

New York Transco, LLC

NEW YORK ENERGY SOLUTION PROJECT

REVISED VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

PREPARED PURSUANT TO 16 NYCRR PART 85 - 88

**Prepared by
TJD&A
121 West Main Street
Yarmouth, Maine, 04096**

October 2, 2019

Revised April 24, 2020

Further Revised August 5, 2020

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

In the summer and fall of 2019, TJD&A prepared a Visual Impact Assessment Report (the “VIA Report”) for New York Transco LLC (“Transco”) for inclusion in Transco’s Public Service Law Article VII application related to the siting and construction of the New York Energy Solution Project (the “Project”). The VIA Report, dated October 2, 2019, was included in Transco’s Article VII application as Appendix H. The VIA Report contained five figures—Figures 4.4 -1 through 4.4 – 5. Figure 4.4 -5 contained the maps TJD&A prepared showing the viewshed analysis of the Project (the “Viewshed Maps”). In short summary, the Viewshed Maps revealed that the Project’s proposed structures would be theoretically visible over approximately 32% of the Project’s 3-mile study area (*i.e.*, 3 miles on either side of the Project centerline).

Broadly speaking, the Viewshed Maps are distinct from the body of the VIA Report and the assessments made therein and were provided as a figure to the VIA Report to provide the reader with an understanding of where the Project’s proposed transmission structures would be theoretically visible over the Project’s three-mile study area. An exception to this general statement is that the data generated by the viewshed analysis is included in the Scenic Resource Table (Tables 5-4 and 5-5 of the VIA Report), where each scenic resource is identified as having potential visibility or no visibility. Given the general separation in subject matter from the VIA Report and the Viewshed Maps, the text of the VIA Report as filed does not provide an analysis of what the Viewshed Maps revealed. Moreover, neither the viewshed analysis nor the resulting Viewshed Maps have any impact on the photosimulations included in the VIA Report.

Revised Viewshed Maps

While reviewing the Viewshed Maps, TJD&A determined that the original interpretation of an environment variable within the ESRI ArcMap software’s *Visibility* command—the software used to generate the Viewshed Maps—was producing a Viewshed Map that over exaggerated the potential visibility of the Project’s proposed structures. This resulted in maps that more closely resembled a topography-only map, rather than one that considered the screening effect of vegetation and other three-dimensional objects (*e.g.*, buildings, topography) within the study area.

As a result of this incorrect variable, TJD&A revised the Viewshed Maps (now referred to as the “Revised Viewshed Maps”) to more accurately show a) where the existing transmission structures within the Project’s right-of-way (“ROW”) and the Project’s proposed structures will be visible, b) where the Project’s proposed structures will be visible in areas where there is currently no visibility of existing transmission structures, and c) where the Project’s proposed structures will *not* be visible even though existing structures *are* visible.

The Revised Viewshed Maps indicates that proposed structure(s) would be theoretically visible over approximately 6.5% of the Project’s 3-mile study area. This represents a *reduction* of approximately 80% over what was originally described as the total area of visibility in the Viewshed Maps attached to the VIA Report. TJD&A compared the Viewshed Maps to the Revised Viewshed Maps and note that there is *no* increased project visibility at federal, State, or local visual

resources. To incorporate the Revised Viewshed Maps into the Application, TJD&A prepared this revised VIA Report (the “Revised VIA Report”).

Revisions to Tables 5-4 and 5-5

During the course of a holistic review of the VIA Report conducted while TJD&A was updating the viewshed analysis, a number of inconsistent data entries were noted between the mapped data, the descriptions of individual aesthetic resources, and the information presented in Tables 5-4 and 5-5 of the VIA (*e.g.*, values relative to the measured distance to the transmission line or incorrect summaries for the evaluation of scenic quality when compared to the text of the VIA Report). These inconsistencies are unrelated to the incorrect variable discussed above that impacted the viewshed analysis. These inconsistencies have been corrected in the Revised VIA Report.

Also note that the data for Taghkanic Creek in Table 5-5 of the VIA Report was erroneous with respect to the distance value and Project visibility, due in part to the fact that a referenced public mapping source had mislabeled Taghkanic Creek as Claverack Creek. This information has been updated in Table 5-5 of the Revised Report.

