

PASSAIC-BERGEN PASSENGER SERVICE RESTORATION PROJECT CURRENT  
CONDITIONS STUDY

**Task 5: Concept  
Development/Feasibility  
Assessment  
Alternatives Screening  
Methodology & Criteria**

November 2019

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Passaic-Bergen Passenger Restoration Project Current Conditions Study is sponsored by NJ TRANSIT with input from Passaic, Bergen, and Hudson Counties. The study aims to prepare a technical update and assessment of the feasibility to restore passenger service along the New York, Susquehanna and Western Railway (NYS&W) corridor between the Borough of Hawthorne in Passaic County, City of Hackensack in Bergen County, and Township of North Bergen in Hudson County. Passenger service was available along the corridor until 1966, when service was terminated because of declines in ridership and mounting financial losses for the railroad. Today, the corridor hosts a moderate amount of freight traffic.

There have been multiple efforts to study the restoration of passenger rail service along the NYS&W. In 1996, NJ TRANSIT completed an environmental assessment of restoring service between the Borough of Hawthorne and Township of Sparta. In 2002, NJ TRANSIT began work on an environmental impact statement (EIS) and preliminary engineering to restore service between the Borough of Hawthorne and City of Hackensack. Between 2002 and 2012, NJ TRANSIT completed the [Passaic Bergen Passenger Service Restoration Project Executive Order 215 Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\)](#) and final design. However, due to other competing projects and the funding environment, the project was not advanced. Since 2012, changes in land use, increased congestion, and economic growth have rekindled discussion about passenger rail service between Passaic and Bergen Counties. Additionally, recent actions on municipal and state levels have resulted in resolutions supporting the restoration of passenger service along this corridor.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

The Alternatives Screening Methodology and Criteria memo is the second in a series and builds on the previous memo that introduced the Preliminary Long List Alternatives. In the Preliminary Long List Alternatives memo, the potential modes, station stops, and alignments that will comprise each alternative were presented. This new memo presents the three-phase screening process and criteria that will be used to evaluate each alternative. The three phases of the screening process are the Fatal Flaws Analysis, Initial Screening, and Final Screening. The screening methodology and the accompanying criteria presented here relate directly to the project's goals and objectives (included in the [Statement of Purpose and Need](#), see Table 1-1) and have been developed to highlight the relative strengths and weaknesses of each alternative.

Table 1-1: Project Goals and Objectives

Goal	Objective
1. Improve mobility options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide frequent, high-quality transit service to existing and planned employment and other activity centers in Passaic, Bergen, and Hudson Counties</li> <li>▪ Provide improved transit accessibility to resident and working populations (particularly underserved and transit dependent populations)</li> <li>▪ Increase transit ridership</li> <li>▪ Reduce travel time and improve reliability</li> <li>▪ Increase transportation system capacity to accommodate future growth and assist in mitigating future increases in traffic congestion</li> </ul>
2. Improve transportation connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide intermodal connectivity/interoperability with existing bus and rail services (e.g. NJ TRANSIT commuter rail, Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Improve pedestrian and bicyclist connectivity and safety</li> </ul>
3. Support economic growth opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Serve existing and proposed development while preserving existing community resources</li> <li>▪ Support ongoing and planned TOD projects</li> <li>▪ Support the goals of local and regional development plans for better connectivity between communities</li> </ul>
4. Develop a cost-effective project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement cost-effective transit improvements within a reasonable construction timeframe and with capital, operations, and maintenance costs that are consistent with realistically anticipated funding</li> <li>▪ Generate sufficient ridership to justify capital and operating costs</li> <li>▪ Maximize revenue potential</li> <li>▪ Utilize existing transportation infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Identify options that can be implemented in phases</li> </ul>
5. Enhance quality of life and minimize adverse environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimize impacts to sensitive environmental areas</li> <li>▪ Minimize property acquisitions</li> <li>▪ Minimize air quality and noise vibration impacts</li> <li>▪ Minimize visual impacts</li> <li>▪ Maintain historical/cultural character of neighborhoods</li> <li>▪ Implement sustainable transit technologies</li> </ul>

