

CHAPTER 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Cheektowaga Trail Feasibility Study is a project that includes a multifactorial analysis of three sections of trail located in Buffalo. The trail segments, initially scoped out in the Regional Bike Buffalo Niagara Master Plan (2020), include the Scajaquada Creek Extension to Cheektowaga, Clarence Pathway Buffalo Extension, and the Lancaster Heritage Trail West Extension.

SCAJAQUADA CREEK EXTENSION TO CHEEKTOWAGA

This corridor is a 2.5 mile off-road trail that will provide a connection between West Delavan Street/Main Street and the Clarence Pathway Buffalo Extension Corridor near Galleria Drive. The proposal may include on-road and off-road improvements that would utilize existing paths. Once the currently proposed East Side Trail/Northeast Greenway is complete, this will also create a connection between Canisius College and Buffalo.

CLARENCE PATHWAY BUFFALO EXTENSION

At nearly 8 miles, this corridor is the longest segment in the Feasibility Study, spanning from Bailey Avenue in Buffalo to Harris Hill Road in Lancaster. Proposals for this corridor include on-road enhancements along Harris Hill Road and Wehrle Drive and off road facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

LANCASTER HERITAGE TRAIL WEST EXTENSION

This corridor is a 5.1 mile segment that would connect the existing Lehigh Valley Railroad Rail Trail to the Lancaster Heritage Trail via off-road facilities.

An existing conditions report will outline aspects of the project such as property ownership, right-of-way (ROW), and existing infrastructure. Upon completion of the existing conditions report, a series of opportunities and challenges within each corridor will be produced to help create trail recommendations.



PAST STUDIES

REGIONAL BIKE BUFFALO NIAGARA MASTER PLAN

(<https://www.gbnrtc.org/bikebuffaloniagara>)

The Regional Bike Buffalo Niagara Master Plan was published in 2020 to serve as a guide to provide a transportation system that safely integrates bicycling in the Buffalo Niagara Region. The Plan builds on recent efforts as well as new research and advances in bicycle facility design best practices with the goal of developing a comprehensive network of bike lanes, greenway trails, and other facilities to safely connect neighborhoods.

The corridors, Scajaquada Creek Extension to Cheektowaga, Clarence Pathway Buffalo Extension, Lancaster Heritage Trail West Extension (project numbers 13, 18, and 50 respectively), are all considered “highest ranking off-road corridors” in the 2020 Plan.

*The project numbers correspond to the project’s regional ranking relative to all of the corridors listed in the plan.

MOVING FORWARD 2050: A REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR BUFFALO NIAGARA (2018)

This plan was adopted in 2018 and builds off the 2015 One Region Forward Plan. The key recommendation in the Plan includes the development of a modern regional bike network to increase connectivity and minimize gaps in existing infrastructure. The network aims to build pathways for the City of Buffalo and the surrounding suburban commuters through both commuter and recreational bike network completion, which requires linking bikes with additional options and bike amenities with upgraded infrastructure. Upon completion this new network would connect the Shoreline Trail, Empire State Trail, and the Buffalo Blueway.

COMPREHENSIVE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2018)

This Plan was adopted in 2018 and aims to increase mobility and accessibility between Buffalo and other regions to the north. The multi-modal and mobility aspect of the Plan has recommendations that include the implementation of bike share facilities with bike

storage and parking opportunities at Metro Rail stations, complete street implementations on streets near Metro stations to improve biking accessibility to and from the Rail, intersection improvements to promote safer crossings, and wayfinding signage to help users identify key destinations.

ERIE COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN UPDATE (2018)

This Update was implemented in 2018 by the Erie County Department of Environmental Planning and Erie County Department of Parks, recreation and Forestry with a focus on the preservation and improvements of existing recreational assets. The goals of the Update that align with the goals of this study include the prioritization of roadway improvements within the County that involve elements of complete streets and better accessibility to parks and recreation. The Update’s recommendations also include routine inspection and maintenance of existing trails and improvements to wayfinding signage and maps.

WESTERN NY GREENWAYS: VISION AND ANALYSIS (2018)

This analysis was developed in 2018 with the goal to develop an interconnected network of greenway trails within the Western NY region. The analysis looked at opportunities to provide links for a more seamless network with an emphasis on potential trail corridors in the Buffalo area including the Empire State Trail, Shoreline Trail, LaSalle Park East Path, and the Buffalo Loop, which runs along an abandoned rail line.

A NEW WAY TO PLAN FOR BUFFALO NIAGARA (2015)

This plan was implemented in 2015 and provides a framework to measure and guide implementation that will assist the region in coordinating investments in federal, state and local funding sources. Some goals of the plan include the expansion of transportation options and maintaining, improving, and expanding parks, trails, greenways, and recreation areas within the Buffalo Niagara region. Specific bike and pedestrian project recommendations include the implementation of complete streets to promote bicycling, walking and other transit options, enhancing corridors to promote alternative modes of travel, and improving bicycle infrastructure and providing incentives to become more bike friendly.



CORRIDOR HISTORIES

SCAJAQUADA CREEK EXTENSION TO CHEEKTOWAGA

The first half mile at the western segment of the corridor runs along Schiller Park Community Services, adjacent to a large, open field, tennis courts, and walking paths open to the public. The remaining 1.75 miles runs along the Scajaquada Creek corridor until it intersects the Clarence Pathway Buffalo Extension segment on Galleria Drive. The creek was originally named Conjockety Creek, after Philip Conjockety, who was a member of the Seneca Nation. During the War of 1812, the northeastern section of the creek was used as a Navy Shipyard, which helped recondition ships. Kater in the 1900s, the creek became a dumping ground for garbage and it was later labeled as a “public nuisance”. Now, the Scajaquada Creek is known as an “Area of Concern” (AOC) and is protected by New York state environmental laws.

