

Appendix D6:
Parklands and Recreational
Resources
Supplemental Information

Contents

Appendix D. Parklands and Recreational Resources Supplemental Information	D-1
D.1 REGULATORY CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY	D-1
D.1.1 Federal Regulatory Laws and Rules	D-1
D.1.2 Local Regulatory Laws and Rules	D-2
D.1.3 Methodology	D-2
D.2 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT	D-3
D.2.1 University at Buffalo South Hayes Hall	D-3
D.2.2 University at Buffalo Clark Hall Lawn	D-3
D.2.3 Templeton Park	D-6
D.2.4 Grover Cleveland Golf Course	D-6
D.2.5 Gateway Park	D-6
D.2.6 Kenilworth Park	D-6
D.2.7 Windermere Boulevard Elementary School	D-6
D.2.8 Lincoln Park	D-6
D.2.9 Ben Franklin Elementary and Middle Schools	D-7
D.2.10 Eggertsville Community Park	D-7
D.2.11 Sweet Home Middle School	D-7
D.2.12 Northtown Center at Amherst	D-7
D.2.13 Alix Rice Peace Skate Park	D-7
D.2.14 University at Buffalo North Athletic Facilities	D-8
D.2.15 Skinnerville Cemetery	D-8
D.2.16 Letchworth Woods	D-8
D.2.17 Walton Woods Park	D-9
D.2.18 Ellicott Creek Trailway	D-9
D.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES	D-9
D.3.1 No Build Alternative	D-9
D.3.2 Build Alternatives	D-9
D.4 POTENTIAL MITIGATION STRATEGIES	D-11

Figures

Figure D-1	Parks and Recreational Resources within the Study Area	D-4
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Tables

Table D-1	Parks and Recreational Resources Impacts Summary	D-1
Table D-2	Parks and Recreational Resources within the Study Area	D-5

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.



Metro Rail..... Metro Light Rail Transit System
Project Buffalo-Amherst-Tonawanda Corridor Transit Expansion
UB..... University at Buffalo
UPARR..... Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act of 1978

Appendix D. Parklands and Recreational Resources Supplemental Information

This appendix 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. Table D-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 D-1 Parklands 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

D.1 REGULATORY CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

D.1.1 Federal Regulatory Laws and Rules

Parklands are protected under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 U.S.C. § 303, as amended). Section 4(f) prohibits Federal agencies from using transportation dollars for the construction of transportation facilities in publicly owned parklands, recreation areas (including recreational trails), wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historic properties, unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to that use and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such a use. A Section 4(f) evaluation for the Project was prepared as part of this Draft EIS (see Chapter 5, “Section 4(f)”).

There are similar requirements for land acquired or developed under Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965 (16 U.S.C. 4601-4 to 4601-11, et seq.) and Section 110 of the Urban Parks and Recovery Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. § 2501–2514).

Section 6(f) provides funds and matching grants to Federal, state, and local governments to acquire land and water for recreational purposes. Section 6(f) states that properties acquired or developed with LWCF funds will not be converted to a use other than public outdoor recreation without the approval of the U.S. Secretary of the Department of the Interior, acting through the National Park Service and at the request of the State delegate/state liaison officer. Under the LWCF Act, if there is a conversion of a Section 6(f) resource (in whole, or in part), to a nonrecreational use, replacement of the property is required.

Section 1010 of the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (UPARR) Act of 1978 provides Federal funds to assist economically distressed urban areas revitalize and enhance recreational opportunities. Conversion of parkland that has received funding under the UPARR Act to a non-park use may be granted by the National Park Service through completion of an alternatives analysis and the identification, evaluation, and supply of replacement parkland.

D.1.2 Local Regulatory Laws and Rules

In addition to Federal regulations, local planning documents provide guidance for parks and recreational resources within the study area.

The City of Buffalo's Parks Master Plan¹ (2021) guides park improvements in the City of Buffalo for the next 10 years. The Master Plan identifies community priorities based on social, health, and natural and built environment, as well as several implementation strategies.

The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan² (2020) identifies open space preservation as a priority and provides the strategies to meet this vision. These strategies include the following:

- Designate a town-wide open space and greenway network through regulatory approaches, public acquisition, and private landowner conservation.
- Encourage conservation development with incentives for the dedication of open space in private developments.
- Initiate a public open space acquisition program consistent with the open space, recreation, and greenway network.

The Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan³ (2014) identifies the parks, open space, and recreational features of the town and provides recommendations for the continued provision of parks and recreational resources as well as the protection of open spaces.

