

6. Consistency with Local Plans

6.1. Chapter Overview

6.1.1. Introduction

This section discusses the goals, objectives, and policies of municipal, county, and state planning entities, as well as known development/redevelopment activities planned within the study area, that may have changed since the DEIS. The State of New Jersey has passed enabling legislation that provides counties and municipalities with planning and regulatory authority. Statewide policy objectives articulated in the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (NJSDRP), the state's land use plan, also facilitates land use policy decisions at the regional and local level. As a result, an inventory of applicable public policy initiatives is provided at the state, regional, county, and municipal levels. This section also addresses the compatibility of the proposed Preferred Alternative with surrounding uses and its compliance with, or variance from, public policy.

6.1.2. Summary of Findings of the DEIS and SDEIS

No conflicts with existing state and regional plans are anticipated as a result of the implementation of the Preferred Alternative as these plans are generally supportive of the reintroduction of passenger rail transit to the Northern Branch Corridor. These compatibilities with the Preferred Alternative included support in state, regional, and county plans for investment in safe and affordable transportation options that support economic growth, improve access to job centers, and help to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.

Consistency of the Preferred Alternative with adopted public plans varies at the municipal level. These differences are briefly described below.

- Light rail as a mode of transportation and as an economic development tool is supported by the local plans adopted by North Bergen, Ridgefield, Leonia, and Englewood.
- Although light rail is not specifically referenced in the most recent plans for Fairview and Palisades Park, the master plans for these municipalities seek to reduce traffic congestion and to improve transportation within and through the area.
- Leonia and Englewood are working with NJ TRANSIT to resolve concerns included in their municipal plans that relate to impacts on parking and traffic congestion that may result from the Northern Branch light rail extension project.

Comments submitted during the DEIS phase expressed opposition to rail service and a terminal station within Tenafly, although Tenafly's Master Plan supports rail service to and through Tenafly. However, the Preferred Alternative is now proposed to terminate north of the Englewood Hospital and Medical Center Station at the border of Englewood and Tenafly and would not provide service to Tenafly. Therefore, opposition from residents regarding service to Tenafly is no longer applicable.

6.2. Methodology

The DEIS describes the regulatory framework in which state, county, municipal, and special interest (e.g., the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC)) plans are prepared and updated. The compulsory planning processes outline a schedule by which the communities regularly reexamine the master plans to update the goals, objectives, principles, assumptions, policies, and standards upon which decisions for the physical, economic, and social development of the community are based.

Additionally, the NJMC is legislatively empowered to regulate and guide development within the 30.4-square-mile Meadowlands District, a portion of which lies within the study area in North Bergen and Ridgefield. NJMC authority includes the establishment of a master plan component, as well as zoning and land use regulations.

The SDEIS identified plans that have been updated since the DEIS analysis and assessed the plans for information that would indicate consistency or departure from the proposed purpose, use, policies, and types and locations of project elements under the revised Preferred Alternative.

6.3. Environmental Review

The following section summarizes updates to public plans on a statewide, county, and municipal level that are applicable to the project corridor.

6.3.1. Existing Conditions

Statewide and Regional Plans

State Strategic Plan: New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (NJSDRP) identifies both statewide policy objectives and specific regional policy goals. The NJSDRP was adopted in 2001. A State Strategic Plan was drafted in 2012 to update the NJSDRP and was proposed for adoption, although it has not yet been adopted. According to the State Strategic Plan, relevant policy principles include moving toward designs and densities that support public transportation, support for jobs and businesses near transportation, and investment in transportation options that support economic growth and improve access, safety, affordability, and air quality for all users. The plan's Infrastructure Needs Assessment also specifically references the Northern Branch Rail Service as a critical initiative for planning and engineering.

Plan 2040: NJTPA Regional Transportation Plan for Northern New Jersey

The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) Plan 2040 was approved in September 2013. This plan updates and expands upon the provisions of the previous long-range plan, Access & Mobility 2030 and Plan 2035, adopted in 2005 and 2009, respectively. The plan outlines investment principles that guide planning and policy direction, including smart growth that encourages economic growth while minimizing sprawl and protecting the environment; expansion of public transit; and intermodal connectivity. The plan recognizes and supports the Northern Branch project as a strategic passenger rail project in the region.

