

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the Preferred Alternative (also referred to throughout this Environmental Assessment [EA] as “the Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility” and as “the Project”), the No Action Alternative analyzed in this EA, and alternative configurations for both the proposed parking garage and the new roadway network.

B. PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

PROJECT SITE

The site where the Preferred Alternative will be developed (referred to throughout this EA as “Project Site”) is located in downtown Wyandanch and is a portion of the larger site designated as Strategic Site A in the Town of Babylon’s *Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan* (May 2009). The Project Site consists of the properties immediately north of the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) tracks (see **Figure 2-1**). In total, the Project Site is 13.9 acres.

To implement the Preferred Alternative, the Project Sponsor proposes to acquire the three tax parcels on the Project Site, which include the following (see **Figure 2-2**):

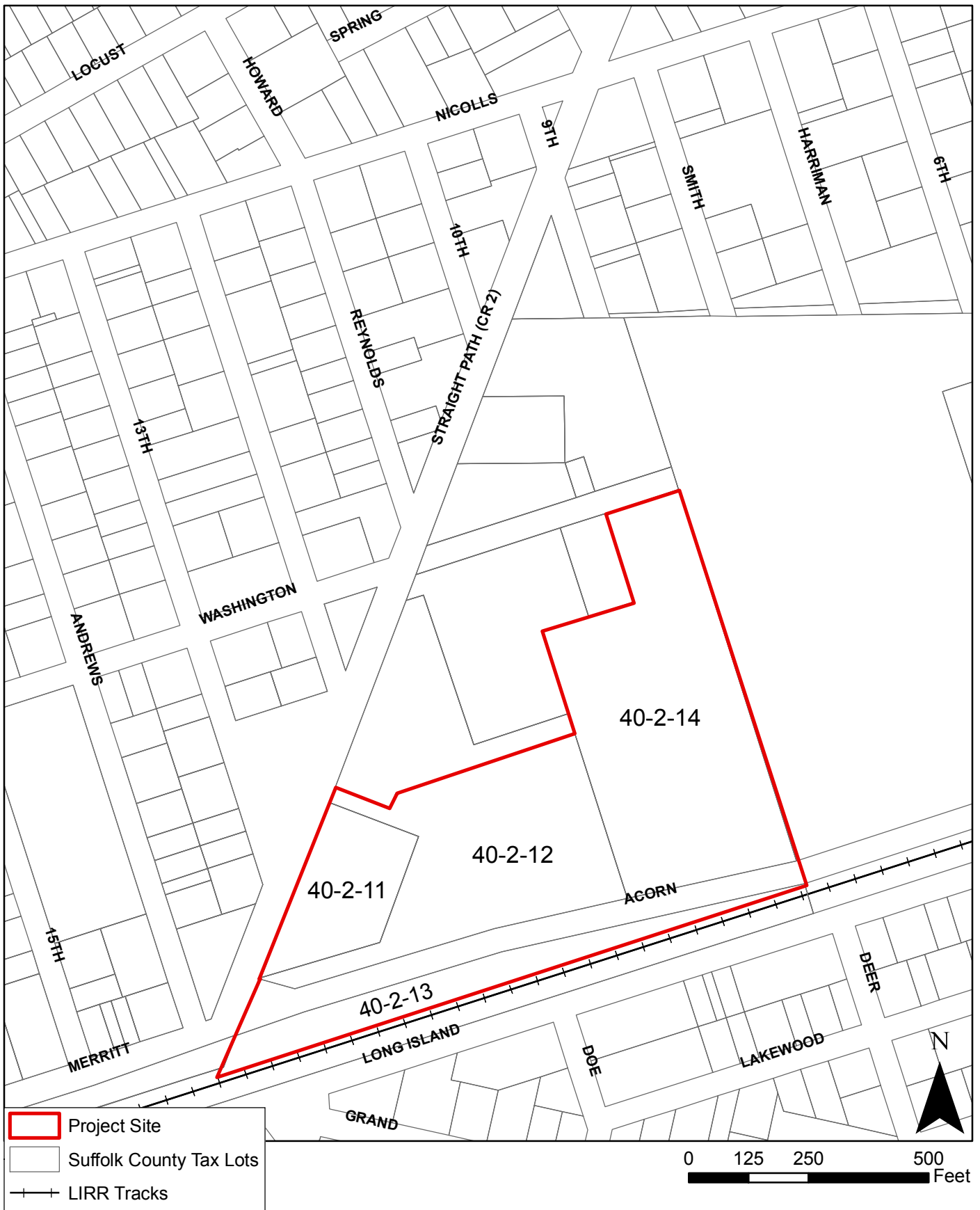
- Suffolk County Tax Lot 40-2-11, at 1589 Straight Path: privately owned parcel occupied by a commercial retail strip and its parking lot.
- Suffolk County Tax Lot 40-2-12, at 305 Acorn Street: commuter parking lot serving the Wyandanch station and owned by Suffolk County.
- Suffolk County Tax Lot 40-2-14, at 1617 Straight Path, occupied by a large building and parking area used by a car dealer for vehicle storage.