Conclusion

The following Revised VIA Report includes the Revised Viewshed Analysis and all above-referenced revisions to Tables 5-4 and 5-5. None of the adjustments contained in the Revised VIA Report have changed the original conclusion reached in the VIA Report that the Project will not have an unreasonable adverse visual impact on the three-mile study area on either side of the Project’s ROW. In fact, the area of potential visibility within the three-mile study area has decreased significantly.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
Commission	New York State Public Service Commission
DSM	Digital Surface Model
dSLR	Digital single lens reflex camera
DTM	Digital Terrain Model
NYSDEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
NYES	New York Energy Solution
NYSDOS	New York State Department of State
Project	New York Energy Solution
VIA	Visual Impact Assessment
VP	Viewpoint
VRM	Visual Resource Management

1.0 INTRODUCTION

TJD&A prepared this Visual Impact Assessment (“VIA”) to support the New York Energy Solution (“NYES” or “Project”) proposed by Transco. The NYES is a proposed 54.5-mile 345 kV and 115 kV Double Circuit transmission line from the new Knickerbocker 345kV Switching Station in the Town of Schodack, Rensselaer County to the existing Pleasant Valley Substation in Pleasant Valley in Dutchess County in upstate New York. The Project also includes the new Churchtown Switching Station in Town of Claverack in Columbia County, the new Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station in Pleasant Valley in Dutchess County-and the rebuild of the Blue Store Tap 2.2 miles of 115 kV transmission lines. This visual assessment analyzes the potential visibility of the proposed Project facilities, compares its visibility to the existing transmission line and facilities, and determines the difference in landscape visual quality after the Project has been constructed. The visual assessment provides an inventory of visual resources as prescribed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (“NYSDEC”) NYSDEC Program Policy #DEP-00-2, *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts* (“NYSDEC Visual Policy”) including reference to the 2018 Draft recommended updates; defines the existing natural and human made conditions to establish a baseline to measure the proposed visual change; determines the potential visibility of Project components through a viewshed analysis and field review; illustrates potential visual impacts of the Project utilizing visual simulations from three road crossings and the three proposed substations/switching stations; and reviews the need for mitigation measures as required.

1.1 Regulatory Framework

1.1.1 Article VII Application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need

The NYES will be reviewed under the certification review process for major electric and fuel gas transmission lines established under Article VII of the New York Public Service Law. The Article VII public review process is administered by the Public Service Commission (Commission) and requires a full review of the need for and environmental impact of the siting, design, construction, and operation of major transmission facilities in New York State. Transco is required to submit an Article VII Application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need to the Commission in accordance with 16 NYCRR Parts 85 through 88. Exhibit 4: Environmental Impact of the Article VII Application must address what efforts, if any, have been made to assure that rights-of-way avoid scenic, recreational and historic areas; will be located to minimize its visibility from areas of public view; and preserves the natural landscape.

1.1.2 NYSDEC Visual Policy

The NYSDEC Visual Policy outlines procedures for evaluating visual and aesthetic impacts generated by proposed facilities in its Program Policy #DEP-00-2, *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts* (NYSDEC Visual Policy) and the 2018 draft recommended updates to that Policy (the 2018 draft). The policy states that the State’s interest with respect to visual resources is to protect those resources whose scenic character and value has been recognized through national or state designations. The (2000) policy identifies fifteen categories (the 2018 Draft includes sixteen categories) of aesthetic resources of statewide significance and further guides the identification of specific resources within those categories to only include public resources that have a documented aesthetic value associated with them. Of the 15 NYSDEC-identified categories in the NYSDEC Visual Policy, only 11 are potentially applicable to the Project. The additional category in the 2018 Draft – National Heritage Area – is also applicable to the Project and discussed below. The terms “visual

resources” and “visually sensitive areas” as used in this VIA generally consist of the applicable categories of aesthetic resources of statewide significance identified in NYSDEC’s Visual Policy.

