

**A. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The proposed Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility Project will not result in disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations, and will be in compliance with applicable NEPA regulations related to environmental justice protections.

The proposed Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility will occur in a potential environmental justice area—or an area with substantial minority and low-income populations. In order to satisfy Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* (February 11, 1994), this environmental justice analysis has been prepared to identify and address any disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations that could result from the Project. Executive Order 12898 also requires federal agencies to work to ensure greater public participation in the decision-making process.

The environmental justice analysis for the Project follows the guidance and methodologies recommended by the federal Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in their publication: *Environmental Justice Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act* (December 1997), and in the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) publication, *Final Order on Environmental Justice* (April 1997).

This chapter analyzes the Project's potential impacts in terms of its effects on minority and low-income populations, to determine whether the proposed Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility Project would result in disproportionately high and adverse impacts on those populations. In summary, the principal conclusion of the analysis is that the Project is not expected to result in any disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations and no environmental justice impacts are anticipated.

**B. METHODOLOGY USED FOR THIS ASSESSMENT**

The assessment of environmental justice for the Project was based on the CEQ and USDOT documents identified above. It involved four basic steps:

1. Identify the area where the Project may cause adverse impacts (i.e., the study area);
2. Compile population and economic characteristics for the census block groups within the study area and identify potential environmental justice areas (i.e., minority or low-income communities);
3. Identify the Project's potential adverse impacts on minority and low-income communities; and
4. Evaluate the Project's potential adverse effects on minority and low-income communities relative to its overall effects to determine whether any potential adverse impacts on those communities would be significant and disproportionately high.

## **DELINEATION OF STUDY AREA**

The study area for environmental justice encompasses the area most likely to be affected by the Project and accounts for the potential impacts resulting from its construction and operation. For the evaluation of environmental justice for the Project, the study area consists of the hamlet of Wyandanch overall, which is a Census-designated place (CDP), and the smaller area in the immediate vicinity of the Project Site, including those census block groups that are at least 50 percent within the study area defined for the Project (generally a ¼-mile perimeter around the Project Site and the area where the new roadway network will be created) (see **Figure 15-1**). The immediate study area is generally bounded by Main Avenue (Seaman's Road) to the north, Lake Avenue to the south, the Carlls River to the east, and N./S. 22nd Street to the west. As shown in Figure 15-1, there are five census block groups captured by the study area as follows: Census Tract (CT) 1224.05 Block Group (BG) 2, CT 1224.06 BG 2, CT 1224.06 BG 3, CT 1225.01 BG 1, and CT 1227.04 BG 2.

