7. Parklands

7.1. Chapter Overview

7.1.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the potential for adverse effects on parkland, open space, and recreational resources resulting from the modification of the Preferred Alternative as presented in the Northern Branch DEIS. The revisions specifically affecting parkland include:

- **Change in project terminus**: the Preferred Alternative terminates in Englewood; consequently, there would be no adverse effects on Tenafly parks.
- **85th Street Viaduct and 85th Street Extension**: a viaduct is proposed to connect the Northern Branch from West Side Avenue over the NYS&W alignment and the elevated CSX River Line alignment to the existing Northern Branch running track. The connection of 85th Street through to West Side Avenue via a new underpass beneath the CSX River Line and new grade crossings, as described in the DEIS, would remain. 83rd Street would be closed as well, as described in the DEIS. The viaduct and underpass would occur near each other as they cross over and beneath, respectively, the CSX River Line embankment and would require the taking of the undeveloped southern tip of the North Bergen municipal pool parcel.
- **Relocation of Leonia Station parking deck**: a parking deck is proposed to be developed within Overpeck County Park.
- **Revision to Englewood Town Center study area**: the Englewood Town Center Station has been relocated to the area north of Palisade Avenue and the project proposes to include double track in this area, where formerly only single track was proposed. To provide adequate right-of-way for the additional track and platform, a portion of the parking area and sidewalk associated with Depot Square Park would be acquired.

Comments submitted on the DEIS expressed general support for the continued preservation of parkland; however, comments also raised concerns about the construction and vibration impacts of the multi-story parking deck proposed at the Leonia Station by the DEIS on the Kulite facility, which utilizes precise and sensitive equipment in their manufacturing operations. The Leonia Station location and parking deck have substantially changed; consequently, the specific project element addressed by the comments no longer applies in the SDEIS. The sentiment expressed in comments regarding the visual impacts on the park, however, still applies and has been taken into consideration during this reassessment.

7.1.2. Summary of Findings of the DEIS and the SDEIS

The parkland assessment identified 43 parkland, open space, and recreational resources within the Northern Branch one-half mile study area (this tally counts Overpeck County Park segments as one resource). Ten facilities are privately-owned cemeteries and one park is privately-owned (Englewood Field Club). The remaining 32 resources are publicly-owned and accessible to the community. All but two of the public resources are municipally-owned; those two are owned and operated by Bergen County as Overpeck County Park and Overpeck Park Golf Course. Four recreational facilities charge membership or usage fees, such as annual pool passes or greens fees for the Overpeck County Golf Course. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Green Acres Program and Section 4(f) protect all 32 of the publicly-owned resources, including those that charge usage fees.

There are three types of impacts considered for open space resources: physical takings, visual impacts, and noise impacts. Physical takings, situations in which open space is converted from open space or recreational use to another non-open space use, are always considered impacts, regardless of the nature or use of the resource or its ownership (public or private). Impacts to access roads into an open space...
resource are also considered physical impacts as access modifications can diminish the usefulness of the resource to the community, thus limiting its benefits. Visual impacts result when an incongruous use is introduced that changes the viewshed of an open space area, restricts sunlight, or otherwise changes the “feel” of the location as a result of changes in the landscape. Noise impacts are evaluated relative to the intended use of the open space resource. Resources set aside for quiet contemplation and reflection, such as cemeteries and memorials, or for concerts and performances are more sensitive to external noise than resources used for active recreation, such as ball games and other sports. In the latter example, noise is part of the recreational experience. FTA’s Transit Noise and Impact Assessment Guidance does not classify active recreational facilities as noise-sensitive resources.

Specific facts and findings regarding the potential for impact to open space resources are as follows:

- The Preferred Alternative would result in acquisition of or easements across the following three parkland resources:
  - North Bergen Municipal Pool, North Bergen
  - Overpeck County Park, Leonia South Area, Leonia
  - Depot Square Park (east and west), Englewood
- The Preferred Alternative does not propose alterations to the road network or means of access to any open space resource that would reduce or complicate access to the resource.
- Installation of overhead catenary would affect the rail right-of-way only and would not result in a noticeable change in the viewshed of any parkland or recreational resource.
- The Preferred Alternative would shift freight service to the overnight hours when most parks, open space, and recreational uses are closed to the public. The change in the time of day of the sounding of freight train horns would have no adverse effect on any parkland in the study area, including areas north of Englewood.
- The Preferred Alternative would operate the rail service at frequent headways, which would result in frequent grade crossings that require rail vehicles to sound their horns. The 9/11 Memorial in Overpeck County Park is located near the Fort Lee Road grade crossing in Leonia. However, based on noise contour modeling, the Memorial is located a sufficient distance from the right-of-way, such that it would not experience impacts as a consequence of the proposed rail service.

