404(b)(1) Analysis

Faster commutes and convenient access to the Texas Medical Center, downtown Houston and the South Main corridor continue to drive suburban growth in Missouri City. As the residential development grows, the population requires accessibility to shopping, dining and entertainment. The intersection at the Fort Bend Parkway and SH 6 is a main artery for commuting into the city. It provides a centralized location for residents commuting to work, which is why Metro Park & Ride selected this location for its new Park & Ride. This location is close to the Medical Center and has become a desired location for medical professionals wanting affordable housing, convenient amenities, and good schools - all with a short commute to work. The Fort Bend County Toll Road Authority (FBCTRA) has provided a convenient public transit system and NewQuest Properties (applicant) is proposing to develop a new town center offering multifamily residential living, a convenient commuting hub and retail and leisure entertainment options for younger professionals in Missouri City.

Purpose and Need

As discussed in Boxes 18 and 19 in **Section 2** of this report, a principal driver for this project is the Houston Metro lease for a dedicated Park & Ride terminal. Metro has an agreement in place to operate a small Park & Ride in a portion of the Fort Bend Town Center owned by A-S 91 Ft Bend County-Hwy 6 LP. The Park & Ride terminal is located within the Kroger Shopping center at the southwest corner of Fort Bend Parkway and State Highway 6. That facility currently utilizes tenant parking of the shopping center to accommodate parking for overflow commuter vehicles. At present, the parking is insufficient and fails to provide the appropriate parking amenities for the residents in the region. Furthermore, expansion is needed to stage multiple buses, as well as facilitate loading and unloading the buses; the current situation is inadequate to service anticipated future demand in the area. Sienna Plantation just south of the proposed development, is expected to have an estimated 14,583 homes when build-out is complete, and the expected demand for more efficient commuting options continues to increase proportionately.

Alternative Analysis and Proposed Mitigation

Section 404(b)(1) guidelines require the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE, Corps) determine that a project it permits complies with statutory restrictions on discharges of dredged or fill material into navigable waters including special aquatic sites and wetlands over which the USACE has authority. The Alternatives Analysis process is instrumental in determining the alternative that is practicable with the least environmental impact. The analysis process is the standard the Corps uses to determine if the proposed activity will receive USACE authorization. An alternative may be deemed practicable if it is available and capable of being completed with the consideration of cost, existing technology, and logistics and overall project requirements.

The Corps must assess whether a proposed alternative satisfies the overall project purpose for which the applicant seeks permit authorization. 40 C.F.R 230.10 (a)(2) adds that "[i]f it is otherwise a practicable alternative, an area not presently owned by an applicant which could reasonably be obtained, utilized, expanded or managed in order to fulfill the basic purpose of the proposed activity may be considered." The Guidelines provide the Corps with the discretion to determine the required level of analysis that would be necessary to support whether an alternative is practicable. In assessing alternatives the Corps may

consider all factors relating to public interest in the areas of conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shore erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs and considerations of property ownership.

The Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative includes the construction of a dedicated 5-acre Metro Park & Ride facility that will accommodate the following capacity:

- 200 to 500 full size vehicle spaces;
- 18 to 50 handicap accessible vehicle spaces; and
- 28 other dedicated parking spaces.

This facility will need a 550-foot bus lane that will accommodate multiple points of ingress and egress for busses to exit directly to the northbound service road of Fort Bend Tollway.

The Metro Park & Ride terminal will be the center of a new Town Center. The Town Center will include a commercial block accommodating 200,000 square feet of retail commercial and restaurant space along with attendant parking. This block will include one (1) large anchor with three (3) conterminous lease spaces totaling 139,000 S.F. Also included in this retail commercial block are 12 additional retail pad sites which will accommodate structures ranging in size from 2,100 S.F. to 17,500 S.F. A third development block will include an approximately 24 acres of multifamily, multi-level residential apartment complex building and support parking and infrastructure.

Also included in the new Town Center development is an extension of Watts Plantation Road linking State Highway 6 and Sienna Plantation Parkway. This extension is necessary to help funnel traffic into and out of Sienna Plantation and Missouri City. It will help relieve traffic congestion and provide for better access to the Fort Bend Parkway and the Metro Park and Ride terminal.