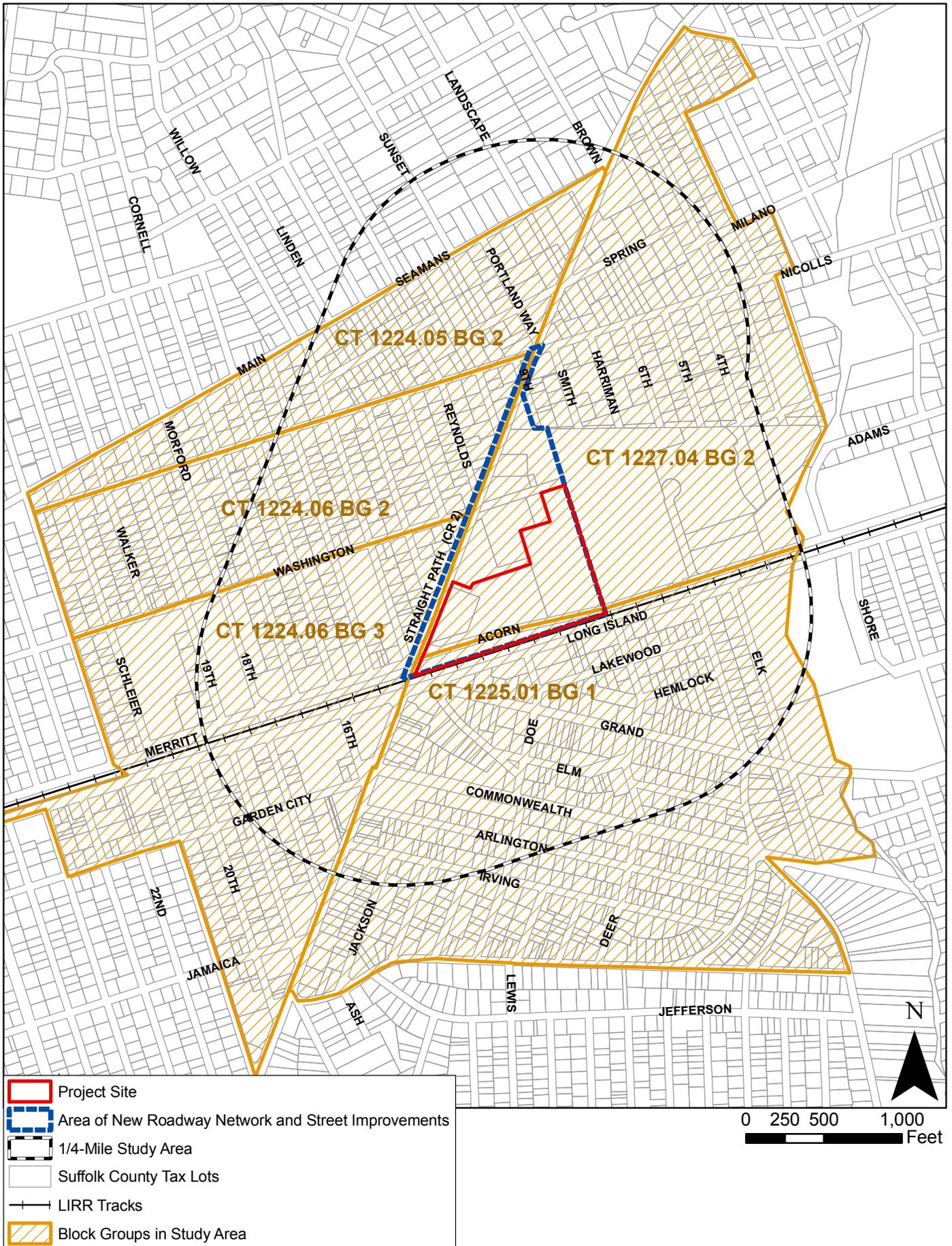
## **IDENTIFICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POPULATION**

Data were gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau's *Census 2000* for the Wyandanch CDP and all census block groups within the immediate study area. For comparison purposes, data for the Town of Babylon and Suffolk County as a whole were also compiled. Minority and low-income communities were identified as follows:

- *Minority Communities.* The guidance documents define minorities to include American Indian or Alaskan natives, Asian and Pacific Islanders, Black persons, and Hispanic persons. This environmental justice analysis also considers minority populations to include persons who identified themselves as being either "some other race" or "two or more races" in the *Census 2000*. Following CEQ guidance, minority populations were identified where either: (1) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50 percent; or (2) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis. For this analysis, the Town of Babylon was used as the Project's primary statistical reference area. In the Town of Babylon, the minority population in 2000 was 29.1 percent. Therefore, for a conservative approach, this environmental justice analysis identifies areas with total minority populations of greater than 29.1 percent as minority areas.
- *Low-Income Communities.* The percent of individuals below poverty level in each census block group, also available in *Census 2000*, was used to identify low-income communities. Since the available guidance documents do not specify thresholds to be used to identify low-income communities, all census block groups whose percentage of individuals below poverty level was meaningfully greater than that of the Town of Babylon as a whole were considered low-income communities. In the Town of Babylon, approximately 6.7 percent of individuals live below the federal poverty threshold, so, for a conservative approach, any area with more than 6.7 percent of its individuals living below the poverty level was considered to be low-income and, therefore, a potential environmental justice area.

## **C. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POPULATIONS IN THE STUDY AREA**

Historically, Wyandanch has been a center for African-American life on Long Island, beginning in the 1920s. After World War II, Wyandanch became an established Black community, where African-Americans looking to move to Long Island were welcomed in the face of emerging new



Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility

Figure 15-1  
Environmental Justice Study Area

racially segregated communities.<sup>1</sup> The 2000 Census data for Wyandanch confirms that this area remains a minority community, with 96 percent of the population minority. Wyandanch has also traditionally been an area with many low-income residents. According to the Town of Babylon's *Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan* (May 2009, page 1-12), in 2000 Wyandanch was ranked by the Suffolk County Planning Department as Long Island's most economically distressed community and included the two poorest census tracts on Long Island. Census data indicate that in the Wyandanch CDP, 16 percent of the residents were living below the poverty level in 1999.

