# Executive Summary

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# Acronyms/Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AA | Alternatives Analysis |
| BNMC | Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus |
| CCTV | closed circuit television cameras |
| CFR | Code of Federal Regulations |
| DEIS | Draft Environmental Impact Statement |
| EA | Environmental Assessment |
| EIS | Environmental Impact Statement |
| FEIS | Final Environmental Impact Statement |
| FTA | Federal Transit Administration |
| GBNRTC | Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council |
| LPA | Locally Preferred Alternative |
| LRT | light-rail transit |
| NEPA | National Environmental Policy Act |
| NFTA | Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority |
| PA | Public Address System |
| PAT | Passenger Assistance Telephones |
| SEQRA | State Environmental Quality Review Act |
| SUNY | State University of New York |
| TDI | transit dependency index |
| TOD | transit-oriented development |
| TVM | ticket vending machine |
| UB | University at Buffalo |
| VMS | variable message signs |

# S. Executive Summary

## S.1 INTRODUCTION

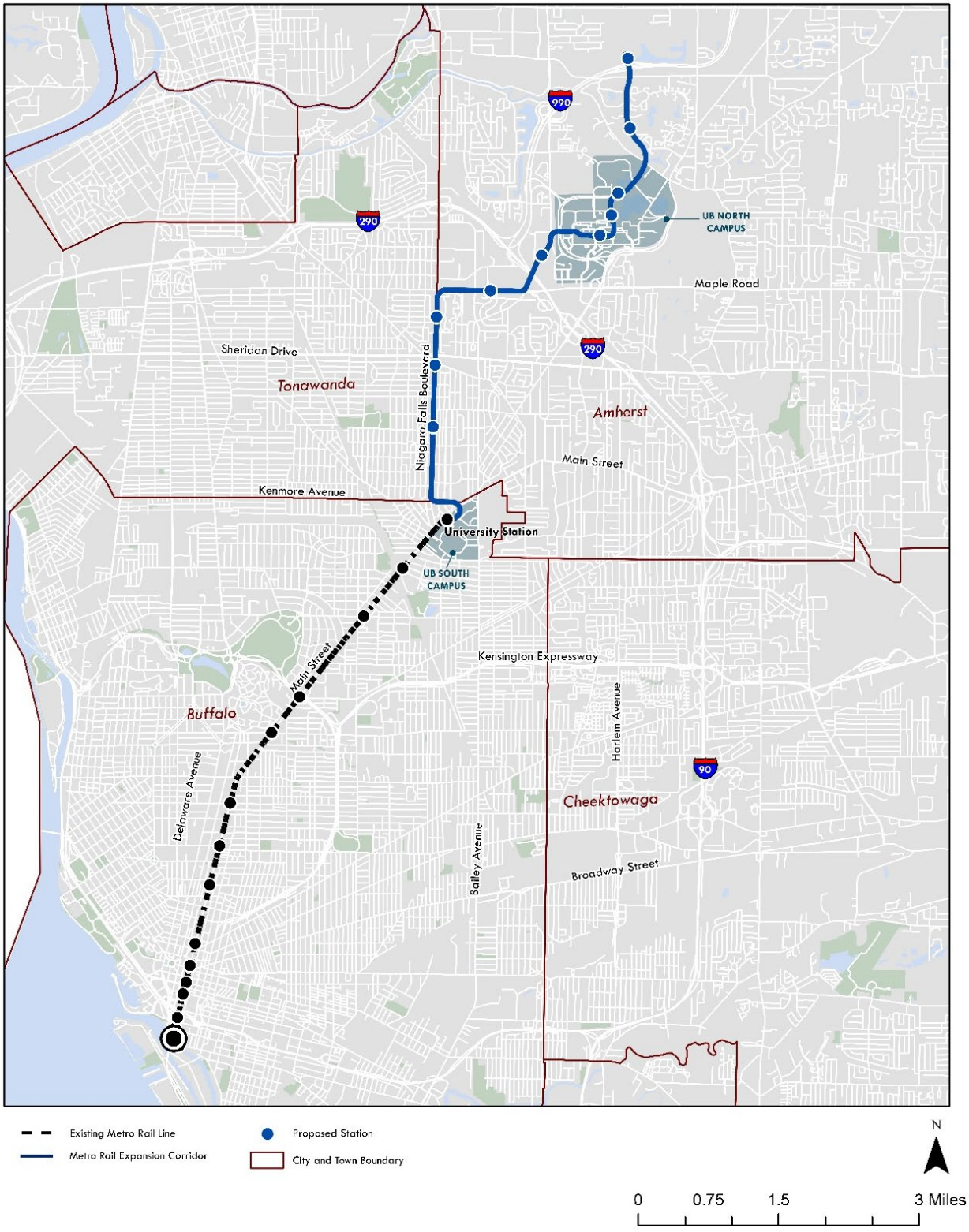
Pursuant to the requirements of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act, Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law and its implementing regulations 6 NYCRR 617 ("SEQRA"), this draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) analyzes a proposal by the Niagara Frontier Transit Metro System, Inc. (Metro), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), to extend Metro's existing 6.4-mile light-rail transit (LRT) system in Buffalo, New York to Tonawanda and Amherst, New York. Metro is proposing to expand the LRT from its current terminus at University Station on the University at Buffalo (UB) South Campus, along Kenmore Avenue, Niagara Falls Boulevard, Maple Road, and Sweet Home Road, through the UB North Campus to John James Audubon Parkway and Interstate 990 (I-990). Ten stations are proposed as part of the 7-mile extension, two of which would contain a park & ride facility—and a light maintenance/storage facility is proposed at the end of the line. Figure S-1 shows both the existing Metro Rail line and the Proposed Action alignment. Figure S-2 presents the Proposed Action, including the underground (tunnel) and at-grade alignment, portal locations, ten stations, two park & ride facilities, and the light maintenance/storage facility. These proposed improvements collectively are referred to herein alternatively as the Metro Rail Expansion Project or the "Proposed Action".