CLARENCE PATHWAY BUFFALO EXTENSION

This former railroad is now primarily used as a utility corridor. The railroad tracks and ties have been removed. The corridor is broken up among several different owners, both east-west and north-south, along its length. Aside from overhead electric lines, the corridor is also used for drainage, with standing or running water along significant portions. An informal access road is present when not directly adjacent to other roadways to access and maintain the utilities.

LANCASTER HERITAGE TRAIL WEST EXTENSION

This corridor follows an abandoned railroad that was initially developed as the former Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad, which was built in 1882. It was used to haul coal from Pennsylvania’s Lackawanna Valley mines into Buffalo. It was also used to transport grain from Buffalo to the Port of New York. The train stopped operating within this corridor in 1972 and the Town purchased it in 1984. The current Lancaster Heritage Trail was completed and opened in 2010.

CORRIDOR OWNERSHIP

SCAJAQUADA CREEK EXTENSION TO CHEEKTOWAGA

This 2.5 mile corridor is generally owned publicly by the Town of Cheektowaga as well as the City of Buffalo at the western end. At the eastern end, a small portion of the corridor is privately owned by the utility company, Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation.

CLARENCE PATHWAY BUFFALO EXTENSION

The eight mile Clarence Pathway Buffalo Extension spans from the City of Buffalo through the Town of Cheektowaga and is generally privately owned by multiple entities. Beginning at the west end, the corridor is owned by the freight transportation supplier, CSX, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), the Pyramid Company of Buffalo, a shopping mall developer, and the Clinton Exchange (Galleria Mall).

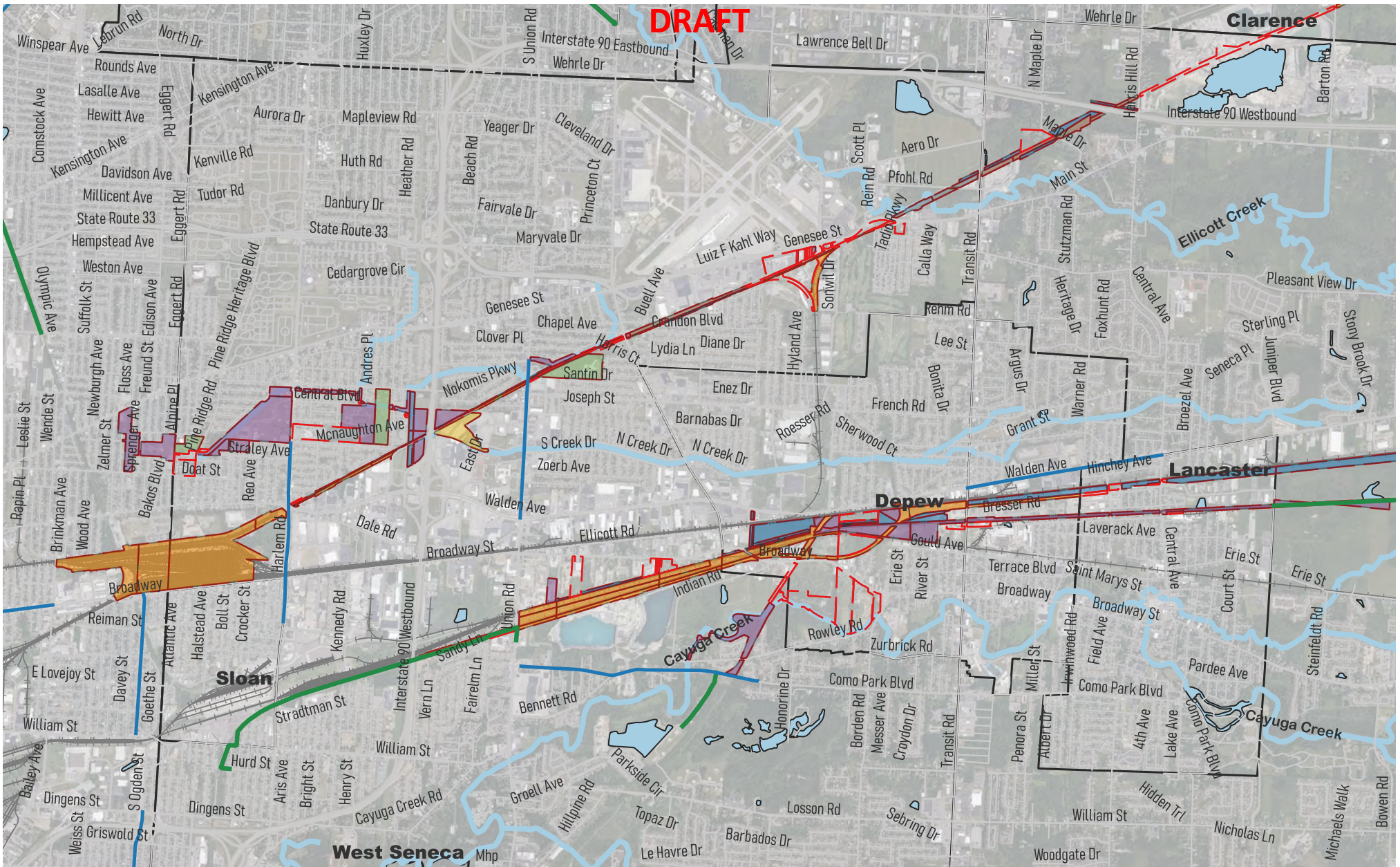
Continuing east, the corridor alternates ownership between Tops Markets Inc., NFTA, CSX, R J Corman Railroad Company, 4455 Genesee properties, Uniland Development Company, a commercial real estate development firm, and New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG).

Public owners include the City of Buffalo, the Town of Cheektowaga, and the People of the State of New York.

LANCASTER HERITAGE TRAIL WEST EXTENSION

The originally proposed route transverses across the Town of Cheektowaga, the Village of Depew, and the Town of Lancaster and is predominantly publicly owned by Erie County with a small section of private ownership under the Erie County Water Authority and CSX at the western end. The railroad is active through a lease to an existing operator. Alternative routes are being considered, primarily to the north - where the property is owned and utilized by NYSEG. To the west, property owned by the Town of Cheektowaga and roadway rights-of-way are being considered.