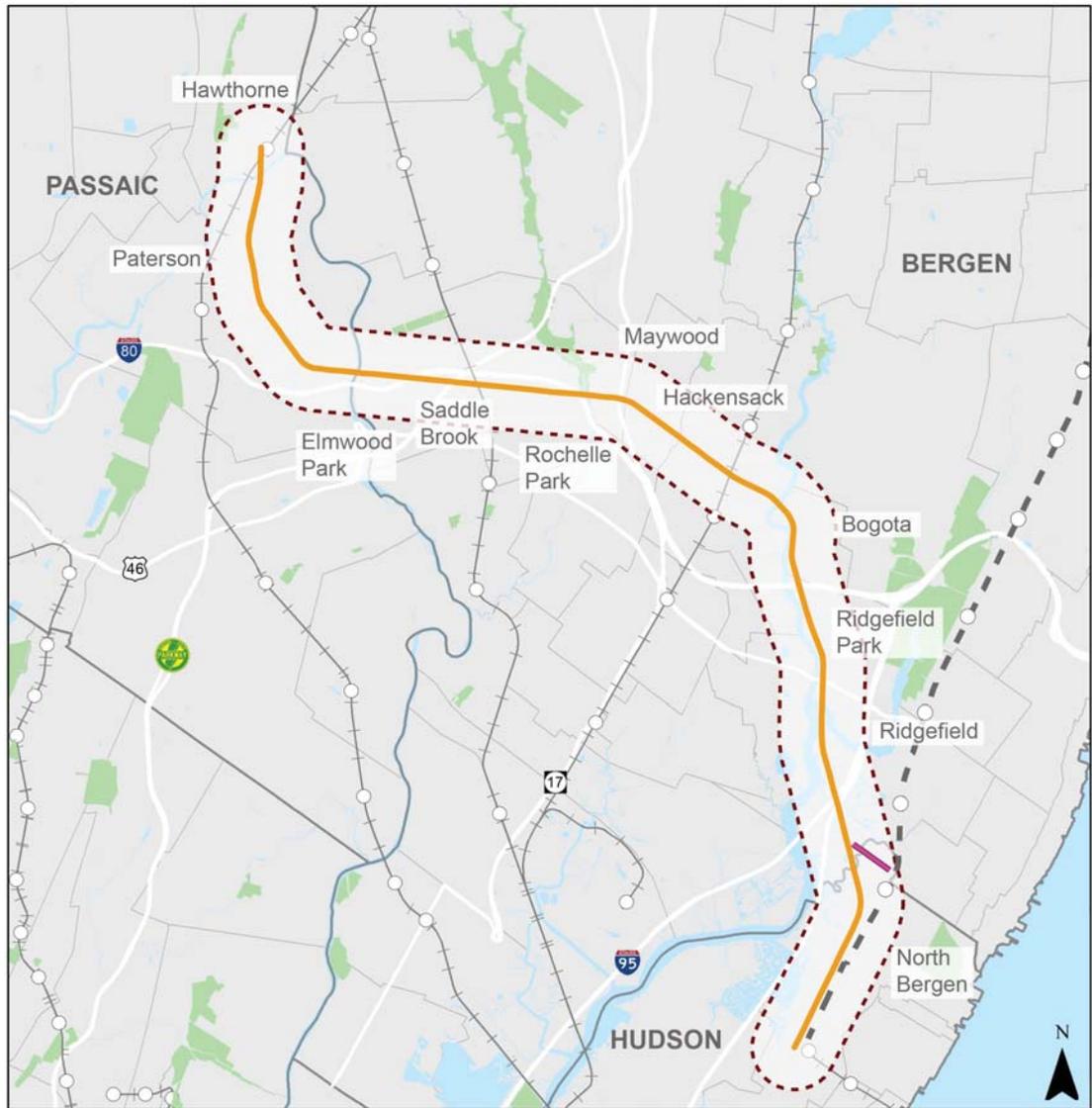
## 2 Study Area

The Study Area occupies 16.3 square miles in northern New Jersey in Passaic, Bergen, and Hudson Counties, and is comprised of the half-mile area surrounding the 15-mile portion of the NYS&W right-of-way (ROW) between the Borough of Hawthorne, City of Hackensack, and Township of North Bergen (see Figure 2-1). Within the Study Area, there are 11 municipalities:

- Borough of Hawthorne and the City of Paterson in Passaic County
- Boroughs of Elmwood Park, Maywood, Bogota, and Ridgefield, the Townships of Saddle Brook and Rochelle Park, the City of Hackensack, and the Village of Ridgefield Park in Bergen County
- Township of North Bergen in Hudson County

The boundaries of the Study Area and the portion of the NYS&W on which it is based are inspired by previous efforts. The previous EIS, which was completed in 2007, proposed a Study Area based on the NYS&W ROW between the Borough of Hawthorne and the City of Hackensack. Under this study, the Study Area will be extended south to include the Township North Bergen to connect with the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit System (HBLRTS).

Figure 2-1: Study Area Map



**Legend**

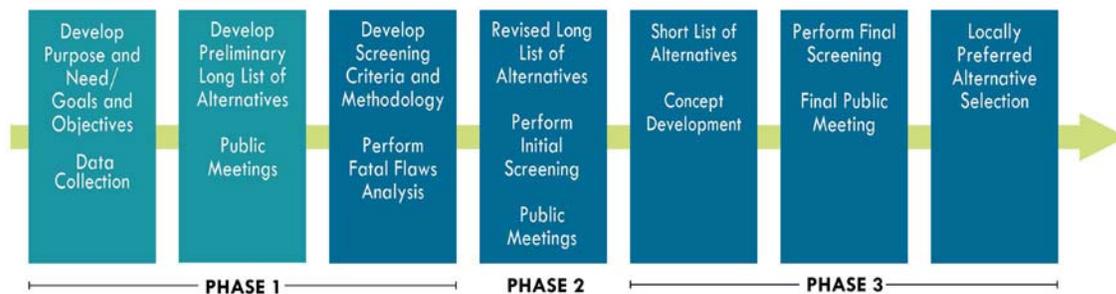
- Study Area Half-Mile Buffer
- Edgewater Branch Option
- Northern Branch Corridor Project
- NYS&W Line
- Passenger Rail Station
- Passenger Rail Line
- County Line

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

### 3 Screening Methodology: Overview

A phased screening process will be used to refine the Preliminary Long List Alternatives and select a Locally Preferred Alternative for restoring passenger service along the NYS&W. The screening process will be closely tied to the project’s goals and objectives, which focus on mobility, connectivity, economic growth, quality of life, and cost-effectiveness (see Table 1-1). Using the project’s goals and objectives as the basis for the alternative screening framework will ensure that each alternative is developed to a consistent level of detail and compared to common criteria. Figure 3-1 shows the three phases and milestones in the screening process.

Figure 3-1: Alternatives Screening Process and Milestones



- The first phase of the screening is a Fatal Flaws Analysis. The Fatal Flaws Analysis will evaluate the Preliminary Long List Alternatives to eliminate any alternatives that are infeasible or impractical and do not warrant further development. The Fatal Flaws Analysis will result in the Revised Long List Alternatives
- The second phase is an Initial Screening of the Revised Long List Alternatives. The Initial Screening will broadly analyze the remaining alternatives to determine how well they meet the project’s goals and objectives. This phase will result in three Short List Alternatives.
- The third phase is a Final Screening. The Short List Alternatives will be further developed and evaluated through a more extensive screening to determine a Locally Preferred Alternative.

As screening progresses, each phase will become more quantitative and detailed. The Fatal Flaws Analysis will be qualitative, and alternatives will be evaluated based on basic characteristics. The Initial Screening will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative criteria and a ranking system to compare each of the Revised Long List Alternatives. For each screening criterion, alternatives will be assigned a ranking based on how well they satisfy each goal and objective relative to each other. The resulting Short List Alternatives will be developed in more detail to determine conceptual alignments, station design concepts, and operating plans. The Final Screening will use a similar ranking system and analyze the details of each alternative using quantitative and qualitative datasets. The results of the Final Screening will be used to determine a Locally Preferred Alternative.

