

Appendix D4:

Neighborhoods and Communities Supplemental Information

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BRT.....	Bus Rapid Transit
CHC	Center for Handicapped Children
EIS.....	Environmental Impact Statement
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
LRT	Light Rail Transit
Metro	Niagara Frontier Transit Metro System, Inc.
PAL	Metro Paratransit Access Line
Project	Buffalo-Amherst-Tonawanda Corridor Transit Expansion
NFTA	Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
UB.....	University at Buffalo

Appendix D. Neighborhoods and Communities Supplemental Information

This appendix identifies potential Project impacts on surrounding neighborhoods and key community resources. The analysis considered the surrounding community context and character, community mobility, and community facilities near the Project corridor, such as schools, libraries, daycare facilities, places of worship, emergency services, and healthcare facilities. Table D-1 summarizes the impact findings related to neighborhoods and community resources.

Table D-1 Neighborhoods and Community Resources – Impacts Summary

Alternative	Permanent Impacts		
	Community Character and Cohesion	Mobility and Access	Community Facilities
No Build Alternative	No impacts	No impacts No enhanced mobility benefits	No impacts
LRT Alternative	<p>Community cohesion would be impacted by the impediment to pedestrians created by the construction of ballasted track along Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road. Mitigation proposed in Chapter 3, "Transportation" includes embedded track to mitigate this impact.</p> <p>Impacts associated with noise will be addressed as described in Section 4.11, "Noise".</p> <p>No adverse impacts after mitigation</p>	<p>No adverse impacts</p> <p>Mobility benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced transit travel time between UB North and South campus ▪ Improved access to study area schools and educational institutions, public libraries, daycare facilities, Amherst government complex. ▪ Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities. ▪ High-quality transit mobility along Audubon Parkway. 	No adverse impacts
BRT Alternative	No adverse impacts	<p>No adverse impacts</p> <p>Mobility benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced transit travel time between UB North and South campus. ▪ Improved access to study area schools and educational institutions, public libraries, daycare facilities, Amherst government complex ▪ Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities. ▪ High-quality transit mobility along Audubon Parkway 	No adverse impacts

D1. REGULATORY CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

Metro used the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) “Community Impacts Assessment: A Quick Reference for Transportation”¹ as a guide to review potential impacts of the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative on community facilities. The analysis considers the following types of impacts:

- **Community Character and Cohesion** - Impacts due to commercial and residential displacements and changes in land use, visual/aesthetics, noise levels, and population/demographics. Community character is an attribute of a geographic area with identifiable characteristics that make it unique. For this Draft EIS, the Project Corridor is divided into three geographic areas or communities which are defined as the southern segment (from University Station to Sheridan Drive), middle segment (from Sheridan Drive to Rensch Road), and northern segment (from Rensch Road to north of I-990). Community cohesion is an attribute of a geographic area, where segmentation or division of the area would reduce its desirability to current and future residents. For this Draft EIS, an impact on community character and cohesion would be adverse if impacts related to displacements and changes in land use, visual/aesthetics, noise levels, and population/demographics substantially alter the character of each community, as discussed throughout this Draft EIS.
- **Mobility** - Overall community impacts of changes in transportation options, travel patterns, business activity, access to jobs, and access for emergency service providers. For this Draft EIS, an impact on mobility would be adverse if transportation options, access to jobs, and access for emergency service providers would be permanently reduced or restricted.
- **Community Facilities** - Impacts on key facilities in the study area that play an important role in shaping and defining the community, such as schools or places of worship, that serve as focal points or provide community services. For this Draft EIS, an impact on community facilities would be adverse if access to facilities would be restricted or reduced.

Metro completed this assessment of neighborhood and community facilities by reviewing data from local agencies, GIS shapefiles, online mapping resources, as-built plans discussions with local agencies, and field verification. Metro defined the study area for the community facility analysis as a 0.25-mile radius on either side of the alignment of the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative and a 0.5-mile radius around each station location.

¹ Community Impact Assessment: A Quick Reference for Transportation (Washington, D.C.: Federal Highway Administration, Office of Environment and Planning, 1996). Accessed October 7, 2022.

D2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

D.2.1 Community Character and Cohesion

Figure D-1, Figure D-2, and Figure D-3 describe the land uses of the three community segments along the Project Corridor. A summary of community character for each segment is provided below:

- **Southern Segment:** The University at Buffalo (UB) South Campus is the main feature in the southern segment with low- to medium-density commercial, residential, and university facilities concentrated along Main Street. Moving north from University Station, the community character transitions to a mix of residential (predominately single-family) and commercial uses (single-story commercial uses) along Kenmore Avenue and Niagara Falls Boulevard.
- **Middle Segment:** At Eggert Road the community character changes from a single-family residential community to more suburban commercial uses along Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road with big-box commercial establishments. A mix of commercial, residential, and institutional uses exist along Sweet Home Road, including academic, and multifamily residential uses associated with UB North Campus.
- **Northern Segment:** The UB North Campus is a major contributor to the character of the northern segment due to its focus on campus activities and student/facility population. North of UB North Campus is a master-planned community, consisting of campus-style office parks and residential uses. Office and commercial land uses line both sides of John James Audubon Parkway, with residential neighborhoods further from the roadway. The area is suburban in character with separated uses, large lots, large setbacks, and off-street parking and includes the Amherst Town Complex.