By letter dated December 21, 2018, Metro circulated among interest and involved agencies its notice of intent to serve as SEQRA lead agency[1] and classified the Proposed Action as a SEQRA Type I action, indicating that the project will be subject to coordinated review procedures under SEQRA. Subsequently, by resolution dated January 24, 2019, Metro issued a SEQRA Positive Declaration for the Proposed Action, reflecting Metro's determination that the Proposed Action has the potential to result in one or more potentially significant adverse environmental impacts, thus warranting preparation of this environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Proposed Action.

The Proposed Action will be the subject of a future application by Metro for federal funds administered through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) or other federal sources to cover a portion of the Proposed Action's capital costs. Therefore, this DEIS is intended to be compliant with the substantive environmental review requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 U.S. Code § 4321 et seq.) and implementing regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508), the Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transportation Authority (23 CFR Part 771), and other applicable federal rules, regulations, and executive orders.

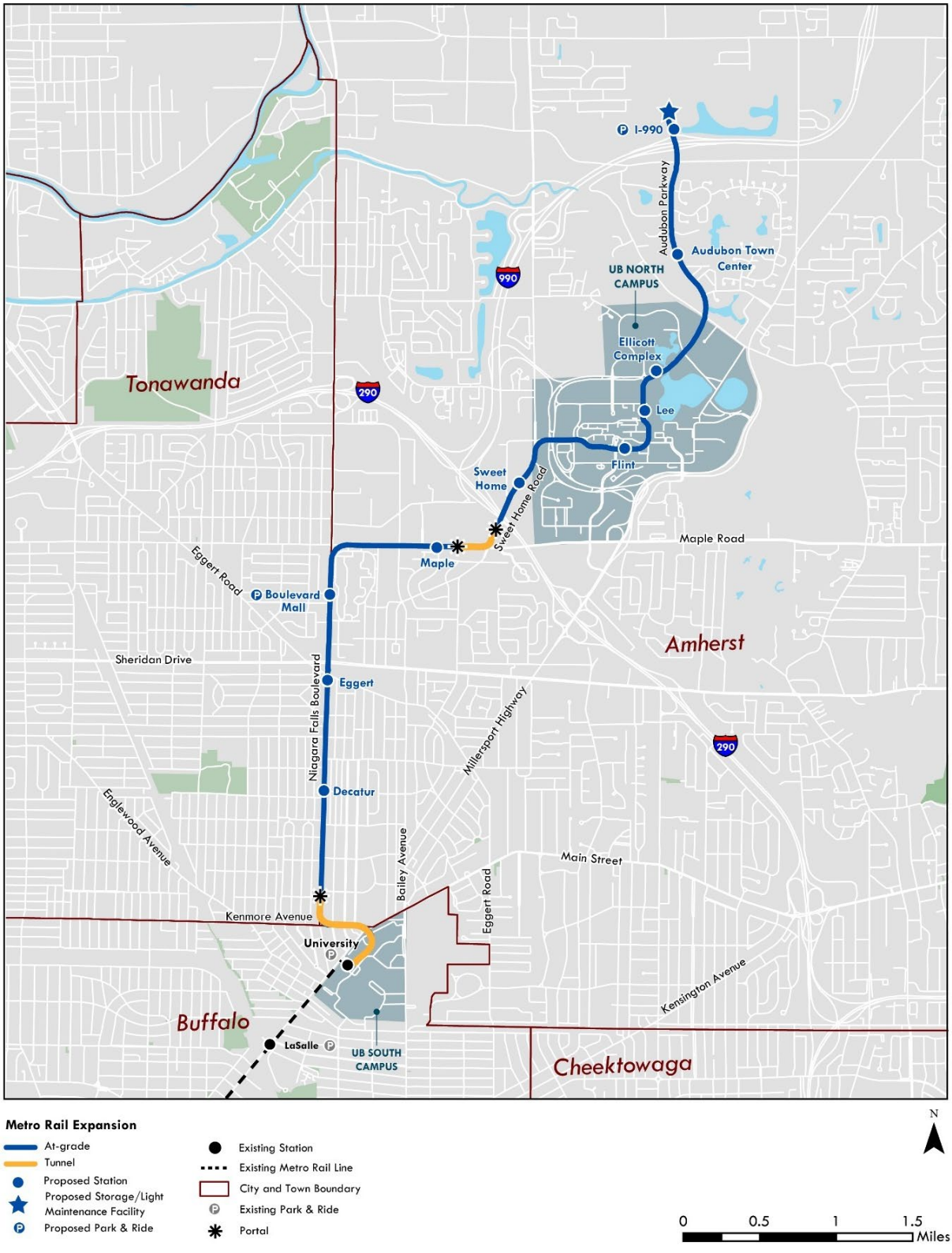
[1] The lead agency coordinates the SEQRA process and is responsible for making key SEQRA determinations during the review process.

**Figure S-1. Metro Rail Existing and Proposed Action Alignment**




Source: Erie County, 2019

**Figure S-2. Metro Rail Proposed Action**




Source: Erie County, 2019

## S.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

The **purpose** of the Proposed Action is to provide a fast, reliable, safe, and convenient transit ride in the Metro Rail Expansion corridor, linking established and emerging activity centers along the existing Metro Rail line in Buffalo with existing and emerging activity centers in Amherst and Tonawanda. The Proposed Action would better serve existing rail and bus riders, attract new transit patrons, improve connections to/from Buffalo, Amherst, and Tonawanda, and support redevelopment and other economic development opportunities. Additionally, the Proposed Action would improve livability by increasing mobility and accessibility in communities throughout the Proposed Action corridor.

The **need** for improved transit service has three main components: (1) to serve increased travel demand generated by recent, pending, and future development; (2) to provide high-quality transit service to key activity centers; and (3) to better serve transit-dependent population segments (Figure S-3).

**Figure S-3. Needs**


### S.2.1 Serve Increased Travel Demand

The Buffalo metropolitan region is experiencing economic growth and transformation. There is a need for new investments to provide a high-quality, increased transit services in the Proposed Action corridor to mitigate the growth of traffic and congestion, to enable and support more sustainable development patterns, and to preserve roadway capacity.