NJTPA Transportation Improvement Program Fiscal Years 2014-2017

Projects are reviewed every year for inclusion in the NJTPA Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and New Jersey's State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which assesses transportation designs and right-of-way constructions and acquisitions. The STIP identifies projects in need of funding and provides a schedule of federal funding allotted for each project on a yearly basis. The TIP and STIP are updated on a yearly basis. The TIP was most recently updated on September 10, 2013 and covers the 2014-2017 fiscal years. The STIP was last updated on October 1, 2013 and covers the 2014-2023 fiscal years. The Northern Branch project, although mentioned, was not independently listed as its own project, but included under the collection of Transit Rail Initiatives.

New Jersey Future in Transportation

The New Jersey Future in Transportation (NJFIT) is an initiative by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) to invest in and improve the sustainability and livability of New Jersey communities through transit and transportation-related improvements. This multi-agency partnership,

which includes NJ TRANSIT, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJDECA) Office of Smart Growth, among others, seeks to integrate transportation and land use planning to maximize affordable and environmentally sustainable mobility options for New Jersey residents. NJFIT's goals include reducing residents' dependence on driving by offering alternative forms of transportation, increasing multi-modal use through improved connectivity, and siting and designing improvements to make public transportation more accessible and appealing to riders of all ages.

County Plans

Public plans for Hudson County and Bergen County that are applicable to the project corridor are discussed below. Public policy initiatives and their potential project-related impacts are discussed by county.

Hudson County Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The Hudson County Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), adopted in February 2010, covers a timeframe of 2010-2014. The CEDS is a requirement of the US Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration to qualify for federal public works assistance. The plan puts forward viable projects that would create jobs and bring economic growth to the County. The expansion of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail (HBLR) system is named specifically as a tool for economic development throughout Hudson County's "Gold Coast." The plan also describes increased passenger rail in general, and the HBLR system specifically, as a means to enhance the County's inter-modal transit access, improve workforce commuting, reduce the traffic congestion, and provide transportation access to a currently under-served population. The plan also supports efforts to increase ridership of public transit and encourage transit-oriented development.

2013 Hudson County Open Space Reexamination Report

The 2013 Hudson County Open Space Reexamination Report, released in November 2013, revisits the 2004 Hudson County Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). OSRP is a program designed to identify, prioritize, enhance and preserve open space resources within the County. The OSRP also maintains Hudson County's eligibility to receive grant funding from the Green Acres Program. The report addresses environmental justice and access issues through increased equity of access to quality parks, particularly for underserved populations where open space and parks are limited. Goals and objectives relevant to the Northern Branch Corridor project include the incorporation of active design guidelines into station designs to attract pedestrians and cyclists as light rail passengers; enhanced connectivity of parks to a variety of transportation modes; and the integration of complete streets design standards to support multi-modal transportation options. Finally, the report supports the incorporation of low-impact development, such as the stormwater best management practices to be incorporated into station parking facilities and the strategic transfer and acquisition of green space to enhance livability and community development.

Vision Bergen: The Visioning Component of the Bergen County Master Plan

The 2011 Vision Bergen document summarizes the findings of a visioning process conducted between November 2009 and January 2010, which is being used to develop the Bergen County Master Plan. Ideas and issues discussed in the three visioning sessions that relate closely to the Northern Branch Corridor project include the need to reduce automobile dependence; reduce roadway congestion; improve transit alternatives, particularly for those who commute to New York City and within Bergen County; and encourage transit-oriented development and mixed-use zoning. The document indicates general support for the Northern Branch Corridor project. However, concerns do persist. Participants expressed concerns about parking at the stations; potential increased traffic due to park-and-ride users; constructing a parking

facility in Overpeck County Park; and the likelihood of riders making excursions into New York City if service is not extended into later evening hours.

Bergen County Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland & Historic Preservation Trust Fund

The Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland & Historic Preservation Trust Fund, adopted by Bergen County in July 2014, sets a regulatory framework and process for the acquisition of land that serves a valuable public interest. Initially established in 1998 through a 1997 State Law (N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.1), the trust fund establishes a dedicated fund for the purchase of lands for conservation/open space purposes, floodplain protection, recreation facilities enhancement, farmland, and historic preservation. The trust fund shows a dedication in the county to the preservation and enhancement of its limited open space.