D.1.3 Methodology

Parks and recreational resources in this section are defined as publicly accessible areas that the community can use regularly—including during designated periods—for active or passive recreation. Types of parks and recreational resources that could potentially be affected by the Project may include local, city, State, or Federal parklands, trails, school recreational areas and athletic fields, as well as facilities that provide access to the public at no cost or for a nominal fee. Publicly accessible open space can be under government control or owned by a private

¹ City of Buffalo Parks Master Plan. 2021. <https://www.buffalony.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9917/Buffalo-Parks-Master-Plan>

² Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan. Amended December 2020. https://www.amherst.ny.us/pdf/planning/compplan/2020/210226_entire.pdf

³ Town of Tonawanda 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update. <https://www.tonawanda.ny.us/document-center/planning-development/comprehensive-plan/228-2014-comprehensive-plan-update/file.html>

entity so long as public access to the property is allowed. Private open space, including residential yards and other facilities that are accessible to a limited population (such as health clubs or private schools), are not included in this analysis.

The information for parks and recreational resources was compiled through research, site surveys, and mapping analyses using the Geographic Information System databases provided by Erie County. The study area for assessing the impacts on parks and recreational resources is the 0.25-mile on either side of the alignment of the LRT Build Alternative and the BRT Build Alternative and a 0.5-mile radius around the proposed station locations. The resources within the study area were evaluated to determine direct or indirect impacts resulting from operating the Project. Resources that meet the following criteria, were identified as Section 4(f) properties:

- Publicly-owned
- Open to the public
- Primary purpose for park, recreation, or refuge activities
- Significant as a park, recreation area, or refuge

Resources that were developed through LWCF funds were identified as Section 6(f) properties.

D.2 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Figure D-1 shows that 17 parks and recreational resources are within the study area. Table D-2 provides an inventory of these resources, including the type, facilities, owner, size, and whether the resource is a Section 4(f) or Section 6(f) property, based on the Federal Regulatory Laws and Rules (section D.1).

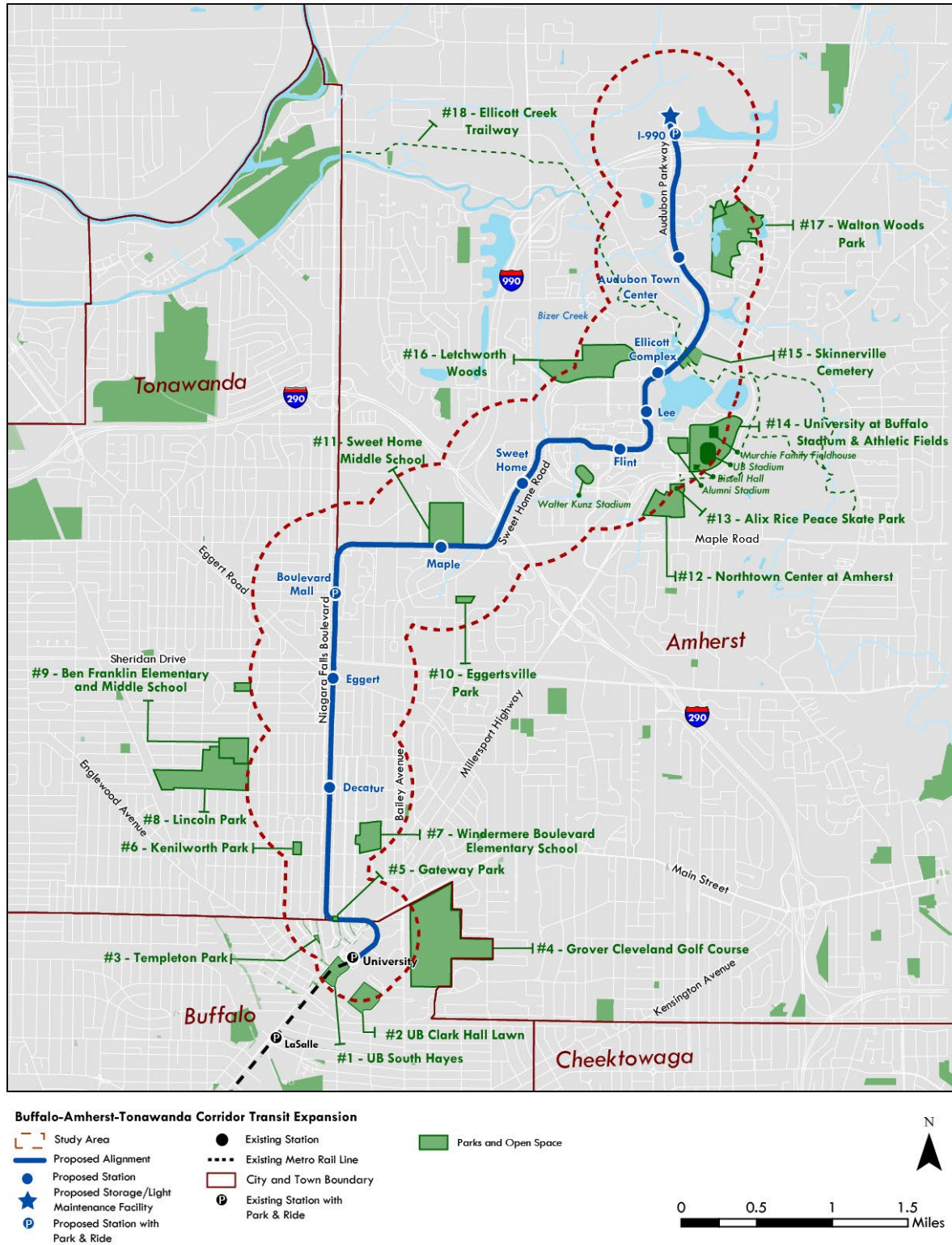
D.2.1 University at Buffalo South Hayes Hall