Growth will require supporting infrastructure and public facilities and services, particularly regarding transportation. Increasing development will increase the demand for work trips and non-work trips, including shopping, medical services, and entertainment. Without mitigation, the anticipated level of new development will further increase congestion within the Proposed Action corridor. Expanded transportation options will be especially important for workers to have access to the increasing employment opportunities both in Buffalo and Amherst.

The Greater Buffalo-Niagara Region Transportation Committee (GBNRTC), Buffalo, Amherst and Tonawanda, BNMC, and UB have plans in place or are developing new plans and land development ordinances to support and encourage sustainable development and redevelopment. The plans and ordinances are geared toward a dramatic transformation of the built environment, and public transit investment can help foster and leverage further reinvestment, redevelopment, and revitalization. New public transit improvements are consistent with these regional and local plans.

As Buffalo, Amherst, and Tonawanda continue to develop and redevelop, increasing transit service would help to shape and support the patterns of future development. Expanding and enhancing transit service along the Proposed Action corridor would promote and support higher development densities and mixed uses. Such development patterns would support more sustainable growth, possibly leveraging additional economic development and employment opportunities, while minimizing needs to expand roadway and parking capacity.

### S.2.2 Provide High Quality Service to Key Activity Centers

Bus service is the only public transit service available for travel to and from retail and commercial activity centers in Amherst. The existing bus service underserves the major commercial and retail activity centers and corridors in Amherst and does not provide a connection to Buffalo without requiring a transit mode transfer. Increased transit service along the Proposed Action corridor would improve access both for city residents traveling to suburban activity centers and suburban residents traveling to city activity centers. A high-quality, high-capacity, and convenient public transit service would improve travel for current riders and attract new riders. Such a service would increase travel options for all travelers in this important corridor.

### S.2.3 Improve Service to Transit Dependent Populations

The lack of quality transit service in the corridor involves both residential origins and key trip destinations, including work and other trip purposes. The study area has many senior-living complexes, facilities serving disabled persons, low-income housing complexes, apartment complexes, and student housing. The current Metro Rail and Metro Bus routes serve some but not all of these locations.

Limited connectivity of the existing transit services affects the transit-dependent populations in the study area. Lack of transit options affects the ability of residents to access employment and other opportunities, and to travel to and from work or non-work purposes. The Proposed Action would increase the study area population's access to high-quality transit and employment opportunities in Amherst and Buffalo. Moreover, with a growing aging population and with a rising number of students, increased transit service would help the region respond to the travel challenges faced by transit-dependent populations and to changing demographic trends.

### S.2.4 Goals and Objectives

Table S-1 presents goals and objectives that are directly linked to the purpose and need statement and that focus on related transportation, economic, and environmental issues.

**Table S-1. Goals and Objectives**

| Goals | Objectives |
|---|---|
| ▪ Develop a cost-effective, attractive, and high-quality transit service to serve the Proposed Action corridor. | ▪ Provide a reliable and convenient transit service.<br>▪ Improve mobility. |
| ▪ Mitigate the growth of traffic congestion on study area roadways. | ▪ Increase the share of trips using transit (both bus and rail) in study area. |
| ▪ Improve the accessibility of transit in the study area. | ▪ Increase the number of transit options for travelers.<br>▪ Provide more convenient transit services for riders transferring to or from Metro Rail at University Station.<br>▪ Improve the connectivity of transit services.<br>▪ Improve livability by providing increased access to facilities, such as, medical services, food shopping, retail shopping, entertainment, etc. |
| ▪ Increase the effectiveness of the regional transit system. | ▪ Increase system ridership.<br>▪ Increase system revenue. |
| ▪ Support sustainable future economic growth in the study area. | ▪ Serve new markets with high-quality transit services to support economic development.<br>▪ Provide the basis for transit-oriented development and design to enable the development/redevelopment of quality neighborhoods.<br>▪ Strengthen the regional economy. |
| ▪ Avoid or minimize adverse community and environmental effects. | ▪ Avoid or minimize impacts to sensitive environmental resources.<br>▪ Avoid or minimize negative impacts to neighborhoods.<br>▪ Avoid or minimize negative impacts to businesses. |

## S.3 BACKGROUND

High-quality transit service in the Greater-Buffalo region has been considered for nearly 50 years. The concept for Metro Rail evolved in the 1960s and 1970s as one segment of a proposed 43-mile network of rapid-transit rail lines across the region. Plans were developed for a 14-mile rail line running between downtown Buffalo and Amherst to north of the planned UB North Campus. Due to concerns regarding cost effectiveness and consistency with local objectives, the rail line was scaled back to a 6.4-mile rail line terminating at the UB South Campus. This line opened in 1985 and continues to operate as the existing Metro Rail.

In 2010, NFTA updated its 2001 Strategic Assessment. The review examined available rights-of-way and major arterial corridors as possible locations for major transit investments. The study identified four corridors as candidates for future major investment. The Proposed Action corridor was recommended as a candidate for further study.

### S.3.1 Alternative Analysis

NFTA and GBNRTC initiated the Amherst-Buffalo Alternatives Analysis (AA) in fall 2012. The overall goal of the Amherst-Buffalo AA was to evaluate a range of high-quality transit service alternatives to improve transit access between key activity centers in Buffalo and Amherst, provide

enough information to support the recommendation of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), and enable GBNRTC to adopt the LPA as part of the fiscally constrained portion of the long-range transportation plan.

The Amherst-Buffalo AA involved a three-tiered approach that established screening methodology and selection criteria. A Project Steering Committee, Project Advisory Committee, and a robust public participation plan were established to help guide the study. Community stakeholders also provided input and feedback. During the study, four public information meetings were held as well as over 75 staff-level meetings and presentations to community organizations and stakeholders.

After reviewing the technical results of the Amherst-Buffalo AA and considering feedback from the Project Steering and Advisory Committees and the public, NFTA recommended the Niagara Falls Boulevard LRT Alternative as the strongest alternative to advance as the LPA. The LPA was generally defined as extending LRT from the existing Metro Rail terminus at University Station, extending underground along Bailey Avenue to a tunnel portal on Eggert Road, continuing at grade on Niagara Falls Boulevard to Maple Road to Sweet Home Road, onto and through UB North Campus to Audubon Parkway, and terminating near the I-990 interchange.

