I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT

SECTION 6-7
ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS THAT CANNOT BE AVOIDED

This section summarizes the adverse effects of the Project that cannot be avoided. As described in the previous chapters and sections of this DDR/DEIS, mitigation measures would be developed to avoid or minimize adverse impacts to the extent practicable. However, even with mitigation, some adverse effects cannot be fully avoided. Unavoidable adverse effects occur if a resource would be lost or if mitigation measures could only partially mitigate the effects.

6-7.1 VIADUCT ALTERNATIVE

The following effects of the Viaduct Alternative would be unavoidable:

• **Section 6-2-3, Environmental Justice:** As will be noted in the following bullets, the Viaduct Alternative would result in the unavoidable displacement of properties, removal of historic structures, temporary closure of a portion of a public park, adverse visual effects at nine viewpoints selected for analysis, and perceptible increases in noise at 43 receivers (representing 120 receptors). Most of these effects would occur in identified environmental justice communities. NYSDOT proposes mitigation measures to minimize these effects on the public, including environmental justice communities; however, it is not feasible to avoid the effects of the Viaduct Alternative in environmental justice communities.

• **Section 6-3-1, Land Acquisition, Displacement, and Relocation:** The Viaduct Alternative would result in the full or partial acquisition of 119 parcels, 118 parcels totaling 22.82 acres in the Central Study Area, and one partial acquisition of 0.07 acres in the I-481 North Study Area. These parcels include 89 properties that would be partially acquired and 30 properties that would be acquired in full. Twenty-seven of these full and partial acquisitions are tax exempt. As a result of the unavoidable acquisition of property, the Viaduct Alternative would result in a total annual tax loss of $629,052. The Viaduct Alternative would acquire 24 buildings (21 occupied and 3 vacant), resulting in the displacement of 565 employees and 54 dwelling units. As described in **Chapter 3, Alternatives**, efforts to reduce property impacts were undertaken, but it is unreasonable to avoid the acquisition of private property for the implementation of the Viaduct Alternative.

• **Section 6-4-1, Historic and Cultural Resources:** The Viaduct Alternative would result in the demolition of 10 buildings that are historic architectural structures. Eight of these are individually National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-listed or eligible; two are contributing resources to the North Salina Street Historic District; and one building is a contributing resource to the New York Central Railroad Passenger and Freight Station complex. As described in Chapter 6, FHWA and NYSDOT will develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in consultation with the SHPO, ACHP, Onondaga Nation, and other Consulting Parties to resolve the Project's adverse effects, however, the demolition of these buildings would be a permanent loss that would be unavoidable under the Viaduct Alternative.

• **Section 6-4-2, Parklands and Recreational Resources:** A portion of Wilson Park would be temporarily occupied during construction of the Viaduct Alternative. A temporary easement on
0.12 acres of Wilson Park would be required for approximately three years of the approximate six-year construction period. One of the two basketball courts at the park, as well as a section of the adjacent grassy area, would be inaccessible to park users for this period. While these park amenities would not be available during a three-year period of construction, this constitutes a small section of the 2.1-acre park, and their inaccessibility would be temporary. Construction activities would also increase noise, vibration, and dust at the park, and would affect views of and from it, but these effects would be temporary. To mitigate this temporary loss of parkland, NYSDOT would make improvements within the portion of the park that would remain open. Once construction is complete, the existing eastern basketball court would be reconstructed and the adjacent lawn area would be graded and reseeded. Thus, the park would be returned to include its current uses, in the same or improved condition, upon the completion of construction. These measures would minimize the adverse effect on Wilson Park during construction, but its partial closure during construction of the Viaduct Alternative would be unavoidable.

- **Section 6-4-3, Visual Resources and Aesthetic Considerations:** The Viaduct Alternative would result in minor adverse visual effects at nine of 27 viewpoints selected for analysis. These adverse effects would largely be due to the increased width and height of the new I-81 viaduct, which would increase the overall massing, scale, and visibility of the structure. NYSDOT would implement practicable measures to minimize or otherwise mitigate adverse effects, such as context-sensitive design solutions, plantings, streetscape improvements, and selection of materials that improve aesthetics of the alternative. However, with these mitigation measures, there would still be adverse visual effects at one viewpoint and minor adverse effects at nine viewpoints, as described in **Section 6-4-3, Visual Resources and Aesthetic Consideration.**

- **Section 6-4-6, Noise:** This DDR/DEIS identified traffic noise impacts at 704 (representing 1,253 receptors) of the 2,246 receivers selected for the Project. Of the 704 impacted receivers (representing 1,253 receptors), 43 receivers (representing 120 receptors) would have a perceptible increase in traffic noise levels, not accounting for the expected reductions in the areas proposed for noise abatement (a noise level change of greater than 3 dB(A) is generally perceptible to the human ear). Abatement measures, such as noise barriers, would be constructed where feasible and reasonable (as defined in NYSDOT Noise Policy). However, where noise barriers or other abatement measures would not be feasible and reasonable, the noise impacts would be unavoidable.