Figure D-1 Existing Land Uses – Southern Segment

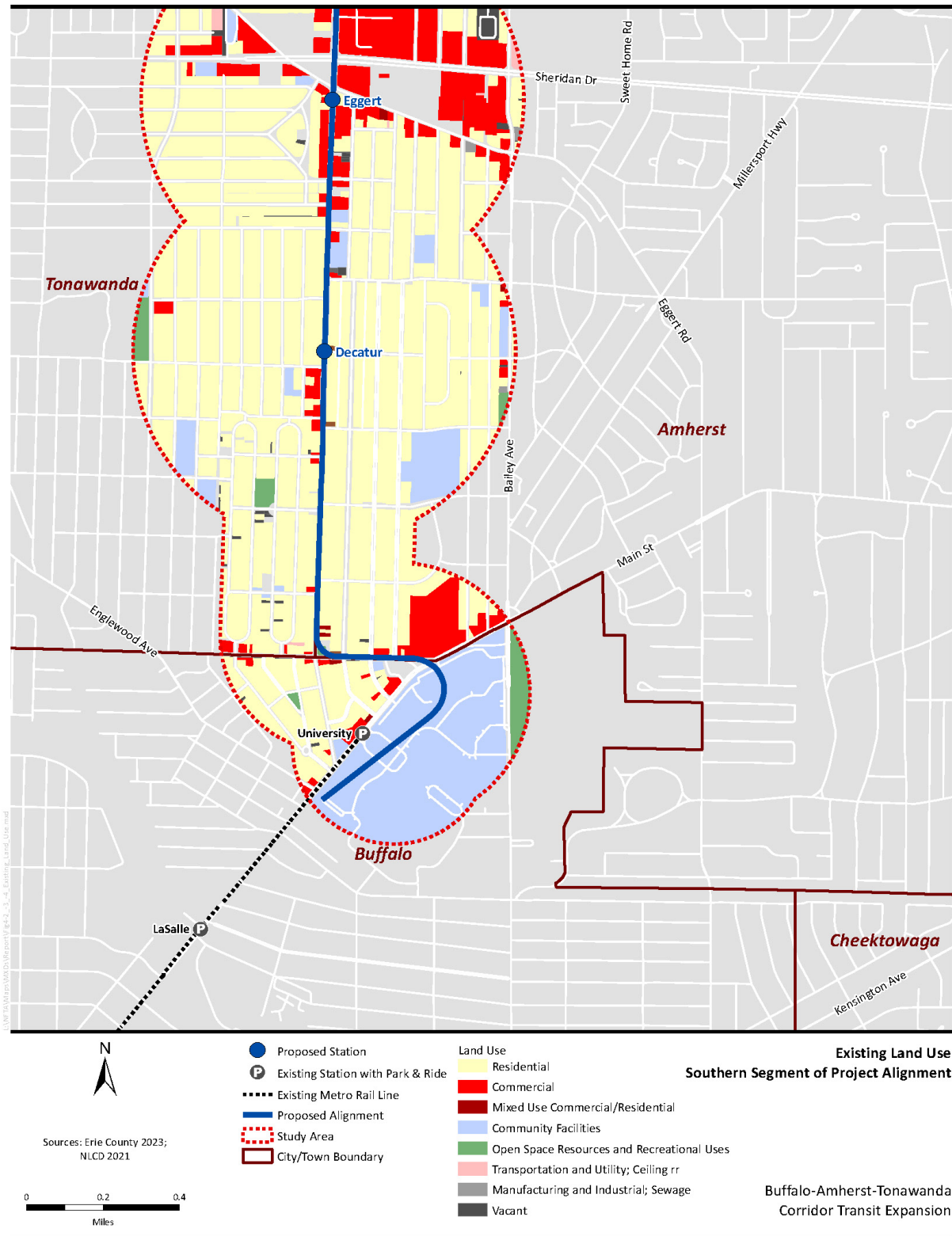


Figure D-2. Existing Land Use – Middle Segment

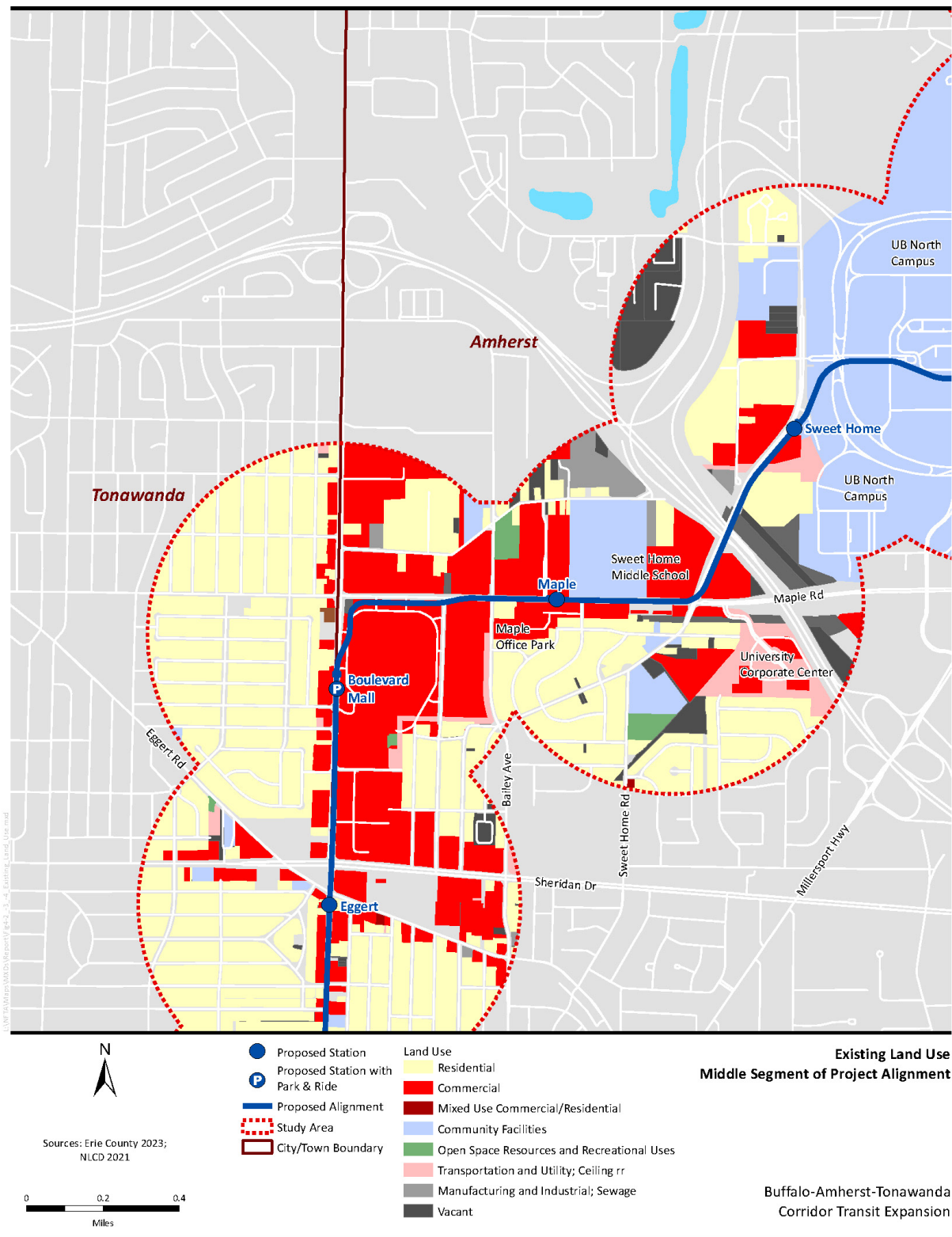
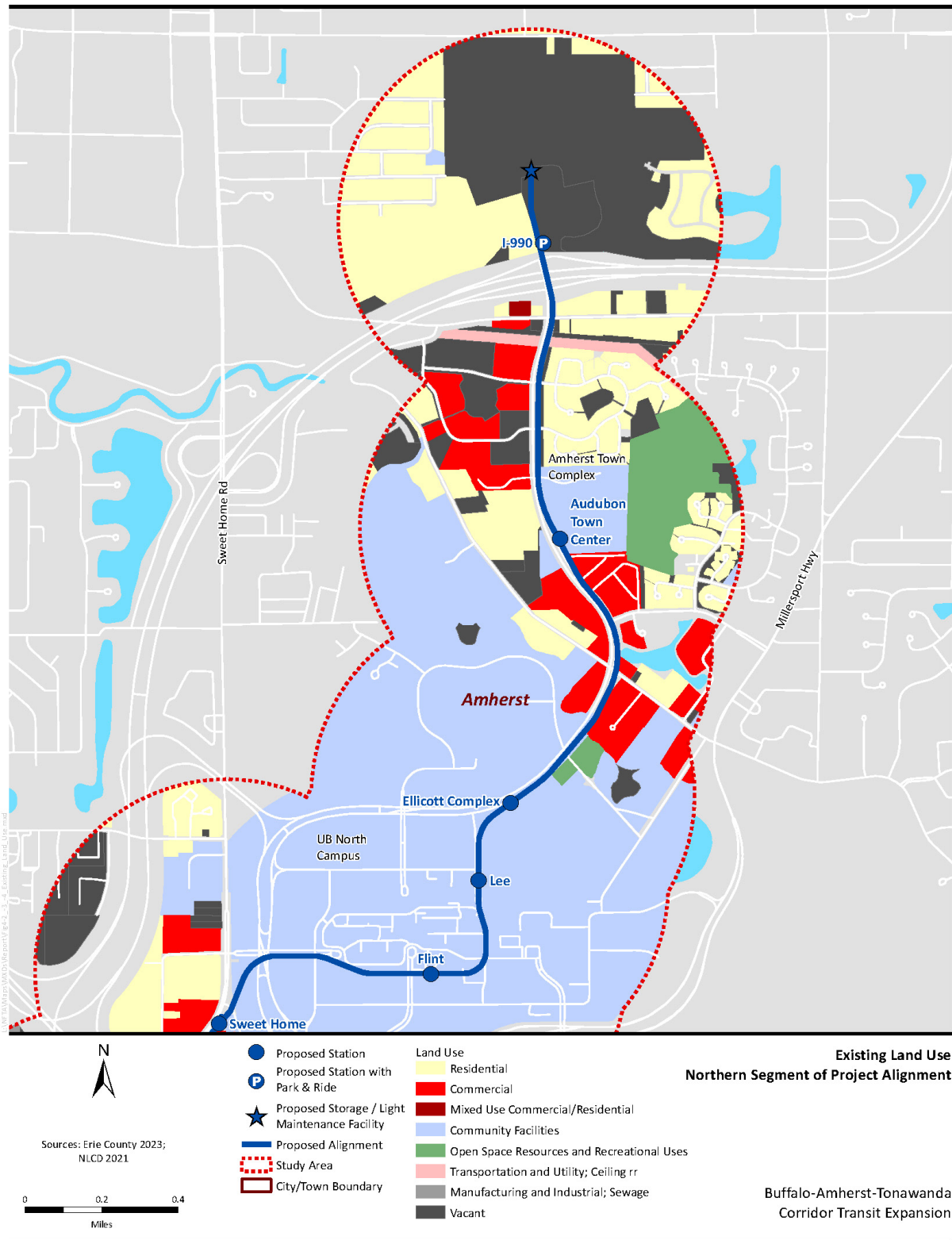