### S.3.2 Transit Oriented Development Study

The GBNRTC initiated a comprehensive TOD planning effort in fall 2016 to complement the Amherst-Buffalo AA study and to support the Proposed Action. This effort included developing TOD typologies for various station areas and using a Desirability & Readiness Assessment for identifying which Metro Rail station areas had the greatest potential for stimulating TOD. The TOD study further identified strategies for facilitating the build-out of TOD at key station areas. These strategies and tools included revised TOD-focused land use and zoning codes, capital projects to ready stations areas for TOD, policies and tools to encourage TOD (e.g., value capture and development financing), and an agreement that would create and focus a Regional TOD Committee.

Stakeholder and community workshops were held in 2017 (March, June, and October) for various stages of the planning effort about Smart Growth TOD along the Metro Rail line in Buffalo and the Proposed Action extension to Amherst and Tonawanda. The multi-day workshops included presentations by the Proposed Action team, followed by interactive discussions among stakeholders and members of the public. In addition to these workshops, the Proposed Action team attended meetings and shared information about the Proposed Action with multiple community and professional organizations. A final open house was held in August 2018 to present the TOD vision that the community and stakeholder members helped develop.

A second TOD planning grant was awarded to the NFTA in December 2018, followed by board resolution in October 2019 to begin the second round of the NFTA Comprehensive Transit Oriented Development Planning. The TOD planning will continue the 2016 effort and will improve opportunities for Metro Rail Expansion funding, enhancing TOD opportunities in the Metro Rail Expansion project corridor, and measuring progress made on these goals over time

### S.3.3 Locally Preferred Alternative Refinement

Following the Amherst-Buffalo AA, the adoption of the original LPA in the fiscally constrained Transportation Improvement Program and the TOD study, NFTA agreed to a request from stakeholders to study the feasibility of exiting University Station directly to Niagara Falls Boulevard, via Kenmore Avenue, rather than running beneath Bailey Avenue. Under this option, the alignment would travel from University Station underground along Kenmore Avenue and onto Niagara Falls Boulevard where it would surface through a portal just north of Kenilworth Avenue and continue along Niagara Falls Boulevard to a common point at the intersection of Eggert Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard. From here, the alignment would follow the original LPA to the interchange of I-990 and Audubon Parkway.

The evaluation identified that this refined LPA could save approximately $200 million (in 2014 dollars) in construction costs by reducing the tunnel length from 10,000 linear feet to only 3,400 linear feet. The refined LPA would also eliminate a costly underground station. Another evaluation factor was travel times, which would be just under 21 minutes from I-990 to University Station for the refined LPA and just under 22 minutes for the original LPA. Even though the travel times are comparable, the refined LPA would have fewer impacts to existing parcels.

During outreach efforts and the scoping process, NFTA received feedback for an additional station along Niagara Falls Boulevard. NFTA conducted further analysis to locate a station at the intersection of Eggert Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard. The refined LPA now includes an additional station at Eggert Road, for a total of 10 proposed stations.

During meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee and Steering Advisory Committee, the consensus was to move forward with the environmental process utilizing the refined LPA and to eliminate the Bailey Avenue portion of the alignment. This was reviewed by the NFTA Board of Commissioners and with the general public during a meeting held on December 6, 2018.

### S.3.4 No Action Condition

In the environmental review process, a No Action condition is used as a starting point to provide a comparison to the Proposed Action in terms of costs, benefits, and impacts. The No Action condition would consist of a future scenario with no changes to the Proposed Action corridor, beyond the projects that are already committed and planned by others. See Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Community Character” for a list of No Action condition projects.

## S.4 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Proposed Action would expand the existing Metro Rail from the terminus at University Station, for an additional 7 miles. The trackway would be configured with two tracks, one for northbound service and one for southbound service. The Proposed Action would generally exist within existing roadway right-of-way. Some portions would be underground, under existing roads. The Proposed Action is described in more detail in the following sections. The conceptual plan is provided in Appendix A, “Conceptual Plan”.

### S.4.1 Alignment

The Proposed Action alignment would begin at the existing Metro Rail terminus at University Station and travel along Kenmore Avenue, Niagara Falls Boulevard, Maple Road, and Sweet Home Road, through the UB North Campus to Audubon Parkway and I-990.

### S.4.2 Track and Catenary Systems

The Proposed Action vehicles would be electrically powered by an Overhead Catenary System (OCS) of wires supported by poles. The design of the light rail OCS would utilize either a center pole configuration or side pole configuration along the corridor. For the Proposed Action, light rail would operate in dedicated right-of-way; although autos would be able to cross the tracks at select intersections. Grade crossing gates and lights would be placed at these intersections for safety.

It is assumed that NFTA will have acquired a new vehicle fleet prior to operation of the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action would require the addition of two tracks also similar to the existing Metro Rail. Each vehicle would be fully compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). The vehicles would also include racks to carry bicycles and Automatic Passenger Counters (APC).

### S.4.3 Stations and Park and Ride Facilities

The Proposed Action would include ten stations to support the light rail system. Passengers would board or alight the light rail vehicles at stations. For each of the Proposed Action stations, three station types – center platform, side platform, and split platform -- were evaluated to determine the best location and orientation to serve rail passengers (see Table S-2). All stations would have level boarding to be ADA accessible. Platforms are planned to be approximately 300 feet long to accommodate the Metro Rail vehicles.

**Table S-2. Proposed Stations**

| Station | Platform Type |
|---|---|
| Decatur | Side |
| Eggert | Side |
| Boulevard Mall | Side |
| Maple | Side |
| Sweet Home | Center |
| Flint | Side |
| Lee | Side |
| Ellicott Complex | Side |
| Audubon Town Center | Center |
| I-990 | Center |

Access to stations would primarily consist of pedestrians, bicyclists, or passengers transferring from bus services; otherwise known as “walk-up” customers. Two of the proposed stations – Boulevard Mall and I-990 – would include park & ride facilities with Americans with Disabilities (ADA) accessible parking. The park-and-ride facilities would vary in size based on projected ridership and available

land. Park-and-ride facilities have been designed to accommodate access by bus, automobile, bicyclists and pedestrians. Additionally, bus bays and bus stops, would be accommodated at select stations based on available land and projected demand.