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LEGEND

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Existing Facilities | County or Town Lands | School or College | Surface Waters |
| ON ROAD | NFTA | NYS | Creeks |
| OFF ROAD | Utility | NULL | Lakes/Ponds |
| Intersecting parcels | Pyramid Co of Buffalo | Roadways | Villages |
| | RJ Corman RR | Railroad | Cities_Towns |

Properties



EXISTING BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

SHARED USE PATHS

The Buffalo Niagara Region has a number of existing shared-use paths that are open to the public year round for different uses. The existing infrastructure is important to outline since the goal of this study is to connect some of the existing trails in an effort to create a larger network to connect more communities within the region. Existing trails within the region are outlined below:

LANCASTER HERITAGE TRAIL

This 4 mile, paved, shared use path that begins at Town Line Road in Dellwood and ends at Walter Winter Drive in Lancaster. This trail will have a direct connection to the proposed Lancaster Heritage Trail West Extension (corridor 50 in the Regional Bike Buffalo Niagara Master Plan). Upon completion of the Lancaster Heritage Trail West Extension, both the Lancaster Heritage Trail (on the east end) and the Lehigh Valley Rail Trail (on the west end) will be completely connected and will provide approximately over 11.5 miles of off-road use to trail users.

LEHIGH VALLEY RAIL TRAIL

This 2.3 mile, paved shared use path is also known as the Cheektowaga Rails to Trails. It begins at Union Road, where the Lancaster Heritage Trail is proposed to begin, and ends at the Medina Street/Herd Street intersection.

CLARENCE PATHWAYS

Clarence Pathways consists of five trails that are located on former railroad corridors that once crossed the suburbs of Buffalo. These trails include the West Shore Trail/Newstead-Akron Bike Path, Peanut Line Trail, Waterford Trail, and Spaulding Green Trail and they connect Clarence, Newstead, and Akron, just north of the Lancaster Heritage Trail. In total, these trails offer nearly 18 miles of off-road use.

NORTH BUFFALO RAILS TO TRAILS

The Buffalo Rails to Trails corridor is a 2.5 mile path that begins at Shoshone Park, just north of the proposed Scajaquada Creek Extension to Cheektowaga trail (corridor 13). While the trail is fairly short, spanning only 0.65 miles, it connects the LaSalle Metro Rail Station on its southern end to the Tonawanda Rails to Trails to its

north. Additionally, it offers great potential for future networks within the community.

TONAWANDA RAILS TO TRAILS

This 4.7 mile paved path was opened to the public in 2016 and was built over the former Erie Lackawanna Railway. The trail runs through multiple residential neighborhoods and commercial areas linking multiple schools and parks. Additionally, it offers a close connection between the North Buffalo Rails to Trails, to the south, and the Erie Canal Trail/Empire State Trail to the north.

STIGLMIER / COMO PARK ENTRANCE ROAD

This is closed to vehicles. Begins on Como Park Blvd and ends approx. 850 ft south of entrance. The park road continues to Losson Road.

ON-ROAD BICYCLE FACILITIES

The following roadways within the study area have existing bicycle facilities:

COMO PARK BLVD

This road has posted bike lane signage and wide shoulders spanning 2.3 miles from Union Road (south of Lehigh Valley Rail Trail entrance) to Borden Road. There are sidewalks on either side of the road.

UNION ROAD

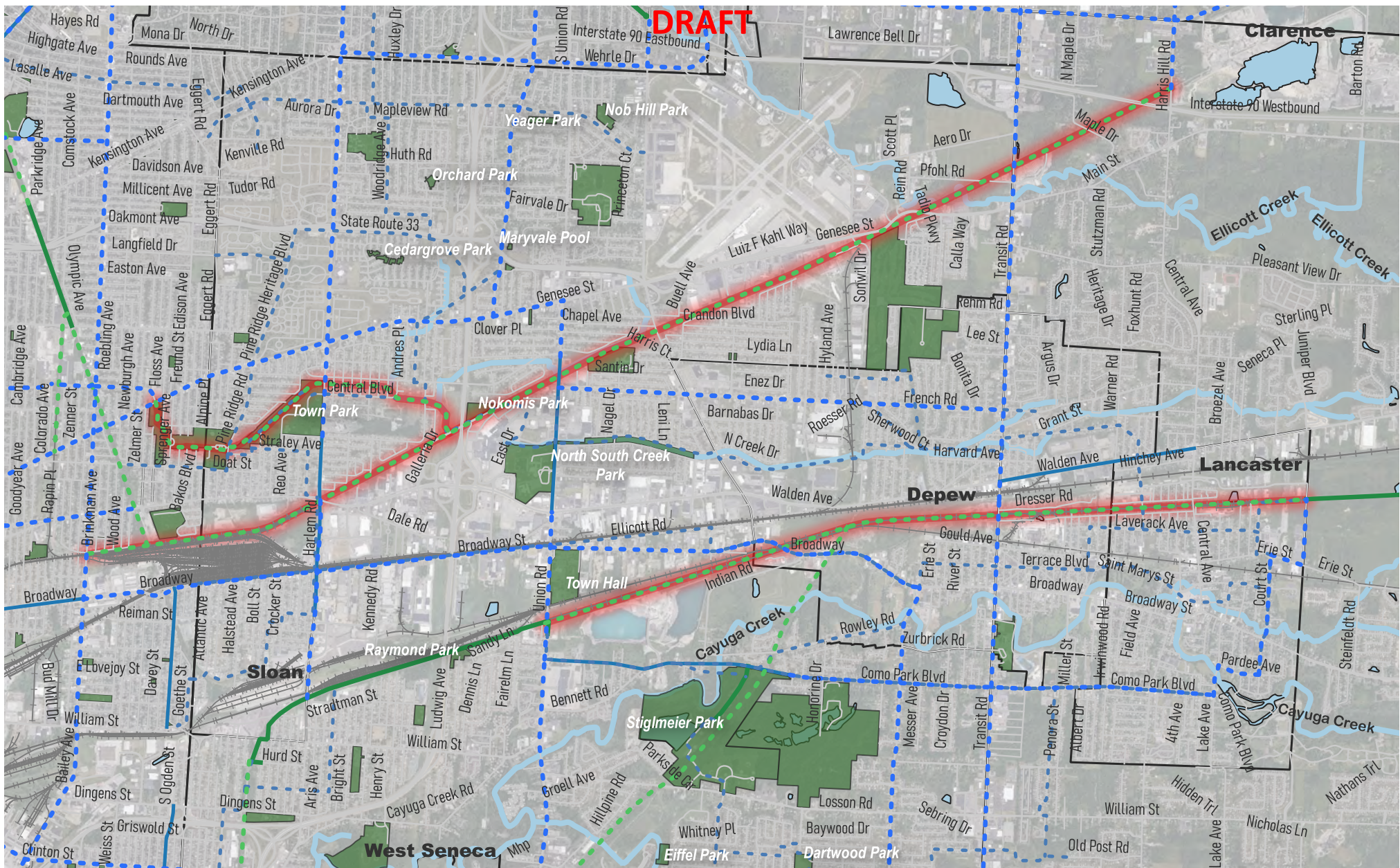
This road is a designated bike route from Transit Road to Seneca Place. It spans 1.5 miles and runs parallel, just north of the proposed Lancaster Heritage Trail West Extension. There are sidewalks on either side of the road.