The Project Site also includes a portion of Acorn Street, which is already owned by the Town of Babylon, and a portion of a lot (Suffolk County Tax Lot 40-2-13) owned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) that includes the LIRR Wyandanch station and a commuter parking lot. The Project Sponsor will enter into an agreement with the MTA regarding use of this property.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

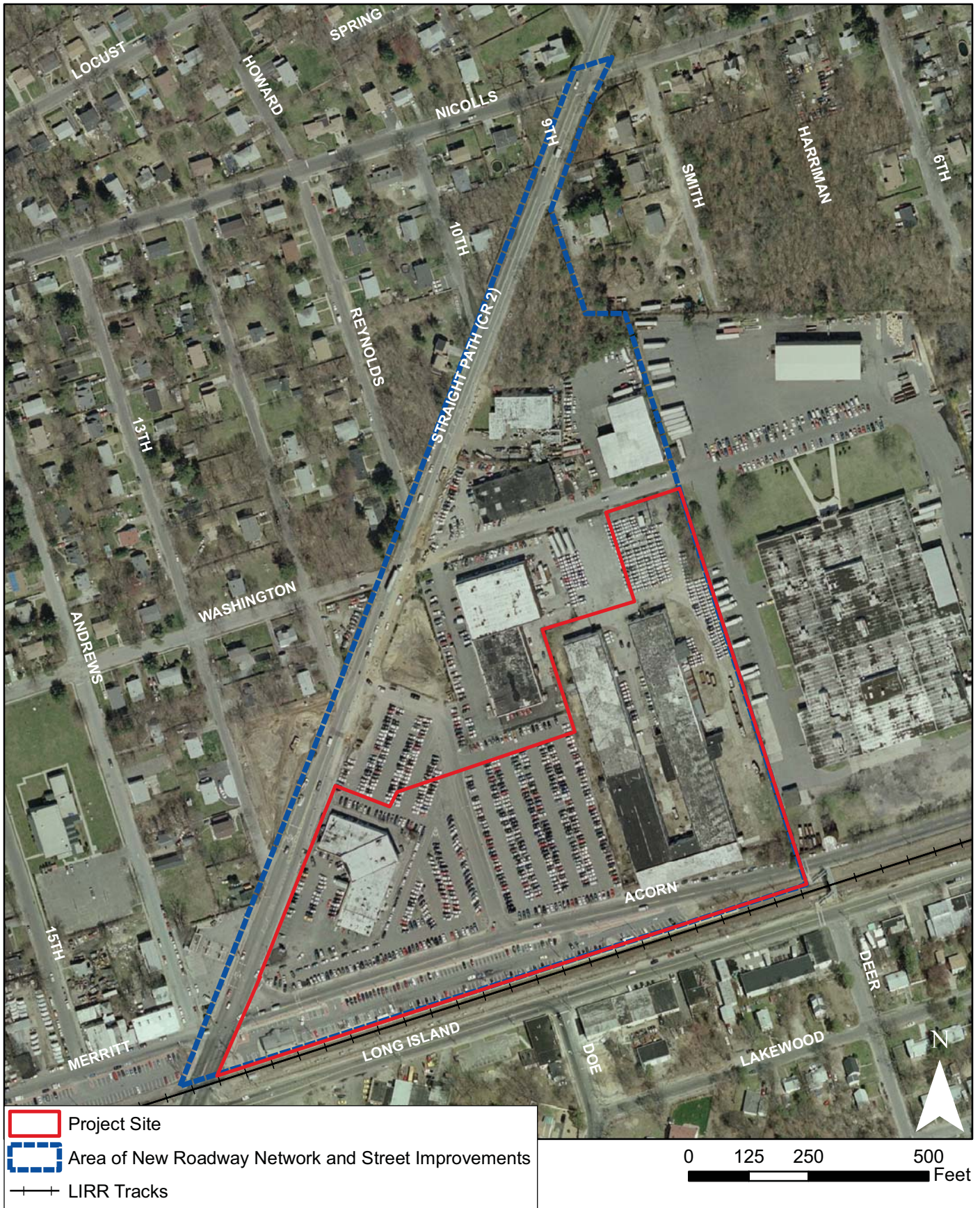
The Preferred Alternative consists of seven components:

- Construction of a new structured parking garage on the Project Site, with approximately 2,000 spaces on six levels including the roof, to accommodate commuters at the LIRR Wyandanch station.



Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility

**Figure 2-1
Project Site Tax Map**



Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility

Figure 2-2
Aerial Photo of Project Site
and Area of New Street Network

Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility

- Construction of a plaza area on the Project Site at the LIRR Wyandanch station to provide public open space at the intermodal transit facility as well as a bus pull-out on Straight Path, just south of the intersection with Acorn Street, along the western edge of the plaza.
- Establishment of a drop-off and pick-up area on the Project Site along Acorn Street to serve commuters and taxis.
- Creation of a new street network adjacent to the Project Site. This street network will provide access to the intermodal facility and future access to and connections with development to be implemented on Strategic Site A (see Chapter 1, B. Planning Overview) as part of the build-out of the Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan.
- Implementation of roadway and streetscape improvements to Straight Path between the LIRR tracks and Nicolls Road, to increase safety for commuters traveling to and from the new intermodal facility and safety for bus passengers on routes using Straight Path.
- Implementation of drainage improvements, which include leaching basins and vegetative plantings, to handle storm water.
- Installation of signage and wayfinding on and off the Project Site to make navigation to the train station and intermodal facility easier.

Each of these Project elements is described in more detail below. **Figure 2-3** illustrates the overall plan of the Project components.

STRUCTURED PARKING GARAGE

The Preferred Alternative includes a new structured parking garage at the southeast corner of the Project Site (see **Figure 2-3**). The garage will provide a central transportation hub with connectivity to different transit modes including the LIRR and Suffolk County Transit (bus service), as well as taxis and automobiles. The garage will have six parking levels, including the roof, and will be approximately 60 feet high. **Figure 2-4** provides a section view of the garage. Approximately 720,000 square feet in size, it will accommodate approximately 2,000 parking spaces. The building footprint will be approximately 133,400 square feet. The details of the garage design will be further refined during the final design of the Project.

The structured parking garage will provide the opportunity to better coordinate transit service, including bus and rail, to ensure efficient connections between all modes of transportation. The main vehicular entrance to the garage will be located at the northern side of the building from the new roadway network on Strategic Site A (discussed below), while additional separate two-lane entrances and exits will be located along Acorn Street on the southern side of the building. The main pedestrian entrance to the garage, which will include a small public plaza and reflecting pool, will be located in the center of the building on the western side and will direct people to the main elevator. Stairways will also be located at the perimeter of the building in each of the four corners to minimize pedestrian-vehicular conflicts. Bicycle facilities and storage will also be located at the perimeter of the building at the north and south entrances.

