

## **Section 4.7**

# **Parks and Recreational Resources**



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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA .....	Americans with Disabilities Act
BRT .....	Bus Rapid Transit
FTA .....	Federal Transit Administration
LRT .....	Light Rail Transit
LWCF .....	Land and Water Conservation Fund
Metro .....	Niagara Frontier Transit Metro System, Inc.
Project .....	Buffalo-Amherst-Tonawanda Corridor Transit Expansion



## 4.7 PARKS AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

This section presents the assessment of potential impacts of the Buffalo-Amherst-Tonawanda Corridor Transit Expansion (the Project) on parks, recreational, and open space resources within the study area that are not defined as Section 4(f) properties. For more information refer to Chapter 5, “Section 4(f) Evaluation.” Existing land use parks, recreational, and open space resources and regulations are described in Appendix D6, “Parks and Recreational Resources Supplemental Information”. Table 4.7-1. summarizes the environmental consequences of the Project No Build Alternative, LRT Build Alternative, and BRT Build Alternative, as they relate to park, recreational, and open space resources.

**Table 4.7-1. Parks and Recreational Resources Impacts Summary**

Alternative	Permanent Impacts
No Build Alternative	No impacts
LRT Build Alternative	No adverse impacts
BRT Build Alternative	No adverse impacts

### 4.7.1 No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative would consist of a future scenario with no changes to transportation services or facilities in the Project Corridor, beyond the projects that are already committed. No projects are known that would use any portion of the parks and recreation resources within the study area. Thus, these resources would be expected to continue to exist in their current configurations; the amenities available at each park and access to each park are not expected to change. The owners and managers of parks and recreation facilities would continue to plan for future maintenance and improvements throughout their park systems and would continue to develop plans for new parks where needed. No direct impacts would occur with the No Build Alternative.

### 4.7.2 Build Alternatives

Neither the LRT Build Alternative nor the BRT Build Alternative would result in adverse impacts to parks and recreational resources, including those that were identified as being adjacent to the Project alignment (Sweet Home Middle School, Skiddersville Cemetery, and Ellicott Creek Trailway). Sweet Home Middle School and Skiddersville Cemetery were identified as noise-sensitive locations and included in the noise analysis for the Project. As presented in Section 4.11, “Noise,” the noise generated by the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would not constitute a moderate or a severe impact according to FTA noise impact criteria. For an evaluation of Gateway Park refer to Chapter 5, “Section 4(f) Evaluation.”

Neither Build Alternative would permanently encroach on parks or recreational resources. Both Build Alternatives would remain largely within the existing transportation right-of-way, except for some private properties, as described in Section 4.1, “Property Acquisitions and Displacements.” In addition, both Build Alternatives would maintain a continued separation between the Project right-of-way and adjacent open space resources. As such, neither Build Alternative would impact existing access to parks and recreational resources.

Both Build Alternatives would expand high-quality transit in the study area, including 10 proposed stations. A multiuse bike and pedestrian trail would be constructed along John James Audubon Parkway with both Build Alternatives, connecting to the existing Ellicott Creek Trailway near Forest Road. As such, both Build Alternatives would provide additional connectivity between parks and recreational space resources.

Both Build Alternatives consider investments in pedestrian facilities as part of the Project and as such, would enhance pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the study area, resulting in benefits to existing and planned recreational paths. Multi-use paths would lead up to all proposed study area. The multi-use improvements support Goal #3 Objective 3.2 of the Town of Amherst’s 2018 Recreation and Parks Master Plan. Streets within the project limits in the study area would be improved with pedestrian and bicycle enhancements, such as distinctive pavement markings to clearly define pedestrian and bicycle spaces, signals to facilitate safe crossings for both bicyclists and pedestrians, bollards and traffic islands for pedestrian protection and refuge, and “bump-outs” at sidewalk corners to narrow pedestrian crossings. In addition, intersections along the corridor would be upgraded with ADA-compliant ramps and push buttons would be added to the crosswalks, thus facilitating the walkability within the study area.

Section 4.17, “Construction Effects,” explains that the potential for adverse construction noise impacts was identified at receptors within 40 feet of construction activity. Of the 17 parks and recreational resources identified in the study area, four are located within 40 feet of the Project. The construction noise analysis found that noise resulting from construction of either Build Alternative could result in noticeable levels of noise, but the noise would not exceed FTA construction noise impact criteria, would occur over only a limited period of time, and would occur infrequently such that it would not rise to the level of an adverse impact.

No portion of Walton Woods Park, the one recreational resource in the study area that has received LWCF funds, would be acquired or converted to nonrecreational use under either Build Alternative. In addition, no construction activities would occur within those sites. Therefore, an analysis pursuant to Section 6(f) of the Act is not needed. Gateway Park and the Ellicott Creek Trailway are evaluated for a Section 4(f) use in Chapter 5, “Section 4(f) Evaluation.”

#### **4.7.3 Potential Mitigation Strategies**

As no adverse impacts to parks and recreational resources evaluated in this Section are anticipated as a result of either Build Alternative, no mitigation measures are warranted.