The acquisition of or easement across portions of these parklands, and the associated mitigation would require approval from the NJDEP Green Acres Program. The portions identified for project use are not actively used for recreation and do not contain character-defining features that would adversely affect the role of the parkland in the community or change the parkland’s identity.

As NJ TRANSIT has coordinated with the affected jurisdictional agencies (Township of North Bergen, City of Englewood, and Bergen County) and Green Acres to identify adequate compensation for the diversions, the development of the parkland ultimately benefits the community through the provision of needed transit service. In North Bergen and Leonia, the development of the parkland also addresses pre-existing adverse conditions. As a result, no significant, unmitigatable impacts on parkland are expected to result from the development of the Preferred Alternative.

### 7.2. Methodology

Parkland resources were updated by a review of existing county and municipal park and recreation division resource listings, aerial photography interpretation, and a Green Acres database search. The methodology is the same as that described in the DEIS.

The DEIS did not involve the use of protected Green Acres resources; consequently, the assessment of impacts to Green Acres resources is new to the SDEIS. The assessment of impacts as they relate to the Green Acres Program was derived from the NJDEP Green Acres regulations, N.J.A.C. Title 7, Chapter 36
Northern Branch Corridor SDEIS

March 2017

(N.J.A.C. 7:36). The Green Acres rules define an easement for non-recreational use as a “diversion” of a Green Acres resource. An easement under the Green Acres Program works the same way as a traditional easement where the title owner of the property retains ownership of the land but a separate entity is granted the right to use the land or portion thereof as defined by the terms of the easement. The rule defines a “disposal” as fee acquisition of parkland permanently removing it from recreational use. A disposal typically involves a transfer of ownership. In the sections that follow “diversion” and “disposal” are used as appropriate to the real estate instrument proposed as a means of acquiring rights to use the parkland acreage required to develop the Northern Branch project.

7.3. **Environmental Review**

7.3.1. **Existing Conditions**

Table 7-1 identifies the 43 parkland, open space, and recreational resources within the half-mile study area. Figures 7-1 through 7-5 illustrate by municipality the location of each of the resources.

