

7. Public Open Space and Recreation

This chapter assesses the potential adverse impacts of the Proposed Project on public open space and recreational resources along the HGL Corridor. The chapter provides an inventory and description of public open space, parkland, and other recreational resources within the study areas for the four proposed stations and HGL Corridor. The analysis addresses the Proposed Project’s potential to adversely affect public open space and recreation.

7.1 KEY CONCLUSIONS

No adverse impacts to public open space and recreational resources would occur with the Proposed Project. Key conclusions from this analysis include the following:

- The Proposed Project would not result in any adverse direct effects, including any encroachment, access, or safety problems, at resources along the existing HGL Corridor.
- A permanent easement immediately adjacent to the railroad right-of-way in Starlight Park and Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses would not encroach on the planned park amenities or disrupt any of the parks’ functions.
- Access to the parks would be maintained during construction and access agreements following construction would permit use of existing or planned paths/roads within the parks for maintenance purposes.
- Changes in noise, vibration and air quality due to the Proposed Project would not adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the public open space and recreational resources along the corridor.
- The proposed stations would not result in a visual impact either to or from adjacent public open space resources.

7.2 METHODOLOGY

MTA divided the HGL Corridor and the four proposed station area locations—located in the Bronx, Queens, New York, and Westchester Counties—into four segments and evaluated them for existing and future (2025) conditions under the No Action Alternative and Proposed Project. MTA defined the study areas for the four proposed station areas and HGL Corridor, within which direct impacts could occur, as ¼-mile and 500-foot radii, respectively. The study areas were identified as the maximum areas within which adverse effects to public open space and recreation (whether by a direct impact or by causing increased noise and other disturbances that would affect their use and enjoyment) could occur.

MTA obtained information about the public open space and recreational resources through geographic information systems shapefiles that contained information on public open space resources from the NYCDCP BYTES of the BIG APPLE database, as well as data available online through the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation’s (NYCDPR) website. MTA obtained information on public parks in Westchester

County through Westchester County land use data and then cross-referenced that information with desktop research.

7.3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

7.3.1 Segment 1 (Corridor)

The study area for Segment 1 includes the HGL, which spans Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx and is generally bounded by the Ditmars Boulevard to the north, Randall's and Wards Islands to the east, Barnett Avenue and Harold Interlocking to the south, and the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway to the west (Segment 1). Four parks and three Greenstreet locations are within the Segment 1 Corridor.¹ Open space in Segment 1 spans from Queens through Manhattan (Randall's and Wards Islands) into the Bronx. The HGL Corridor in Segment 1 bisects two waterfront parks—Ralph Demarco Park and Astoria Park in Queens—and through Wards Island Park and Randall's Island Park, where 312 acres of parkland exist within the study area.

As presented in Table 7-1, Ralph Demarco Park, Astoria Park, Wards Island Park, and Randall's Island Park are considered active recreational uses. These resources consist of playing fields, outdoor pools, running and walking paths, and playgrounds. Two Greenstreet locations in Queens are considered passive recreational uses. Figure 7-1 shows the public open space resources within Segment 1.

Table 7-1. Open Space (Existing): Segment 1 (Corridor)

Map ID	Name	Location	Total Size (acres)	Active/Passive	Ownership
1	Greenstreet	Northern Boulevard and Broadway	0.01	Passive	NYC DPR/DOT/DEP
2		33rd Street between Ditmars Boulevard and 23rd Avenue	0.08		
3	Ralph Demarco Park	Shore Boulevard between Ditmars Boulevard and 20th Avenue	3.69	Active	NYCDPR
4	Astoria Park	19th Street between Astoria Park South and Ditmars Boulevard	49.40		
5	Wards Island Park	East River and Hell Gate	111.58		
6	Randall's Island Park	East River and Harlem River	200.76		

Sources: NYCDPR, 2019

Notes: Map ID references Figure 7-1

NYCDPR = New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

NYCDOT = New York City Department of Transportation

NYCDEP = New York City Department of Environmental Protection

¹ The Greenstreets Program—administered by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection—converts paved, vacant traffic islands and medians into green spaces filled with trees, shrubs, and groundcover in an effort to capture stormwater.