Pedestrian walkways around the garage will provide safe and efficient routes for pedestrians traveling to and from the public plaza, LIRR Wyandanch station, future development sites on Strategic Site A, and transfer locations including the new designated drop-off/pick-up area on Acorn Street and the new bus stop at the public plaza.

In addition, solar canopies will be installed above the parking spaces on the garage roof to both shade/cover any vehicles parked on the roof level and generate electricity for the garage. The

garage will also include a green roof design, with plantings along the north, west, and south sides of the structure.

Design drawings for the proposed garage, which include detailed floor plans and elevations, are included in **Appendix 2** (see “Preliminary Garage Design Plans”), and specifications and drawings for the garage’s mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) systems are also shown in **Appendix 2** (see “MEP Drawings”).

PUBLIC PLAZA

Close to the Wyandanch train station, the Project will create an approximately 2.65-acre public plaza at the southwesternmost portion of the Project Site, at the corner of Straight Path and the LIRR tracks. The public plaza, comprising landscaped seating areas, green open space as well as paved areas to accommodate pedestrian walkways, and market areas, will provide passive recreational space, to be used by commuters waiting for transit, and for activities/uses such as farmers’ markets, concerts, and the public display of art. Bike racks at key locations in the plaza will provide convenient parking for cyclists using the bus, train, or the plaza itself. At the western end of the plaza, a relocated bus stop area (discussed later in this chapter) will include a bus shelter.

Preliminary design drawings for the public plaza, which include details on the location of walkways, plantings, street furniture, and bicycle racks, are shown in **Appendix 2** (see “Preliminary Street and Plaza Design Drawings”).

COMMUTER DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP AREA

As part of the Project, a new commuter drop-off/pick-up area will be located along the newly realigned Acorn Street (see description below) adjacent to the public plaza to provide commuters with a convenient and safe place to access the LIRR Wyandanch station and its platforms.

NEW STREET NETWORK

On and near the Project Site, the Preferred Alternative includes development of a new roadway network for Strategic Site A, to serve the intermodal facility and the future development anticipated as part of the Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan. The roadway network, shown in **Figures 2-5** and **2-6**, includes the North 9th Street Extension that will run adjacent to the proposed parking garage on its eastern edge. This new roadway segment will connect Acorn Street and Straight Path, and will allow some truck traffic to bypass Straight Path and the center of downtown Wyandanch. The new street grid was designed to create development parcels of adequate size and shape to attract private development on Strategic Site A as envisioned in the Wyandanch Downtown Revitalization Plan. To accommodate vehicular access to the intermodal facility and to eliminate pedestrian-vehicular conflicts, Acorn Street will be realigned to connect to Straight Path north of the public plaza. The location of this intersection near the existing railroad crossing has historically been identified as a dangerous intersection for pedestrians and vehicles. The realigned portion of Acorn Street is intended to be a ‘slow-speed’ street with a design speed of between 7 and 15 miles per hour. It is anticipated that the same materials used to construct the plaza will be used on this section of Acorn Street, curb reveals will be eliminated in favor of bollards, and traffic movements and speed will be controlled by neckdowns and raised devices such as speed tables and humps. The redesigned street will make it safe for pedestrians to cross the street anywhere adjacent to the plaza. Together with the North 9th Street Extension, the changes to Acorn Street are intended to improve pedestrian conditions near the

Wyandanch station. The North 9th Street Extension will provide a more direct and convenient route for trucks traveling between Acorn Street and Straight Path, and most notably will eliminate truck traffic turning right at the problematic intersection of Acorn Street and Straight Path. This improved street configuration will also allow train commuters to move freely and more safely back and forth between the station and platform and their parked cars, because it will greatly reduce truck traffic on the portion of Acorn Street between the North 9th Street Extension and Straight Path, eliminating the need for pedestrians to cross a heavily traveled, high speed truck route mid-block without traffic control, as they do today.

Design drawings and typical cross-sections for the new street network described above, are included in **Appendix 2** (see “Preliminary Street and Plaza Design Drawings”).