Figure D-3. Existing Land Uses – Northern Segment



D.2.2 Mobility

Today the primary mode of transportation used for travel within each community area is the automobile. In addition to the automobile, mobility options are also provided by public transportation. Metro is the public transportation operator in the Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan region and the Project Corridor, operating the Metro Rail LRT system, a network of bus lines, and the Metro Paratransit Access Line (PAL). Figure D-4 maps public transportation services in the study area which includes Metro Rail and Metro Bus services. A summary of mobility provided by public transportation services for each segment is provided below:

- **Southern Segment:** Within the southern segment Metro provides Metro Rail service connecting downtown Buffalo with the University Station. At the University Station transfers are available to and from Metro Bus Routes 5, 8, 12, 13, 19, 44, 47, 48, 49, and 81. Metro Bus Route 34 operates within the Project Corridor along Niagara Falls Boulevard and PAL service is provided within 0.75 miles of Metro bus routes or rail stations.
- **Middle Segment:** Within the middle segment Metro provides service via the Metro Bus Route 34 and 35 which operate within the Project Corridor along Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road, respectively. Metro Bus Route 35 also provides service to the UB North Campus. PAL service is provided within 0.75 miles of Metro bus routes.
- **Northern Segment:** Within the northern segment Metro provides service via the Metro Bus Route 35 which operates within the Project Corridor along Maple Road with connections to the UB North Campus. Metro Bus Route 64 provides express service that makes a connection with the Project Corridor at I-990. There are currently no Metro services along the Project Corridor along Audubon Parkway. PAL service is provided within 0.75 miles of Metro bus routes.

D.2.3 Community Facilities

Figure D-5, Figure D-6, and Figure D-7 map community facilities in the study area. These facilities include schools, libraries, and daycare centers (Figure D-5), places of worship (Figure D-6), and emergency services and healthcare facilities (Figure D-7).