**Table 7-1: Parkland, Open Space, and Recreational Resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Assessed in DEIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Bergen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palisades Cemetery</td>
<td>Union Turnpike. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weehawken Cemetery</td>
<td>Kennedy Boulevard West. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policeman Memorial Park</td>
<td>Union Turnpike. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grove Church Cemetery</td>
<td>Kennedy Boulevard and 46th Street. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46th Street Park/Ballfield</td>
<td>1223 46th Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50th Street Park</td>
<td>1207 50th Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43rd Street/Fireman Park</td>
<td>1821 44th Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower Hill Cemetery</td>
<td>5433 Kennedy Boulevard. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoboken Cemetery</td>
<td>5500 Tonnelle Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machpelah Cemetery</td>
<td>Tonnelle Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Bergen Recreation Center &amp; Fields</td>
<td>6300 Meadowview Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Bergen High School Fields</td>
<td>7417 Kennedy Boulevard. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Bergen Little League Fields</td>
<td>Corner of Durham Avenue and 76th Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82nd Street Park</td>
<td>Corner of Grand Avenue and 82nd Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88th Street Park</td>
<td>Durham Avenue and 88th Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Bergen Municipal Pool</td>
<td>91st Street. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fairview</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairview Cemetery</td>
<td>500 Fairview Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Moriah Cemetery</td>
<td>658 Fairview Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Neighborhood Park</td>
<td>Sedore Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ridgefield</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meadowlands Park</td>
<td>Pleasant View Terrace. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Park</td>
<td>Adjacent to Overpeck Creek. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willis Field</td>
<td>Linden Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palisades Park</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palisades Park Municipal Pool</td>
<td>Roosevelt Place. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overpeck County Park</td>
<td>Palisades Park - Roosevelt Place, between Hackensack River and right-of-way. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ridgefield Park/Teaneck</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overpeck County Park</td>
<td>Ridgefield Park - Adjacent to Overpeck Creek. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overpeck County Golf Course</td>
<td>East Cedar Lane, Teaneck. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7-1: Parkland, Open Space, and Recreational Resources (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Assessed in DEIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leonia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overpeck County Park</td>
<td>Leonia South Area - South of Fort Lee Road; Henry Hoebel Area - North of Fort Lee Road. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonia Swim Club</td>
<td>Grand Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvan Park</td>
<td>Grand Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station Park</td>
<td>Fort Lee Road. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonia Recreation/Wood Park</td>
<td>370 Broad Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonia Middle School Fields</td>
<td>Broad Avenue and Christie Heights Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonia High School Fields</td>
<td>Christie Heights Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Englewood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crystal Lake Park</td>
<td>North of I-80/I-95 on Sheffield Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison Park</td>
<td>Madison Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artus Park</td>
<td>Between South Dean Street and Linden Avenue. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacKay Park</td>
<td>Englewood Avenue. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depot Square Park (west)</td>
<td>Between North Van Brunt Street and West Street. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Veterans Memorial Park)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depot Square Park (east)</td>
<td>Between North Van Brunt Street and North Dean Streets. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Veterans Memorial Park)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunning Park</td>
<td>Between Hillside Avenue and Spring Lane. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englewood Field Club</td>
<td>Engle Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durie Park (Winton White Stadium)</td>
<td>Tenafly Road. West of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brookside Cemetery (east)</td>
<td>Engle Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brookside Cemetery (west)</td>
<td>Engle Street. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangle Park</td>
<td>Between E. Ivy Lane, E. Hudson Avenue, and N. Dean St. East of right-of-way.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jacobs, 2015

The SDEIS reassessment identified several parkland, open space, and recreational resources not previously described in the DEIS. Many of these resources reflect updates to North Bergen’s parkland directory and include pocket parks and small basketball courts not previously captured in the DEIS analysis. Some additional parks were also identified from a review of Englewood’s most recent Master Plan update. Middle school athletic fields are also included as they serve the same recreational utility as high school athletic fields previously identified in the DEIS. These new resources are described below:

**North Bergen**

**Palisades Cemetery:** This facility is a cemetery located east of the right-of-way at the intersection of Bergen Turnpike and Union Turnpike.

**Weehawken Cemetery:** This facility is a cemetery located east of the right-of-way at the intersection of Bergen Turnpike and Union Turnpike, across from Palisades Cemetery.

**Policeman Memorial Park:** This facility, located on Union Turnpike where Grand Avenue intersects, is east of the right-of-way and contains a small playground area.

**46th Street Park/Ballfield:** This facility is located between 44th and 46th Streets south of Smith Avenue at the eastern edge of the Northern Branch half-mile study area. The facility contains a baseball/softball field and a basketball court.
Figure 7-1

Northern Branch Parks and Open Space: North Bergen Township

Half-Mile Study Area
Proposed Stations
Proposed Alignment
HBLR Stations
Hudson Bergen Light Rail
Parks and Open Space
Municipality

Source: Municipal Parks Departments and Jacobs
Northern Branch
Parks and Open Space:
Ridgefield & Fairview

Figure 7-2

- Half-Mile Study Area
- Proposed Stations
- Proposed Alignment
- Parks and Open Space
- Municipality

Source: Municipal Parks Departments and Jacobs
Northern Branch
Parks and Open Space:
Palisades Park Borough
Figure 7-3

Overpeck County Park -
Ridgefield Park Area

Overpeck County Park -
Palisades Park Area

Palisades
Park Station

Palisades
Park Municipal Pool

Half-Mile Study Area

Proposed Stations

Proposed Alignment

Parks and Open Space

Municipality

Source: Municipal Parks Departments and Jacobs
Northern Branch
Parks and Open Space: Leonia Borough
Figure 7-4

Half-Mile Study Area
Proposed Stations
Proposed Alignment
Parks and Open Space
Municipality

Source: Municipal Parks Departments and Jacobs
**50th Street Park:** This facility, located on 50th Street, north of Newkirk Avenue and east of the right-of-way, contains a basketball court and a small playground with slides and climbing equipment for children.