Figure 7-1. Open Space (Existing): Segment 1 (Corridor)



Source: New York City Department of City Planning; New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; and WSP, 2019

7.3.2 Segment 2 (Corridor and Hunts Point Station Area)

7.3.2.1 Corridor

Five open space resources are within the Segment 2 Corridor.¹ Martin Luther King Triangle (a passive recreational use) is at Austin Place at East 149th Street. Daniel Boone Playground (an active recreational use) is on Boone Avenue between West Farms Road and Freeman Street. Longfellow Garden (a passive recreational use), Concrete Plant Park, and a portion of Lyons Square Playground are also within the study area. Concrete Plant Park is the largest publicly accessible resource within the HGL Corridor study area and provides a range of active and passive recreational uses along the Bronx River. Descriptions of these resources are shown on Figure 7-2 and listed in Table 7-2.

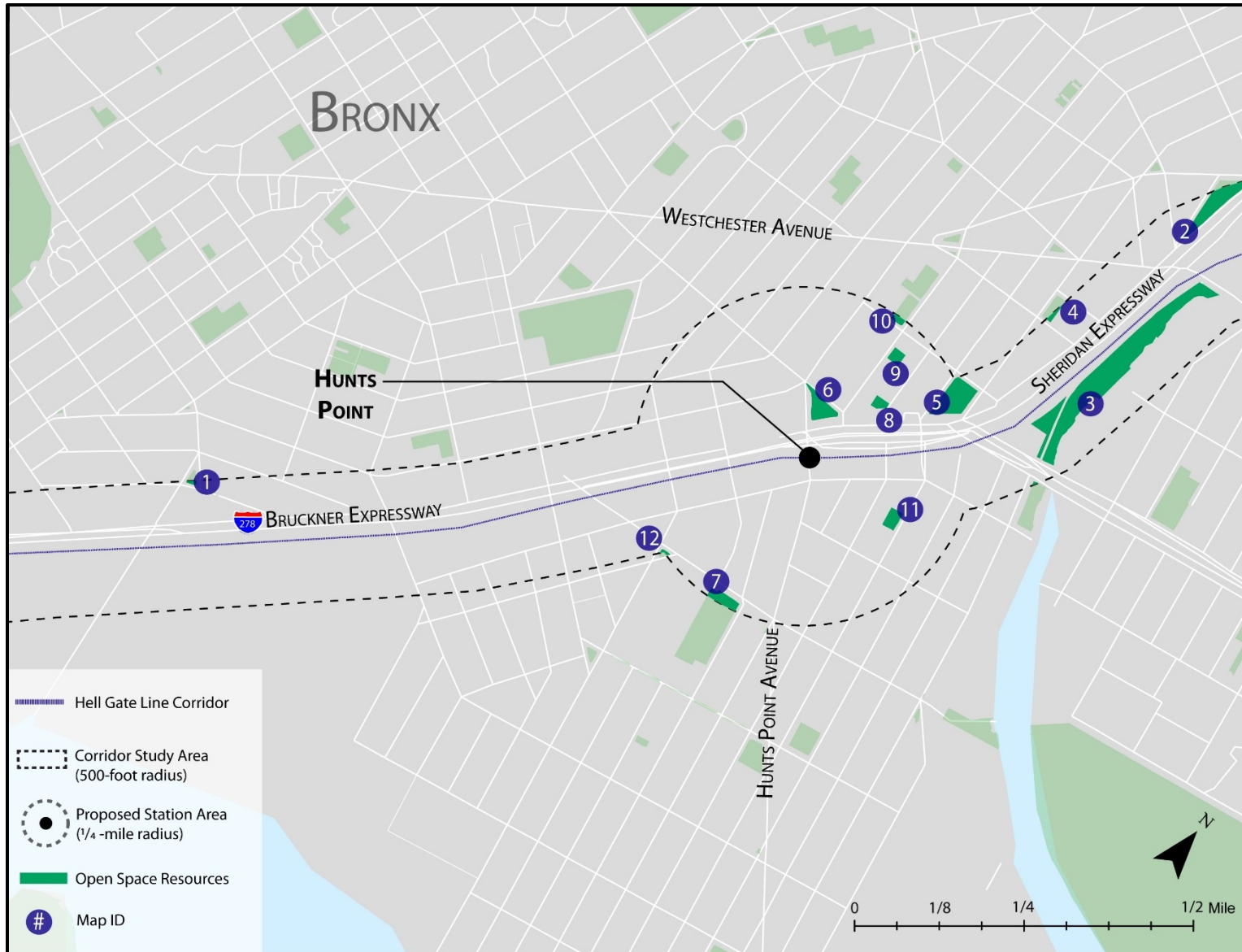
7.3.2.2 Hunts Point Station Area

The study area for the assessment of potential open space impacts in the Hunts Point Station area comprises a ¼-mile radius of the proposed Metro-North station, which would be within the railroad right-of-way southwest of the Hunts Point Avenue bridge at Bruckner Boulevard. Aldus Street to the north, Whittier Street to the east, Lafayette Avenue to the south, and Tiffany Street to the west generally bound the station area.

As shown on Figure 7-2 and listed in Table 7-2, eight publicly accessible open space resources are entirely or partially within the proposed Hunts Point Station area. The resources include one public plaza, three gardens, a playground, a recreational field, and several parks that allow for passive and active recreational uses. One Greenstreet is at the border of the Hunts Point Station area and the HGL Corridor study area to the south of the proposed station location.

¹ Lyons Square Playground is in both the HGL Corridor study area and the proposed Hunt Point Station area.

Figure 7-2. Open Space (Existing): Segment 2 (Corridor and Hunts Point Station Area)



Source: New York City Department of City Planning; New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; and WSP, 2019

7. Public Open Space and Recreation

Table 7-2. Open Space (Existing): Segment 2 (Corridor and Hunts Point Station Area)