4.3.1 Factors and Consideration for Preferred Alternative

The 2009 Missouri City Comprehensive Plan (MCCP) and the Strategic Plan 2014-2019-2029 (Strategic Plan) layout both broad and targeted objectives related to the intersection of the Fort Bend Parkway & State Highway (S.H.) 6. These objectives are long-term development and planning goals, which include the future growth trajectory of Missouri City, as well as the specific area of the proposed project. The Strategic Plan goal for 2029 is a "Vibrant Town Center at S.H.6 and Toll Road" which incorporates the following development objectives.

- Major office complexes with regional and major businesses
- Mid-rise mixed-use development for work, live and play blending with retail, restaurants, entertainment, and residential opportunities
- New businesses providing employment opportunities for residents and bringing new residents
- Metro station connection to both the city of Houston and the Medical Center
- Major and local retail necessary to support business and residents, and attracting visitors

- Major economic hub in Fort Bent County
- Alternative industries targeting medical related business and research, international offices, and light manufacturing
- Range of housing: rental and ownership
- Attractive landscaping, open space and architecture that define the area

In addition to the objectives enumerated above, two main project drivers were considered during the initial siting of the proposed Fort Bend Town Center. These drivers include two key components:

- Development of housing requirements to meet the needs of an underserved demographic group of Missouri City and the immediate surrounding region, and

- Meeting the commuting needs of this demographic, as well as a larger demographic subset of the population needing more convenient access to mass transit services to the interior of Houston as well as surrounding commercial nodes.

Housing and Demographics

Population projections used in the MCCP were derived from the Missouri City Planning Department, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) and Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). At the time of publication (2009) MCCP had projected a population for Missouri City of 67,562, and the projected population in 2018 of 76,118. The current Missouri City population projection for 2020 is 79,410 which is similar to the H-GAC projections. The combined forecast projections were bracketed between 2018 and 2040 with the TWDB projecting a 2040 population of 145,816 and the H-GAC projection of 101,799.

According to MCCP, Missouri City has an owner-occupancy rate 90.8% compared with a renter occupancy rate 9.2%. At 90.8%, the percentage of owner-occupied units in Missouri City is appreciably higher than an adjacent community of Sugarland and Pearland listed at 84.1 % and 79.4% respectively. The population of adults between the ages of 18 and 34 is 21 % for Missouri City. This percentage is consistent with both Sugarland and Pearland, both having a percentage of 22% for this demographic. Given the high rate of owner-occupied housing, there is clear demand to increase multifamily housing to attract this critical demographic cohort to Missouri City. This demographic is single, childless, young professionals looking for multi-inhabitant housing in their early career years.

The proposed mixed-use project would incorporate approximately 24 acres of multi-level apartments. The planned development will include a total of 484 apartment units across two development areas. The apartment density was developed based on the project population density, the target demographic population and the growing need for centralized housing near effective transportation hubs.

Mobility

Mobility was a preeminent consideration in the development of the MCCP which included, among other things, the advancement of transportation planning and thoroughfare designs to promote safe and efficient systems of travel to meet the demands of a growing population through 2040. The MCCP lists single occupancy vehicles as the most common form of transportation with 83% of Missouri City residents choosing this mode of travel to and from work, with only 11.4% of residents car-pooling. Only 1.7% of

Missouri City residents utilize public transportation; and similarly, only 1.4% of residents of the City of Sugarland utilize public transportation. This is likely due to that fact that neither of these population centers have efficient public transportation alternatives.

Houston Metro operates two Park & Ride terminals within Missouri City, one dedicated facility located in the northwest corner of the intersection of Fondren and Sam Houston Tollway, and another temporary location within the Kroger parking lot in the southwest corner State Highway 6 and Fort Bend Tollway. The METRO Fort Bend Tollway facility currently uses overflow tenant parking of the shopping center to accommodate commuters' cars in a portion of the Kroger Center **(Figure 5).** A review of aerial imagery suggest that this temporary location accommodates approximately 80 to 120 vehicles on normal commuting days.

By contrast, the permanent Park & Ride at the corner of Fondren and Sam Houston Tollway appears to accommodate up to approximately 500 vehicles. The much larger Park & Ride at West Belfort and Sam Houston Tollway has a much greater capacity (approximately 1,500 to 2,000 vehicles located 3.8 miles to the east of Fondren Road). Neither of these two facilities are convenient to the travel patterns for Missouri City commuters given the development of the Fort Bend Parkway, particularly with the most recent expansion from just north of Lakeshore Harbor, West to Sienna Parkway. The anticipated Metro Park & Ride expansion into Sienna Plantation, west beyond Sienna Ranch Road will create direct access to approximately 14,583 residents from Sienna Plantation alone and increase demand for Park & Ride occupancy.

