

I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT
SECTION 6-7
ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS
THAT CANNOT BE AVOIDED

This section summarizes the adverse effects of the Project that cannot be avoided. As described in the previous chapters and sections of this DDR/DEIS, mitigation measures would be developed to avoid or minimize adverse impacts to the extent practicable. However, even with mitigation, some adverse effects cannot be fully avoided. Unavoidable adverse effects occur if a resource would be lost or if mitigation measures could only partially mitigate the effects.

6-7.1 VIADUCT ALTERNATIVE

The following effects of the Viaduct Alternative would be unavoidable:

- **Section 6-2-3, Environmental Justice:** As will be noted in the following bullets, the Viaduct Alternative would result in the unavoidable displacement of properties, removal of historic structures, temporary closure of a portion of a public park, adverse visual effects, and perceptible increases in noise at multiple receivers. Most of these effects would occur in identified environmental justice communities. NYSDOT proposes mitigation measures to minimize these effects on the public, including environmental justice communities; however, it is not feasible to fully avoid the effects of the Viaduct Alternative in environmental justice communities.
- **Section 6-3-1, Land Acquisition, Displacement, and Relocation:** The Viaduct Alternative would result in the full or partial acquisition of 119 parcels: 118 parcels totaling 21.74 acres in the Central Study Area and one partial acquisition of 0.07 acres in the I-481 North Study Area. These parcels comprise 87 properties that would be partially acquired and 31 properties that would be acquired in full in the Central Study Area, and one partial acquisition in the I-481 North Study Area. Twenty-seven of these full and partial acquisitions are tax exempt. As a result of the unavoidable acquisition of property, the Viaduct Alternative would result in a total annual tax loss of \$754,063. The Viaduct Alternative would acquire 24 buildings (21 occupied and three vacant), resulting in the displacement of 555 employees and 53 dwelling units. As described in **Chapter 3, Alternatives**, efforts to reduce property impacts were undertaken, but it is unreasonable to avoid the acquisition of private property for the implementation of the Viaduct Alternative.
- **Section 6-4-1, Historic and Cultural Resources:** Under the Viaduct Alternative, 10 historic properties, or portions thereof, would be permanently incorporated into the transportation right-of-way. These include nine individual properties determined eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places and one National Register-listed Historic District. The use of the North Salina Street Historic District would occur under the Viaduct Alternative due to adverse effects on two of its contributing resources—the Britton Block and Learbury Centre. One building is a contributing resource to the New York Central Railroad Passenger and Freight Station complex. As described in **Section 6-4-1**, FHWA and NYSDOT will develop a Programmatic Agreement (PA) in consultation with the SHPO, ACHP, Onondaga Nation, Tuscarora Nation, and other Consulting Parties to resolve the Project’s potential adverse effects, however, the demolition of

these buildings would be a permanent loss that would be unavoidable under the Viaduct Alternative.

Construction of the Viaduct Alternative would involve ground disturbance, which has the potential to disturb archaeological resources. The presence or absence of archaeological resources would be determined through Phase IB testing and additional field investigations as needed to evaluate NRHP eligibility in consultation with SHPO, the Onondaga Nation, and the Tuscarora Nation (for Native American sites). If eligible sites are identified, FHWA in coordination with NYSDOT would carry out consultation with SHPO, the Onondaga Nation, and the Tuscarora Nation to consider measures that would minimize and/or mitigate any unavoidable adverse effects on archaeological properties.