## 4 Fatal Flaws Analysis Methodology

The Fatal Flaws Analysis will refine the Preliminary Long List Alternatives and eliminate any alternatives that are infeasible or impractical. Table 4-1 lists the alternatives will be considered under the Fatal Flaws Analysis.

Table 4-1: Preliminary Long List Alternatives to be Considered under Fatal Flaws Analysis

Alternative	Mode	Alignment
1a	Local Bus	On-street using local streets and major highways, local service between Hawthorne, Paterson, Hackensack, and North Bergen
1b	Express Bus	On-street alignment using local streets and major highways, express service between Hawthorne, Paterson, Hackensack, and North Bergen
1c	Express Bus	Partially within NYS&W
2a	Bus Rapid Transit	Fully within NYS&W ROW
2b	Bus Rapid Transit	Partially within NYS&W ROW
2c	Bus Rapid Transit	On-street
3a	Rubber-Tired Tram	Fully within NYS&W ROW
3b	Rubber-Tired Tram	Partially within NYS&W ROW
4a	Automated Guideway Transit	Fully within NYS&W ROW
4b	Automated Guideway Transit	Partially within NYS&W ROW
5a	Diesel Multiple Unit, compliant with Federal Railroad Administration requirements	Fully within NYS&W ROW
5b	Diesel Multiple Unit, not compliant with Federal Railroad Administration requirements	Fully within NYS&W ROW
5c	Diesel Multiple Unit, compliant with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirements	Partially within NYS&W ROW
5d	Diesel Multiple Unit, not compliant with FRA requirements	Partially within NYS&W ROW
6a	Electrified Light Rail (station-based charging)	Fully within NYS&W ROW
6b	Electrified Light Rail (overhead electric wires)	Fully within NYS&W ROW
6c	Electrified Light Rail (station-based charging)	Partially within the NYS&W
6d	Electrified Light Rail (overhead electric wires)	Partially within the NYS&W

The Fatal Flaws Analysis will be performed using a qualitative method based on the study team’s best judgment and the project goals. Screening criteria that will be used in the Fatal Flaws Analysis are listed in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2: Fatal Flaws Analysis Screening Criteria

Goal	Objective	Screening Criteria
1. Improve mobility options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide frequent, high-quality transit service to existing and planned employment and other activity centers in Passaic, Bergen, and Hudson Counties</li> <li>▪ Provide improved transit accessibility to resident and working populations (particularly underserved and transit dependent populations)</li> <li>▪ Increase transit ridership</li> <li>▪ Reduce travel time and improve reliability</li> <li>▪ Increase transportation system capacity to accommodate future growth and assist in mitigating future increases in traffic congestion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Does the alternative substantially increase transit service levels and reduce transit travel times within the Study Area?</li> <li>▪ Does the alternative provide connections to most of the identified existing community attractors and trip generators in and around the Study Area?</li> </ul>
2. Improve transportation connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide intermodal connectivity/interoperability with existing bus and rail services (e.g. NJ TRANSIT commuter rail, Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Improve pedestrian and bicyclist connectivity and safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Does the alternative allow for potential connections to existing bus and rail services with demonstrated demand for transfer ridership?</li> <li>▪ Is the alternative flexible in terms of mode or alignment?</li> </ul>
3. Support economic growth opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Serve existing and proposed development while preserving existing community resources</li> <li>▪ Support ongoing and planned TOD projects</li> <li>▪ Support the goals of local and regional development plans for better connectivity between communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Does the alternative support existing and proposed transit-oriented development?<sup>1</sup> (see footnote)</li> </ul>
4. Develop a cost-effective project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement cost-effective transit improvements within a reasonable construction timeframe and with capital, operations, and maintenance costs that are consistent with realistically anticipated funding</li> <li>▪ Generate sufficient ridership to justify capital and operating costs</li> <li>▪ Maximize revenue potential</li> <li>▪ Utilize existing transportation infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Identify options that can be implemented in phases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can the alternative be made operational without major capital infrastructure improvements?<sup>2</sup> (see footnote)</li> <li>▪ Can the alternative accommodate physical or temporal separation to preserve existing freight activities?</li> </ul>
5. Enhance quality of life and minimize adverse environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimize impacts to sensitive environmental areas</li> <li>▪ Minimize property acquisitions</li> <li>▪ Minimize air quality and noise vibration impacts</li> <li>▪ Minimize visual impacts</li> <li>▪ Maintain historical/cultural character of neighborhoods</li> <li>▪ Implement sustainable transit technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can the alternative be implemented without significant property acquisitions?</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Proposed transit-oriented development is defined as any development which has already received a permit.