- **Section 6-4-7, Water Resources:** The Viaduct Alternative would permanently affect approximately 0.01 acres of freshwater wetlands in the I-481 North Study Area because of noise barrier construction. Where freshwater wetlands and regulated adjacent areas are disturbed, these impacts would be unavoidable. In terms of NYSDEC-regulated freshwater wetland adjacent area, approximately 1.86 acres in the I-481 East Study Area and 0.43 acres in the I-481 North Study Area would be permanently affected because of noise barrier construction. Wetland mitigation is not proposed under the Viaduct Alternative as the permanent impacts are under the 0.1-acre threshold required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.
6-7.2 COMMUNITY GRID ALTERNATIVE

The following effects of the Community Grid Alternative would be unavoidable:

- **Section 6-2-3, Environmental Justice**: As will be noted in the following bullets, the Community Grid Alternative would result in the unavoidable displacement of properties, closure of a portion of a public park, adverse visual effects at one viewpoint selected for analysis, and perceptible increases in noise at 43 receivers (representing 99 receptors). Many of these effects would occur in identified environmental justice communities. NYSDOT proposes mitigation measures to minimize these effects on the public, including environmental justice communities; however, it is not feasible to avoid the effects of the Community Grid Alternative in environmental justice communities.

- **Section 6-3-1, Land Acquisition, Displacement, and Relocation**: The Community Grid Alternative would result in the full or partial acquisition of 136 parcels, totaling 24.36 acres. This includes 125 parcels, totaling 18.72 total acquired acres, within the City of Syracuse. These parcels include 122 properties that would be partially acquired and 14 properties that would be acquired in full. Of these properties, 27 are tax-exempt (3.81 acres). Two acquisitions, one a tax-exempt parcel owned by the State of New York, would be required in the Town of DeWitt (0.6 acres). Nine acquisitions would be required in the Town of Cicero (5.05 acres). The unavoidable acquisition of property by the Community Grid Alternative would result in a total tax loss of approximately $133,393 annually. The Community Grid Alternative would acquire four commercial buildings (three occupied and one vacant) and displace a total of 35 employees. As described in Chapter 3, Alternatives, efforts to reduce property impacts were undertaken, but it is unreasonable to avoid the acquisition of private property for the implementation of the Community Grid Alternative.

- **Section 6-4-1, Historic and Cultural Resources**: Two archaeological sites have been identified within the APE for the Community Grid Alternative, the Britton Lime Kiln Site and the Onondaga Arsenal Site (Unique Site Number 06740.000389). The NRHP eligibility of both sites is currently undetermined. If found to be NRHP-eligible based on Phase II archaeological investigation and further consolation with SHPO, the Onondaga Nation, and the Tuscarora Nation, then the removal of these resources would be considered an unavoidable impact.

- **Section 6-4-2, Parklands and Recreational Resources**: A portion of Wilson Park would be temporarily occupied during construction of the Community Grid Alternative. A temporary easement on 0.12 acres of Wilson Park would be required for approximately two years of the approximate five-year construction period. One of the two basketball courts at the park, as well as a section of the adjacent grassy area, would be inaccessible to park users for this period. While these park amenities would not be available during a three-year period of construction, this constitutes a small section of the 2.1-acre park, and their inaccessibility would be temporary. Construction activities would also increase noise, vibration, and dust at the park, and would affect views of and from it, but these effects would be temporary. To mitigate this temporary loss of parkland, NYSDOT would make improvements within the portion of the park that would remain open. Once construction is complete, the existing eastern basketball court would be reconstructed and the adjacent lawn area would be graded and reseeded. Thus, the park would be returned to
include its current uses, in the same or improved condition, upon the completion of construction. These measures would minimize the adverse effect on Wilson Park during construction, but its partial closure during construction of the Community Grid Alternative would be unavoidable.

- **Section 6-4-3, Visual Resources and Aesthetic Considerations:** The Community Grid Alternative would result in minor adverse visual effects at one of the 27 viewpoints selected for analysis. Since the existing I-81 viaduct would be removed under this alternative, these effects would be due to the obstruction of existing views by safety fencing. Where practicable, measures to minimize or otherwise mitigate adverse effects would be implemented, such as context-sensitive design solutions, plantings, streetscape improvements, and selection of materials that improve aesthetics of the alternative. However, with these mitigation measures there would still be minor adverse visual effects at one viewpoint, as described in Section 6-4-3, Visual Resources and Aesthetic Consideration.

- **Section 6-4-6, Noise:** Traffic noise impacts were identified at 619 (representing 1,084 receptors) of the 2,246 receivers selected for the Project. Under the Community Grid Alternative, it is anticipated that traffic noise level increases would be perceptible at 43 (representing 99 receptors) of the 2,246 receivers. Abatement measures, such as noise barriers, would be constructed where feasible and reasonable (as defined in NYSDOT Noise Policy). However, where noise barriers or other abatement measures would not be feasible and reasonable, the noise impacts would be unavoidable.

  During construction, there would be temporary increases in noise levels related to construction equipment and traffic detours. Abatement strategies would include, to the extent practicable, siting equipment as far from sensitive receivers as possible; timing noisy construction activities at times when they may be least disruptive; and implementing shielding measures. (See Table 4-7 in Chapter 4, Construction Means and Methods.) Where these increases in noise could not be adequately abated, these temporary effects would be unavoidable.

- **Section 6-4-7, Water Resources:** Approximately 0.68 acres of freshwater wetlands (0.61 acres of vegetated wetlands and 0.07 acres of open water wetlands) would be permanently incorporated into the Community Grid Alternative. The Project would also affect about 4 acres of wetland adjacent area. Where freshwater wetlands regulated adjacent areas are disturbed, these impacts would be unavoidable. Mitigation for these impacted wetlands would be in the form of an in-lieu fee arrangement with USACE. Mitigation for the potential NYSDEC wetlands would be in the form of improvements to Mud Creek (including streambed restoration, habitat connectivity, floodplain enhancements, and riparian corridor enhancements).