Municipal Plans

Updates to municipal plans specific to project elements within the study area, particularly as they relate to development, open space, community consistency, and transportation policy were assessed and are described by municipality.

North Bergen Master Plan

The North Bergen Master Plan was last examined and updated in 2009. The current plan aims to reduce traffic congestion and blight through the thoughtful siting and design of transportation routes. The plan also indicates a desire to reduce environmental degradation, prevent urban sprawl, and encourage conservation of energy resources, open space, natural resources, and historic sites and districts. In addition, the plan explicitly states the desire to capitalize on regional circulation networks to encourage the use of mass transportation, including the HBLR line, and recommends improvements and maintenance of mass transit facilities. These objectives align with the Northern Branch Corridor project, which would help to reduce private automobile dependence and congestion, encourage the use of mass transit facilities, and serve to revitalize historic sites and districts and preserve open space through thoughtful station siting and design and transit-oriented development.

Borough of Fairview General Reexamination of the Master Plan and Master Plan Update

The Fairview Master Plan was last updated in 2014. The document focuses on housing, economic development, and vehicular traffic, with no reference to public transportation or the light rail. The fact that the plan does not directly reference the light rail may be a reflection of the community's location on the periphery of the proposed passenger rail line with a very short length of the alignment running through the municipality and no plans for a station stop in Fairview.

Ridgefield Master Plan

The Ridgefield Master Plan was last reexamined in 2003, which was reviewed in the 2011 DEIS. The 2003 plan included the Overpeck Creek Redevelopment Plan, which supports connectivity to the proposed Northern Branch Corridor project and encourages the use of public transportation as it incorporates a transit village and station within its plan.

Palisades Park Master Plan

The Palisades Park Master Plan was last revisited in 2000, which was reviewed in the 2011 DEIS. The plan outlined strategies to enhance transportation routes and reduce congestion.

Borough of Leonia Master Plan Reexamination Report

Leonia updated its Master Plan in 2010. Similar to Leonia's previous 2002 plan, the plan promotes the reintroduction of passenger rail services as a long-term goal, but continues to be cautious about potential

impacts to Overpeck County Park and the immediate vicinity. The plan states that Borough officials have held meetings with NJ TRANSIT to explore the most advantageous integration of the proposed passenger rail station and station parking facilities. The Borough would like to explore all potential opportunities and liabilities to ensure the best possible result for Borough residents. One concern is the impact that the light rail may have on traffic and circulation in the vicinity of the station. Three opportunities stated in the plan are a gain in ratables, an attractive gateway to the downtown from the station and Overpeck County Park, and improvements to the intersection of Fort Lee Road and Grand Avenue to draw visitors to the park and to the downtown commercial establishments.

City of Englewood Master Plan

The Englewood Master Plan was updated in 2014. The plan is divided into overarching themes, one of which is mobility. The plan's guiding principles include enhancement of existing transit, capitalizing on the HBLR extension, and taking advantage of economic opportunities around the stations. The plan also discusses transit-oriented development as a means to attract and support jobs and revitalize and sustain neighborhoods.

The plan is direct in its support for the Preferred Alternative to extend through Englewood with stations at Englewood Route 4, Englewood Town Center, and Englewood Hospital and Medical Center, with the caveat that there should be no net loss of parking at the station locations. Additional specific recommendations for the HBLR extension outlined in the Englewood Master Plan include:

- Englewood Route 4 Station
 - Support for the parking deck
 - Strong opposition to the vehicle base facility (VBF)
 - Plan for parking and traffic
- Englewood Town Center Station
 - Locate station at Depot Square
 - Make traffic improvements through the addition of a traffic signal
 - Improve public safety by fencing rail right-of-way
 - Coordinate structured parking
 - Preserve parking
 - Maintain a destination
- Englewood Hospital and Medical Center Station
 - Improve pedestrian access from the adjacent neighborhood
 - Make traffic improvements through the addition of a traffic signal
 - Improve public safety by fencing rail right-of-way
 - Coordinate structured parking with Englewood Hospital and Medical Center