HARLEM ROAD

This road is a designated bike route with bike lanes on either side for 1.15 miles between Gierlach Street and McNaughton Avenue, thus creating a potential connection between the existing Lehigh Valley Rail Trail and the proposed Scajaquada Creek Extension to Cheektowaga and Clarence Pathway Buffalo Extension trails. In addition to the bike lanes there are also sidewalks on both sides of the street.

Many other major and local roadways have proposed bicycle facilities. The Regional Bicycle Master Plan focused on major roadway recommendations, such as Genesee Street, Broadway Street, or Union Road, while the local Cheektowaga bicycle plan identified a collection of local and major streets to propose a more robust network of cycling routes.

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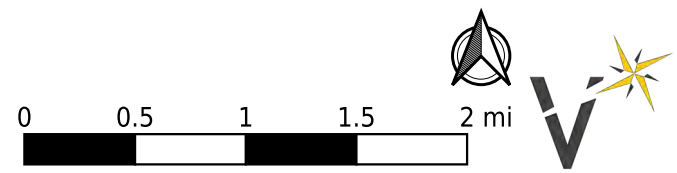
LEGEND

- Proposed Facilities
 - OFF-ROAD
 - ON-ROAD
 - Proposed_Cycle_Routes
- Existing Facilities
 - ON ROAD

- OFF ROAD
- Roadways
- Railroad
- Study Corridors
- City of Buffalo Parks
- Park_Community_Facility

- Surface Waters
 - Creeks
 - Lakes/Ponds
 - Villages
 - Cities_Towns

Existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Destinations



SURROUNDING LAND USE AND DESTINATIONS:

The land use across the study area varies greatly. Adjacent to the proposed trail corridors, the land use is primarily industrial, with pockets of commercial, parks, schools, and single family homes. The following parks and major destinations are located within the study area. Note that this is not a complete list but rather highlights key destinations that may be adjacent to or connect with the future trails.

PARKS:

- North Creek Park
- Nakomis Park
- Moorman Drive Park
- Walden Park
- Raymond Park
- Broadway Driving Range and Mini Gold
- Fireman's Park /Depew Ice Pavilion
- Keysa Park
- Cheektowaga Town Park

KEY DESTINATIONS:

- Buffalo Niagara International Airport
- Walden Galleria Mall
- Villa Maria College

TRAFFIC

Traffic volumes vary significantly across the study area. There are six major roadways, with volumes over 20,000 vehicles per day, that intersect or parallel potential trail corridors. These include I-90, Dock Road, Transit Road, Genesee Street, and Walden Avenue. Most of the other major roadways within the study area have an annual average daily traffic (AADT) of 10,000 to 20,000 vehicles per day. This applies to most of the other major roadway crossings. Local roadways are typically 5000 vehicles per day or less.