An additional consideration of incorporating a Metro Park & Ride into the applicant's development plan is the public/private partnership lease between the applicant and Metro. Incorporated in this partnership is the flexibility Metro will realize as a leasee rather than property developer; with regards to ownership, tax liabilities and depreciation, and the flexibility to reposition installations as transit priorities shift.

The additional mobility enhancements projected will include a Watts Plantation Road connector crossing along the southern boundary of the proposed project area. This road segment will connect to an existing segment of Watts Plantation Road to the west; with a segment to the east that turns north and crosses SH 6. The proposed connector will create a secondary east-west corridor which will service the following transportation needs:

- Connect new residential communities north and south of SH 6, as well as those currently under construction, east of the proposed project area.
- Watts Plantation Road will complete a local transit corridor which will reduce traffic congestion from SH 6 and the Fort Bend Parkway Access Road between SH 6 and Sienna Ranch Road.
- The completed Watts Plantation connector will also provide direct access to the proposed new Park & Ride from both east and west as well as communities north of SH 6.

Retail and Commercial Development

Approximately three-fifths of the Fort Bend Town Center will be devoted to retail space. This plan is described within the preferred alternative and detailed in Box 19 of **Section 2** of this Report. The commercial

aspect of the development serves to enhance the convenience and livability of the multi-tenant development. The proposed retail space will add shopping and retail outlets, restaurants, and leisure businesses. Furthermore, these service-oriented establishments will ultimately result in increased municipal revenues arising from increased property tax assessments, sales tax receipts and other ancillary benefits.

No-build Alternative

The no build alternative was also considered as a viable alternative. However, the Metro Park and Ride facility is needed at the target location based on the needs analysis developed by the City of Missouri City. The City indicated that a Town Center is critical part of the expansion of the Missouri City to support it anticipated growth. The Town Center was selected for the corner of SH 6 and Fort Bend Parkway. A satellite Park & Ride facility is operating in the neighboring property to the northwest. However, the existing Park and Ride is undersized for the current demand and will not support the expected future growth for the area.

If the much-needed full-service Metro Park & Ride is not built, the area will not have the critical infrastructure to support critical convenient access to the Texas Medical Center and Downtown Houston. The desired development including the Watts Plantation Road extension will help with future growth in this area while maintaining safe and effective vehicular movement within the area. Missouri City is projected to have significant growth over the next 10 years. If a desirable mixed used retail residential development is not be built, valuable affordable housing for young commuters will not be available to support this growing community.

If the vital connection between two disconnected alignments of Watts Plantation Road will not be constructed, traffic congestion will continue to build of the feeder roads for SH 6 and Fort Bend Park Way. This vital connector when completed will connect residential neighborhoods north of SH 6 and new residential neighborhoods to the east of the proposed project Sienna Parkway, a major north-south transportation corridor in Missouri City. Not building this connector would do nothing to relieve congestion at the SH 6 and Fort Bend Tollway intersection and along the western alignment of the Toll Road.

Alternate Development Sites

With regards to property available for development in the vicinity of the proposed project there is vacant land owned by the development consortium A-S 151 NW FBPKWY-Hwy-6 LP which consists of eight (8) contiguous tracts totaling 40.7 acres. This property is significantly smaller than the proposed alternative, the alternative property is approximately 75 acres; but this property includes 5 acres of conservation allowing for a net 70 acres of developable land. The deficit of 30 acres would require the applicant to significantly reduce the scale and scope of the development currently envisioned at the proposed site location. A loss of 30 acres would result in the following changes to the development plan:

- The size of the lot would have to be scaled down to a configuration similar to what currently exists at the Kroger and would require metro to enter into a less desirable lease agreement and would significantly reduce capacity and flexibility for Metro. Furthermore, a Park & Ride at this location would have busses and commuters oriented on the outbound side of the Fort Bend Tollway, which would further inconvenience Metro buses and commuters. The applicant anticipates that Metro would withdraw from the project and ultimately, the park and ride concept would be abandoned.

- The proposed multi-tenant development be scaled back at the loss of a convenient mass transit system and reduce access to the medical center and downtown. This would necessitate a reconfiguration of the of design; and given the strategic location of these tracts, a scaled back project would not result in an optimum land use plan that the Missouri City Development Authority would continue to support.

Given these constraints of the northwest corner of this property, it would be more suited to for a single purpose commercial/retail development. This would not satisfy the needs of the project to provide more residential housing and improve traffic flow along the major corridors.