### S.4.4 Roadway Modifications

The inclusion of the Proposed Action within the constraints of the existing right-of-way would require modifications to the existing roadway infrastructure. These modifications are listed in Table S-3 and presented in Chapter 13, "Transportation".

**Table S-3. Proposed Action Traffic Capacity Change**

| Corridor Location | Direction | Capacity Change |
|---|---|---|
| Niagara Fall Boulevard | Northbound and Southbound | Eliminate one travel lane in each direction along Niagara Falls Boulevard from Kenilworth Boulevard to Maple Road, and along Maple Road from Niagara Falls Boulevard to Sweet Home Road |
| Niagara Falls Boulevard | Southbound | Add additional southbound left-turn lane on Niagara Falls Boulevard at Eggert Road |
| Niagara Falls Boulevard | Southbound | Add a 200-foot southbound receiving lane on Niagara Falls Boulevard south of the Eggert Road intersection |
| Boulevard Mall | Northbound | Metro Rail alignment would be shifted from median running to side running at northern Boulevard Mall entrance (to east side), through mall property and transition into median of Maple Road at Alberta Drive |
| Maple Road | Westbound | Add additional westbound left-turn lane on Maple Road at Niagara Falls Boulevard |
| Brighton Road | Eastbound | Add additional eastbound through-lane on Brighton Road at Niagara Falls Boulevard (eastbound Brighton approach (through and through/right lanes would be extended west for more storage) |
| Bailey Avenue | Southbound | Add southbound dual left-turn lanes on Bailey Avenue at Maple Road |
| Maple Road | Eastbound | Add eastbound dedicated left-turn lane on Maple Road at furthest eastern Sweet Home Middle School Driveway |
| Maple Road/Sweet Home Road intersection | All Directions | LRT alignment will traverse under the Maple Road and Sweet Home Road intersection and avoid interaction between LRT and general vehicles. |
| Sweet Home Road | Northbound | Convert the dedicated right-turn lane to a shared through/right turn lane at intersection with Maple Road at Sweet Home Road |
| Sweet Home Road | Southbound | Continue to provide two northbound and southbound through lanes along Sweet Home Road from Rensch Road to Maple Road. Add additional receiving lane southbound on Sweet Home Road south of Maple Road |
| Sweet Home Road | Eastbound | Shift Metro Rail alignment to east side, running along Sweet Home Road from Maple Road to Rensch Road |
| Rensch Road | | Create a separate Metro Rail track bridge over Bizer Creek to avoid affecting operations of Rensch Road at Sweet Home Road intersection |
| Audubon Parkway | Both | Convert Audubon Parkway from a 4-lane divided facility to a two-lane facility utilizing the existing 2-lane southbound facility; the LRT would then operate on the 2-lane northbound travel lanes from Lee Road to I-990 |

### S.4.5 Light Maintenance/Storage Facility

The Proposed Action would include a storage facility to store LRT vehicles overnight and perform light maintenance and cleaning at the end of line, north of the I-990 and Audubon Parkway interchange. The site is an undeveloped parcel; however, the property is being planned for student housing. NFTA has been coordinating with the developer of the property to incorporate a storage facility, as well as a station and park & ride facility. The storage facility would be fully enclosed with staff facilities to account for offices, restrooms, and lockers.

### S.4.6 Substations

The Proposed Action would require substations which are typically located every 5,000 feet, depending on power source connections and available sites. Locations of substations were identified during conceptual engineering for the purposes of this DEIS, and are shown in Appendix A, "Conceptual Plan". During preliminary and final design, the location of substations could change. Substations could be located and designed within a station platform area to minimize impacts. Similarly, substations could be incorporated into existing or new development and designed to blend with surroundings. Chapter 7, "Visual Resources" considers how substations could change the visual environment and includes photos of typical substations.

### S.4.7 Operations Characteristics

The operations plan for the Proposed Action includes light rail service. Since the Proposed Action would be an extension of the existing Metro Rail, service frequency for the Metro Rail would be the same as that for the existing Metro Rail.

Light-rail service would operate between the downtown Buffalo's Erie Canal Harbor Station at the southern terminus of the existing Metro Rail and the proposed I-990 Station. Trains would operate in 1, 2 or 3-car sets, seven days a week from 5:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. On occasion, for special events, 4 car trains would be used. The service would generally operate on the following frequencies:

- Weekday peak-period service (i.e., 6:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.) would be every 10 minutes.
- Weekday off-peak service would be 12 minutes during the mid-day and early evening periods (i.e., 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.) and 15 minutes during the early morning and evening/night period (i.e., 5:00 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.).
- Saturday service would be every 15 minutes from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m.

Fare collection for the Proposed Action would be the same as the existing Metro Rail. Light rail patrons would buy tickets and passes from the self-serve ticket vending machines (TVMs) located in all Metro Rail stations, Metropolitan Transportation Center, Portage Road Transportation Center and Niagara Falls Transportation Center, or otherwise in advance at an authorized NFTA outlet or through the NFTA website. The TVMs located at the stations would have the capability to dispense one-way, round-trip, weekly and day pass tickets, reduced-fare tickets for qualified persons (seniors, handicapped, etc.) and print receipts for credit/debit transactions. The fare media would be paper-based, magnetically encoded, and compatible with the existing bus magnetic ticketing system. In

addition, the NFTA is in the process of upgrading the fare collection system for Metro Rail and Bus system. The new system will include TVMs, as well as a variety of cashless payment options including smart cards and mobile ticketing using smart phone technology.

## S.5 REQUIRED ACTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Proposed Action is subject to environmental review under SEQRA based on the discretionary actions associated with the Proposed Action's implementation by Metro and other involved agencies. SEQRA was enacted by the New York State legislature in 1975 and requires New York governmental agencies to identify potential environmental effects that would result from their discretionary actions, to evaluate reasonable alternatives to avoid or minimize impacts, and—to the extent that adverse impacts are identified—avoid or otherwise mitigate those impacts to the maximum extent practicable, consistent with social, economic, environmental, and other considerations. State and local governments and agencies must review their discretionary actions in accordance with SEQRA, unless such actions fall within certain statutory or regulatory exemptions, before undertaking, funding, or approving the actions.