**43rd Street/Fireman Park:** This facility, located between 43rd and 44th Streets along Bergen Turnpike east of the right-of-way, contains two basketball courts and a small playground with slides and climbing equipment for children.

**North Bergen Recreation Center & Fields:** This complex includes a recreation center as well as two softball fields, a baseball field, two soccer fields, and a playground. The complex is located between 63rd and 67th Streets, west of Durham Avenue, and east of Cottage Avenue.

**North Bergen High School Fields:** North Bergen High School is located on John F. Kennedy Boulevard West between 73rd and 76th Streets. The athletic fields behind the school and adjacent, across 76th Street, are available for public use when not in use by the school.

**Fairview**

**English Neighborhood Park:** This facility, located on Sedore Avenue, across from Mt. Moriah Cemetery, is east of the right-of-way, and contains multi-purpose ballfields.

**Ridgefield Park/Teaneck**

**Overpeck County Park - Ridgefield Park Area:** This newest development of Overpeck County Park is located west of Overpeck Creek, north and south of Fort Lee Road. There is an internal access road allowing access between the Ridgefield Park Area and Leonia South Area of Overpeck County Park. The Ridgefield Park Area contains an amphitheater, ballfields, soccer fields, tennis courts, three comfort stations, two concession areas, a children’s playground, a dock, canoe/kayak launch, and five miles of paths for pedestrian and bicycle use. This site is host to festivals and concerts most weekends throughout the spring, summer and fall seasons.

**Leonia**

**Leonia Middle School Fields:** Leonia Middle School Fields are located behind Leonia Middle School, located at the corner of Christie Heights Street and Broad Avenue. The resource consists of multi-purpose ballfields available for public use when not in use by the school.

**Englewood**

**Madison Avenue Park:** This facility, located on Madison Avenue, east of the right-of-way, includes ballfields and two playgrounds.

**Artus Park:** This facility, located between S. Dean Street and Linden Avenue east of the right-of-way, includes a basketball court and small playground.

**Dunning Park:** This facility, located between Hillside Avenue and Spring Lane east of the right-of-way, includes 1.5 acres of grassy lawn with benches for passive recreation.

**Triangle Park:** This facility, located between East Ivy Lane, East Hudson Avenue, and North Dean Street, is east of the right-of-way and contains a lawn area and small playground.
7.3.2. Potential Impacts and Mitigation

7.3.2.1. No Build Alternative

There are no changes to the impacts associated with the No Build Alternative as compared with the DEIS.

7.3.2.2. Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative would not cause any new or different noise or visual impacts as compared with the DEIS. As the revised alignment does not move the alignment closer to any parklands, open space, or recreational resources, none of the parkland resources described in Table 7-1 would experience a noise- or visual-related impact.

The Preferred Alternative does not result in the alteration of roadway circulation in the study area, with the exception of some traffic mitigation measures intended to improve the level of service for cars, and the closure of 83rd Street and connection of 85th Street to West Side Avenue in North Bergen. Neither traffic mitigation, nor the 83rd/85th Street modification, directly affects roadway access to a park or recreational facility. The Preferred Alternative includes new bus pull-outs along Fort Lee Road in Leonia, which would improve safety for bus operators, riders, and drivers in the vicinity of Overpeck Park (see Overpeck Park discussion below.)

The revisions to the Preferred Alternative do require the acquisition of or easement across three portions of parkland as described below. Section 4(f) applicability is described in summary at the end of the analysis.

**North Bergen Municipal Pool, North Bergen**

In the interim between the DEIS and the SDEIS, NJ TRANSIT, CSX, and NYS&W determined that the Northern Branch light rail service must remain physically separate from freight yard activity to the greatest extent possible. This separation resulted in the design of the viaduct from the Tonnelle Avenue connection over the CSX North Bergen yard, the alignment along West Side Avenue, and the 85th Street viaduct. In addition, 85th Street would be extended to West Side Avenue by means of a new underpass (a short tunnel) created in the embankment supporting the CSX River Line. The new 85th Street extension is an improvement identified by North Bergen to alleviate an existing dangerous curve on the present 83rd Street underpass, where several fatalities have occurred.