The UB South Hayes Lawn is at the entrance of the UB South Campus along Main Street. This lawn contains pedestrian walking paths and landscaping open to the public. The existing Metro Rail University Station is within 150 feet, along Main Circle at the northern end of the UB South Hayes Hall Lawn.

D.2.2 University at Buffalo Clark Hall Lawn

The UB Clark Hall Lawn along Rotary Road inside the UB South Campus contains three softball diamonds, pedestrian walking paths, and landscaping all accessible and open for public use. The Clark Hall Lawn is approximately 800 feet to the southeast of the existing Metro Rail University Station.

Figure D-1 Parks and Recreational Resources within the Study Area



Source: Erie County, 2019

Table D-2 Parks and Recreational Resources within the Study Area

Map No.	Name	Type	City/Town	Owner	Facilities	Size	Regulatory Context
1	UB South Hayes Lawn	Open Space	Buffalo	University at Buffalo	Athletic facilities	8.4 acres	
2	UB Clark Lawn	Open Space	Buffalo	University at Buffalo	Athletic facilities	5.2 acres	
3	Templeton Park	Park	Buffalo	City of Buffalo	Grassy area	0.5 acre	Section 4(f)
4	Grover Cleveland Golf Course	Recreational Resource	Buffalo	Erie County	Golf course and facilities	91.1 acres	
5	Gateway Park	Open Space	Amherst	Town of Amherst	Parking and grassy area	0.58 acres	Section 4(f)
6	Kenilworth Park	Park	Tonawanda	Town of Tonawanda	Playground and athletic facilities	2.2 acres	Section 4(f)
7	Windermere Boulevard Elementary School	Recreational Resource	Amherst	Amherst Central School District	Athletic facilities and playground	15.1 acres	
8	Lincoln Park	Park	Tonawanda	Town of Tonawanda	Pavilions, playground, athletic fields, walking trails, and swimming pool	48.6 acres	Section 4(f)
9	Ben Franklin Elementary and Middle School	Recreational Resource	Tonawanda	Ken-Ton School District	Athletic facilities	22.5 acres	
10	Eggertsville Community Park	Park	Amherst	Town of Amherst	Playground, athletic facilities, and trail	4.1 acres	Section 4(f)
11	Sweet Home Middle School	Recreational Resource	Amherst	Sweet Home School District	Athletic facilities	32.9 acres	
12	Northtown Center at Amherst	Recreational Resource	Amherst	Northtown Center at Amherst	Multipurpose sports facility (ice rink) and athletic fields	19.2 acres	
13	Alix Rice Peace Skate Park	Recreational Resource	Amherst	Northtown Center at Amherst	Skate park	3.1 acres	
14	UB Stadium & Athletic Fields	Recreational Resource	Amherst	University at Buffalo	Stadium and athletic facilities	48.4 acres	
15	Skinnerville Cemetery	Cemetery	Amherst	Skinnerville Cemetery Association, Inc.	Cemetery	3.5 acres	
16	Letchworth Woods	Open Space	Amherst	University at Buffalo	Wooded area	33.2 acres	
17	Walton Woods Park	Park	Amherst	Town of Amherst	Wooded area and trail	65.6 acres	Section 6(f)
18	Ellicott Creek Trailway	Recreational Resource	Amherst	Town of Amherst	Multiuse trail	7.2 miles	Section 4(f)

Source: Erie County, 2019

D.2.3 Templeton Park

Templeton Park is a triangle park with trees just west of the existing Metro Rail University Station (0.4 mile) and is bounded by Bellevue Avenue to the north, Larchmont Road to the east and south, and Radcliffe Road to the west.