Figure D-4. Metro Public Transportation Services

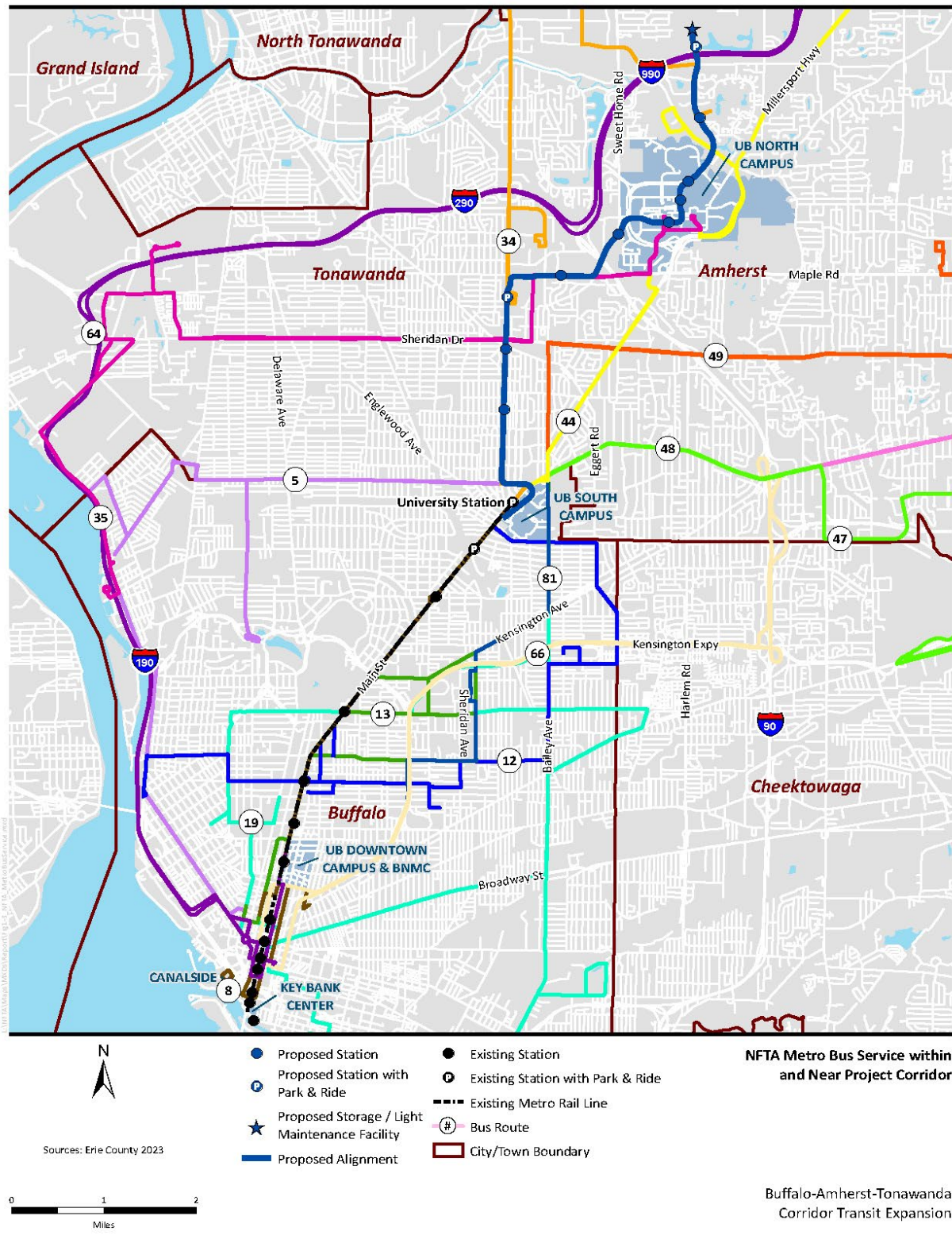
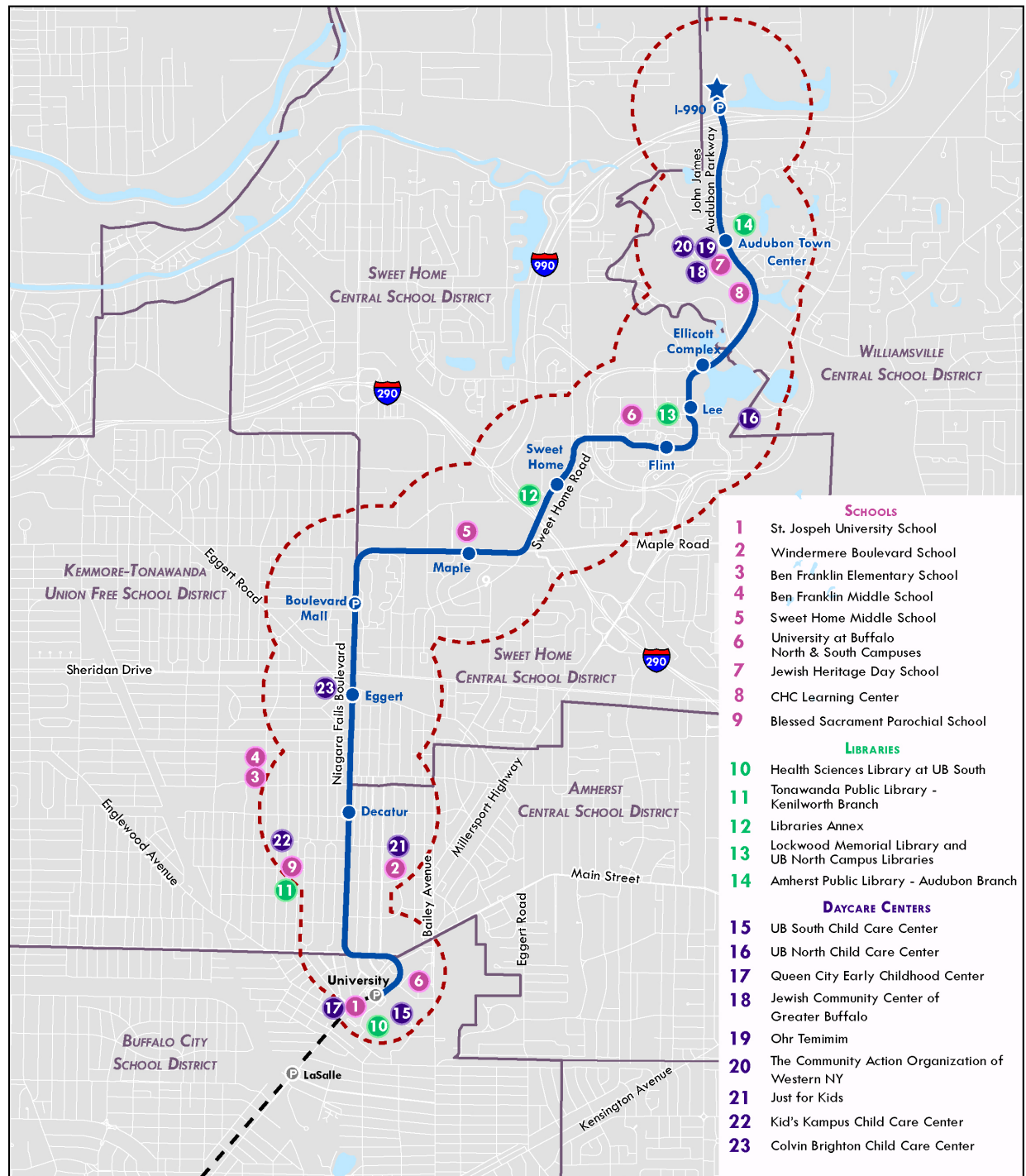
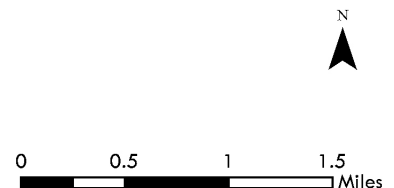
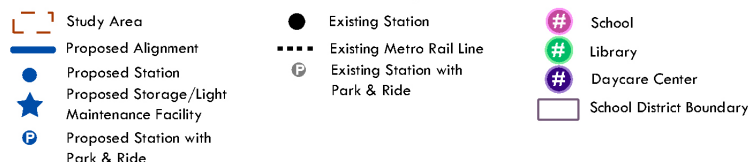