To accomplish the 85th Street viaduct and the 85th Street extension, a portion of Block 468, Lot 1 would be acquired. This lot is partially developed with the North Bergen Municipal Pool facility; the remainder of the parcel outside of the development envelope for the pool is vacant and overgrown (refer to Figure 7-6). The acquired portion of the property would be developed with new roadway right-of-way and would contain the supports for the viaduct and maintenance access roads.

The land required for the development of the viaduct and roadway extension is located in the southwest quadrant of the lot, away from and not affecting the pool facilities, parking lot, or sidewalks. The land is not optimal for additional recreational development as it is located between the existing CSX freight rail right-of-way and the Northern Branch rail right-of-way, is overgrown with vegetation, and experiences significant change in elevation and uneven topography climbing toward the CSX tracks.
Figure 7-6

Northern Branch Parks and Open Space: North Bergen Municipal Pool Facility

Total Acquisition: 0.91 acres

Proposed Alignment
- At Grade
- Viaduct

Station Area Features
- 85th Street Extension
- 85th Street Railroad Underpass
- Parkland
- Parkland Acquisition

Source: Municipal Parks Department and Jacobs
The municipal pool lot is encumbered by the NJDEP Green Acres Program, which requires 2-to-1 compensation of land or 4-to-1 compensation of funds to offset the loss of the parkland for a major disposal (fee acquisition of more than 0.5 acre), regardless of the present recreational use of the land. The taking would acquire in fee approximately 0.91 acres of the approximately 14-acre lot. NJ TRANSIT has actively coordinated with both Green Acres and the Township of North Bergen regarding the Northern Branch project and has committed to identifying adequate compensation meeting the requirements of the Green Acres Program and North Bergen’s needs. It is anticipated that monetary compensation at 4:1 would be the most appropriate form of compensation for North Bergen, providing the greatest community benefit. The funds could be used to enhance existing park facilities or acquire additional land in the future for recreation.

Since the proposed acquisition does not affect existing recreational resources and has a low potential to affect potential additional recreational development, the acquisition of the park acreage is not an adverse impact on the availability of parkland or recreational resources in the study area. Land uses adjacent to the North Bergen Municipal Pool site are primarily industrial or large-scale commercial; consequently, the development of the identified portion of the park does not constitute a visual impact on either the pool or adjacent uses that may consider the park a visual resource.

**Overpeck County Park, Leonia South Area, Leonia**

The SDEIS Preferred Alternative proposes a new location for Leonia Station, primarily in response to community opposition to the Leonia Station configuration proposed in the DEIS. The revised Leonia Station platforms would both be located south of Fort Lee Road. A four-story parking deck is proposed to be located within the Leonia South Area of Overpeck County Park on the site of an abandoned basketball court and abandoned comfort station, within Block 703 Lot 1 (refer to Figure 7-7a). Four areas of bus pull-outs along Fort Lee Road are also proposed to facilitate multi-modal access to the Northern Branch. Two pull-outs would be located on the eastbound side of Fort Lee Road, within Block 703, Lot 1, and two would be located opposite on the westbound side in Block 102, Lot 1 (Henry Hoebel Area).

Overpeck County Park is encumbered by the Green Acres Program. The funds used to purchase Overpeck County Park were derived from the 1961 Bond Act, which requires 1-to-1 land compensation (or 2-to-1 if an appraisal is waived). That is, unlike traditional Green Acres diversions and disposals, compensation for the non-recreational use of Overpeck County Park cannot be provided in terms of financial compensation to Bergen County; equal land (in acreage) and equal value must be provided. The amount of land required for compensation would depend on Green Acres’ interpretation of the components of the diversion. If the parking deck and associated bus pull-outs are considered to represent the total diversion, the acreage diverted is estimated at 1.23 acres. If the use of existing internal park roads is considered part of the diversion as well, the total diversion increases to 2.3 acres. NJ TRANSIT intends to acquire the right to develop the parking deck through an easement instead of fee purchase of the area required, which would reduce the value of the land needed but not the acreage.

