

4. Socioeconomic Conditions

This chapter evaluates the potential effects of the Proposed Project on socioeconomic conditions, including demographics, employment, and income. The chapter includes an assessment of existing conditions, the No Action Alternative, and potential consequences of the Proposed Project. In addition, this chapter discusses the property acquisitions, easements, and right-of-way agreements required for implementation of the Proposed Project.

4.1 KEY CONCLUSIONS

MTA has determined that there would be no adverse impacts to socioeconomic conditions under the Proposed Project. Key conclusions from this analysis include the following:

- MTA anticipates the Proposed Project would have substantial positive benefits to the neighborhoods within the study area.
- The Proposed Project would greatly improve transit access for communities in the eastern Bronx and the proposed Metro-North stations would provide better access to employment opportunities, shopping, and entertainment.
- MTA anticipates the enhancement of transportation options for residents, workers, and visitors would support future business and employment growth near the proposed Metro-North stations.
- Underutilized sites near the proposed Metro-North stations would be more attractive for residential and commercial development, benefiting the area's character and the economy.
- Property acquisitions and easements on Amtrak and City of New York-owned and private property would be required to implement the Proposed Project. In almost all cases, MTA would acquire only portions of the private lots, allowing the existing uses to continue. These acquisitions would generally be adjacent to the existing HGL corridor, thereby limiting any socioeconomic impacts.

4.2 METHODOLOGY

MTA defined the study areas for the four proposed station areas and HGL Corridor as the census tracts that intersect the ½-mile and 500-foot radii, respectively. The study area encompasses the populations that would be directly affected by the construction of the Proposed Project. MTA compiled socioeconomic data for the study areas using the 2013–2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, aggregated at the census-tract level, which corresponds to the smallest census geography for which data are available for all relevant socioeconomic indicators. MTA included census tracts that fall completely within the study areas in the station area and corridor analyses. Where population data were available, MTA included census tracts that fall only partially within the study areas in the analysis for conservative purposes.

In addition to assessing potential effects of the Proposed Project on socioeconomic conditions, if a federally funded transportation project requires property acquisition and relocation, a project must follow the standards

established in the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Title 42 Code of Federal Regulations Part 24) (Uniform Act; see Section 3.3, “Regulatory Context” for definition). The Uniform Act establishes minimum standards related to acquiring real estate or displacing individuals from their homes, businesses, or farms, including relocation assistance, compensation, and other allowable payments related to moving costs and displacement. The Uniform Act ensures the rights of owners and tenants of real estate property acquired for a project and equitable treatment of those individuals so that such persons will not suffer disproportionate injuries as a result of projects designed for the benefit of the public as a whole.

As described in Chapter 2, “Project Alternatives,” the HGL Corridor is split into four segments. Appendix D, “Socioeconomic Conditions,” shows the census tracts included in each segment. MTA compared data compiled for the study areas with pertinent county data to provide a broader demographic context for the study areas. Appendix D includes specific datasets compiled by census tract, study area, and segment.

4.3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

4.3.1 Segments

4.3.1.1 Segment 1 (Corridor)

The Segment 1 Corridor includes the HGL right-of-way that spans Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx. Ditmars Boulevard to the north, Randall’s and Wards Islands to the west, Barnett Avenue and Harold Interlocking to the south, and the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway to the east encompasses this corridor. Figure D-1 in Appendix D shows the census tracts in the study area. Appendix D also provides data for Queens, New York, and Bronx Counties for broader demographic context in this corridor.

4.3.1.2 Segment 2 (Corridor and Hunts Point Station Area)

Segment 2 is entirely within the Bronx and comprises the Segment 2 Corridor as well as the area surrounding the proposed Hunts Point Station. Figure D-2 in Appendix D shows the census tracts used for the Hunts Point Station area and HGL Corridor study area. Appendix D also provides Bronx County data for broader demographic context.

4.3.1.3 Segment 3 (Corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest, Morris Park, and Co-op City Station Areas)

Segment 3 is entirely within the Bronx and includes the HGL right-of-way and bisects three proposed station locations. Figure D-3 in Appendix D shows the census tracts used in the analysis of this segment. Segment 3 has been divided into four study areas: the Segment 3 Corridor study area, the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area, the Morris Park Station area, and the Co-op City Station area. Appendix D also provides Bronx County data for broader demographic context.