STRAIGHT PATH IMPROVEMENTS

Roadway and streetscape improvements are proposed along Straight Path to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety. This is of particular concern to address the increased traffic volumes on Straight Path expected with the increase in commuter parking capacity as a result of the Project. These improvements include providing 10-foot-wide travel lanes, with 8-foot-wide parking lanes on both sides of the street and 12-foot-wide sidewalks that also include 4-foot-wide areas of right-of-way acquisition or easement from adjacent properties. In the center of Straight Path, a 14-foot-wide area will be reserved as a landscaped median and to provide areas for vehicles waiting to make left turns. In addition, crosswalks will be provided at each intersection—Acorn Street, McCue Street, Washington Avenue, North 10th Street, and the North 9th Street Extension. The improvements proposed for Straight Path, which is a County roadway, were developed in consultation with Suffolk County.

As part of these improvements, to better coordinate bus service into the intermodal facility, the bus stop that is currently located at Straight Path and Long Island Avenue will be relocated to Straight Path between Merritt Avenue and North 13th Street. New bus stops will be located adjacent to the public plaza (for northbound buses) and across the street from the public plaza (for southbound buses). The new stops will include a bus pull out adjacent to the plaza, which will remove buses from the flow of traffic and allow for better coordination of their service with LIRR trains. The Town of Babylon has discussed these elements of the Project with Suffolk County, which has indicated its support of these modifications and improvements.

Design drawings for Straight Path including a typical section, site and striping plans, alignment, grading, and drainage plans, and landscape plans are included in **Appendix 2** (see “Preliminary Street and Plaza Design Drawings”).

DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS

The Preferred Alternative also includes drainage improvements on the Project Site and in association with the new roadway network and improvements to Straight Path. These improvements will include leaching basins and vegetative plantings to handle storm water. Straight Path from North 13th Street to Main Avenue (over ½-mile to the north) and a small section of the commuter parking area to the west of Straight Path between North 13th Street and McCue Street are currently connected to catch basins that drain into the recharge basin on the west side of Straight Path between North 13th Street and McCue Street. Because there is excess capacity in that recharge basin (see “Drainage Calculations” in **Appendix 2**), storm water from the parking garage will be collected and piped into that collection system under the Preferred Alternative. The garage will have plantings on the roof that will also absorb some storm water.

The new roadway network will have a system of catch basins that drain into leaching basins underground. However, because of the high water table, the precise size of the leaching basins can not be determined at this time without having the results of detailed soil sampling that will be undertaken in later stages of the design process. Depending on the soil characteristics found, it may be necessary to replace or supplement the leaching basins with stormwater planters that could be built into the sidewalks, as shown in the landscape design drawings provided as “Preliminary Street and Plaza Design Drawings” in **Appendix 2**. If they are ultimately required, these stormwater planters will necessitate that the sidewalks be expanded to a width of 17 feet, from the proposed 12 foot widths. This sidewalk widening has been accounted for in the designs presented in **Appendix 2**; the soil characteristics and final sidewalk designs will be determined during the final design process.

WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Finally, the Preferred Alternative also includes implementation of a new wayfinding and signage program at locations near the new garage and train station, along the new street network, and along Straight Path to make navigation to the train station and intermodal facility easier. The proposed wayfinding and signage plan is included in **Appendix 2** (see “Wayfinding and Signage Plans”).

PROJECT COST

The total construction cost for all of the Project elements, including the intermodal facility, the new public plaza and drop-off/pick-up area, the new roadway network on Strategic Site A, and the improvements to Straight Path, is approximately \$65.4 million. A detailed cost estimate that includes a breakdown of costs by project element, as well as assumptions is included in **Appendix 2** (see “Cost Estimate”). If federal funding is approved for the Project, the Project will be jointly funded with federal funds, New York State funds, and funds from Suffolk County and the Town of Babylon. A portion of the Project may also be funded through a public/private initiative.

To date, the Project Sponsor continues to research and secure funding for the construction of the Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility.

CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE AND COMPLETION DATE

Construction of the Preferred Alternative is scheduled to begin in 2011, and is expected to be fully complete in 2012.

C. NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Consistent with NEPA and New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) requirements, this EA compares the effects of the Preferred Alternative to those of a No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, the Wyandanch Intermodal Transit Facility Project would not be constructed. The existing structures on the Project Site would likely remain, with the remainder of the site continuing to be used as free and uncoordinated surface parking for the LIRR Wyandanch station; no new street network would be developed; Straight Path would continue to be a high-speed, heavily traveled roadway that does not encourage pedestrian or bicycle traffic or promote safety; and downtown Wyandanch would continue to

function in its degraded condition with no distinct hamlet center to focus redevelopment opportunities.

Under the No Action Alternative, the Project Site would remain under current ownership. The commercial strip would continue to lease to commercial tenants or in some cases, would remain vacant.

The No Action Alternative assumes that future background conditions will occur independently of the Project. According to the Town, there are no major development projects in the vicinity of the Project Site planned for completion by 2012, aside from the relocation of the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Health Center, which currently sits on the southwest corner of Straight Path and Long Island Avenue.

D. OTHER CONFIGURATIONS CONSIDERED

The Project Site, which is adjacent to the LIRR Wyandanch station and located in downtown Wyandanch, is the most suitable site for creation of a central hub to define downtown Wyandanch, consolidate parking, and provide intermodal connections between LIRR and other transportation modes. Therefore, alternative sites for the Project were not analyzed.

Alternative configurations to the Preferred Alternative's parking garage footprint, layout, and height, as well as for the street network were considered, including realigning Acorn Street to the north of the proposed garage. The alternatives were screened based on their consistency with the Project's purpose and need and its goals and objectives presented in Chapter 1, "Purpose and Need." The Preferred Alternative was determined to be the most appropriate location and configuration for the Project, as it will best meet the purpose and need and goals and objectives. Additionally, the Preferred Alternative will require the fewest relocations and acquisitions based on existing uses. The Preferred Alternative was selected through a Public Information Meeting held on September 18, 2007.

Alternative configurations considered for the proposed garage included a structure with a larger footprint but fewer levels, as well as different orientations on the Project Site. These alternative garage designs were discarded because they adversely affected the preferred street network layout, and/or because they occupied a greater portion of the Project Site, which would reduce opportunities for the public plaza and its associated amenities, or would not provide an adequate number of parking spaces to accommodate the already overcrowded parking conditions at the LIRR station, nor the anticipated ridership increases projected in the future, all of which would be in conflict with several of the Project's goals and objectives.

In initial Project planning, the Project Sponsor explored different configurations for the street grid. One alternative street grid considered included two new east-west streets in addition to realigning Washington Avenue, a third east-west street; however, this configuration would only provide for large development blocks within Strategic Site A that would not be pedestrian friendly, which is contrary to encouraging transit-oriented development, a long standing goal of the Town for the area, and this site in particular. Further, the large development blocks would not entice developers to redevelop Strategic Site A since access to the individual blocks would be limited. Pedestrian safety and redevelopment of the downtown are key goals for the Town and would not be met with this alternative.

Another option for the street grid was to terminate Acorn Street at the proposed parking garage and have vehicles and trucks use the new north-south street segment, the North 9th Street Extension, which is included in the Preferred Alternative. In this alternative, a new east-west

street would be developed just north of the parking garage and the public plaza would be rectangular in design instead of the Preferred Alternative's proposed triangular shape. However, this internal street network would create a circuitous route from Straight Path to Acorn Street and the garage, and would maintain the dangerous configuration of the Straight Path/Acorn Street intersection with its undesirable proximity to the railroad crossing presenting operational and safety concerns. Therefore, this street grid would not meet the Project goal to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety. Moreover, the rectangular design of the public plaza would not provide adequate spacing for events and also would not optimally encourage passersby to utilize the space. This shape of the public plaza would also result in the need to move the proposed bus stop further north along Straight Path, moving it away from the train station and intermodal hub; therefore, this alternative does not meet the Project goal of providing better connectivity between different transit modes. *