NJ TRANSIT has actively coordinated with Green Acres, Bergen County (the agency with jurisdiction over Overpeck County Park), and the Borough of Leonia (the municipality directly affected) regarding the impacts and has committed to identifying adequate compensation meeting the requirements of Green Acres and the needs of Bergen County and Leonia. It is anticipated that the compensation requirements would be satisfied through the development of new parkland immediately north and adjacent to the Henry Hoeble Area of Overpeck Park. The land, composed of two parcels, is currently in use by the Borough of Leonia as a recycling facility and DPW yard (refer to Figure 7-7b). Areas presently developed with DPW buildings would remain in use serving their present function. The other areas of the site would be developed with a new ballfield and other amenities. The area proposed for compensation would be adequate to meet the replacement ratio regardless of whether the existing internal roads accessing the new parking deck are included in the total acreage of the diversion.
Overpeck Park - Henry Hoeble Area
Block 102, Lot 1

Overpeck Park - Leonia South Area
Block 703, Lot 1

4 Bus Pull-Outs (easement)
0.02 acres each

Parking Deck (easement)
1.15 acres

Proposed Stations
Proposed Alignment
Station Area Features

Parkland Acquisition
Pull-Out (not parkland)
Parkland
Proposed Stations
At Grade
Pedestrian Walkway
Platform

Figure 7-7a

Northern Branch
Parks and Open Space:
Overpeck County Park

Source: Municipal Parks Departments and Jacobs

Bergen County
Hudson County
Manhattan

0 180 360 Feet

NJTRANSIT
The Way To Go.

JACOBS
Northern Branch
Parks and Open Space: Overpeck County Park

Figure 7-7b

Potential Compensation
Leonia DPW Site
Convert to New Athletic Fields

Parking Deck (easement)
1.15 acres

Bus Pull-Outs (easement)
0.02 acres each

Potential Compensation
Overpeck Park - Township Area
Block 102, Lot 1

Overpeck Park - Leonia South Area
Block 703, Lot 1

Overpeck County Park

Proposed Stations

Proposed Alignment

At Grade

Underpass

Station Area Features

Pedestrian Walkway

Platform

Source: Municipal Parks Departments and Jacobs

NJ TRANSIT
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In addition, since the impact of the park loss would be experienced most directly by Leonia, NJ TRANSIT proposes to construct a pedestrian overpass connecting Leonia High School to the athletic fields in the Henry Hoebel Area of Overpeck Park. Presently, high school students cross the Northern Branch at grade to reach the fields. The pedestrian overpass would address safety concerns raised by the high school. The overpass is considered a park improvement for the purposes of improving access and use of an existing park facility. No other non-park needs are served by the pedestrian overpass. As a result, it does not require analysis or compensation under Green Acres.

Since the proposed acquisition does not affect existing recreational resources and has a low potential to affect potential additional recreational development, the acquisition of the park acreage is not an adverse impact on the availability of parkland or recreational resources in the study area. Comments submitted on the DEIS indicated community concerns regarding the aesthetic value of Overpeck County Park. The parking deck would be developed using context-sensitive design to limit visual impacts and harmonize with the existing development and landscaping within Overpeck County Park. Additionally, the Green Acres program mandates that whenever possible, mature trees should be preserved during a diversion. In the instance of Overpeck County Park, the internal park street leading to the equestrian center is lined with mature hardwood trees. These trees would be protected to the greatest extent possible, providing visual screening of the deck from adjacent uses. As a result of these measures, no adverse effect would result.

The development of Leonia Station at the proposed location, including the development of the parking deck, would benefit Overpeck County Park. The Bergen County Department of Parks has stated that during weekend events, Overpeck County Park experiences a parking shortage. As peak park use occurs during hours that are opposite those of the Northern Branch’s peak operating hours, the parking deck can serve to provide parking for park users. Additionally, the Northern Branch rail service provides a transportation alternative for reaching Overpeck County Park, improving access to the recreational resource, particularly for users who do not have access to personal automobiles.

**Depot Square Park, Englewood**

Depot Square Park is a recreational area composed of two parcels separated by the existing Northern Branch alignment in the town center area of Englewood. The old Englewood train station building is located on the west side of the alignment. The western parcel includes a playground and incorporates the sidewalk along the western side of the alignment from Tallman Place to West Palisade Avenue (CR 505), a distance of more than 900 feet, creating a flag-shaped lot. The eastern parcel consists of a small lawn area and a parking lot, with the parking area occupying approximately one-third of the parcel (refer to Figure 7-8a).