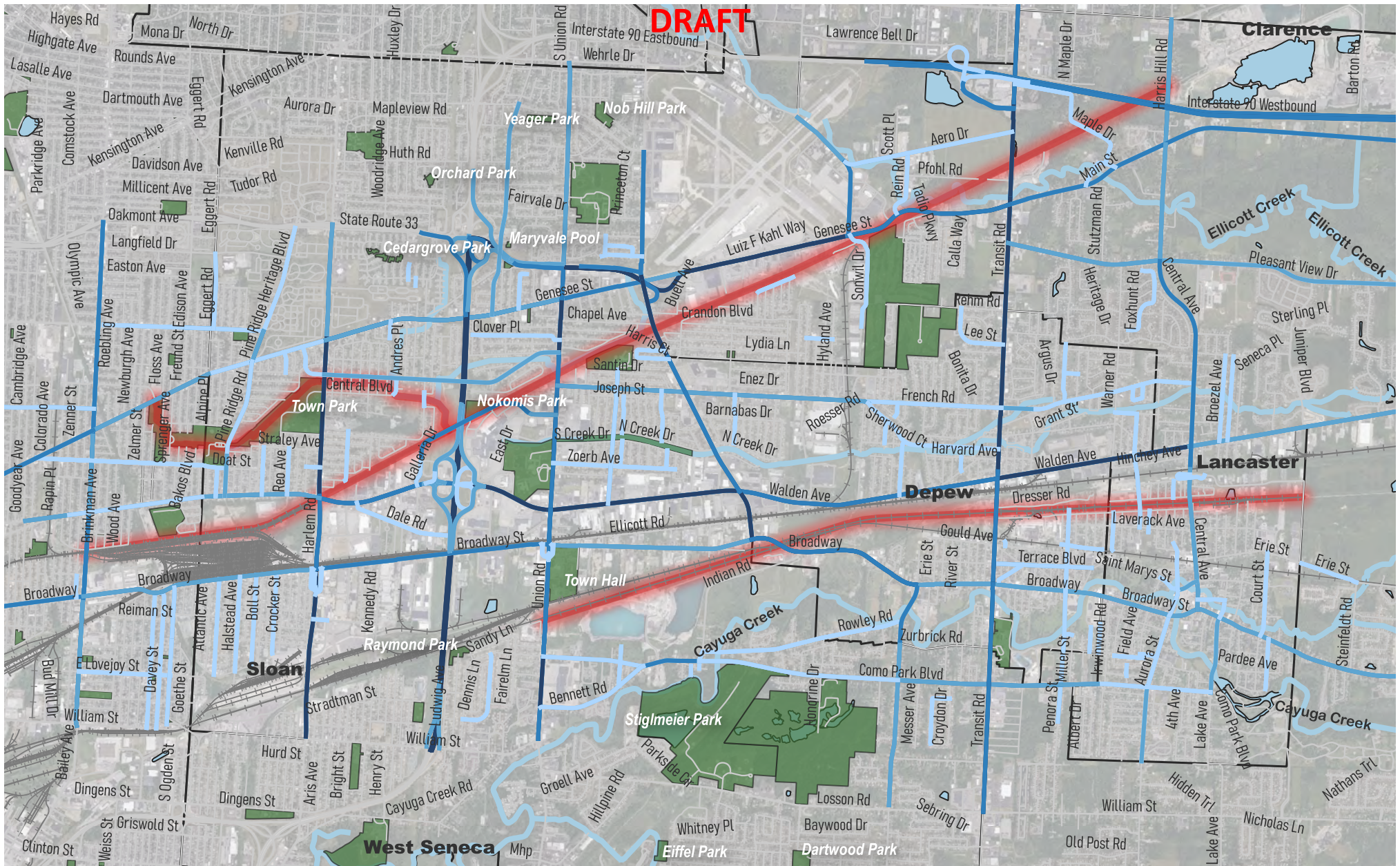
TRANSIT

The study area is serviced by several bus lines provided by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA-Metro) and includes the Thruway Mall Transit Center. The Transit Center provides connections to routes 4 (Broadway), 6 (Sycamore), 22 (Porter-Best), 26 (Delevan), 32 (Amherst), and 46 (Lancaster). The study area is also serviced by routes 1 (William), 69 (Lancaster Express), and 24 (Genesee). Most routes in the study area travel east-west, connecting Cheektowaga to Buffalo's Central and West Side areas.

With the Thruway Mall Transit Center on Harlem Road between the Clarence Pathway Buffalo Extension and the prospective Lancaster Heritage Trail West Extension, there's significant potential to increase multimodal connectivity in Cheektowaga. In addition, the Scajaquada Creek Extension's prospective western terminus is also home to Genesee St & Kerns Ave stop on route 24 (Genesee). Scajaquada Creek Extension's eastern terminus, where the trail intersects with the prospective Clarence Pathway Buffalo Extension at Galleria Dr, is serviced by routes 6 (Sycamore), 32 (Amherst), and 46 (Lancaster), though the closest stops are over ¼ mile away inside the commercial shopping areas.



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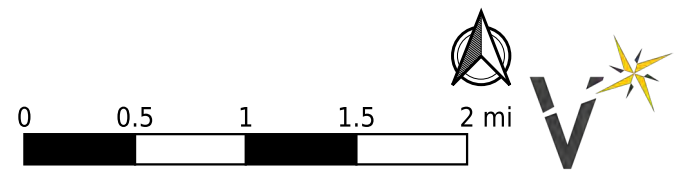
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- AADT**
- █ 20000 - 100000
 - █ 10000 - 20000
 - █ 5000 - 10000
 - █ 0 - 5000

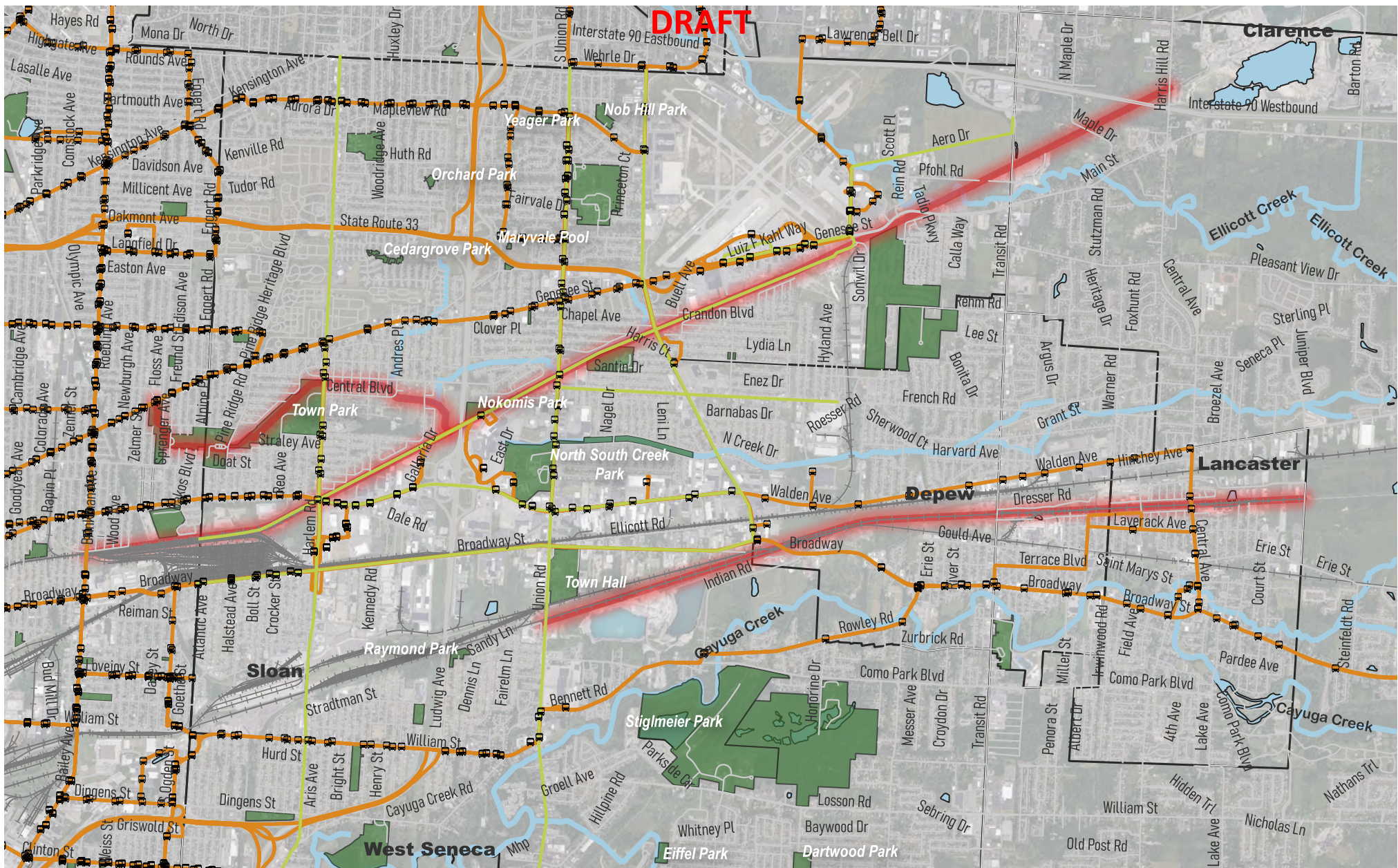
- Roadways
- +— Railroad
- █ Study Corridors
- █ City of Buffalo Parks
- █ Park_Community_Facility