D.2.4 Grover Cleveland Golf Course

The Grover Cleveland Golf Course is a public golf course that is owned by Erie County. The golf course is the site of the original Country Club of Buffalo and was designed by two of the most famous golf architects of the early twentieth century: Walter J. Travis and Donald Ross. There are annual passes and daily fees associated with the Grover Cleveland Golf Course. The study area contains only a small portion of the course and is bounded by Main Street to the north, Eggert Road to the east, Lebrun Road to the south, and Bailey Avenue to the west. The Grover Cleveland Golf Course is approximately one mile northeast of the existing Metro Rail University Station.

D.2.5 Gateway Park

Gateway Park is bounded by Niagara Falls Boulevard to the west, Kenmore Avenue to the south, and Allenhurst Road to the east. The park consists of eight parking spaces for those who wish to enjoy the area or for those looking to park and take the bus, a large lawn area with a shade structure, various benches and landscaping elements throughout the site, and other open space/grass pavers on the eastern section for stormwater filtration. The park is meant to be a passive place but could be transformed into a public space for smaller town events. There are also enhanced features building off of the existing Metro bus such as a seating wall, trash receptacle, and bike rack. The closest Metro station would be the proposed Decatur Station.

D.2.6 Kenilworth Park

Kenilworth Park is bounded by Lyndale Avenue to the west, Ford Avenue to the south, and Hawthorne Avenue to the east. The park contains playground equipment, an activity shed, a splashpad, and open space. The closest Metro station would be the proposed Decatur Station.

D.2.7 Windermere Boulevard Elementary School

Windermere Boulevard Elementary School is located on Windermere Boulevard between Oxford Avenue and Cambridge Boulevard. The school grounds consist of a school building, playground, and tennis courts. The playground and tennis courts are open to the public. The closest Metro station would be the proposed Decatur Station.

D.2.8 Lincoln Park

Lincoln Park is bounded by Highland Avenue to the north, Parkhurst Boulevard to the east, Decatur Road to the south, and the Tonawanda Rail-to-Trail to the west. The park contains baseball diamonds, benches, picnic and grill areas, playgrounds, walking trails, an ice rink, the Donald F. Kunzelman (DFK) Pavilion, and a swimming pool. The DFK Pavilion (on the east side of Lincoln Park Athletic Complex) is available for year-round rentals. Lincoln Park is

adjacent to the study area with only a small portion (11 percent) that falls within the study area. The closest Metro station would be the proposed Decatur Station.

D.2.9 Ben Franklin Elementary and Middle Schools

The Ben Franklin Elementary and Middle Schools sit adjacent to Lincoln Park, fronting Parkhurst Boulevard. The schools contain a playground, baseball field, tennis courts, and the Adams Field, which contains a multipurpose artificial turf field and track. The track is open for community use during the day except when in use by the Ken-Ton School District athletic program, physical education class, or other school/district program. Ben Franklin Elementary and Middle Schools are adjacent to the study area with only a small portion (2 percent) that fall within the study area. The closest Metro station would be the proposed Decatur Station.

D.2.10 Eggertsville Community Park

Eggertsville Community Park is located off Sweet Home Road south of Maple Road. The park contains a basketball court, benches, playground, and a small pavilion. The park also provides a walking trail through a small natural wooded area that runs along Bizer Creek. The closest Metro station would be the proposed Maple station.

D.2.11 Sweet Home Middle School

Sweet Home Middle School is located on the north side of Maple Road, west of Sweet Home Road. The school grounds consist of a school building and athletic facilities to the east and north of the school building, extending to Meyer Road. The athletic facilities, including little league fields, basketball courts, and a track, are generally available for public use when not in use by school athletic teams or events. This resource is approximately 0.2 miles from the proposed Maple station.

D.2.12 Northtown Center at Amherst

The Northtown Center at Amherst is a multipurpose sports facility to the south of the UB North Campus. The center is bounded by Amherst Manor Drive to the north and west, Audubon Town Park to the east, and Maple Road to the south. The facility includes three National Hockey League regulation ice pads, one Olympic-size ice pad, a full-service pro shop, a restaurant, and a sports training facility. A softball field is in front of the center, adjacent to the parking lot off Amherst Manor Drive. The closest Metro station to the center would be the proposed Flint station approximately 0.8 miles away.

D.2.13 Alix Rice Peace Skate Park

Alix Rice Peace Skate Park is a recreational resource located in the northern parking lot closest to Amherst Manor Drive and is adjacent to the Northtown Center. The skate park features two skate bowls with additional features including ramps, stairs, and rails. The closest Metro station would be the proposed Flint station.