Map ID	Name	Location	Segment Location	Total Size (acres)	Active/Passive	Ownership
1	Martin Luther King Triangle	Austin Place at East 149th Street	Corridor	0.13	Passive	NYCDPR
2	Daniel Boone Playground	Boone Avenue between West Farms Road and Freeman Street	Corridor	1.38	Active	NYCDPR
3	Concrete Plant Park	Bronx River between Westchester Avenue and Bruckner Boulevard	Corridor	6.30	Active	NYCDPR
4	Longfellow Garden	Longfellow Avenue, Lowell Street, and East 165th Street	Corridor	0.38	Passive	NYCDPR
5	Lyons Square Playground	Aldus Street to Bruckner Boulevard, between Bryant and Longfellow Avenues	Corridor & Hunts Point Station Area	1.60	Active	NYCDPR
6	Monsignor Raul Del Valle Square	Hunts Point Avenue, Bruckner Boulevard, East 163rd Street	Hunts Point Station Area	0.42	Passive	NYCDPR
7	Julio Carballo Fields	Manida Street between Spofford and Lafayette Avenues	Hunts Point Station Area	3.47	Active	NYCDPR
8	Mildred T. Rhodebeck Garden (Garden of Eden)	927 Faile Street	Hunts Point Station Area	0.25	Passive	NY Garden Trust
9	Hoe Garden	Hoe Avenue between Aldus Street and Bruckner Boulevard	Hunts Point Station Area	0.27	Active & Passive	NYCDPR
10	Printer's Park	Hoe Avenue between Aldus Street and Westchester Avenue	Hunts Point Station Area	0.55	Active	NYCDPR
11	Bryant Hill Garden	Bryant Avenue between Seneca and Garrison Avenues	Hunts Point Station Area	0.34	Passive	NYCDPR
12	Greenstreet	Lafayette Avenue, Tiffany Street and Barry Street	Hunts Point Station Area	0.07	Passive	NYC DPR/DOT/DEP

Sources: NYCDPR, 2019

Notes: Map ID references Figure 7-2

NYCDPR = New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

NYCDOT = New York City Department of Transportation

NYCDEP = New York City Department of Environmental Protection

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

7.3.3.1 Corridor

Portions of the Hutchinson River Parkway, Bronx River Parkway, Pelham Bay Parkway, Pelham Bay Park, and Starlight Park are along the Segment 3 Corridor. Along with Pelham Bay Park and Starlight Park, Noble Playground represents the three active uses in this segment of the corridor. As listed in Table 7-3, Greenstreets are at several places along the corridor. Along with parkway land and Young Park, these passive recreational uses are typically landscaped areas where not much recreational activity takes place.