- Surface Waters**
- █ Creeks
 - █ Lakes/Ponds
 - Villages
 - Cities_Towns

Traffic

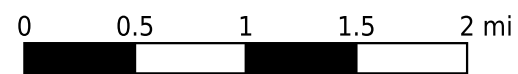


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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NFTA_Bus_Stops Proposed_Mass_Transit NFTA_Transit_Routes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roadways Railroad Study Corridors City of Buffalo Parks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park_Community_Facility Surface Waters Creeks Lakes/Ponds Villages Cities_Towns |
|---|--|--|



Transit

ENVIRONMENTAL

Along the study corridors, there are several environmental factors for consideration during trail development, including the presence of wetlands, significant/sensitive recharge areas, and remediation sites. According to NYSDEC's EAF Mapper, no endangered species are known in the corridor areas.

SCAJAQUADA CREEK EXTENSION TO CHEEKTOWAGA

At this segment's prospective western terminus, the trail begins on Genesee St, going through Schiller Park. After crossing Pine Ridge Rd, the trail follows the Scajaquada Creek until reaching Galleria Dr where it connects with the Clarence Pathway. One bridge to provide a crossing for trail users is anticipated. As this area is considered to be a part of the 100 year flood zone, the trail should be designed with flooding in mind.

CLARENCE PATHWAY BUFFALO EXTENSION

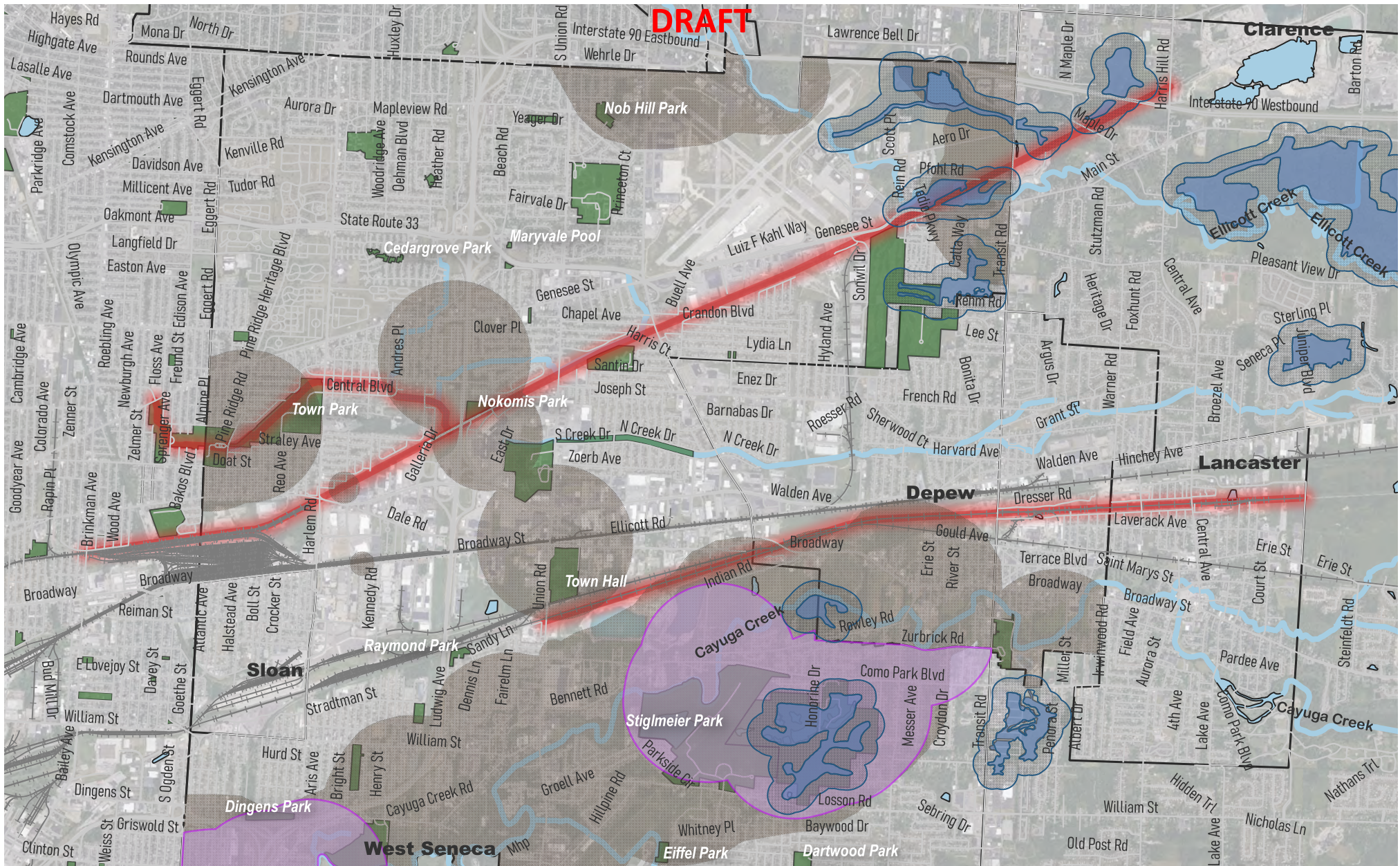
This segment follows the historic railroad corridor, from Bailey Ave where the tracks remain, northeast to Harris Hill Rd. For most of the section between Bailey Ave and Harlem road, the route runs adjacent to an active railyard, where materials, including industrial and petroleum products, are held. After crossing Genesee St (Rt 33), the trail runs along Ellicott Creek until reaching Pfohl Rd, where it follows the old West Shore Railroad run northeast. At this location, just west of the Buffalo Niagara International Airport and north of Pfohl Rd, the trail runs along a former hazardous waste site before crossing Transit Rd. The trail terminates to the east at Harris Hill Rd, just before reaching New Enterprise Stone & Lime Co's sizable quarry and asphalt plant.