The SDEIS Preferred Alternative requires that the Northern Branch be double-tracked through Englewood Town Center to maintain the proposed service plan. This improvement would require additional right-of-way beyond what exists in the developed downtown area. Station platforms would also be developed for the Englewood Town Center Station. Platforms must be located adjacent to the tracks.

To provide the second track and station platforms, approximately 0.15 acres of Block 1202, Lot 1.01 (Depot Square Park (east)) and about 0.08 acres from Block 1201, Lot 1.01 (Depot Square Park (west)) would be required. The acquisition from Depot Square Park east would consist of parking lot area; the acquisition from Depot Square Park (west) would consist of sidewalk. Proposed site plans for Depot Square reconfigure the parking area on the east side of the Northern Branch, between North Dean Street and the railroad. The reconfiguration would better utilize the existing space and improve traffic flow through the parking lot.
Northern Branch
Parks and Open Space:
Depot Square

Figure 7-8a

Proposed Stations
Restored Lawn
Parkland Acquisition
Parkland
Proposed Alignment
At Grade

Source: Municipal Parks Departments and Jacobs

Fee Acquisition:
0.08 acres

Fee Acquisition:
0.15 acres

Depot Square (west)
Block 1201, Lot 1.01

Depot Square (east)
Block 1202, Lot 1.01

Engle St
E Palisade Ave
Dean St
Englewood Town Center Station

0 150 300 Feet

Source: Municipal Parks Departments and Jacobs

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Additionally, an existing driveway bisecting Depot Square Park (east) would be closed and restored to lawn, and the previous intersection of the driveway with the parking lot and North Dean Street would be striped for parking. As a result, no parking loss would occur in the final condition, once construction of the Northern Branch is complete.

No recreational uses would be affected by the acquisition. The sidewalk area to be acquired from Depot Square Park (west) is part of the flag portion of the lot. Pedestrian circulation would be maintained as part of the station development. No recreational facilities would be permanently lost through the acquisition and development of this portion of the parkland.

Depot Square Park is, like the previously described resources, encumbered by the Green Acres Program. The fee acquisition of the 0.23 acres of parkland, although presently used for parking and sidewalks, is classified as a minor disposal and must be compensated at a 1:1 ratio of land, funds, or a combination of the two. NJ TRANSIT has actively coordinated with both Green Acres and the City of Englewood and has committed to identifying adequate compensation meeting the requirements of the Green Acres program and Englewood’s needs. It is anticipated that the compensation requirements would be satisfied by the development of a new park area in the town center area of Englewood. The compensation would replace an existing commercial building located on West Palisade Avenue with a small community park (refer to Figure 7-8b). Property acquisition associated with this compensation is described in Chapter 5. The proposed compensation site would be used to provide interim parking during the construction phase of the development of Englewood Town Center Station. At the completion of construction, the parking capacity at Englewood Town Center Station would be restored as described above, and the compensation parcel would be developed as a recreational resource.

Section 4(f) Applicability
In addition to Green Acres, the affected parkland described above represents publicly-funded open space resources, and since the Northern Branch project would be funded in part by US Department of Transportation (USDOT) funds, the use of the resources for transportation purposes requires analysis under Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act of 1966. Chapter 25 of this SDEIS document details the Section 4(f) evaluation process. As the parklands to be acquired are not in active use for recreational purposes and do not constitute character-defining features of the park resources, the Section 4(f) uses are proposed to be de minimis.

7.4. Summary of Potential Environmental Effects of the DEIS and SDEIS

The Preferred Alternative requires the acquisition of or easement across three parcels currently identified as parkland and/or recreational resources. The DEIS Preferred Alternative did not affect parkland; therefore, these impacts are new to the SDEIS and represent the total potential impact resulting from the development of the project.