<sup>2</sup> Major capital infrastructure improvements include widening of the ROW, significant bridge rehabilitation, or bridge replacement.

## 5 Initial and Final Screening Methodology

### 5.1 OVERVIEW

The Fatal Flaws Analysis will be followed by an Initial Screening that will result in the Short List Alternatives. The Initial Screening will include both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Revised Long List Alternatives. Once the Short List Alternatives are determined, concepts for each alternative will be developed in more detail. Based on the location of attractors, generators and major roads that closely parallel the ROW, conceptual alignments will be developed as well as station design concepts and operating plans. Using the concepts and operating plans developed, estimates of capital costs, operating and maintenance costs, and ridership will be prepared and used in the Final Screening. The Final Screening will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative datasets to evaluate the Short List Alternatives and determine a Locally Preferred Alternative.

### 5.2 SCREENING CRITERIA

Screening criteria will be used for the Initial Screening of the Revised Long List Alternatives and the Final Screening of the Short List Alternatives. The project's goals and objectives will inform the development of the screening criteria. The specific screening criteria to be included in the Initial and Final Screenings have not yet been determined. The Initial Screening will be broader and more qualitative than the Final Screening, which will rely more on quantitative data to evaluate each alternative. Both screenings will utilize a ranking method (to be determined) to rate how well each alternative meets the screening criteria and satisfies the project's goals and objectives. Screening criteria will be weighted as needed.

The first step in developing screening criteria is to determine performance measures that capture each of the project goals and objectives. A list of performance measures is included in Table 5-1 through Table 5-5. In certain cases, one performance measure correlates to multiple project objectives, and certain objectives have been defined by more than one performance measure.

When conducting the Initial and Final Screenings, each performance measure will be evaluated to determine how it can be used to compare each alternative. Wherever possible, thresholds will be developed for each performance measure to capture how fully each alternative meets individual project objectives. The resulting screening criteria will be used to rank each alternative, and determine which alternatives should be included in the Short List Alternatives and eventually selected as the Locally Preferred Alternative.

Table 5-1: Performance Measures for Goal 1: Improve Mobility Options

Objective	Performance Measure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide frequent, high-quality transit service to existing and planned employment and other activity centers in Passaic, Bergen, and Hudson Counties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Current and credible community attractors and trip generators that connect to existing transit service or are within a short walking distance of potential station stops (employment centers, retail centers, colleges, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Projected daily boardings by station</li> <li>▪ Location of existing freight customers</li> <li>▪ Freight operating schedule along NYS&amp;W ROW</li> <li>▪ Potential service levels (run all day vs. peak periods only, per hour levels of service)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide improved transit accessibility to resident and working populations (particularly underserved and transit dependent populations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Residents within half-mile of potential station stops</li> <li>▪ Employees within half-mile of potential station stops</li> <li>▪ Transit dependent populations within half-mile of potential station stops (include zero-auto households and low income, minority, disabled, youth, and senior populations)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase transit ridership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential travel time savings compared with existing transit options (peak and off-peak)</li> <li>▪ Projected run times</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce travel time and improve reliability</li> <li>▪ Increase transportation system capacity to accommodate future growth and assist in mitigating future increases in traffic congestion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Projected population and employment growth</li> <li>▪ Existing traffic counts</li> <li>▪ Projected traffic counts</li> <li>▪ Existing bus and rail ridership volumes between counties</li> <li>▪ Projected bus and rail ridership volumes between counties</li> <li>▪ Private vehicle trips eliminated</li> </ul>

Table 5-2: Performance Measures for Goal 2: Improve Transportation Connectivity

Objective	Performance Measure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide intermodal connectivity/interoperability with existing bus and rail services (e.g. NJ TRANSIT commuter rail, Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bus services and bus stops within quarter-mile of potential station stops<sup>3</sup></li> <li>▪ Rail services and stations intersecting alignment within quarter-mile of potential station stops</li> <li>▪ Projected ridership demand at proposed transfer points</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve pedestrian and bicyclist connectivity and safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure intersecting alignment</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> A quarter-mile radius around potential station stops was chosen as a reasonable walkable distance for a connection to bus and rail services.