4.3.1.4 Segment 4 (Corridor)

The Segment 4 Corridor includes the HGL right-of-way and New Rochelle Yard that generally extends from Lispenard Avenue in New Rochelle (Westchester County, New York) to the north to Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses (Bronx County, New York) to the south. The Segment 4 Corridor study area includes census tracks in Bronx County and Westchester County, as shown on Figure D-4 in Appendix D, which provides data for Bronx County and Westchester County for broader demographic context.

4.3.2 Population and Households

The Segment 1 Corridor has a population of approximately 55,700 and approximately 23,400 housing units and has a range of median household incomes. The Queens portion contains higher median household incomes, the Bronx portion contains lower median household incomes. Median household incomes in the Segment 1 Corridor range from approximately \$87,000 in Astoria, Queens (Queens Census Tract 97) to approximately \$13,200 in the Port Morris, Bronx (Bronx Census Tract 27.02). Since median household incomes are lower in the Bronx portion, it has a higher proportion of households that are below the poverty level compared to the Queens portion. The Bronx portion has some of the lowest median incomes along the entire corridor study area and has one of the highest poverty rates. Specifically, approximately 43 percent of the households are below the poverty level within the Bronx portion of the Segment 1 Corridor, which is well-above the rate for the entire county (29.3 percent).

Segment 2 has a population of approximately 81,500 and 28,700 housing units. Households along this corridor—located in portions of the Port Morris, Foxhurst, and Hunts Point neighborhoods of the Bronx—have some of the lowest median household incomes compared to the entire study area. The median household income of all census tracts in Segment 2 are below that of Bronx County (\$36,593), except for in Census Tract 24, which has a median household income of about \$53,000. With such low median household incomes, the population in Segment 2 also has one of the highest poverty rates along the entire study area—higher than that of Bronx County as well. Specifically, within Segment 2, approximately 37 percent of the households are below the poverty level.

Segment 3, the largest of the segments, has a total population of approximately 158,100. The portion of Segment 3 that includes the HGL Corridor study area and the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area has the largest population and number of housing units at approximately 85,200 and 32,300, respectively. The Morris Park Station area has the smallest population and number of households in Segment 3 with approximately 27,100 and 10,800, respectively. In the middle, the Co-op City Station area has a population of approximately 45,800 and 19,300 housing units. Lower median household incomes are present in the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area, while higher median household incomes can be found in the Morris Park and Co-op City Station areas. In general, median household incomes are higher along this segment than along the other three segments; however, median household incomes range from approximately \$21,400 in the West Farms neighborhood of the Bronx (Bronx Census Tract 56) in the HGL Corridor study area and the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area to approximately \$102,600 in the Pelham Parkway neighborhood of the Bronx (Bronx Census Tract 288) in the Morris Park Station area. In addition, since the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area has lower median incomes, it has a higher proportion of households below the poverty level (approximately 22 percent) compared to the Morris Park and Co-op City Station areas (approximately 13 and 8 percent, respectively); however, this poverty rate is lower than that of Bronx County (29 percent).

The Segment 4 Corridor has a population of approximately 46,700 with approximately 17,400 housing units. In general, Segment 4 has some of the highest median household incomes along the entire study area; however, a range of median household incomes are present along the Segment 4 Corridor, depending on the neighborhood. Median household incomes range from approximately \$31,200 in the New Rochelle neighborhood of Westchester County (Westchester Census Tract 63) to approximately \$158,400 in the Pelham Manor neighborhood of Westchester County (Westchester Census Tract 55). Although there are high median household incomes in some neighborhoods, the portion of Segment 4 in Westchester County has a higher poverty rate compared to the county as a whole. Approximately 15 percent of households are below the poverty



level within the Westchester County portion of the corridor, which is higher than the rate for the entire county (approximately 10 percent).

4.3.3 Employment

The Queens portion of Segment 1 has one of the lowest unemployment rates along the entire study area at approximately 5 percent, which is below the unemployment rate for Queens County as a whole (6.9 percent). Except for the census tract in Manhattan, the Bronx portion has the highest unemployment rate in the entire study area at approximately 13 percent, which is above that of Bronx County as a whole (11.6 percent). However, the unemployment rate in the Manhattan census tract of Segment 1 is approximately 40 percent, which is the highest along the entire study area and well above the unemployment rate of New York County (6.2 percent). This census tract includes several public facilities, such as homeless shelters, which may be contributing to the high unemployment rate.

The unemployment rate of Segment 2 (approximately 10 percent) is below that of Bronx County, but is on the higher end of the spectrum compared to the entire study area.