7.3.3.2 Parkchester-Van Nest Station Area

The study area for the assessment of potential open space impacts in the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area comprises a ¼-mile radius of the proposed Metro-North station, which would be within the existing railroad right-of-way just parallel to East Tremont Avenue, with station access provided approximately at the avenue's intersection with Dogwood Drive (Figure 7-3). Kinsella Street to the north, Bronxdale Avenue to the east, Metropolitan Oval to the south, and Thieriot Avenue to the west generally bound the station area.

As shown on Figure 7-3 and listed in Table 7-3, two publicly accessible open space resources are partially within the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area. Van Nest Park is near the northwestern boundary of the station area—between Unionport Road and White Plains Road, south of Van Nest Avenue—and comprises playground equipment and a monument. At the center of the Parkchester development—located along the southeastern boundary of the station area and extending farther south outside the station area—the Metropolitan Oval contains a pond with ornamental statues surrounded by benches. In addition, two Greenstreets are within the station area: one at the intersection of Unionport Road and the Metropolitan Oval and a second at the intersection of Van Nest Avenue between Unionport Road and Victor Street.

7.3.3.3 Morris Park Station Area

The study area for the assessment of potential open space impacts in the Morris Park Station area comprises a ¼-mile radius of the proposed Metro-North station, which would be within the existing railroad right-of-way parallel to Bassett Avenue near Morris Park Avenue (Figure 7-3). Seminole Street to the north, the Bronx Psychiatric Hospital to the east, Waters Place to the south, and Hering Avenue to the west generally bound the station area.

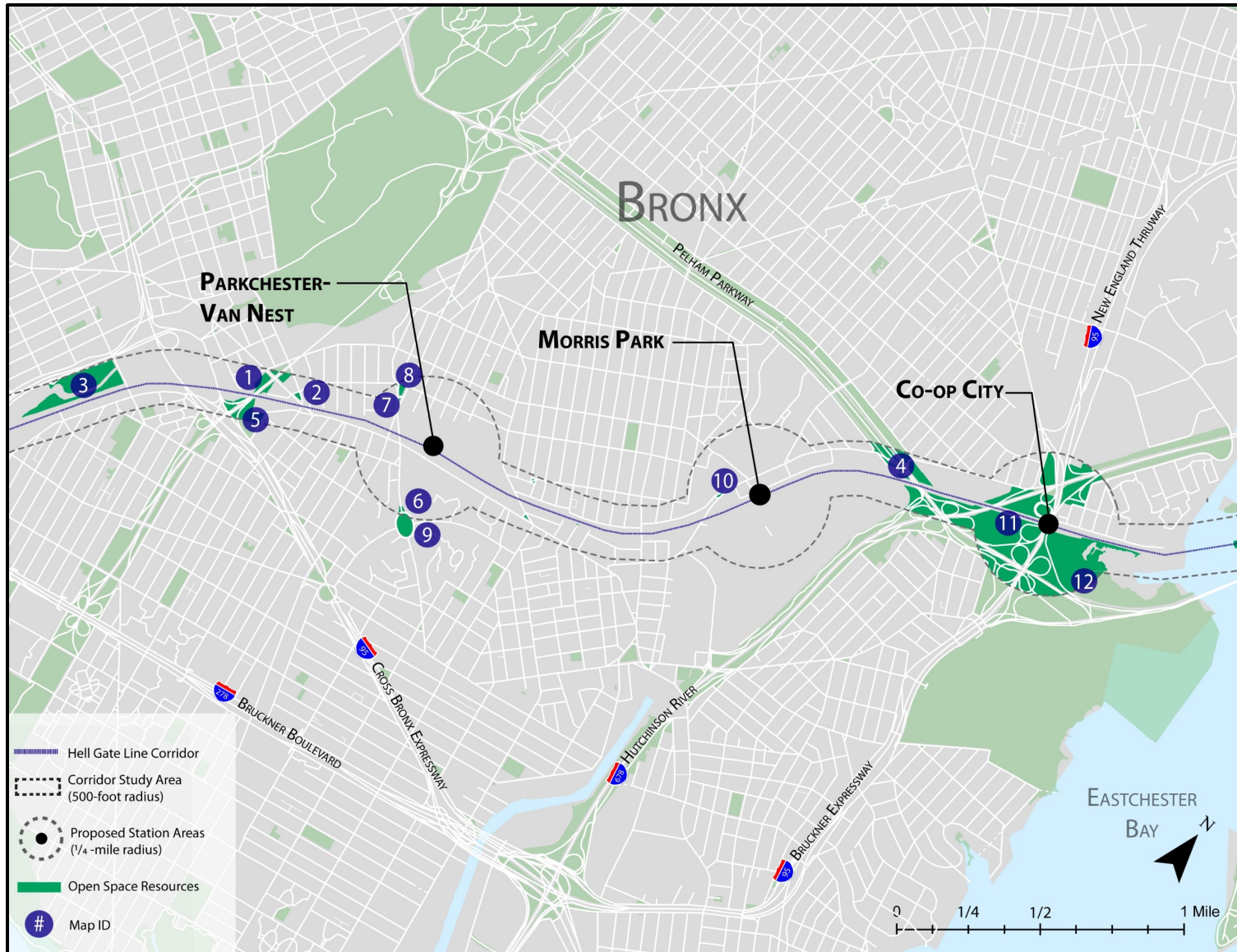
As shown on Figure 7-3 and listed in Table 7-3, one existing open space resource is within the Morris Park Station area. This Greenstreet comprises a landscaped triangle where Sackett Avenue diverges from Eastchester Road, just south of Loomis Street.