6.3.2. Potential Impacts and Mitigation

6.3.2.1. No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, no major changes in statewide, regional, county, or municipal public policy are contemplated. Since the No Build Alternative primarily assumes a continuation of existing transit service, it would not be expected to improve connectivity and public transportation connections to outlying residential neighborhoods, improve transportation circulation, or significantly decrease traffic congestion, goals enumerated in the NJSDRP and NJTPA plans, Hudson and Bergen public policy documents, and municipal master plans. Neither would it be expected to significantly reduce overreliance on the private automobile as called for in several planning documents. On the contrary, under the No Build Alternative, roadway traffic circulation and congestion are expected to worsen as a result of residential and economic background growth.

The No Build Alternative would also not be expected to serve as a centralizing influence or be a magnet for development in the same way a rail-transit line within the study area would. The encouragement of centralized transit-oriented development and better connectivity are fundamental elements of the NJSDRP and NJTPA plans, NJFIT, the county plans, and the municipal plans for North Bergen, Ridgefield, Leonia, and Englewood.

6.3.2.2. Preferred Alternative

State and Regional Plans

All state and regional plans identified are supportive of the reintroduction of passenger rail transit to the Northern Branch Corridor. Policy objectives listed within the NJSDRP State Strategic Plan and NJTPA Plan 2040 encourage the integration of land use and transportation to support economic development, improve equity and access to public transportation, reduce automobile dependence, and improve environmental sustainability outcomes. The Northern Branch project would meet these objectives by increasing access to a clean and affordable electric light rail transportation alternative, increasing mobility of residents to job centers in Hudson County and New York City. The plans promote thoughtful design and siting of transit facilities with support for transit-oriented development to reduce sprawl and improve access between intermodal transportation alternatives, residential areas, and employment centers. The Northern Branch project would meet these objectives by siting stations in or in close proximity to downtown areas and job centers of the towns along the corridor (North Bergen, Fairview, Palisades Park, Ridgefield, Leonia, and Englewood), thereby encouraging retention and, where feasible, growth in existing commercial and residential areas. Both plans specifically reference the Northern Branch Corridor project as a viable regional economic development tool. The inclusion of the Northern Branch Corridor project in NJTPA's STIP as a Transit Rail Initiative indicates a recognition of the project for potential future funding.

The State's NJFIT initiative, which encourages the planning of transportation projects that improve the livability, equity, and economic and environmental sustainability of New Jersey's local communities, aligns with the objectives of the Northern Branch Corridor project. The Preferred Alternative would improve equity by increasing access to public transportation for many under-served populations. The project would also support local economic initiatives in the vicinity of the stations through transit-oriented development. With thoughtful design considerations, these developments would improve the livability of the communities with complete streets and mixed use commercial and residential neighborhoods. Lastly, the reduction of auto dependency and congestion in the project corridor would help to mitigate pollution and encourage more environmentally friendly modes of transportation.

Implementation of the proposed project would aid in achieving the goals and objectives discussed in the State and regional plans. As such, the proposed project is not anticipated to result in any significant adverse public policy impacts with respect to applicable State and regional plans.

County Plans

The Hudson County CEDS and the Bergen County Vision Bergen document are supportive of the reintroduction of passenger rail transit to the Northern Branch Corridor. The Preferred Alternative would be consistent with the plans' goals to improve County and regional circulation and mobility; improve access to public transit and intermodal transportation; reduce automobile dependence; and encourage economic growth, such as through transit-oriented development, without the negative externalities of sprawl and pollution. The Bergen County Vision Bergen report indicates that residents have reservations about the impact that the Northern Branch Corridor project may have on availability of parking and siting of parking facilities, and on impacts to vehicular congestion from new riders. NJ TRANSIT is actively collaborating with the municipalities to address parking concerns and to optimize circulation. It is

anticipated that the Northern Branch Corridor project would overall reduce the trend in traffic congestion by offering an alternative to driving and reducing automobile dependence. Concerns about the project's hours of service are also being assessed, factoring in such considerations as anticipated ridership at different times of the day, the nighttime freight rail needs, and nighttime noise and vibration impacts.