As the largest segment along the study area, Segment 3 has approximately 72,500 employees, which represents approximately 12 percent of employment in Bronx County. The HGL Corridor study area and the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area has one of the highest unemployment rates in the entire study area at approximately 12 percent, which is also slightly higher than the unemployment rate in Bronx County (11.6 percent). Meanwhile, the Morris Park and Co-op City Station areas have similar unemployment rates on the lower end of the spectrum as compared to the entire study area at just above approximately 7 percent.

The portion of Segment 4 in Bronx County has the lowest unemployment rate of the entire study area at approximately 5 percent. The unemployment rate for the Westchester County portion of Segment 4 is also one of the lowest along the entire study area (approximately 8 percent); however, it is slightly higher than the poverty rate in the county as a whole (approximately 7 percent).

In all segments, educational services, and health care and social assistance sectors comprise the largest share of employment, which is also the largest share of employment in Queens, New York, Bronx, and Westchester Counties.

4.3.4 Travel to Work

The No. 6 train is near Segment 2 and the proposed Hunts Point Station. No subway lines are near the proposed stations in Segment 3; however, several bus lines serve these areas. In Segments 1 and 2, the most common mode for journey-to-work travel is public transportation, representing approximately two-thirds of all modes used. Segments 1 and 2 rely more heavily on public transportation than the comparable county as a whole. The use of public transportation is also the most common in Segment 3; however, its use varies for each station area within Segment 3, where a high proportion use public transportation in the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area (approximately 62 percent), but a lower proportion use it in the Morris Park Station area (approximately 44 percent) and Co-op City Station area (approximately 55 percent). In the Morris Park and Co-op City Station areas, a higher percentage of workers use a personal vehicle than in Segment 1, Segment 2, the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area, and Bronx County. Unlike the other segments along the corridor, the most common travel mode for journeys to work in Segment 4 is personal vehicle, representing more than half of all modes used.

In Segments 1, 2, and 3, the average travel times to work are similar at approximately 44 minutes, which is comparable to travel times for each county. However, average travel times vary for each study area within Segment 3, where the Morris Park Station area has an average travel time of 39 minutes, and the Co-op City Station area has an average travel time of 47 minutes. The Westchester County portion of Segment 4, which relies more heavily on cars, has an average travel time to work of 30 minutes, which is the shortest travel time in the study area and is also shorter than that of Westchester County.

4.4 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the HGL Corridor will continue to operate as it does today. The No Action Alternative will not provide new passenger rail service, enhance network resiliency, or support faster recovery from rail service disruptions. The No Action Alternative will not bring increased regional accessibility to the eastern Bronx community by offering rail service to and from Manhattan or the New York Metropolitan Area and Connecticut suburbs served by Metro-North's NHL. Socioeconomic and demographic forecasts for the No Action Alternative are not available for the study area or at the census-tract level; however, forecasts are available at the county level. According to forecasts that NYMTC prepared and adopted in March 2015, the population in Queens County is projected to be approximately 2,353,400 in 2025, which represents an increase of approximately 1.9 percent over existing conditions. The population in New York County is projected to be approximately 1,661,600 in 2025, which represents an increase of approximately 1.6 percent over existing conditions. The population in Bronx County is projected to be approximately 1,485,300 in 2025, which represents an increase of approximately 3.4 percent over existing conditions. NYMTC projects population in Westchester County to be approximately 998,000, which represents an increase of approximately 3 percent over existing conditions.

4.4.1 Segment 1 (Corridor)

As described in Chapter 3, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," MTA anticipates no future programmed or committed development projects will be completed or constructed within Segment 1 by 2025. Therefore, MTA anticipates socioeconomic conditions, including population and housing characteristics and economic activities, would not be affected in Segment 1 under the No Action Alternative.

4.4.2 Segment 2 (Corridor and Hunts Point Station Area)

As described in Chapter 3, MTA anticipates five programmed and committed development projects will be completed or constructed within Segment 2 by 2025. Of note, one proposed development project is anticipated to have 474 residential units, and community facility and retail uses. Another proposed development project is anticipated to have 89 residential units. Since the Segment 2 Corridor and station area have approximately 26,200 housing units, MTA does not anticipate these projects to substantially affect socioeconomic conditions in Segment 2, representing a minor percentage of the total. In addition, Majora Carter Group will restore, develop, and subsequently manage the former Hunts Point Station site as outlined in a permanent easement granted by Amtrak.