7.3.3.4 *Co-op City Station Area*

The study area for the assessment of potential open space impacts in the Co-op City Station Area comprises a ¼-mile radius of the proposed Metro-North station, which would be within the existing HGL right-of-way parallel to Erskine Place at approximately De Reimer Avenue (Figure 7-3). Hutchinson River Parkway and Baychester Avenue to the north, Earhart Lane to the east, the Pelham Parkway/New England Thruway interchange to the south, and Vance Street to the west generally bound the station area.

Two open space resources are within the Co-op City Station area. As shown on Figure 7-3 and listed in Table 7-3, Pelham Bay Park occupies most of the southern portion of the station area, south of the rail line, and continues farther south and east outside the station area boundary. Pelham Bay Park is the largest open space resource in Segment 3 and the largest park in New York City. The park is under the jurisdiction of the NYCDPR and provides numerous facilities for active and passive recreation. Additional open space resources in the station area include the Hutchinson River Parkway.

Figure 7-3. Open Space (Existing): Segment 3 (Corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest, Morris Park, and Co-op City Station Areas)



Source: New York City Department of City Planning; New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; and WSP, 2019

7. Public Open Space and Recreation

Table 7-3. Open Space (Existing): Segment 3 (Corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest, Morris Park, and Co-op City Station Areas)

Map ID	Name	Location	Segment Location	Total Size (acres)	Active/Passive	Ownership
*	Greenstreets	Various Locations	Corridor	0.20	Passive	NYC DPR/DOT/DEP
1	Bronx River Parkway	Bronx River Parkway	Corridor	4.10	Active & Passive	NYCDPR
2	Young Park	Van Nest Avenue, East 180th Street, and East Tremont Avenue	Corridor	0.19	Passive	NYCDPR
3	Starlight Park	Sheridan Expressway between East 174th Street, East 172nd Street, and Jennings Street	Corridor	14.85	Active	NYCDPR
4	Pelham Bay Parkway	Pelham Bay Parkway	Corridor	15.77	Passive	NYCDPR
5	Noble Playground	Noble Avenue between Bronx River Avenue and East 177th Street	Corridor	3.78	Active	NYCDPR
6	Greenstreet	Between Unionport Road and Metropolitan Oval	Parkchester-Van Nest Station Area	0.19	Passive	NYC DPR/DOT/DEP
7	Greenstreet	Van Nest Avenue between Unionport Road and Victoria Street		0.03	Passive	
8	Van Nest Park	White Plains Road, Van Nest Avenue, Unionport Road		0.34	Active	NYCDPR
9	Metropolitan Oval	Metropolitan Oval at Unionport Road and Metropolitan Avenue		1.94	Passive	NYC DPR/DOT
10	Greenstreet	Sackett Avenue and Eastchester Road North	Morris Park Station Area	0.08	Passive	NYC DPR/DOT/DEP
11	Hutchinson River Parkway	Whitestone Bridge Approach to the NYC-Westchester County Line	Corridor & Co-op City Station Area	46.81	Passive	NYCDPR
12	Pelham Bay Park	Hutchinson River, Long Island Sound between Bronx County Line and Middletown Road, Watt Avenue		67.10	Active	NYCDPR

Sources NYCDPR, 2019

Notes: Map ID references Figure 7-3.