Figure D-5. Schools, Libraries, and Daycare Centers within the Study Area

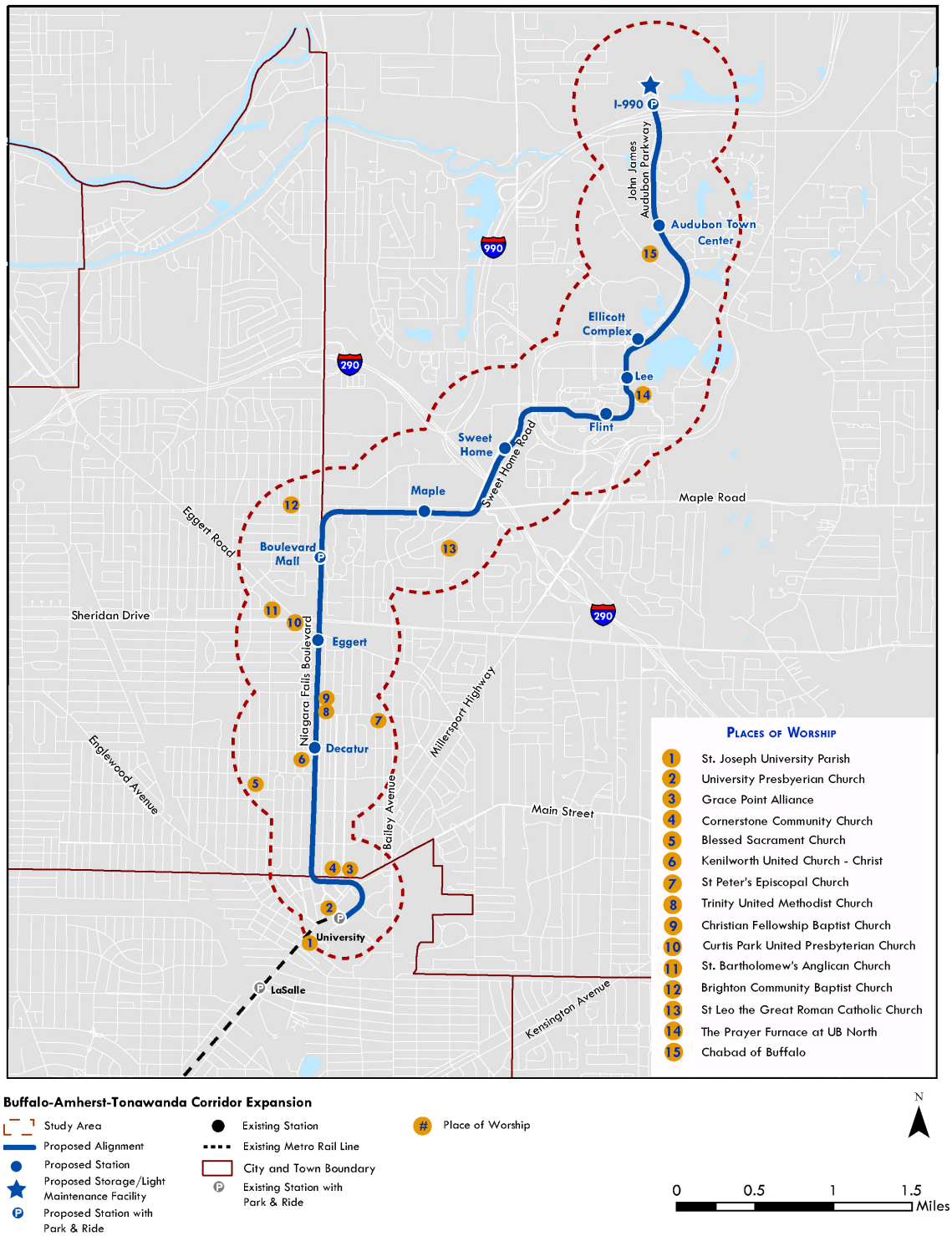


Buffalo-Amherst-Tonawanda Corridor Transit Expansion



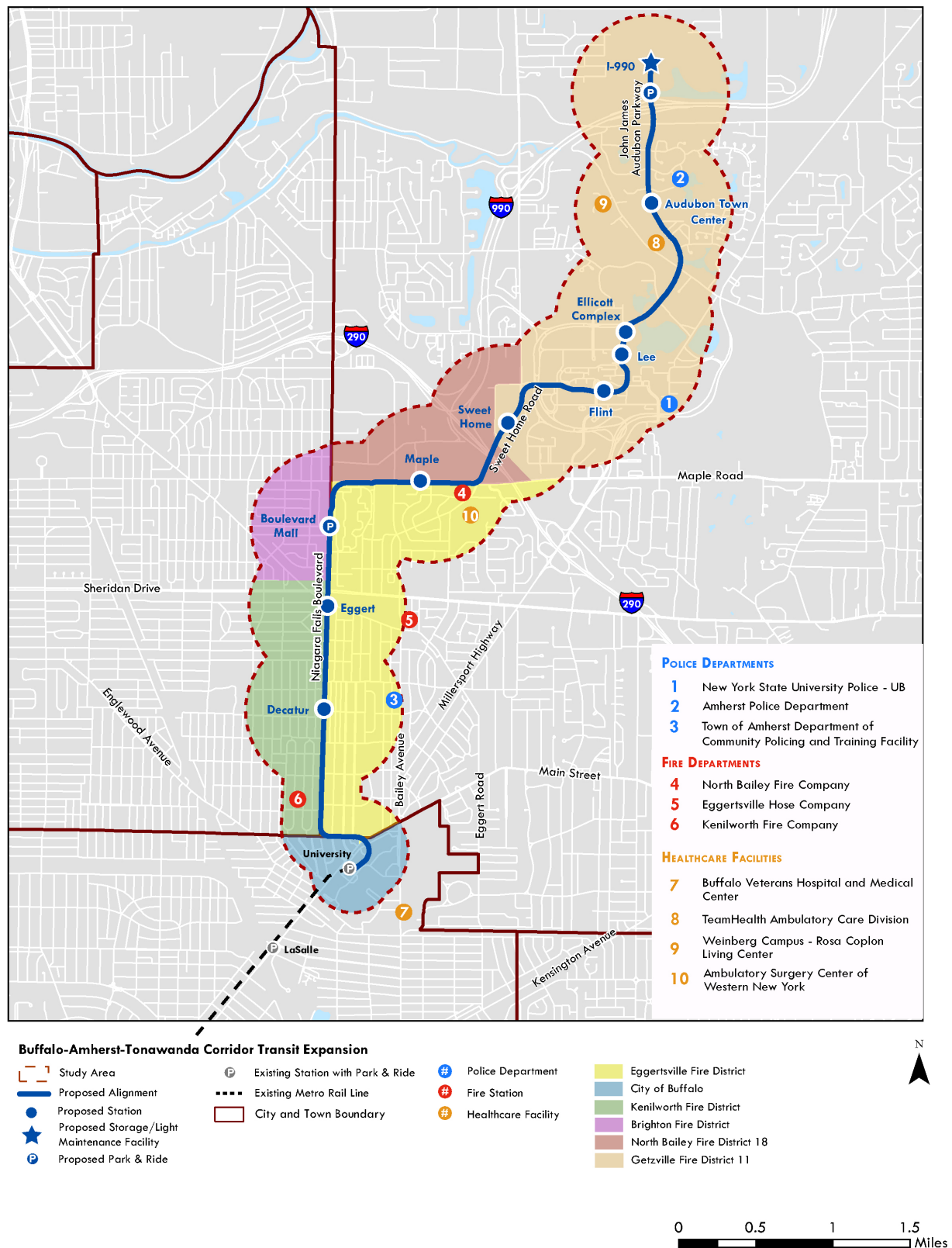
Source: Erie County, schooldigger.com, greatschools.org, and <https://www.buffalolib.org/>, 2019

Figure D-6. Places of Worship within the Study Area



Source: Erie County and Association of Religion Data Archives, 2019

Figure D-7. Emergency Services and Healthcare Facilities within the Study Area



Source: Erie County, Erie County Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, <https://www.buffalo.va.gov/>, <https://www.teamhealth.com/what-we-do/ambulatory-care/>, and <https://www.weinbergcampus.org/Skilled-Nursing-Rehab/Rosa-Coplon-Living-Center.aspx>, <https://koordinates.com/layer/96513-erie-county-new-york-fire-districts/download/>, 2019

D.2.3.1 Schools

Figure D-5 shows that nine schools are located within the study area, which are presented in Table D-2 along with 2021 enrollment data.

Table D-2. Schools within the Study Area

Map Key	School	Address	City/Town	Enrollment
1	St. Joseph University School	3269 Main Street	Buffalo	169
2	Windermere Boulevard Elementary School	291 Windermere Boulevard	Amherst	761
3	Ben Franklin Elementary School	500 Parkhurst Boulevard	Tonawanda	472
4	Ben Franklin Middle School	540 Parkhurst Boulevard	Tonawanda	631
5	Sweet Home Middle School	4150 Maple Road	Amherst	765
6	University at Buffalo	North Campus – 12 Capen Hall South Campus – 208 Norton Circle	Buffalo	32,009
7	Jewish Heritage Day School	411 John James Audubon Parkway	Amherst	102
8	CHC Learning Center	1085 Eggert Road	Buffalo	52
9	Blessed Sacrament Parochial School	263 Claremont Avenue	Buffalo	177

Sources: schooldigger.com and niche.com, 2024; <http://www.buffalo.edu/news/releases/html>, 2021; <http://www.buffalo.edu/>, 2023, and <https://www.privateschoolreview.com/blessed-sacrament-elementary-school-profile/14223>, 2021. <https://www.privateschoolreview.com/st-joseph-university-school-profile>, 2024. <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/new-york/windermere-blvd-school-225832#:~:text=The%20student%20population%20of%20Windermere,minority%20student%20enrollment%20is%2051%25>, 2024. <https://www.privateschoolreview.com/jewish-heritage-day-school-ohr-temimim-profile>, 2024.