The intent of the policy is to require the applicant to identify significant visual and aesthetic impacts generated from proposed facilities and to mitigate such impacts to the maximum extent practicable. To assure that all visual and aesthetic concerns are addressed, the policy prescribes a procedure that requires the Applicant to provide an inventory of visual resources, which is provided in Section 3.2 of this VIA. Potential adverse effects on these resources resulting from the proposed facilities and the significance of the impact must also be identified. The policy states: *Significant aesthetic impacts are those that may cause a diminishment of the public enjoyment and appreciation of an inventoried resource, or one that impairs the character or quality of such a place* (NYSDEC 2000).

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

See Exhibit 2: Location of Facilities for a complete detailed Project description. The Project includes new and rebuilt transmission lines for the 54.5-mile 345 kV Knickerbocker to Pleasant Valley Transmission Line, rebuild of the 2.2-mile Blue Stores Tap and the proposed new switching stations/substations including the Knickerbocker Switching Station in Schodack, Churchtown Switching Station in Claverack and the Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station in Pleasant Valley.

The Knickerbocker Switching Station will be located approximately 2.0 miles east of the Hudson River, 800 feet south of the Governor Thomas E. Dewey Thruway, and 175 feet east of Muitszeskill Road in Schodack, Rensselaer County. In proximity to the proposed switching station, there is one existing 345 kV transmission line and two 115kV transmission lines. The proposed switching station will be located wholly within the ROW on a site currently managed for agricultural uses.

The existing Churchtown Switching Station, located approximately 500 feet south of Schoolhouse Road and Route 23 and 250 feet north of Orchard Road in Claverack will be rebuilt and expanded within the existing ROW. The existing transmission lines connecting to the switching station will be rebuilt.

The new 345 kV Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station is proposed on land currently owned by National Grid located approximately 0.8 miles northwest of the existing 345 kV Pleasant Valley Substation, including an area currently managed as a mixed woodlands. Two A-proposed reconductored 345 kV double-circuit electric transmission line circuits will connectrun between the new 345 kV Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station and the existing 345 kV Pleasant Valley Substation-to the Project’s new 345 kV Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station which and will be located entirely within existing utility property. A driveway will be constructed on the east side of Van Wagner Road south of the transmission line corridor to provide construction/maintenance access to the Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station. The driveway will remove approximately 100 feet of mixed woodland paralleling the road. Two strips of trees and understory vegetation will remain along Van Wagner Road: and a strip approximately 45 feet deep by 130 feet along Van Wagner Road to the north of the driveway; and a strip approximately 45 feet deep by 125 feet along Van Wagner Road south of the driveway. buffer strip approximately 25 feet in width will remain between the Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station and Van Wagner Road. Non-capable vegetation species will be maintained within the transmission line corridor.

Within the existing ROW in Schodack, Stuyvesant, Stockport, Ghent and Claverack north of the Churchtown Switching Station, there are two existing 115 kV transmission lines supported on steel lattice structures (two lines mounted on one structure) approximately 80 feet in height. All 115 kV transmission structures will be

removed and replaced with a galvanized steel ‘Chicago style’ monopole structures approximately 90 feet in height which will support a new 345kV transmission line and the 115 KV transmission lines,

Within the existing ROW in Claverack south of the Churchtown Switching Station, Livingston, Gallatin, Clermont, Clinton and Pleasant Valley there are four existing 115 kV transmission lines supported on steel lattice structures (two lines mounted on one structure) approximately 80 feet in height. All 115 kV transmission structures will be removed and replaced with a galvanized steel ‘Chicago style’ monopole structures approximately 90 feet in height which will support a new 345kV transmission line and two 115 KV transmission lines (two 115 kV transmission lines will be removed).

Within the existing ROW in Milan there are two existing 345 kV transmission lines on steel lattice structures approximately 100 feet in height and four existing 115 kV transmission lines located on steel lattice structures (two lines mounted on each of the two 115 kV transmission structures) approximately 80-90 feet in height. All of the 115 kV transmission structures will be removed and replaced with a galvanized steel ‘Chicago style’ monopole structure approximately 100 feet in height that will support a new 345kV transmission line and two 115 KV transmission lines (two 115 kV transmission lines will be removed). The two existing 345 kV transmission lines will remain.