NYCDPR = New York City Department of Parks and Recreation

NYCDOT = New York City Department of Transportation

NYCDEP = New York City Department of Environmental Protection

* Open Space not shown on Figure 7-3.

7.3.4 Segment 4 (Corridor)

The study area for the assessment of potential open space impacts in Segment 4 includes the HGL and is generally bounded from North Avenue in New Rochelle (Westchester County, New York) to Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses (Bronx County, New York) to the south (Segment 4). Within the Segment 4 Corridor, there are a number of active and passive open space resources. The corridor begins in Pelham Bay Park—where it bisects the Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses—until it reaches Westchester County. As shown on Figure 7-4 and listed in Table 7-4, the HGL Corridor study area includes 2 acres of public and parkway land in Westchester County. Pelham Country Club is along the corridor, and although a large open space resource, it is privately owned. Liberty Green and Sycamore Park are two public, active recreational uses.

Table 7-4. Open Space (Existing): Segment 4 (Corridor)

Map ID	Name	Location	Total Size (acres)	Active/Passive	Ownership
1	Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses/Pelham Bay Park	New England Thruway and Shore Road	1,941.73	Active/Passive	New York City Department of Parks and Recreation
2	Library Green	Huguenot Street and Lawton Street	0.64	Active	Westchester County
3	The Court	The Court and Manhattan Avenue	1.58	Passive	Westchester County
4	Sycamore Park	83 Kings Highway	0.96	Active	Pelham Town
*	Public Parks, Parkway Lands	Various Locations	2.0	Passive	Pelham Town

Sources: New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and Westchester County, 2019

Notes: Map ID references Figure 7-4.

* Open Space not shown on Figure 7-4.



Figure 7-4. Open Space (Existing): Segment 4 (Corridor)



Source: New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; Westchester County; and WSP, 2020

7.4 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, Phase II of Starlight Park will be constructed. The expansion of the park to the west side of the Bronx River, on both sides of the HGL, is currently under construction and will include three pedestrian bridges across the river. No other new open space resources or changes to existing resources are expected. Except for a small increase in Amtrak service, the HGL will continue to operate as it does today. Therefore, MTA has identified no impacts to open space resources within any of the segments under the No Action Alternative.

7.5 PROPOSED PROJECT

7.5.1 Segments 1 through 4 (HGL Corridor)

Under the Proposed Project, there would be no adverse impacts to open space resources along the existing HGL Corridor. Except in a small area within Starlight Park, there would be no encroachment on any open space resources because the Proposed Project would remain in the existing railroad right-of-way. A permanent easement for two small areas of approximately 2,800 square feet in total for signal equipment and retaining walls, located immediately adjacent to the rail right-of-way in Starlight Park, would not encroach on the planned pathway through the park or disrupt any of the park's functions. A non-exclusive easement along the planned pathway to be used for access to equipment would not adversely change the activities, features or properties of the park. In addition, the railroad right-of-way and adjacent open space resources would continue to be separated. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not create any safety concerns for usage of parks adjacent to the HGL Corridor. The Proposed Project would not affect any amenities, use, or public enjoyment of these open spaces. Finally, access to open space would remain as it is today.

Two small areas (200 square feet and 1,750 square feet) within the Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses immediately to the east and west of the railroad right-of way would require a permanent easement for the Pelham Lane Pathway Bridge to accommodate parts of the proposed wing walls for the rehabilitated or replaced bridge. These small areas are part of the golf cart path and bridle path, which MTA would realign underneath the bridge as part of the Proposed Project. The design-builder would refine the design of the bridge as the Proposed Project progresses, with review and approval by SHPO regarding historically-sensitive design elements, and input from NYCDPR regarding design requirements for operations of the park and golf courses (i.e., minimum height for forestry equipment). Chapter 9, "Historic Resources" and Chapter 11, "Department of Transportation Act, Section 4(f)" discuss this further. MTA would maintain access under the Pelham Lane Pathway Bridge during rehabilitation or replacement of the bridge and following construction.