Note: Map key is shown on Figure D-5.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Five school districts serve the study area, and four public schools within these school districts are located within the study area (Table D-2). A description of public school districts follows:

- **Buffalo City School District** services all of the City of Buffalo and consists of four community school zones: Northeast, East, South, and West. The district extends to the edges of the city limits. The Buffalo City School District provides transportation for primary students from Kindergarten through Grade 8. The Buffalo City School District partners with Metro to provide bus service and transit passes to secondary students from Grade 9 through Grade 12. Though the southernmost portion of the alignment of the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would fall within this district, no schools are within the study area.
- **Amherst Central School District** comprises two elementary schools (Windermere Boulevard School in the west and Smallwood Drive School in the east), Amherst Middle School in the south, and Amherst Central High School in the middle of the district. Of these schools, the Windermere Boulevard School is within the study area. Windermere Boulevard School serves Pre-K through Grade 5. The Amherst Central School District provides transportation for students in Grades K through 5, students in Grades 6 through 8 who live one mile or more from school, and students in Grades 9 through 12 who live 1.5 miles from school.
- **Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District** encompasses most of Tonawanda and all of Kenmore. This district is the third-largest school district in Western New York and

among the largest school districts in Upstate New York. Ben Franklin Elementary and Middle Schools are in the Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District and are just outside the study area but have been included in this assessment. Ben Franklin Elementary School serves Pre-K through Grade 4, and Ben Franklin Middle School serves Grades 5 through 8. The Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District provides transportation to students in Grades K through 4 who live at least 0.5 miles from their school, students in Grades 5 through 7 who live at least 0.75 miles from their school, and students in Grades 8 through 12 who live at least 1.0 mile from their school.

- **Sweet Home Central School District** is a Pre-K through Grade 12 public school district in the towns of Amherst and Tonawanda. The district consists of four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Sweet Home Middle School is within the study area. Sweet Home Middle School serves Grades 5 through 8. The Sweet Home Central School District provides transportation for students to the six district schools.
- **Williamsville Central School District** is the largest suburban school district in Western New York, and includes portions of the towns of Amherst, Clarence, and Cheektowaga. The district includes six elementary schools, four middle schools, and three high schools. Though the northernmost portion of the alignment of the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would fall within this district, there are no schools in the study area. Williamsville's Transportation Department provides bus service to over 11,000 students who attend more than 75 schools, including private or parochial schools located outside of the District boundaries.

Public school enrollment varied between 2011 and 2021 at these schools. Benjamin Franklin Middle School enrollment experienced an increase in enrollment of 167 students (approximately 35 percent). Windermere Boulevard School experienced a decrease of 76 students (approximately ten percent). Ben Franklin Elementary School experienced a decrease of 23 students (approximately four percent). Sweet Home Middle School experienced a decrease of 40 students (approximately five percent).²

Overall enrollment decreased for most districts within the study area between 2011 and 2021. This decline is consistent with an overall regional decline of 2.7 percent in the population under 18 within the Buffalo-Cheektowaga Metropolitan Statistical Area during that time, and with nationwide trends showing an increase of households homeschooling in 2021 following the COVID-19 Pandemic.^{3, 4} The greatest decrease was in the Kenmore-Tonawanda School District, with a loss of approximately 15 percent of students. Enrollment in the Buffalo City School

² NYSED, "IRS: Information and Reporting Services," Archive: Enrollment Data, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/statistics/enroll-n-staff/ArchiveEnrollmentData.html>.

³ U.S. Census Bureau. 2021. Population Under 18 Years by Age, 2011 and 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/table?q=B09001:POPULATION+UNDER+18+YEARS+BY+AGE&g=310XX00US15380&y=2021&tid=ACSDT1Y2021.B09001>.

⁴ US Census Bureau, "Household Pulse Survey," Census.gov, October 14, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/en.html>.

District and Sweet Home Central School District decreased by approximately five percent and the Amherst Central School District decreased approximately two percent.⁵

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Four private schools are also located within the study area. Descriptions of each school follows:

- **Blessed Sacrament Parochial School** is physically located within the Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District but is not part of the school district because it is a private institution. The school is a subset of Blessed Sacrament Church and is located on Claremont Avenue in the study area. In 2021 enrollment was 168 students.
- **CHC Learning Center** is part of The Center for Handicapped Children, Inc. As an approved New York State Education Department private school, the CHC Learning Center serves students with special needs and provides caring support for their families.
- **Jewish Heritage Day School** is within the Williamsville Central School District (Figure D-5), but because it is a private institution, it is not counted as part of this school district. This private school is located within the study area on John James Audubon Parkway. The school has 66 students in Pre-K and Kindergarten through Grade 8, with a student-teacher ratio of approximately 7 to 1.
- **St. Joseph University School** is within the Buffalo City School District, though it is not counted as part of the school district because it is not a public school. This private school is located within the study area. In 2021, the school had approximately 176 students enrolled in Pre-K and Kindergarten through Grade 8.

UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO

UB is also located within the study area and is the largest public university in the State University of New York system with enrollment steadily increasing by nearly seven percent between the years 2013 and 2023 for a total enrollment of 31,891 students in 2023 spread between three campuses². Two of these campuses—UB North Campus (Amherst) and UB South Campus (Buffalo)—are within the study area. The two campuses are linked by “UB Stampede” bus routes which move students between North Campus and South Campus.

D.2.3.2 Libraries

Figure D-5 and Table D-3 show that four public libraries are within the study area. The Kenilworth Branch of the Tonawanda Public Library is on the study area’s border and was also included in the assessment. Three of the four libraries are affiliated with UB North and South Campuses, which are accessible to the public, and the fourth is the Audubon Branch of the Amherst Public Library system.

⁵ NYSED, “IRS: Information and Reporting Services,” Archive: Enrollment Data, accessed October 18, 2022, <https://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/statistics/enroll-n-staff/ArchiveEnrollmentData.html>.

Table D-3. Libraries within the Study Area

Map Key	Library	Address	City/Town
10	Health Sciences Library at UB South Campus	3435 Main Street	Buffalo
11	Tonawanda Public Library – Kenilworth Branch	318 Montrose Avenue	Tonawanda
12	Libraries Annex – UB Facility	3850 Rensch Road	Amherst
13	Lockwood Memorial Library and UB North Campus Libraries	Mary Talbert Way	Amherst
14	Amherst Public Library – Audubon Branch	350 John James Audubon Parkway	Amherst

Source: Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, 2019

Note: Map key is shown on Figure D-5.

D.2.3.3 Daycare Facilities

According to New York State Office of Children and Family Services and New York State Health Department, nine licensed daycare facilities are within the study area.⁶ Of these, two daycare centers are on the UB campuses. Daycare centers range in options from daytime care to after-school care. Figure D-5 and Table D-4 show these facilities.

Table D-4. Daycare Centers within the Study Area

Map Key	Daycare Facility	Address	City/Town
15	UB South Child Care Center	3435 Main Street	Buffalo
16	UB North Child Care Center	100 St. Rita's Lane	Amherst
17	Queen City Early Childhood Center	3242 Main Street	Buffalo
18	Jewish Community Center of Greater Buffalo	2640 North Forest Road	Amherst
19	Ohr Temimim	411 John James Audubon Pkwy	Amherst
20	The Community Action Organization of Western NY	2700 N. Forest Road	Getzville
21	Just for Kids	291 Windermere Boulevard	Buffalo
22	Kid's Kampus Childcare Center	300 Wendel Avenue	Buffalo
23	Colvin Brighton Child Care Center	748 Woodland Drive	Tonawanda

Source: University at Buffalo Child Care Center, 2019

Note: Map key is shown on Figure D-5.