As noted above, the Proposed Action will be the subject of a future application by Metro for federal funds administered through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) or other federal sources to cover a portion of the Proposed Action's capital costs. Therefore, this DEIS is intended to be compliant with the substantive environmental review requirements the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 U.S. Code § 4321 et seq.) and implementing regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508), the Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transportation Authority (23 CFR Part 771), and other applicable federal rules, regulations, and executive orders. While the Proposed Action does not include a federal action at this time, Metro could seek federal funding and enter the FTA's Capital Investment Grant program. As such, the SEQRA environmental findings could be used to prepare and make a NEPA-level environmental determination. FTA serves on an advisory committee and has reviewed the environmental documents, along with other involved and interested agencies, per SEQRA.

### S.5.1 Environmental Setting

SEQRA requires that an EIS include a concise description of the environmental setting of the areas to be affected, sufficient to understand the impacts of a proposed action and alternatives. This DEIS includes a discussion of existing conditions as well as conditions expected in the future with and without the Proposed Action. Construction of the Proposed Action is expected to occur in multiple phases, with completion of the full build-out of all project components in 2030.

An analysis year of 2040 was used, which includes the anticipated year of completion (2030) and a reasonable planning horizon to evaluate long-term environmental consequences. In accordance with SEQRA, this DEIS considers the Proposed Action's potential impacts on the environmental setting, considering planned and in-construction development as well as major infrastructure projects in the area that are anticipated to be completed by 2040. This DEIS also includes analysis of the Proposed Action's potential for temporary effects during the construction period.

In the environmental review process, the future without the Proposed Action (No Action condition) is used as a starting point to provide a comparison of the Proposed Action in terms of costs, benefits, and impacts.

## S.5.2 Public Involvement

Public participation is an integral part of the SEQRA process. NFTA has committed to an open, participatory environmental review process and has solicited early and continued feedback from the public and from agencies; encouraged open discussion of project details and issues; and has provided opportunities for comments and questions. These efforts will continue throughout the environmental review of the Metro Rail Expansion project. Appendix C, "Public Outreach and Coordination Report" describes the public outreach and coordination that has been implemented for the Proposed Action.

### *S.5.2.1 Scoping*

A Draft Scope for the project was issued on January 24, 2019 followed by a 45-day public comment period, ending on March 10, 2019. A public scoping meeting for the Proposed Action was held on February 12, 2019, at Sweet Home Middle School at 4150 Maple Rd, Amherst, NY 14226. A total of 80 people attended the scoping meeting, including community members, elected and government officials, representatives of nonprofit/community organizations, and property owners within or adjacent to the Study Area. All comments received prior to the close of the comment period were considered by NFTA and the changes, as appropriate, were included in the Final Scope that was prepared and distributed on May 29, 2019.

### *S.5.2.2 DEIS Public Comment Period and Public Hearings*

A 60-day public comment period will follow the release of this DEIS to the public. Public hearings will be held after this DEIS is released to the public and during the 60-day DEIS public comment period. The public hearings will include informational displays and a presentation. The public hearings will provide opportunities for the public to submit comments on this DEIS verbally and/or in writing. Comments received during this comment period will be considered and included and responded to, as appropriate, in the FEIS.

## S.5.3 Other Involved or Interested Agencies

In addition to NFTA, several other involved or interested public agencies or authorities have been identified as being required to implement the Proposed Action, as follows:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – federal wetland permit
- NYS Department of Transportation: highway work permits for curb cut access and review of traffic mitigation measures
- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation: State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit/approval of Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and state wetland permit
- NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation: historic resources determination
- National Grid: proposed substation, underground distribution feeders and transmission lines, and electrical connection

- Erie County Department of Public Works: highway work permit for work on county roads; sewer permit/stormwater management requirements; review and implementation of transportation mitigation measures
- Town of Amherst
- Town of Tonawanda

### S.5.4 Smart Growth Infrastructure Act

The State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act requires state infrastructure agencies to determine that a public infrastructure project is, to the extent practicable, consistent with the relevant criteria specified in the act prior to approving, undertaking, supporting, or financing a public infrastructure project. This includes providing grants, awards, loans, or assistance programs in furtherance of a project. A Smart Growth Impact Statement Assessment Form was completed for the Metro Rail Expansion Project and is included in the DEIS as Appendix B, "Smart Growth Screening Tool".

## S.6 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Table S-4 summarizes the findings of the environmental analyses performed for this DEIS. Analyses were performed to determine the potential for adverse and/or beneficial impacts in the following categories: land use, zoning, and community character, socioeconomic conditions, property acquisitions and displacements, community facilities and utilities, environmental justice communities, visual resources, historic and cultural resources, parks, recreation areas, and open spaces, natural resources, water resources, soils, traffic operations, transportation, and parking, transportation and pedestrians, noise, vibrations, energy, hazardous materials, construction effects, indirect and cumulative impacts, and commitment of resources.

## S.7 CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information about the Proposed Action, please visit the project website: (*https://www.nftametrorailexpansion.com*) or contact:

Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Metro
Attn: Rachel Maloney
181 Ellicott Street
Buffalo, NY 14203
*railx@nfta.com*

Written comments on this DEIS should be submitted to Rachel Maloney at NFTA.