Table 5-3: Performance Measures for Goal 3: Support Economic Growth Opportunities

Objective	Performance Measure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Serve existing and proposed development while preserving existing community resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sites posing development opportunity within half-mile of alignment</li> <li>▪ Current and future development projects/rezonings within half-mile of alignment</li> <li>▪ Private automobile trips eliminated</li> <li>▪ Changes in public transit mode share</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support ongoing and planned TOD projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sites posing development opportunity within half-mile of alignment</li> <li>▪ Current and future development projects/rezonings within half-mile of alignment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support the goals of local and regional development plans for better connectivity between communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local and regional development plans that guide growth in a comprehensive manner, encouraging sustainable growth that respects the existing community fabric and takes strategic advantage of transit</li> <li>▪ Complements overall goals of local and regional plans to encourage growth, development, and redevelopment strategically around transit to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and enhance other quality of life considerations</li> </ul>

Table 5-4: Performance Measures for Goal 4: Develop a Cost-Effective Project

Objective	Performance Measure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement cost-effective transit improvements within a reasonable construction timeframe and with capital, operations, and maintenance costs that are consistent with realistically anticipated funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Estimated total capital cost</li> <li>▪ Estimated annual operations and maintenance costs</li> <li>▪ Flexibility for phased implementation</li> <li>▪ Duration of construction</li> <li>▪ Funding types available</li> <li>▪ Major capital improvements required</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Generate sufficient ridership to justify capital and operating costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Projected daily boardings</li> <li>▪ Estimated cost per rider</li> <li>▪ Farebox ratio</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maximize revenue potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Level of improvements needed to utilize existing NYS&amp;W ROW (quality of existing bridges, width of existing ROW, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Feasibility of using parallel and connecting corridors</li> <li>▪ Location of existing freight customers</li> <li>▪ Freight operating schedule</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Utilize existing transportation infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Availability of nearby existing transit services (bus and rail)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify options that can be implemented in phases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Duration of construction</li> <li>▪ Flexibility for phased implementation</li> </ul>

Table 5-5: Performance Measures for Goal 5: Enhance Quality of Life and Minimize Adverse Environmental Impacts

Objective	Performance Measure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimize impacts to sensitive environmental areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sensitive environmental areas within half-mile of proposed alignment (sensitive or endangered species/habitats, wetlands, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Hazardous mitigation/remediation sites along or adjacent to proposed alignment or station locations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimize property acquisitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Full or partial property acquisitions required (costs and anticipated issues)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimize air quality and noise vibration impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nature of air quality and noise vibration impacts</li> <li>▪ Sensitive noise receptors within half-mile of proposed alignment (residences, hospitals, schools, places of worship, etc.)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimize visual impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Negatively affected properties within half-mile of proposed alignment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain historical/cultural character of neighborhoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Areas where historic and/or cultural resources negatively affected</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement sustainable transit technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential to integrate sustainable transit technologies (electric vehicles, hybrid vehicles, etc.)</li> </ul>

## 6 Next Steps

The next steps in the screening process include:

- Phase 1
  - Complete Fatal Flaws Analysis to determine the Revised Long List Alternatives
- Phase 2
  - Perform Initial Screening to determine Short List Alternatives
  - Hold public meetings to get feedback on Short List Alternatives
- Phase 3
  - Develop concepts for each of the Short List Alternatives
  - Hold public meetings to get feedback before selecting Locally Preferred Alternative
  - Perform Final Screening to determine the Locally Preferred Alternative

The Locally Preferred Alternative will then be used to provide updated environmental review information utilizing the previous Executive Order 215 EIS as a base document (see Task 9).