D.2.3.4 Places of Worship

Figure D-6 and Table D-5 show that there are 15 places of worship distributed throughout the study area.

⁶ Office of Children and Family Services Division of Child Care Services, "Search for Child Care," OCFS, 2022, <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/looking/ccfs-search.php>.

Table D-5. Places of Worship within the Study Area

Map Key	Places of Worship	Address	City/Town
1	St. Joseph University Parish	3269 Main Street	Buffalo
2	University Presbyterian Church	3330 Main Street	Buffalo
3	Grace Point Alliance	39 Kenmore Avenue	Amherst
4	Cornerstone Community Church	49 Capen Boulevard	Buffalo
5	Blessed Sacrament Church	263 Claremont Avenue	Tonawanda
6	Kenilworth United Church – Christ	45 Dalton Drive	Tonawanda
7	St. Peter's Episcopal Church	205 Longmeadow Road	Amherst
8	Trinity United Methodist Church	711 Niagara Falls Boulevard	Amherst
9	Christian Fellowship Baptist Church	765 Niagara Falls Boulevard	Amherst
10	Curtis Park United Presbyterian Church	748 Woodland Drive	Tonawanda
11	St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church	2368 Eggert Road	Tonawanda
12	Brighton Community Baptist Church	1225 Brighton Road	Tonawanda
13	St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Church	885 Sweet Home Road	Amherst
14	The Prayer Furnace at UB North	520 Lee Road #112	Amherst
15	Chabad of Buffalo	2450 N Forest Road	Amherst

Source: Association of Religion Data Archives, 2019; Erie County and Association of Religion Data Archives, 2019

Notes: Map key is shown on Figure D-6.

D.2.3.5 Emergency Services

Buffalo, Amherst, and Tonawanda emergency services (including police, fire, and ambulance) serve the study area. Tonawanda has its own paramedic team,⁷ though it is also served by Twin City Ambulance, which serves Amherst as well.⁸ Table D-6 and Figure D-7 identify the stations and public safety services located within the study area and that would most likely serve the study area. In addition to this list, the NFTA Transit Police's Metro Division performs patrol duties, such as controlling and enforcing traffic, taking accident and crime reports, making arrests for crimes and warrants, and patrolling Metro's rail system and NFTA properties.⁹

Table D-6. Emergency Services within the Study Area

Map Key	Emergency Service	Address	City/Town
1	New York State University Police – University at Buffalo	Bissell Hall	Amherst
2	Amherst Police Department	500 John James Audubon Parkway	Amherst
3	Amherst Community Police and Training Facility	4220 Bailey Avenue	Amherst
4	North Bailey Fire Company	966 Sweet Home Road	Buffalo
5	Egbertsville Fire District	1880 Eggert Road	Amherst
6	Kenilworth Fire Company	84 Hawthorne Avenue	Tonawanda

Source: Erie County Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, 2021

Note: Map key is shown on Figure D-7.

⁷ <https://www.tonawanda.ny.us/public-safety/paramedics.html#:~:text=FOR%20MEDICAL%20NEEDS-CALL%20911%20for%20Emergencies%20or%20716%20876%205300,Christian%20Krawczyk.>

⁸ <https://www.tcaems.com/about-us>

⁹ NFTA, "Transit Police," Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority: Divisions, Metro, Index, 2022, <https://www.nfta.com/Police>.

D.2.3.6 Healthcare Facilities

Figure D-7 and Table D-7 show the healthcare facilities within or adjacent to the study area, including the Buffalo Veterans Hospital and Medical Center near the UB South Campus as well as other medical and assisted living facilities. Smaller medical practices with one or two doctors are not included in Table D-7. Figure D-7 shows that facilities are clustered around two stations: the existing University Station and the proposed Audubon Station. Table D-7 shows the facilities provide various services.

Table D-7. Healthcare Facilities within the Study Area

Map Key	Healthcare Facility	Address	City/Town	Services Provided
7	Buffalo Veteran's Hospital and Medical Center	3495 Bailey Avenue	Buffalo	Full-service hospital for veterans
8	Team Health Ambulatory Care Division	1 John James Audubon Parkway #200	Amherst	Ambulatory care facility
9	Weinberg Campus – Rosa Coplon Living Center	2700 N Forest Road	Amherst	Assisted living facility
10	Ambulatory Surgery Center of Western New York	945 Sweet Home Road	Buffalo	Surgery Center

Source: U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, "VA Western New York Health Care," Veterans Affairs, 2022, <https://www.buffalo.va.gov/>, TeamHealth, "Physician Services & Nationwide Clinician Jobs," Physician Services, October 5, 2022, <https://www.teamhealth.com/what-we-do/ambulatory-care/>, and Weinberg Campus, "Rosa Coplon Living Center Provides Nationally Acclaimed Skilled Nursing Home and Long Term Care," Weinberg Campus News & Events, 2022, <https://www.weinbergcampus.org/Skilled-Nursing-Rehab/Rosa-Coplon-Living-Center.aspx>, 2019

Note: Map key is shown on Figure D-7.

Though outside the study area, the following nearby hospitals and larger healthcare facilities also serve the communities around the study area:

- **Erie County Medical Center Hospital:** 462 Grider Street, Buffalo, NY 14215
- **Elmwood Health Care:** 2128 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14207
- **John R. Oishei Children's Hospital:** 818 Ellicott Street, Buffalo, NY 14203
- **Buffalo General Medical Center:** 100 High Street, Buffalo NY 14203
- **Kenmore Mercy Hospital:** 2950 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14217
- **Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital:** 1540 Maple Road, Williamsville, NY 14221
- **Sisters of Charity Hospital:** 2157 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14214
- **University at Buffalo Medical Doctors Internal Medicine:** 1020 Youngs Road, Williamsville, NY 14221

D.2.3.7 Government Offices

Amherst has several government offices northeast of the proposed Audubon Town Center Station, including the Amherst Court, Amherst Center for Senior Services, and Amherst Police Department. Buffalo and Tonawanda do not have government offices within the study area.

D3. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The following sections summarize the potential neighborhood and community impacts of each alternative.

D.3.1 No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, the Project would not be built, and there would be no changes to community character and cohesion. With the No Build Alternative, community facilities in the study area would not benefit from enhanced access to transit that would be associated with the implementation of the Project. An example of these unrealized benefits include:

- No additional mobility benefits to study area schools and educational institutions such as UB.
- No additional mobility benefits to study area public libraries, particularly those located in Amherst and on or near the UB campuses (e.g., Amherst Public Library – Audubon Branch, Health Sciences Library at UB South Campus, Libraries Annex – UB Facility, Lockwood Memorial Library and UB North Campus Libraries).
- No additional mobility benefits to study area daycare facilities, particularly those located on or near the UB campuses (e.g., UB North and South Child Care Centers).
- No additional mobility benefits to study area government facilities, particularly the Amherst government complex where the Amherst Court, Amherst Center for Senior Services, and Amherst Police Department are located.

D.3.2 Build Alternatives

The following analysis addresses community character and cohesion, mobility, and community facilities. Differences between the two Build Alternatives are noted.

D.3.2.1 Community Character and Cohesion

The LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would operate at-grade within existing roadway rights-of-way on Niagara Falls Boulevard, Maple Road, adjacent to Sweet Home Road, and within the UB North Campus. Each Build Alternative would be constructed using the same proposed alignment and the same transportation cross-sections.