**Table S-4. Environmental Impacts Summary**

| Environmental Area | Benefits and Adverse Effects | Measures to Avoid, Minimize, or Mitigate Adverse Effects |
|---|---|---|
| Land use, Zoning, and Community Character (Chapter 2) | ▪ Shift in use of some properties where acquisition could be needed<br>▪ Stations would be compatible with surrounding land uses, underlying zoning, and would support existing and future development in the station areas, particularly retail and business activities, and would serve as a focus for future growth<br>▪ Proposed Action would be consistent with and would support future land use plans along the Proposed Action corridor<br>▪ Changes to existing operations and future planning for the UB North Campus | ▪ NFTA would evaluate sustainability measures for incorporation into station designs<br>▪ Station area plans would be formally adopted and implemented<br>▪ Tonawanda and Amherst may elect to adjust zoning along the corridor in the future<br>▪ NFTA would continue to coordinate with UB |
| Socioeconomic Conditions (Chapter 3) | ▪ Proposed Action would support future plans for increased development in the study area that would result in an increase in population, housing, and employment<br>▪ Loss of tax revenues from private properties acquired for the Proposed Action offset by long-term increase in property values (and resulting taxes)<br>▪ New permanent jobs in operations and maintenance for the Proposed Action and additional earnings from operations and maintenance expenditures. | ▪ None |
| Property Acquisitions and Displacements (Chapter 4) | • Acquisition of private property could be required for new stations, proposed widening of Niagara Falls Boulevard, and tunnel portal:<br>– Potential full acquisition of 15 properties (2 residential, 10 commercial, 1 parking lot, 2 vacant)<br>– Potential partial acquisition of 148 properties<br>– Potential acquisition of easement property rights from additional properties<br>• Potential displacements:<br>– 3 residences at 2 residential properties<br>– 10 businesses<br>▪ Reductions in existing parking on private property as a result of required road widening on Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road | ▪ Measures developed and incorporated during conceptual design to limit the required right-of-way<br>▪ All property acquisition, displacement, and relocation to be performed in accordance with federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, FTA Circular 5010.1D, and New York State laws |
| Community Facilities and Utilities (Chapter 5) | ▪ No direct effects on community facilities<br>▪ Benefits to community facilities from increased transit access | ▪ Continued coordination between NFTA and emergency service providers to ensure that design reflects needs of emergency services<br>▪ Signal designs for the Proposed Action to ensure that efficient emergency services are not impeded |

**Table S-4. Environmental Impacts Summary (continued)**

| Environmental Area | Benefits and Adverse Effects | Measures to Avoid, Minimize, or Mitigate Adverse Effects |
|---|---|---|
| Environmental Justice (Chapter 6) | ▪ Proposed Action would not result in disproportionately high and adverse effects on environmental justice populations | ▪ Mitigation measures were incorporated into the Proposed Action, during conceptual design, to avoid or minimize adverse effects of the new transit system where practicable.<br>▪ Additional measures would be taken during construction to mitigate adverse impacts resulting from construction activities. |
| Visual Resources (Chapter 7) | ▪ Changes in visual character along the alignment from the new tracks within existing roadways; new stations within and adjacent to existing roadways; right-of-way widenings; overhead electric wires and associated support poles; new tunnel portals in roadway; new substations; and the new light maintenance/storage facility | ▪ Integration of art in the Proposed Action's design through FTA's Art in Transit Program<br>▪ Use of best-practices principles to minimize light pollution at stations related to duration and usage, brightness, orientation, directionality, form, and fixtures |
| Historic and Cultural Resources (Chapter 8) | ▪ Potential effects to historic resources pending concurrence on eligibility from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)<br>▪ Potential for effects to areas that may contain buried archaeological resources | ▪ Consultation with SHPO regarding potential effects and mitigation<br>▪ If further design for the Proposed Action indicates disturbance of areas where archaeological resources may be located, additional investigation to be conducted |
| Parklands and Recreational Resources (Chapter 9) | ▪ No direct effects on parks, recreation areas, or open spaces<br>▪ Benefits to parks, recreation areas, and open spaces from increased transit access | ▪ See discussion of noise mitigation later in this table |
| Natural Resources (Chapter 10) | ▪ Potential adverse effects to small habitat areas and wetlands | ▪ Replacement plantings may be provided where the width of the right-of-way is large enough |

**Table S-4. Environmental Impacts Summary (continued)**

| Environmental Area | Benefits and Adverse Effects | Measures to Avoid, Minimize, or Mitigate Adverse Effects |
|---|---|---|
| Water Resources (Chapter 11) | ▪ Potential adverse effects to wetland areas<br>▪ Increase in stormwater due to increase in impervious area<br>▪ Modifications required to stormwater drainage systems to accommodate Proposed Action | ▪ Impacts to be refined during further design and design refinement to be made to avoid wetland impacts where practicable<br>▪ Use of best management practices to treat stormwater runoff<br>▪ During final design, consideration of green infrastructure measures to reduce stormwater flows<br>▪ Hydraulic analysis during preliminary and final design to ensure that no adverse effects would occur to stream beds and banks<br>▪ Landscape restoration plan to include native species |
| Geology, Soils, and Farmlands (Chapter 12) | ▪ No adverse effects | • Soil types and limitations for construction to be evaluated during later phases of design |
| Transportation: Traffic Operations (Chapter 13) | ▪ Some intersection operations improved and some deteriorated; increase in the number of individual traffic movements operating at Level of Service E or F for all time periods compared to the No Action condition. | ▪ Design incorporates improvements to avoid impacts, including operation and capacity changes:<br>▪ New left turn lane northbound on Niagara Falls Boulevard at Longmeadow Drive<br>▪ Moved alignment into the northwest corner of the Boulevard Mall to avoid interaction with the intersection of Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road<br>▪ Additional northbound through lane on Sweet Home Road at Maple Road<br>▪ Underground alignment through the intersection of Sweet Home Road and Maple Road<br>▪ Signalization of John James Audubon Pkwy / Sylvan Pkwy intersection<br>▪ Use of signal coordination and connected signals to allow the Metro Rail vehicles to operate without stopping at intersections while satisfying vehicular demand in at least one direction while the light rail passes |