The immediate environmental justice study area includes five census block groups, as shown in **Figure 15-1**, with a total population of 4,192 in 2000. **Table 15-1** details the study area's population and economic characteristics. As shown in the table, the study area has a total minority population of 93.7 percent and a low-income population of 21.8 percent. As explained above, because these percentages are well in excess of the corresponding percentages in the Town of Babylon, which has a minority population of 29.1 percent and a low-income population of 6.7 percent, the study area meets the definition of both a minority and low-income community and is considered a potential environmental justice area. Moreover, each of the study area's block groups, with minority populations ranging from 80.4 to 98.5 percent and low-income populations ranging from 14.9 to 37.2 percent, is considered both a minority and low-income community and a potential environmental justice area. In the next steps of this analysis, the Project's potential to result in disproportionately high and adverse impacts on the study area as a whole or any of its block groups is evaluated.

Land uses within the study area are illustrated in **Figure 3-1**. As shown in the figure, within the Project study area there are commercial, light industrial, and community facility uses lining Straight Path and the area immediately surrounding the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) Wyandanch station and railroad tracks in the central portion of the study area. The Project Site is included in this commercial area at the northeast corner of Straight Path and the LIRR tracks. The study area's residents are concentrated outside of this central commercial area in the northern, southern, eastern, and western portions of the hamlet. The Project Site is bounded by commercial and parking uses to the north, the LIRR tracks to the south, industrial uses to the east, and Straight Path to the west, and is not immediately adjacent to any residences. The figure also shows that the nearest residences to the Project Site are approximately 200 feet away, along N. 12th and N. 13th Streets across from the Project Site to the northwest, and south of the Project Site on the south side of the LIRR tracks. As can also be seen on the figure, study area open space is scarce; limited to a small park, the George Sims Veterans Plaza (which includes a small sitting area), and a portion of Geiger Memorial Park located at the southeast corner of Long Island Avenue and Elk Street along the study area's eastern boundary.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sustainable Long Island, *Wyandanch Blight Conditions Study*, 2004.

**Table 15-1**  
**Study Area Racial, Ethnic, and Economic Characteristics**

Census Area	2000 Total	White		Black		Asian		Other		Hispanic		Total Minority (%)	Individuals Below Poverty Level (%)
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
CT 1224.05 BG 2	581	32	5.5	399	68.7	14	2.4	28	4.8	108	18.6	94.5	18.0
CT 1224.06 BG 2	1,116	46	4.1	843	75.5	0	0.0	34	3.0	193	17.3	95.9	14.9
CT 1224.06 BG 3	712	47	6.6	424	59.6	0	0.0	15	2.1	226	31.7	93.4	37.2
CT 1225.01 BG 1	1,162	18	1.5	904	77.8	9	0.8	37	3.2	194	16.7	98.5	19.4
CT 1227.04 BG 2	621	122	19.6	374	60.2	32	5.2	26	4.2	67	10.8	80.4	23.2
Study Area	4,192	265	6.3	2,944	70.2	55	1.3	140	3.3	788	18.8	93.7	21.8
Wyandanch CDP	10,546	409	4.6	7,949	75.4	58	0.5	406	3.8	1,724	16.3	96.1	16.4
Town of Babylon	211,792	150,180	70.9	31,945	15.1	3,975	1.9	4,417	2.1	21,275	10.0	29.1	6.7
Suffolk County	1,419,369	1,118,405	78.8	93,262	6.6	34,355	2.4	23,936	1.7	149,411	10.5	21.2	6.0

**Notes:**

The racial and ethnic categories provided are further defined as: White (White alone, not Hispanic or Latino); Black (Black or African American alone, not Hispanic or Latino); Asian (Asian alone, not Hispanic or Latino); Other (consisting of American Indian and Alaska Native alone, not Hispanic or Latino; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, not Hispanic or Latino; some other race alone, not Hispanic or Latino; two or more races, not Hispanic or Latino); and Hispanic (Hispanic or Latino; persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race).