The Hudson County Open Space Reexamination Report and the Bergen County Open Space, Recreation, Floodplain Protection, Farmland & Historic Preservation Trust Fund do not specifically reference transit plans. However, a main goal of both open space plans is to improve quality of life and to make recreational opportunities more accessible to all residents. The proposed project would improve accessibility to open space resources proximate to the alignment within Hudson and Bergen Counties, such as the North Bergen Community Pool and its main entrance near the 91st Street Station, Overpeck County Park's ballfields near the Ridgefield Station, additional ballfields and the equestrian center at Overpeck County Park in Leonia, Depot Square near the Englewood Town Center Station, and the recreational fields near the Englewood Hospital and Medical Center Station. In addition, it is anticipated that Overpeck County Park would attract additional park patrons from Bergen County and beyond due to its proximity to Leonia Station. As a result, the proposed project would be consistent with the aspects of the counties' open space plans that pertain to improving user accessibility to recreational resources within the corridor. No significant adverse public policy impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed project.

Municipal Plans

The potential impacts and mitigation for consistency with the local plans of Ridgefield and Palisades Park are unchanged since the 2011 DEIS as there have been no updates to the master plans for these municipalities.

For North Bergen, the extension of the light rail would help the municipality to achieve many of its objectives as stated in the master plan. The implementation of the Preferred Alternative would serve to achieve the plan's goal to increase public transportation ridership and reduce traffic congestion. The closure of 83rd Street and the extension of 85th Street would help to accomplish the goal to improve traffic circulation and vehicular safety. Proper siting and design of the rail corridor and 91st Street Station would encourage transit-oriented development, which would support the municipality's goals to preserve open space, preserve historic sites and districts, and prevent urban sprawl.

For Fairview, while light rail was not specifically referenced in the master plan reexamination document, the Borough recognizes the need to reduce traffic congestion and encourage economic development. The Northern Branch Corridor project may serve to stem further traffic congestion by encouraging the use of public transit by commuters, an amenity that may also result in a boost in economic development and housing values in the borough.

In Leonia, the implementation of the Preferred Alternative would support the Borough's goals to create a gateway from the park and rail station to its downtown business district; the light rail will bolster Leonia's image as a transit-oriented village, attract visitors and residents to support its small local businesses, which will help to support the town's tax base. The Borough and NJ TRANSIT are actively engaged in discussions to address concerns regarding traffic and congestion in the vicinity of the station and it is anticipated that the light rail extension as a transportation alternative would reduce overall future congestion within Leonia and throughout the project corridor.

In Englewood, the implementation of the Preferred Alternative would be consistent with the Englewood Master Plan as this adopted plan encourages both the reintroduction of passenger rail service along the corridor as well as the use of public transportation. The plan goes beyond support for the Northern Branch Corridor project, planning under the assumption that the project would be implemented in the

future, and laying out economic development strategies and land use changes to capitalize on potential transit-oriented development. The City of Englewood and NJ TRANSIT are working together to resolve any issues related to the siting of the VBF at Englewood Route 4, as well as to address any concerns regarding parking and traffic congestion.

Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would aid in achieving the goals and objectives discussed in the above-mentioned plans. As such, no significant inconsistencies or adverse public policy impacts at the municipal level are anticipated as a result of the proposed project.

Mitigation

No mitigation is required.

6.4. Summary of Compliance with Local Plans

As described above, the Preferred Alternative is generally supported by state and regional plans. The issue of compliance is a matter of local master plan support, as summarized below and in Table 6-1. Light rail is specifically supported by the master plans adopted by North Bergen, Ridgefield, Leonia, and Englewood.

Project impacts north of Englewood would be confined to changes to the freight service schedule, with freight trains operating at night. Passenger service would not extend past the proposed Englewood/Tenafly border; consequently, no conflicts with existing local plans are anticipated.

Table 6-1: Summary of Compliance with Local Plans

Alternative	Endorsed by Local Plan	Description of Support or Opposition
No Build	Not Supported	All local plans state the need for improved mobility and decreased congestion.
Preferred Alternative	Specifically supported by North Bergen, Ridgefield, Leonia, and Englewood in terms of vehicle mode.	Plans seek opportunities to prepare for and capitalize on economic development opportunities in the vicinity of proposed rail stations, while ensuring that station siting and design preserve community character and prevent increased visitor traffic.