MTA also anticipates that changes in vibration and air quality as a result of the increased operations along the HGL Corridor would be minimal and would not adversely affect enjoyment of the park and open resources. As shown in Chapter 16, "Noise and Vibration," MTA placed noise receptors in six open space or recreational resources along the HGL Corridor: Astoria Park, Randall's and Wards Islands, Concrete Plant Park, Starlight Park, Pelham Bay Park, and Pelham Bay/Split Rock Golf Course. Ambient noise levels would rise only 1 to 3 decibels along the HGL Corridor, which would be barely perceptible. MTA identified no impacts at any of the park receptors. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not create an adverse noise impact to open space resources in the HGL Corridor or station areas. Because the Proposed Project would result in a continuation of the existing rail transportation use, MTA anticipates no visual impacts to or from open space and recreational resources.

In a letter from the NYCDPR dated August 28, 2019, in response to the submittal of the PSA Effects Assessment, the agency noted that in the event that any construction activities are identified that would potentially have an impact on parkland, an NYCDPR construction permit would be required.

In conclusion, the Proposed Project would not result in impacts to open space along the HGL Corridor.

7.5.2 Hunts Point Station Area

In addition to the conclusions stated above, under the Proposed Project within the Hunts Point Station area in Segment 2, MTA anticipates that the existing Hunts Point No. 6 Line subway station—located at Monsignor Paul Del Valle Square—would see some increased pedestrian traffic by commuters making connections between the New York City subway and proposed Metro-North Hunts Point Station; however, it is unlikely that this would adversely affect the quality of the plaza as an open space. Because the Proposed Project would not encroach on any open space and would not affect amenities, use, or public enjoyment of these open spaces, the Proposed Project would not result in a significant adverse impact to open spaces in the Hunts Point Station area.

7.5.3 Parkchester-Van Nest Station Area

Although several open space resources exist within the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area, none are located adjacent to the proposed station. Therefore, no adverse impacts would result from the Proposed Project.

7.5.4 Morris Park Station Area

There is one open space resource in the Morris Park Station area – a Greenstreet at Sackett Avenue and Eastchester Road North. However, it is not adjacent to the proposed station. Therefore, no adverse impacts would result from the Proposed Project.

7.5.5 Co-op City Station Area

MTA would construct the proposed Co-op City Station near Pelham Bay Park. The station's platform and pedestrian overpass would not result in any encroachment or parkland displacement nor would they result in any access or safety issues with respect to the parkland. Because access to Pelham Bay Park is on the more distant southern side of the park, the new station's pedestrian overpass would not be visible to most park users. Amtrak uses an access road through Pelham Bay Park to reach the rail right-of-way for maintenance purposes. The access road is located off of an entrance ramp to I-95 (New England Thruway), in area of the park not accessible to the public. MTA anticipates that a non-exclusive easement would allow Metro-North to similarly use the access road. The moderate noise impact to Pelham Bay Park would not be in the vicinity of Co-op City Station.

MTA discussed specific measures to prevent trash from migrating from the proposed Co-op City Station into Pelham Bay Park during consultation with NYCDPR¹ (see Appendix E, "Agency Correspondence and Public Involvement"). Such measures would likely include installing fencing between the park and the railroad right-of-way in order to prevent access to the park from the station and to minimize the occurrence of wind-blown trash to the park. Because the Proposed Project would not encroach on any open space and would not affect

¹ Anderson, Marianne. New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Meeting held June 10, 2014.



amenities, use, or public enjoyment of these open spaces, the Proposed Project would not result in a significant adverse impact to open spaces in the Co-op City Station area.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The Proposed Project would not result in any adverse direct effects, including any encroachment, access, enjoyment, or safety problems, to public open space and recreational resources along the existing HGL Corridor. Permanent easements located immediately adjacent to the railroad right-of-way in Starlight Park and Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses would not encroach on the planned park amenities or disrupt any of the park's functions. MTA would maintain access to the parks during construction, and access agreements following construction would permit use of existing or planned paths/roads within the parks for maintenance purposes. There would be no noise impacts to park resources. Changes in vibration and air quality caused by the Proposed Project would not adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the public open space and recreational resources along the corridor. The proposed stations would not result in a visual impact either to or from adjacent public open space resources.

Although a number of open space and recreation areas are adjacent to the HGL corridor or within the proposed station areas, as discussed above, there would be no adverse impacts to open space under the No Action Alternative and Proposed Project.