4.4.3 Segment 3 (Corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest, Morris Park, and Co-op City Station Areas)

4.4.3.1 Corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest Station Area

As described in Chapter 3, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy,” by 2025 there will be one public parkland development completed within the Segment 3 Corridor and five programmed and committed development projects completed or constructed within the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area. Of the five proposed development projects, all have a potential residential component and two have potential commercial uses. Of note, these proposed development projects will result in 52 residential units, as compared to approximately 32,300 existing housing units in the study area, representing a minor percentage of the total. Therefore, MTA does not anticipate these projects to substantially affect socioeconomic conditions in the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area.

4.4.3.2 Morris Park Station Area and Co-op City Station Areas

As described in Chapter 3, by 2025 no future programmed and committed development projects will be completed or constructed within the Morris Park and Co-op City Station areas. Therefore, MTA does not anticipate socioeconomic conditions, including population and housing characteristics and economic activities, to be affected in the Morris Park and Co-op City Station areas under the No Action Alternative.

4.4.4 Segment 4 (Corridor)

The Westchester County portion of the study area will continue to rely primarily on cars, trucks, or vans alone for the journeys to work, as it does today. As described in Chapter 3, by 2025 two programmed and committed development projects will be within Segment 4. Both proposed development projects will be entirely residential and will have approximately 170 units. Since the Segment 4 Corridor has approximately 17,400 housing units, representing a minor percentage of the total, MTA does not anticipate these projects to substantially affect socioeconomic conditions under the No Action Alternative.

4.5 PROPOSED PROJECT

Operations for the Proposed Project would be within the existing HGL right-of-way. Property acquisitions and easements on Amtrak and City of New York-owned and private property would be required to implement the Proposed Project. In almost all cases, MTA would acquire only portions of the private lots with no demolition or displacement of buildings, allowing the existing uses to continue. These acquisitions would generally be adjacent to the existing HGL right-of-way, thereby limiting any socioeconomic impacts.

With four new stations, the Proposed Project would greatly improve transit access for communities in the eastern Bronx. The new link would create a direct connection to and from PSNY in Manhattan as well as provide intra-Bronx connections to other areas served by Metro-North’s NHL. These improvements would provide more convenient public transportation options for users surrounding the proposed new station locations. In particular, since there are no subway lines near the proposed stations in Segment 3, residents and workers of these areas would benefit from this new service. The Proposed Project would greatly support study area neighborhoods by adding travel options and access for residents, workers, and visitors to employment opportunities, shopping, and entertainment. This beneficial impact would provide an additional option for accessing the regional destinations in the station areas such as the Morris Park Station area, which could benefit existing and future employees, specifically for the Hutchinson Metro Center complex and the students, faculty,



and staff associated with the Yeshiva University - Albert Einstein College of Medicine and affiliated hospitals. Thus, the Proposed Action would not adversely affect population, housing, and businesses.

In addition, underutilized sites near the proposed new stations would be more attractive for residential and commercial development, benefiting the neighborhood's character and economy. Chapter 21, "Indirect and Cumulative Impacts" describes the potential for such new development and associated indirect effects. The proposed new stations would also draw additional pedestrian traffic, which could increase the sales of nearby retail stores or result in new retail uses that cater to these additional customers. This increase in retail sales or other new commercial businesses could result in beneficial impacts on employment in the station areas.

The proposed new stations and the addition of Metro-North service would improve travel times for customers, resulting in faster, more efficient travel options, and improved service. In addition to providing new stations for its customers in the eastern Bronx, the Proposed Project would also enhance Metro-North's network resiliency by allowing for faster recovery and improving its ability to maintain acceptable levels of service when faced with planned and unplanned service disruptions, severe weather events, and other emergency situations. Disruptions to service affect commuting to work, shopping, tourism, and businesses. Faster recoveries from disruptions would improve travel times for workers, shoppers, and visitors following an unplanned event. Therefore, the Proposed Project would result in broader benefits to Metro-North's entire NHL.

Overall, the Proposed Project is anticipated to better serve and provide benefits to the station areas. MTA anticipates that the Proposed Project would support increased economic activity and other economic benefits near the proposed new station locations; therefore, no adverse socioeconomic impact would result.

4.6 CONCLUSION

There would be no adverse impacts to socioeconomic conditions under the No Action Alternative and Proposed Project. MTA anticipates that socioeconomic conditions, including population and housing characteristics and economic activities, would not be affected within any of the segments under the No Action Alternative. However, MTA anticipates the Proposed Project would have substantial positive benefits to the neighborhoods within the study area and would greatly improve transit access for communities in the eastern Bronx. The proposed new Metro-North stations would provide better access to employment opportunities, shopping, and entertainment.