The 2.2 mile Blue Stores Tap line located in Livingston will be rebuilt from the Blue Stores Substation east of Route 9 to the NYES ROW. One of the two existing 115 kV transmission lines supported by wooden H-frame structures will be replaced with new 115 kV transmission line H-frame structures.

3.0 LANDSCAPE SETTING AND VISUAL RESOURCES

The following section describes the existing visual resources and character of the Project’s study area for the Visual Impact Analysis (“VIA”). It includes consideration of the visual character, viewer group characteristics and their sensitivity to visual change, and specific types of local resources that have been identified as visually sensitive. Based on the published policy regarding visual assessment methodology developed by the NYSDEC (NYSDEC 2000), the Project’s study area for the Project was defined as three miles to either side of the Project centerline. The location of the Project’s study area is illustrated in Figure 4.4 -1, Project’s Study Area.

3.1 Landscape Setting

3.1.1 Landform

The Project’s study area is situated within the Hudson Valley physiographic region of New York, with additional sections in the Taconic Foothills physiographic region. The Hudson Valley physiographic region ranges from south of Albany to Pleasant Valley. The Hudson Valley physiographic region includes the valley from the Eastern Adirondack Foothills to the Glaciated Reading Prong/Hudson Highlands to the south. During the Pleistocene Epoch, glacial floodwaters shaped Hudson Valley topography, and Glacial Lake Albany filled the valley from Bear Mountain to Glens Falls. Sediments deposited into Glacial Lake Albany cover the valley floor today (Bryce et al. 2010). Elevations in the Hudson Valley range from several feet above sea level (ASL) at the Hudson River adjacent to the City of Hudson to over 600 feet ASL close to the Town of Milan.

East of the Town of Red Hook, the Project’s study area crosses the Taconic Foothills physiographic region, which is the transition zone between the Hudson Valley and Taconic Mountains. The foothills have a rounded

and rolling profile whereas the Taconic Mountains are upended and rugged. The elevation of the specific portion of the physiographic region crossed by the Project's study area ranges from approximately 250 feet ASL to about 750 feet ASL (Bryce et al. 2010).

3.1.2 Vegetation

Vegetation in the Project's study area is mostly characterized as upland forest and agricultural cover. The remaining vegetation is riparian and wetland habitat. Open fields in the agricultural areas include active cropland and pasture, and tend to occur on level terrain and gentle slopes. Forest vegetation is primarily deciduous with some conifers interspersed. Mature trees typically occur in hedgerows, woodlots, on steep slopes and ridges, and along river/stream corridors.

The low elevations and the moderate climate of the Hudson Valley allow Appalachian oak-hickory forests to penetrate northward in the physiographic region (Bryce et al., 2010). Appalachian oak-hickory forests, which dominate the southern portion of the region, decline and are replaced by northern hardwoods in the northern region of the Project's study area. Vegetative land cover includes pasture and cropland with grains, hay, soybeans, corn, fruit, and nursery stock.

The Taconic Foothills physiographic region, which the Project's study area crosses as described above, includes chestnut oak and red oak on steep slopes. The lower slopes contain Appalachian oak-hickory forest with white oak, black oak, and pignut hickory. Historically, both the steep slopes and lower slopes also had American chestnut. Abandoned farm fields are colonized by red maple, eastern white pine, and sugar maple. North of Columbia County, northern hardwood forest begins to replace Appalachian oak-hickory forest. Today, the land use mosaic in the Taconic Foothills consists of woodland, pasture, minor areas of cropland, and rural residential development. Overall the vegetation and vegetative patterns are very similar throughout the Project's study area.

3.1.3 Land Use

Land use within the Project's study area is dominated by forest and agricultural uses, with areas of moderate density man-made development such as Hudson and Pleasant Valley, with smaller hamlets such as Kinderhook and Claverack. Pastures and field crops used for dairy farming are the primary agricultural uses in the Project's study area. Low-density residential and commercial land uses are located adjacent to communities within the Project's study area (such as Hudson and Pleasant Valley) and along major roads (Interstates 90, 87, and New York State Highways 9H, and 115). Generally, the towns and villages are characterized by a defined central business district surrounded by traditional grid-pattern residential neighborhoods, with some highway commercial development along the outskirts. Many of the towns in the Project's study area are comprised of rural residences, not structures around a central business district, and commercial areas situated along major roadways. Towns and villages within the Project's study area are relatively small, well-defined components of a primarily rural/agricultural landscape, and are typically located at major crossroads and along important roadways.