D.2.14 University at Buffalo North Athletic Facilities

The UB North Campus has several athletic facilities:

- The Walter Kunz Stadium provides practice facilities for intramural activities, marching band, and varsity team practices. The 4,000-seat stadium on the northwest side of the UB North Campus has an eight-lane, 400-meter running track that also features a steeplechase course with a water jump. The stadium is available for the community to use, and the field and track can also be reserved for non-academic events by submitting a request to UB, which may require a fee.
- The UB Stadium is used primarily for football, soccer, and track and field events. It is also the home field of the UB Bulls.
- Alumni Arena is an indoor gym used by UB athletic programs that is also available to the public for use through the purchase of a community membership. In addition, three practice facilities and the racquetball courts can be reserved for non-academic events for a fee. Indoor facilities within the Alumni Arena include the Bulls Team Shop, dance studio, Ed Wright Practice Facility, fitness center, jogging track, locker rooms, main gym, member services, pool, racquetball courts, and spinning room.
- Murchie Family Fieldhouse is a 92,000 square foot indoor practice facility that houses a full-size football field, sprinting tracks, a jump pit, a pole-vaulting pit, and a motorized softball batting tunnel. The facility houses university events, student recreation programming, and intramurals, and can also be reserved for non-academic events by submitting a request form to UB, which may require a fee.
- Governor's Field is open for public use on the North Campus and is located next to the Governor's Complex.

D.2.15 Skinnerville Cemetery

Frontier Road bifurcates Skinnerville Cemetery east of John James Audubon Parkway. Lake LaSalle borders the cemetery to its west and Ellicott Creek to its east. The cemetery is 0.4 mile away from the proposed Ellicott Complex station.

D.2.16 Letchworth Woods

Letchworth Woods is a forested area associated with the UB North Campus that is largely inaccessible to the public and is used for academic excursions. Otherwise known as the Letchworth Teaching Forest, the forest is open to UB students and the public for recreational use. The public can access the Letchworth Teaching Forest blue trail across from the Red Jacket Parking Lot (main entrance). The closest Metro station would be the proposed Ellicott Complex station.

D.2.17 Walton Woods Park

Walton Woods Park is roughly bounded by residential streets associated with the Audubon Community. The park features a lake and several trails, including a 1.4-mile loop trail. The park is accessible year-round and offers several activity options, benches, a gazebo, wildlife watching, and an accessible paved path. The closest Metro station would be the proposed Audubon Town Center Station.

D.2.18 Ellicott Creek Trailway

Ellicott Creek Trailway is a multiuse path that travels along Ellicott Creek for 7.2 miles from Niagara Falls Boulevard and Irwin Place to North Forest Road and Maple Road. The asphalt path is used for biking, walking, running, and rollerblading. The trailway passes through the UB North Campus and parallels the northbound side of John James Audubon Parkway between Lee Road and Frontier Road. At Frontier Road, the trailway travels under John James Audubon Parkway and continues along the creek in a northwest direction and crosses Ellicott Creek in a northeast direction using the existing piers remaining from a former section of the John James Audubon Parkway northbound lanes.

D.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The following sections summarize the potential for each alternative to impact parks, recreational resources, and open space.

D.3.1 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.

D.3.2 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 (Gateway Park, Sweet Home Middle School, Skinnersville Cemetery, and Ellicott Creek Trailway), Sweet Home Middle School and Skinnersville 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.

Neither Build Alternative would 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 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 cross walks, 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*.”

As described in Chapter 5, “Section 4(f)”, during construction of the LRT Build Alternative, there would be temporary impacts to Gateway Park. The Gateway Park has been identified as a potential staging area for tunnel construction. During this time, the Gateway Park would not be open to the public. Following construction, the park will be restored to the condition in which it

was originally found. During construction, Metro will coordinate with the Town of Amherst to temporarily relocate passive uses to other nearby facilities.

Also described in Chapter 5, “Section 4(f) Evaluation”, during construction, of the LRT Build Alternative and BRT Build Alternative, there would be a temporary impact to Ellicott Creek Trailway. The existing pedestrian bridge that crosses Ellicott Creek would be moved to the southeast to accommodate a new bridge deck for the LRT Build Alternative and BRT Build Alternative. The relocation of the Ellicott Creek Trailway pedestrian bridge would be temporary and alternate routes to the trail will be identified and provided during construction. Following construction, the trailway will be restored to the condition in which it was originally found.

D.4 POTENTIAL MITIGATION STRATEGIES

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