Total minority percentage consists of all population other than non Hispanic Whites.

Poverty information is provided as the percent of individuals with incomes below established poverty level. The U.S. Census Bureau's established income threshold for poverty level defines poverty level.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000*.

**D. SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL ADVERSE IMPACTS**

As discussed throughout this Environmental Assessment (EA), the proposed Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility Project will not result in significant adverse impacts. While some localized adverse impacts could occur in the study area during the construction phase of the Project, these impacts will be temporary and will end once construction is complete. Moreover, mitigation measures will be employed to minimize any potential adverse effects.

As described in Chapter 3, "Land Use, Zoning, Social Conditions, and Community Character," to implement the Project, the Town of Babylon will acquire three tax parcels, currently utilized for retail shopping, surface parking, and an industrial-type use. The businesses that will be displaced employ an estimated 62 people. Based on the population profile of Wyandanch and the immediate study area, the affected parties may be minority and/or low-income. Acquisition and relocation will be conducted in accordance with state and federal laws. Displaced business owners and commercial tenants will receive relocation benefits and assistance as required by these laws.

## **E. IDENTIFICATION OF DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGH AND ADVERSE IMPACTS**

The Project will not result in any disproportionately high and adverse impacts on environmental justice populations. As discussed throughout this EA, the Project will not result in any significant adverse impacts. This determination involved consideration of existing environmental burdens in the study area, cumulative effects, and proposed mitigation measures. The Project is part of a larger effort to redevelop and revitalize downtown Wyandanch and is aimed at improving environmental and economic conditions for Wyandanch's residents, most of whom are minorities and many of whom are low-income. The Project will provide a place for residents and visitors to gather or wait comfortably for public transit; improve the current poor state of pedestrian and bicycle safety; and increase parking capacity on weekdays as existing lots are overcrowded, increasing roadway congestion as a result of illegally parked vehicles. As a central location where people can conveniently access and/or transfer between different modes of transportation, the Project will serve the community and its residents by providing more travel opportunities with improved connectivity, encouraging economic development in downtown, creating a new plaza at the northeast intersection of Straight Path and the LIRR tracks for community access to public open space, and improving pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety. Anticipated to act as a catalyst for future redevelopment in downtown Wyandanch, the Project will also indirectly increase job and shopping opportunities; generate new tax revenue, which could ultimately lead to a higher quality of education in the school district and new public improvements; and improve the overall quality of life for residents in the Wyandanch community.

## **F. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Executive Order 12898 also requires federal agencies to work to ensure greater public participation in the decision-making process. In addition, CEQ guidance suggests that federal agencies should acknowledge and seek to overcome linguistic, cultural, institutional, geographic, and other barriers to meaningful participation. Furthermore, the USDOT's *Final Order on Environmental Justice* indicates that project sponsors should seek public involvement opportunities, including soliciting input from affected minority and low-income populations in considering alternatives.

As described in Chapter 16, "Public Outreach and Agency Coordination," public outreach efforts for the Project began in 2002 with the extensive community-based visioning and planning process, called *Wyandanch Rising*, continuing with public outreach conducted for the *Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility Feasibility Study* (June 2008) and the *Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan* (May 2008), and continuing to date with public and stakeholder meetings on the Project and the overall Wyandanch revitalization effort.

During the *Wyandanch Rising* process, the Town of Babylon engaged community stakeholders in the visioning and planning process for the redevelopment and revitalization of downtown Wyandanch. Over 800 residents, businesses, civic groups, clergy, planners, architects, government officials, and property owners participated in this process. One of the community-identified goals was the creation of a mixed-use transit-oriented development around the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) Wyandanch station.

## **Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility**

---

See Chapter 16, “Public Outreach and Agency Involvement,” for more information related to the Project’s public outreach and participation process.

### **G. CONCLUSION WITH RESPECT TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

There are no environmental justice concerns anticipated with the Project. The proposed Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility Project is not expected to result in any disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations. In addition, the Project will be in compliance with applicable NEPA regulations related to environmental justice protections. \*