- **Section 6-4-2, Parklands and Recreational Resources:** A portion of Wilson Park would be temporarily occupied during construction of the Viaduct Alternative. A temporary easement on 0.12 acres of Wilson Park would be required for approximately three years of the approximate six-year construction period. One of the two basketball courts at the park, as well as a section of the adjacent grassy area, would be inaccessible to park users for this period (prior to Project construction, a basketball court would be constructed west of the bleachers in the location of the former tennis court, so that two basketball courts would be maintained for use during construction). While these park amenities would not be available during a three-year period of construction, this constitutes a small section of the 2.1-acre park, and their inaccessibility would be temporary. Construction activities would also increase noise, vibration, and dust at the park, and would affect views of and from it, but these effects would be temporary. To mitigate this temporary loss of parkland, NYSDOT would make improvements within the portion of the park that would remain open. These improvements include a third hoop and backboard, benches, new shade trees, a new water fountain in the basketball court area, new pavement for access from Jackson Street and other fence, pedestrian gates, and parking improvements. Once construction is complete, the existing eastern basketball court would be reconstructed and the adjacent lawn area would be graded and reseeded. Thus, the park would be returned to its current uses, in the same or improved condition, upon the completion of construction. These measures would minimize the adverse effect on Wilson Park during construction, but its partial closure during construction of the Viaduct Alternative would be unavoidable.
- **Section 6-4-3, Visual Resources and Aesthetic Considerations:** The Viaduct Alternative would result in minor adverse visual effects at 13 of 32 viewpoints selected for analysis. These minor adverse effects would largely be due to the increased width and height of the new I-81 viaduct, which would increase the overall massing, scale, and visibility of the structure as well as the construction of noise barriers to mitigate adverse traffic noise impacts. NYSDOT would implement practicable measures to minimize or otherwise mitigate adverse effects, such as context-sensitive design solutions, plantings, streetscape improvements, and selection of materials that improve aesthetics of the alternative. However, where mitigation may not be practicable, the minor adverse visual impacts would be unavoidable.
- **Section 6-4-6, Noise:** The Viaduct Alternative would result in traffic noise impacts at 675 of the 2,817 receiver sites. Traffic noise level increases would be perceptible at 38 of the 2,817 receiver

sites. Abatement measures, such as noise barriers, would be constructed where feasible and reasonable (as defined in NYSDOT Noise Policy). With implementation of the proposed abatement measures described in **Section 6-4-6, Noise**, noise impacts at 286 receiver sites would be avoided. However, where noise barriers or other abatement measures would not be feasible and reasonable, the noise impacts would be unavoidable.

- **Section 6-4-7, Water Resources:** The Viaduct Alternative would permanently affect approximately 0.06 acres of freshwater wetlands in the I-481 North Study Area because of noise barrier construction. Where freshwater wetlands and regulated adjacent areas are disturbed, these impacts would be unavoidable. Within the wetland adjacent area, the Project would affect about 0.10 acres to place new pavement and 0.15 acres to remove existing pavement, resulting in a net increase of 0.05 acres in pervious area. It would also affect about 0.30 acres due to cut and fill (pervious) in the wetland adjacent area for roadway and noise barrier construction in the I-481 North Study Area. Wetland mitigation is not proposed under the Viaduct Alternative as the permanent impacts are less than the 0.1-acre mitigation threshold required by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

6-7.2 COMMUNITY GRID ALTERNATIVE

The following effects of the Community Grid Alternative would be unavoidable:

- **Section 6-2-3, Environmental Justice:** As will be noted in the following bullets, the Community Grid Alternative would result in the unavoidable displacement of properties, closure of a portion of a public park, adverse visual effects, and perceptible increases in noise at multiple receivers. Many of these effects would occur in identified environmental justice communities. NYSDOT proposes mitigation measures to minimize these effects on the public, including environmental justice communities; however, it is not feasible to fully avoid the effects of the Community Grid Alternative in environmental justice communities.
- **Section 6-3-1, Land Acquisition, Displacement, and Relocation:** The Community Grid Alternative would result in the full or partial acquisition of 151 parcels, totaling 20.44 acres. This includes 136 parcels, totaling 18.20 total acquired acres, within the City of Syracuse. Of the 151 total parcels, 137 properties would be partially acquired and 14 properties would be acquired in full. Of these properties, 27 are tax-exempt (3.75 acres). Eight acquisitions, two of them tax-exempt parcels owned by the State of New York, would be required in the Town of DeWitt (0.65 acres). Seven acquisitions would be required in the Town of Cicero (1.59 acres). The unavoidable acquisition of property by the Community Grid Alternative would result in a total tax loss of approximately \$136,952 annually. The Community Grid Alternative would acquire four commercial buildings (three occupied and one vacant) and displace a total of 35 employees. As described in **Chapter 3, Alternatives**, efforts to reduce property impacts were undertaken, but it is unreasonable to avoid the acquisition of private property for the implementation of the Community Grid Alternative.
- **Section 6-4-1, Historic and Cultural Resources:** Construction of the Community Grid Alternative would involve ground disturbance, which has the potential to disturb archaeological resources. The presence or absence of archaeological resources would be determined through