Table 7-2 summarizes the impacts associated with the project. Within each affected resource, the land identified for acquisition or easement is undeveloped, abandoned, or not directly associated with the parkland or recreational value of the resource. As all three resources are encumbered under the New Jersey’s Green Acres Program, compensation would be required for each parkland diversion, regardless of the present recreational value of the land to be acquired. The result would be a net increase in either actual parkland or park and recreational funding to develop additional facilities. As a result of these measures, no significant, unmitigatable impact to parkland and recreational resources is anticipated.
Figure 7-8b

Northern Branch Parks and Open Space: Depot Square

Proposed Stations
- Depot Square (west) Block 1201, Lot 1.01
- Depot Square (east) Block 1202, Lot 1.01

Restored Lawn

Potential Compensation

Fee Acquisition:
- 0.08 acres
- 0.15 acres

Proposed Alignment
- At Grade

Potential Compensation Commercial Uses Convert to New Park

Source: Municipal Parks Departments and Jacobs

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### Table 7-2:  Parkland Affected by the SDEIS Preferred Alternative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality and Project Element</th>
<th>Affected Resource, Project Need, and Potential Impact</th>
<th>Mitigation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Bergen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Right-of-Way</td>
<td>North Bergen Municipal Pool facility, Block 468, Lot 1. Acquisition of approximately 0.91 acres of undeveloped land adjacent to CSX right-of-way for a new rail viaduct and extension of 85th Street to West Side Avenue. There would be no impact to existing recreational facilities or access to facilities.</td>
<td>Replacement land or financial compensation for loss of parkland under Green Acres Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91st Street Station</td>
<td>Does not affect parkland or recreational resources.</td>
<td>None required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fairview</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Right-of-Way</td>
<td>Does not affect parkland or recreational resources.</td>
<td>None required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ridgefield</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Right-of-Way</td>
<td>Does not affect parkland or recreational resources.</td>
<td>None required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridgefield Station</td>
<td>Does not affect parkland or recreational resources.</td>
<td>None required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palisades Park</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Right-of-Way</td>
<td>Does not affect parkland or recreational resources.</td>
<td>None required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palisades Park Station</td>
<td>Does not affect parkland or recreational resources.</td>
<td>None required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leonia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Right-of-Way</td>
<td>Does not affect parkland or recreational resources.</td>
<td>None required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonia Station</td>
<td>Leonia South Area of Overpeck County Park, Block 703, Lot 1, approximately 1.19 acres for the parking deck and bus pull-outs. Henry Hoebel Area, Block 102, Lot 1, approximately 0.04 acres for bus pull-outs. The total easement is estimated at 1.23 acres, or 2.3 acres if access roads are included in the area affected. There would be no impact to existing recreational facilities or access to existing facilities. The parking deck would be available for park users during peak park usage periods, which are opposite from peak transit usage. Bus pull-outs would enhance safety along Fort Lee Road and the pedestrian bridge would increase safety for students accessing school fields. The Northern Branch Corridor project would improve access to Overpeck County Park resources.</td>
<td>Replacement land and improvements for loss of parkland under Green Acres Program. Context sensitive design and screening of proposed parking deck to preserve visual resource value of Overpeck County Park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Englewood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail Right-of-Way</td>
<td>The effect on parkland is included in Englewood Town Center Station discussion.</td>
<td>Included with Englewood Town Center Station.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englewood Rt. 4 Station and VBF</td>
<td>Does not affect parkland or recreational resources.</td>
<td>None required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englewood Town Center Station</td>
<td>A portion of the sidewalk included in the 900-foot stem of the flag lot of Depot Square Park (west), Block 1201, Lot 1.01 would be acquired to develop the southbound station platform for Englewood Town Center Station (approximately 0.08 acres). No recreational facilities would be affected. A portion of the parking lot within Depot Square Park (east), Block 1202, Lot 1.01 would be acquired to develop the second track and the northbound station platform (approximately 0.15 acres). No recreational resources would be affected by the acquisition.</td>
<td>Replacement land or financial compensation for loss of parkland under Green Acres Program. Station development involves reconfigured parking and closure of an existing driveway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englewood Hospital &amp; Medical Center Station</td>
<td>Does not affect parkland or recreational resources.</td>
<td>None required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AREAS NORTH OF ENGLEWOOD</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The shift in freight rail service to the overnight hours would introduce a noise source along the rail right-of-way during a time period when it does not currently exist; however, parkland and recreational resources are not actively used during the period of freight operation. No impact would result. No mitigation is required.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>