

31. Adverse Impacts Which Cannot be Avoided

Certain adverse impacts are anticipated to occur regardless of the various mitigation measures employed. Adverse physical impacts to wetlands in the study area are possible under the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative is expected to require the acquisition of 3.92 acres of wetlands (refer to Chapter 15: Wetlands for additional details). The mitigation plan for wetlands cannot replace the wetlands in their existing location; as a consequence, the impact to the actual wetland features cannot be avoided or mitigated on site. However, the function of the wetlands within the watershed can be mitigated through the purchase of mitigation credits through a wetlands credit bank, such as the Kane tract or the MRI-3 Wetland Mitigation Bank. Purchase of wetland mitigation credits through a wetlands credit bank would serve to enhance this tract of land that provides water quality benefits to the entire Hackensack-Pascack Watershed (Watershed Area 5). Consequently, the acquisition of the wetlands along the Northern Branch Corridor is unavoidable; however, the impact to water quality that might otherwise arise as a result of the loss of these resources can be mitigated.

Noise impacts are associated with both the proposed passenger rail service and overnight freight service. Horn noise can be mitigated through the implementation of Quiet Zones. Although the application for Quiet Zones must be initiated by the municipality or county, depending upon jurisdiction, the implementation of Quiet Zones would effectively eliminate all horn noise impacts. As such, although NJ TRANSIT cannot compel a municipality/county to implement Quiet Zones, they represent a viable solution to avoid the adverse noise impacts associated with both light rail and freight train horns.

Quiet Zones would not mitigate wayside noise, which is associated exclusively with the movement of freight trains during the overnight hours. It is important to note that while noise modeling (See Chapter 12: Noise) assumed a worst-case-scenario of two freight train pass-bys per night, the reality at the time of the development of the SDEIS is that freight service currently operates on the Northern Branch alignment once or twice *per week*. With two freight train pass-bys per night, the project would result in moderate noise impacts to 211 residences and severe impacts to one residence.

Interference with normal traffic operating conditions along the corridor would occur during the construction of the Preferred Alternative, as emergency vehicles, construction equipment, and trucks would traverse streets adjacent to the construction staging areas. Short-term unavoidable air quality and noise impacts would be anticipated at the various construction staging locations due to the emissions from excavation, grading, construction equipment operation, and potential short-term traffic effects related to construction activity. Construction, maintenance, and operation of the proposed project would result in the use of energy resources. Proper mitigation measures to alleviate adverse impacts would be determined once final design plans are formalized.

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