**Table S-4. Environmental Impacts Summary (continued)**

| Environmental Area | Benefits and Adverse Effects | Measures to Avoid, Minimize, or Mitigate Adverse Effects |
|---|---|---|
| Transportation: Transit (Chapter 13) | ▪ Introduction of new light rail transit service with 10 new stations that would connect many of the region's important employment, institutional, shopping, and entertainment centers<br>▪ Increase of approximately 12,000 riders on Metro Rail system; highest new ridership at University Station, Boulevard Mall, Flint, and Ellicott Complex<br>▪ Rerouting of three Metro Bus routes and discontinuation of UB shuttle bus service between the UB North and UB South Campuses | ▪ None |
| Transportation: Parking (Chapter 13) | ▪ New park and ride facilities at Boulevard Mall and I-990 Stations<br>▪ Reductions in existing parking on private property as a result of required road widening on Niagara Falls Blvd and Maple Rd affecting approximately 875 parking spaces; most could be relocated to other portions of the affected properties | ▪ All property acquisition, displacement, and relocation to be performed in accordance with federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, FTA Circular 5010.1D, and New York State laws |
| Transportation: Pedestrians and Bicycles (Chapter 13) | ▪ New multi-use paths, bicycle lanes, and median refuge areas for pedestrians to be created as part of the Proposed Action<br>▪ New continuous sidewalks to be provided along both sides of the alignment, filling in existing gaps<br>▪ Crosswalks with push buttons to activate the "walk" signal and countdown clocks to be provided<br>▪ ADA improvements to intersections along the corridor | ▪ None |
| Noise (Chapter 14) | ▪ Noise levels exceeding FTA impact thresholds resulting from operation of the new transit system:<br>▪ Moderate impacts at certain locations, where noise increases would be barely perceptible<br>▪ Moderate impact at Lockwood Memorial Library at UB North Campus that would be readily noticeable, but library windows and masonry walls would reduce interior noise levels so that an adverse noise effect would not occur<br>▪ Moderate and severe impacts at residences within 172 feet of John James Audubon Parkway between Dodge Rd and the Amherst police station | ▪ Noise analysis assumed use of the following to reduce noise levels:<br>▪ All new fleet of rail vehicles along the existing rail line and extension; vehicles to include rail skirts that break the line of sight between wheel-rail contact point and adjacent properties<br>▪ Signals at entrance and exit of tunnel to produce noise level not greater than 83 dBA at a distance of 50 feet<br>▪ Additional noise reduction measures, including wayside noise barriers, removal of at-grade crossings, etc., either not feasible or would not provide additional benefit |

**Table S-4. Environmental Impacts Summary (continued)**

| Environmental Area | Benefits and Adverse Effects | Measures to Avoid, Minimize, or Mitigate Adverse Effects |
|---|---|---|
| Vibration (Chapter 15) | ▪ Potential for adverse effects to vibration-sensitive equipment in Bonner Hall, Davis Hall, and Furnas Hall at UB North Campus<br>▪ Potential adverse vibration impacts and adverse ground-borne noise impacts at the following locations:<br>▪ Residences on Niagara Falls Blvd within 140 feet of underground track<br>▪ Residences on Niagara Falls Blvd within 165 feet of at-grade track<br>▪ Residences on the east side of John James Audubon Pkwy between Dodge Rd and the Amherst police station within 160 feet of at-grade track<br>▪ Potential adverse ground-borne noise impacts at performance hall in Alan Hall at UB South Campus | ▪ Detailed evaluation of vibration effects on sensitive equipment at UB North Campus during later phases of design and implementation of mitigation if impacts identified<br>▪ Design features to reduce vibration, including resilient fasteners for direct fixation track and resilient rail ties (ballast mats) for ballasted areas<br>▪ Ongoing preventive maintenance for vehicles and rails to avoid vibration associated with rough or flattened wheels |
| Air Quality (Chapter 16) | ▪ No adverse effects | ▪ None |
| Energy (Chapter 17) | ▪ No adverse effects | ▪ None |
| Hazardous and Contaminated Materials (Chapter 18) | ▪ No adverse effects | ▪ None |

**Table S-4. Environmental Impacts Summary (continued)**

| Environmental Area | Benefits and Adverse Effects | Measures to Avoid, Minimize, or Mitigate Adverse Effects |
|---|---|---|
| Construction Effects (Chapter 19) | ▪ Construction-related disruption, especially near Main Street shaft site and staging area at Kenmore Ave / Niagara Falls Blvd<br>▪ Temporary disruptions to access to nearby uses<br>▪ Adverse effects on local businesses due to access restrictions, loss of parking and landscape, signage removal, traffic congestion, noise, and dust<br>▪ Need for utility relocations<br>▪ Disruptions to vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic<br>▪ Disruptions to existing bus service<br>▪ Construction-related noise audible in surrounding areas; noise from construction vehicles on local roadways<br>▪ For locations near station and substation construction, noise in excess of FTA impact thresholds, but due to short duration of construction and small magnitude of exceedances, would not constitute an adverse effect<br>▪ Perceptible vibration associated with construction activities<br>▪ Potential to encounter contaminated soil or groundwater during construction | ▪ Minimizing parking disruptions<br>▪ Notifications to businesses of traffic interruptions; potential development of business continuity plans for local businesses<br>▪ Coordination with emergency service providers to ensure access is maintained<br>▪ Utility relocation in advance of construction<br>▪ Use of maintenance and protection of traffic measures<br>▪ No construction during nighttime hours (10 p.m. – 7 a.m.)<br>▪ Trucks routed to avoid noise-sensitive land uses wherever possible<br>▪ Use of low noise construction equipment and lower noise construction methodologies<br>▪ Vibration monitoring at structures near construction activity<br>▪ Use of dust control measures<br>▪ Further investigation of potentially contaminated sites; appropriate clean-up and remediation during construction |
| Indirect and Cumulative Effects (Chapter 20) | ▪ Strong potential for transit-oriented development close to the new stations<br>▪ The Proposed Action would complement existing land use plans, which call for up to 8.4 million square feet of new commercial and residential space within ½ mile of existing and new Metro Rail stations, once zoning and land use policies are revised to accommodate growth<br>▪ Positive economic benefits as a result of the increase in jobs and housing<br>▪ Potential increase in property values close to transit stations that could create a burden for some households and could result in business displacement<br>▪ Potential for cumulative impacts of new transit system with other developments proposed or planned nearby | ▪ Coordination between NFTA, Amherst, and Tonawanda regarding transit-oriented development along the Proposed Action alignment |