LANCASTER HERITAGE TRAIL WEST EXTENSION

This corridor runs along the existing Southern Tier Line railroad, north of the tracks, and passes several adjacent industrial sites. These include the Niagara Metals scrap yard and the New Enterprise Stone & Lime Co. Inc's Como Park Blvd site near the trail's western terminus. Further east, the trail passes the Casey's Truck junkyard and the Commerce Parkway industrial park area. Just south of this corridor is the Cayuga Creek and several greenspaces with significant animal habitat.



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Environmental

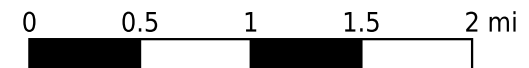
- Wetland Checkzones
- State Wetlands
- Natural Heritage Plant & Animal Occurrences

- Archaeological Sensitive Areas
- Roadways
- Railroad
- Study Corridors

- City of Buffalo Parks
- Park_Community_Facility
- Surface Waters**
- Creeks

- Lakes/Ponds
- Villages
- Cities_Towns

Environmental



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

SCAJAQUADA CREEK EXTENSION TO CHEEKTOWAGA

This trail segment is poised to connect several small existing green spaces and campus-like land uses, including Schiller Park, Villa Maria College Cheektowaga Town Park, and the sports fields near McNaughton Ave to the Walden Galleria Mall and the future Clarence Pathway Buffalo Extension. By connecting these areas, Cheektowaga will expand the utility of existing path segments, increasing their capacity to serve residents, and better connecting people with the Scajaquada River.

While the Scajaquada Creek Extension has several straightforward sections, it's not without some challenges. One challenge is coordination across the multiple public agencies and other landowners along the route. Another challenge is creating a cost-feasible connection across the Scajaquada Creek to the Cheektowaga Town Park and a crossing at Harlem Rd. The trail design will also need to accommodate concerns and threats associated with potential flooding. Lastly, mindful public engagement to manage concerns and expectations of the trail's impact on nearby residents will be needed, especially near Central Blvd and St Boniface Rd, where the trail could potentially be in close proximity to single family homes.

CLARENCE PATHWAY BUFFALO EXTENSION

This extension provides several key connections while expanding the existing Clarence Pathway and future Northeast Greenway into an interconnected network. The Clarence Pathway Buffalo Extension will also connect to the future Scajaquada Creek Extension and important local sites, including the Walden Galleria mall and Maryvale Primary School.

While not entirely intuitive, connections to the Buffalo Niagara International Airport and Walden Avenue Thruway Transit Center would increase the utility of the network even further. One challenging component along this corridor includes obtaining easements to property along the existing rail lines or identifying alternative routes. Where the railroad is no longer in place, there are several property owners to coordinate and negotiate with, both public and private. Another significant challenge is designing safe, convenient connections across several major roadways, including Walden Ave,

Union Rd, Dick Rd, Genesee St, and Transit Rd.

LANCASTER HERITAGE TRAIL WEST EXTENSION

This segment also connects two existing trails, thus expanding its utility for nearby residents. This would provide residents with a more attractive and useful resource for outdoor recreation, commuting, and improved access to economic opportunity.