Both Build Alternatives propose the construction of stations at the same locations with the same configuration. The new transit stations would become focal points for the surrounding communities using context sensitive station designs that celebrate the existing community character. Proposed stations may also attract new commercial and residential activities that would result in the development of underutilized properties, new residential units, and new employment opportunities supporting the continued vibrancy of each community's character. Project investments in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and the increased pedestrian activity around stations would improve safety and help bridge the gap between communities currently separated by higher volume roadways. Future development plans at the Boulevard Mall and the Project's associated station would serve as a community enhancement.

The following describes impacts to Community Charter and Cohesion by segment.

- **Southern Segment:** Both Build Alternatives would be constructed at-grade within the median of Niagara Falls Boulevard. The LRT Build Alternative is proposed to use ballasted track which would act as a physical barrier for pedestrians traveling between neighborhoods on either side of Niagara Falls Boulevard. This LRT Build Alternative impact would be mitigated, as proposed in Chapter 3, “Transportation”, through construction of embedded track which is flush with the roadway removing any physical barrier.

The LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would be constructed primarily within existing transportation right-of-way. However, portions of the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would be constructed in areas where there is insufficient right-of-way width or extending the limits of disturbance beyond the existing transportation right-of-way. As such, implementing the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would require acquiring property and, in some cases, could displace commercial and residential uses (see Section 4.1, “Property Acquisitions and Displacements”). These displacements are located immediately adjacent to the Project corridor and existing transportation uses. The Project would not result in permanent adverse impacts to community character.

- **Middle Segment:** Both Build Alternatives would be constructed at-grade within the median of Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road. The LRT Build Alternative is proposed to use ballasted track which would act as a physical barrier for pedestrians travelling between neighborhoods on either side of Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road. This LRT Build Alternative impact would be mitigated, as proposed in Chapter 3, “Transportation”, through construction of embedded track which is flush with the roadway removing any physical barrier.
- **Norther Segment:** Both Build Alternatives would be constructed at-grade through the UB North Campus and along the vacated northbound travel lanes of Audubon Parkway. Both proposed Build Alternatives invest in public transit services within the existing transportation right-of-way and would not adversely impact community character or cohesion.
Project noise, vibration impact analysis, and resultant findings are described in Sections 4.11 and 4.12, “Noise” and “Vibration”, respectively. The Project design incorporates mitigation measures to reduce the noise impacts for the LRT Build Alternative.

D.3.2.2 Mobility

The LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would not restrict mobility within the study area given their proposed median running alignment. Both Build Alternatives would result in benefits to mobility, as follows:

- Both Build Alternatives would invest in high-frequency public transit service which is currently not present within the study area today, providing enhanced mobility.
- Travel time between UB North and South campus would be reduced and study area neighborhoods would have direct transit services (without a transfer) to the community

facilities, housing, and employment opportunities present within the City of Buffalo and along the existing Metro Rail line.

- Enhanced mobility benefits and access to study area schools and educational institutions such as UB will be provided. As a result of the Project, there is an opportunity to discontinue UB shuttle bus services as most users would directly benefit from the enhanced mobility provided by the Project. Enhanced mobility between the UB campuses is described in Chapter 3, “Transportation,” and Appendix C2, “Travel Demand Forecasting.”
- Enhanced mobility benefits and access to study area public libraries, particularly those located in Amherst and on or near the UB campuses (e.g., Amherst Public Library – Audubon Branch, Health Sciences Library at UB South Campus, Libraries Annex – UB Facility, Lockwood Memorial Library and UB North Campus Libraries).
- Enhanced mobility benefits and access to study area daycare facilities, particularly those located on or near the UB campuses with direct access to the Project (e.g., UB North and South Child Care Centers).
- Enhanced mobility benefits and access to the Amherst government complex where the Amherst Court, Amherst Center for Senior Services, and Amherst Police Department are located.
- Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle mobility benefits because of Project pedestrian infrastructure investments.

The following describes impacts to mobility by segment.

- **Southern and Middle Segments:** Modifications to Metro Bus service within the study area as provided by Route 34 along Niagara Falls Boulevard and Route 35 along Maple Road are anticipated. These modifications would be designed to complement the service provided by either Build Alternative and would not impact mobility.
- **Northern Segment:** As of September 1, 2024, Metro extended the Metro Bus Route 34 (Niagara Falls Boulevard) from Commerce Drive. This new service travels east on Commerce Drive and Dodge Road and then travels south on Audubon Parkway with a connection to the Amherst Town Center. Metro does not currently provide public transit services between UB North Campus and the Amherst Town Center within the study area along Audubon Parkway. Both Build Alternatives would invest in new high-quality transit service, providing a Project benefit to mobility. In doing so, PAL service would also be provided by Metro, in association with both Build Alternatives, which also constitutes a benefit to mobility.

D.3.2.3 Community Facilities

The LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would not directly displace community facilities within the study area, such as schools, libraries, day care services, places of worship, and healthcare facilities. The LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would remain largely within the existing transportation right-of-way and would generally operate

at-grade within the roadway median, separated from immediately adjacent community facilities. At-grade median running operations would minimally impact access (turning movements) to these immediately adjacent properties and community facilities.

The LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would not have an adverse impact on Emergency Service facilities. Modifications to Niagara Falls Boulevard resulting in the repurposing of one lane of traffic for use by both Build Alternatives would not have an adverse impact on emergency response times. LRT and BRT Build Alternative investments in traffic signals would include technology that allows emergency vehicles to take advantage of signal preemption or priority designed for LRT or BRT vehicles. Through coordination meetings with the NFTA, emergency service providers have indicated the potential to reroute emergency access plans, if needed, and have also indicated that the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would not impact emergency services. Coordination efforts with emergency service providers would continue throughout Project design and construction.

With the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative, community facilities would experience benefits from increased access to transit and transportation options. The LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative would provide increased access to community facilities such as places of worship, emergency services, healthcare facilities, and government offices; therefore, increased usage of facilities could occur Chapter 3, "Transportation," describes the impacts of the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative on traffic operations

D4. POTENTIAL MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative conceptual designs have incorporated measures to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to community character and cohesion. These mitigation measures are summarized by segment below.

- **Southern Segment:** The LRT Build Alternative is proposed to use ballasted track which would act as a physical barrier for pedestrians traveling between neighborhoods on either side of Niagara Falls Boulevard. This LRT Build Alternative impact would be mitigated, as proposed in Chapter 3, “Transportation”, through construction of embedded track which is flush with the roadway removing any physical barrier.
- **Middle Segment:** The LRT Build Alternative is proposed to use ballasted track which would act as a physical barrier for pedestrians travelling between neighborhoods on either side of Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road. This LRT Build Alternative impact would be mitigated, as proposed in Chapter 3, “Transportation”, through construction of embedded track which is flush with the roadway removing any physical barrier.
- **Northern Segment:** Adverse impacts related to noise in the Northern Segment will be addressed during final design, as described in Section 4.11, “Noise”.

Metro would continue to conduct extensive public information activities to inform residents and provide the opportunity for participation when implementing either the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative. Information may include details related to station locations, environmental concerns, and other items of public interest. Public presentations have been offered to the public at-large, community groups, public officials, institutional officials, and local, State, and Federal agencies during the planning phases of the Project and would continue throughout the environmental review process. Appendix J1, “Public Outreach and Coordination Report,” summarizes these activities and meetings. Public involvement would also continue throughout design and construction, with continued solicitation of comments and concerns from Project stakeholders.