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Phase IB testing and additional field investigations as needed to evaluate NRHP eligibility in consultation with SHPO, the Onondaga Nation, and the Tuscarora Nation (for Native American sites). If eligible sites are identified, FHWA in coordination with NYSDOT would carry out consultation with SHPO, the Onondaga Nation, and the Tuscarora Nation to consider measures that would minimize and/or mitigate any unavoidable adverse effects on archaeological properties.

- **Section 6-4-2, Parklands and Recreational Resources:** A portion of Wilson Park would be temporarily occupied during construction of the Community Grid Alternative. A temporary easement on 0.12 acres of Wilson Park would be required for approximately two years of the approximate five-year construction period. One of the two basketball courts at the park, as well as a section of the adjacent grassy area, would be inaccessible to park users for this period (prior to construction, a basketball court would be constructed west of the bleachers in the location of the former tennis court, so that two basketball courts would be available for use during construction). While these park amenities would not be available during a three-year period of construction, this constitutes a small section of the 2.1-acre park, and their inaccessibility would be temporary. Construction activities would also increase noise, vibration, and dust at the park, and would affect views of and from it, but these effects would be temporary. To mitigate this temporary loss of parkland, NYSDOT would make improvements within the portion of the park that would remain open. Improvements after construction include a third hoop and backboard, benches, new shade trees, a new water fountain in the basketball court area, new pavement for access from Jackson Street, and other fence, pedestrian gates, and parking improvements. Once construction is complete, the existing eastern basketball court would be reconstructed and the adjacent lawn area would be graded and reseeded. Thus, the park would be returned to include its current uses, in the same or improved condition, upon the completion of construction. These measures would minimize the adverse effect on Wilson Park during construction, but its partial closure during construction of the Community Grid Alternative would be unavoidable.
- **Section 6-4-3, Visual Resources and Aesthetic Considerations:** The Community Grid Alternative would result in minor adverse visual effects at six of the 32 viewpoints selected for analysis. Since the existing I-81 viaduct would be removed under this alternative, these effects would be due to the obstruction of existing views by safety fencing or from proposed noise barriers. Where practicable, measures to minimize or otherwise mitigate these minor adverse effects would be implemented, such as context-sensitive design solutions, plantings, streetscape improvements, and selection of materials that improve aesthetics of the alternative. However, where mitigation may not be practicable, the minor adverse visual effects would be unavoidable.
- **Section 6-4-6, Noise:** Traffic noise impacts were identified at 565 of the 2,817 receivers selected for the Project. Under the Community Grid Alternative, it is anticipated that traffic noise level increases would be perceptible at 33 of the 2,817 receivers. Abatement measures, such as noise barriers, would be constructed where feasible and reasonable (as defined in NYSDOT Noise Policy). With implementation of the proposed abatement measures described in **Section 6-4-6, Noise**, noise impacts at 224 receiver sties would be avoided. However, where noise barriers or other abatement measures would not be feasible and reasonable, the noise impacts would be unavoidable.

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- **Section 6-4-7, Water Resources:** Approximately 0.96 acres of freshwater wetlands (0.89 acres of vegetated wetlands and 0.07 acres of surface water) would be permanently incorporated into the Community Grid Alternative. Within the wetland adjacent area, the Project would affect about 3.57 acres for new pavement and 2.36 acres from removed pavement, resulting in a net decrease of 1.21 acres in pervious area. It would also affect about 9.61 acres due to cut and fill (pervious) in the wetland adjacent area as a result of new roadway and noise barriers. Where NYSDEC-regulated freshwater wetland adjacent areas are disturbed, these impacts would be unavoidable. Mitigation for these impacted wetlands would be in the form of an in-lieu fee arrangement with USACE. Mitigation for the potential NYSDEC wetlands would be in the form of improvements to Mud Creek (including streambed restoration, habitat connectivity, floodplain enhancements, and riparian corridor enhancements).