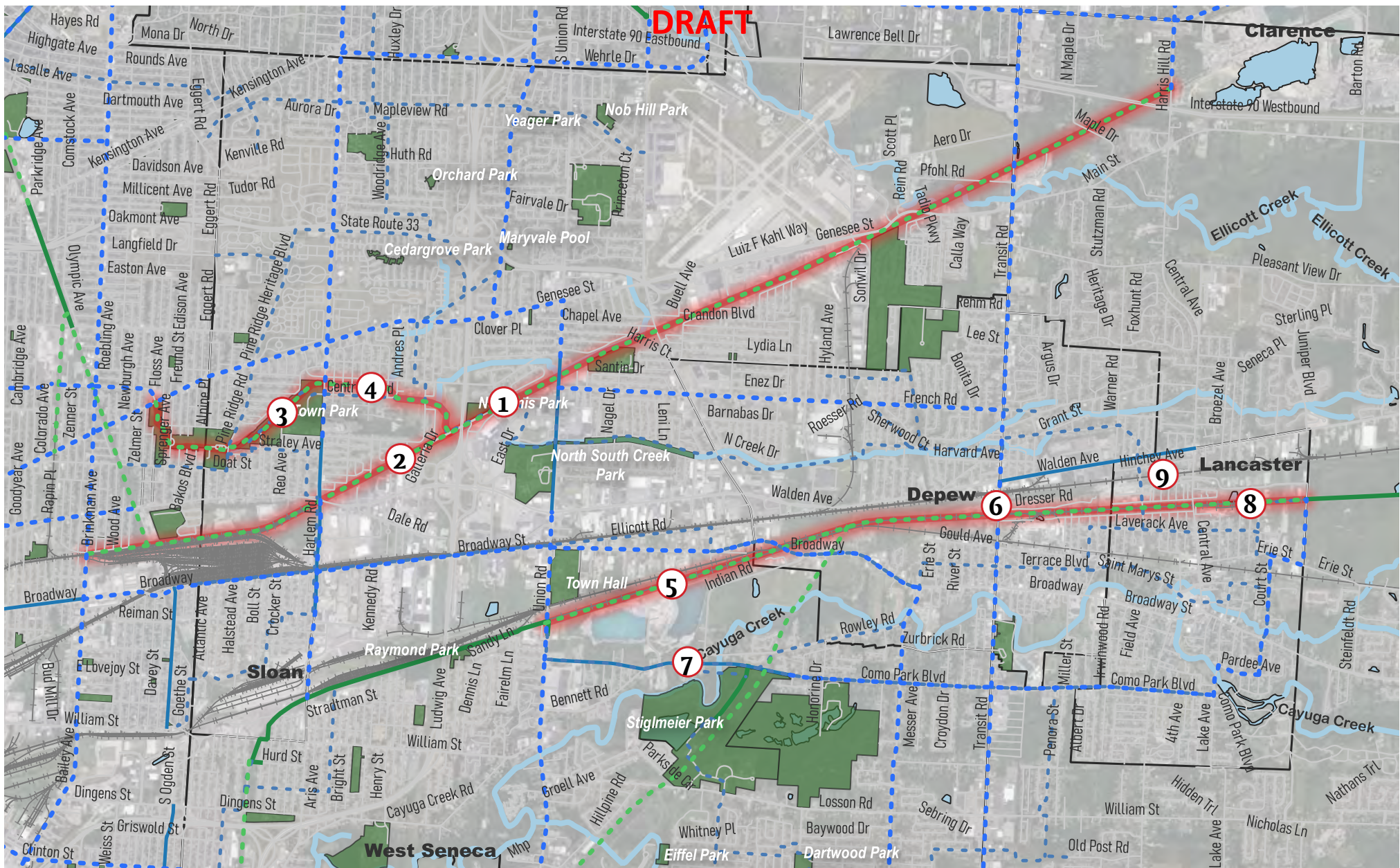
The route was proposed as a rail-with-trail in the Regional Trails Plan. It is owned by Erie County and currently leased to a railroad operator. Limited right-of-way and grades on either side of the tracks make creation of an adjacent trail difficult. Another challenge along this route is creating a safe crossing at Broadway, where there are currently 4 lanes of traffic. Additionally, there may be additional consideration required during the development of this trail to avoid environmental concerns associated with adjacent industrial land uses.

EXISTING CONDITION SECTIONS

Illustrative existing condition sections have been completed for nine (9) locations across the study area. These are representative of existing conditions, widths, and facilities for areas of the proposed trails or potential alternatives.



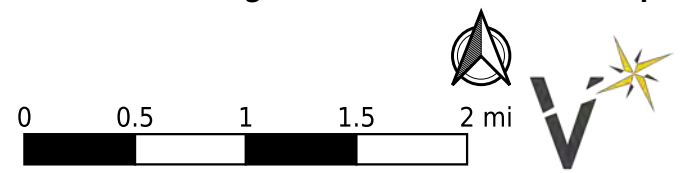
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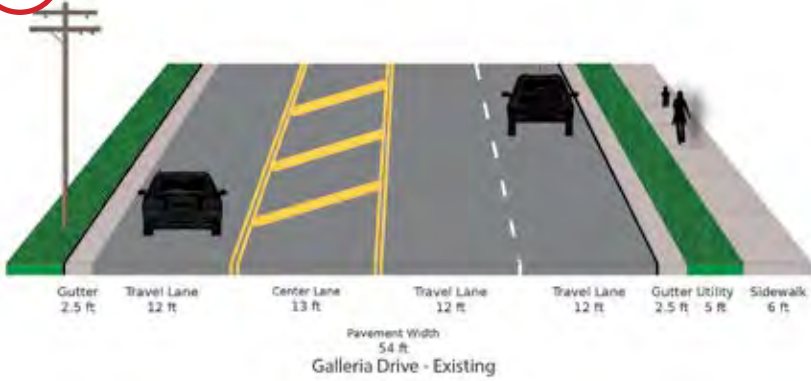
LEGEND

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|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Proposed Facilities | OFF ROAD | Surface Waters |
| OFF-ROAD | ROADWAYS | Creeks |
| ON-ROAD | Railroad | Lakes/Ponds |
| Proposed_Cycle_Routes | Study Corridors | Villages |
| Existing Facilities | City of Buffalo Parks | Cities_Towns |
| ON ROAD | Park_Community_Facility | |

Existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Destinations
Existing Cross Sections Location Map



1



2



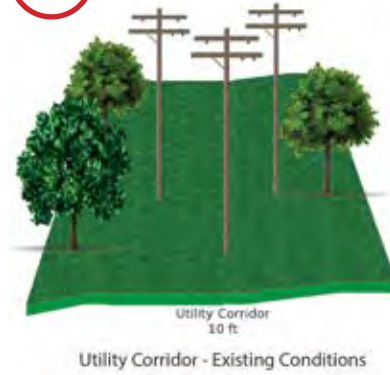
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6



7



8



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