

PREFACE

The Draft EIS for the LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) Northeast Corridor Light Rail Project, published in August 2010, documented the purpose and need for the project; presented a discussion of all reasonable alternatives considered; described in detail the anticipated social, environmental, economic, and transportation-related effects of the proposed project; and identified appropriate mitigation measures to offset unavoidable impacts. The Draft EIS evaluated four alternatives: the No-Build; Transportation Systems Management (TSM); the Light Rail Alternative; and the Light Rail Alternative – Sugar Creek Design Option. Public and agency comments were sought on the Draft EIS alternatives during the public circulation period that occurred between August 27 and October 12, 2010 and during the public hearing on September 22, 2010. An additional public meeting was held on January 12, 2011 to gain public input on proposed project changes, including ending the alignment at UNC Charlotte and other measures to reduce the project cost and enhance financial feasibility. Public comments on the Draft EIS and January 12, 2011 public meeting were summarized and presented to the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) and the Light Rail Alternative was recommended as the NEPA Preferred Alternative. The MTC unanimously voted for the selection of the Light Rail Alternative as the Preferred Alternative on January 26, 2011.

This Final EIS is the next step in documenting the purpose and need, alternatives considered and impacts that would result from implementation of the Preferred Alternative. The information presented in this Final EIS is based on numerous technical studies and reflects comments or suggestions from interested and affected parties made during the evaluation of alternatives, and during the aforementioned comment period of the Draft EIS. Impact information is based on design assumptions as shown in the *30% Preliminary Engineering Design Plans* completed March 2010 and updated based on scope reduction measures implemented in January 2011, as shown on the *LYNX Blue Line Extension Project Layout to be used for 65% Preliminary Engineering and FEIS*, March 21, 2011. Figures are located at the end of each chapter, where applicable. Supporting documentation can be found in Appendices D through I. The document has been circulated to federal, state, and local agencies as well as the interested parties, and copies of this document have been made available for public review, as noted in Appendix E: Distribution. In addition, the Final EIS, Appendices, and supporting technical reports have been made available on the CATS website, www.ridetransit.org. Following the public review period for the Final EIS, the Federal Transit Administration, as the lead federal agency, will render its formal decision on the proposed project in a Record of Decision (ROD).