There are numerous man-made structures within the Project's study area, ranging from scattered single rural residences and farms, to villages, towns and small cities such as Hudson. The largest amount of development follows the Hudson River and the NYS Thruway. There are numerous scenic roads within the Project's study area, including County Route 61, NY State Routes 385 and 9J and the Taconic State Parkway. Scattered commercial and industrial developments occur along some of these corridors. Existing transmission lines ranging from 115kV to 345kV also tend to follow parallel to the Hudson Valley.

3.1.4 Water Features

The most prominent water feature within the Project's study area is the Hudson River, a 315-mile waterway that flows from north to south through eastern New York State. The river originates at the outlet of Henderson Lake in Newcomb, NY, in Adirondack Park, flowing southward past the state capital at Albany, and eventually forms the boundary between New York City and the state of New Jersey at its mouth before emptying into Upper New York Bay. At its closest point, the Project is approximately 1.4 miles east of the river. The Hudson River roughly parallels the Project's ROW for the northern half of the Project.

Other water and wetland resources are found throughout the study area, including Bell Pond, Churchtown Reservoir, and Twin Lakes in Columbia County; and Spring Lake, Warackmac Lake, Round Lake, Sepasco Lake, Silver Lake, Mud Pond, Long Pond and Upton Lake in Dutchess County. The majority of the smaller water bodies are not major visual components of the landscape of the Project's study area due to their relatively small size or occurrence within wooded valleys or ravines. The three most notable creeks are Claverack, Taghkanic, and Kinderhook Creeks in Columbia County. Wappinger Creek lies near the southern terminus of the Project, near the Pleasant Valley substation in Dutchess County (Figure 4.4-1, Project's study area).

3.2 Inventory of Visual Resources (NYSDEC Visual Policy)

Of the 16 categories of visual resources identified in the NYSDEC Visual Policy and the 2018 Draft, 13 are potentially impacted by the Project's study area. Those 13 categories are:

- (1) Properties in or eligible for inclusion in the New York State Register of Historic Places or the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP);
- (2) State Parks;
- (3) Urban Cultural Parks (or Heritage Areas);
- (4) National Wildlife Refuges;
- (5) National Natural Landmarks;
- (6) National Park System, Recreation Areas, Seashores and Forests;
- (7) Rivers designated as National or State Wild, Scenic, or Recreational;
- (8) A site, area, lake, reservoir or highway designated or eligible for designation as scenic;
- (9) Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance;
- (10) a State or federally designated trail, or one proposed for designation;
- (11) Historic Preserve Areas;
- (12) Bond Act Properties purchased under Exceptions Scenic Beauty or Open Space category; and
- (13) National Heritage Areas, the new 16th category of the 2018 draft.

The three categories *not* applicable to this Project for geographic reasons include the State Forest Preserves (Adirondack and Catskill Parks), Adirondack Scenic Vistas, and Palisades Park.

A total of 53 visual resource locations (federal, state, and local resources) were identified within the three-mile project study area and are included in the Project's VIA.

For each identified visual resource location, a scenic quality rating of high, medium, or low was assigned based on factors such as vegetation variety, presence of water features, topography, and man-made elements. As detailed below, the majority of the identified visual resources will have no views of the Project. Below are the definitions for the scenic quality rating.

- High – Distinct and unique landscapes that may include geologic features, water bodies, mountainous terrain, and significant stands of vegetation that are unique in the context of the surrounding area. Architecturally distinct structures may be present that enhance the character of the landscape.
- Medium – Common landscapes that may be considered visually interesting but not unique. Characteristic features may include small water bodies, moderate topographic changes, and vegetation that is not dominant in the landscape setting. Man-made development is generally harmonious with the surrounding landscape.
- Low – Landscapes with minimal to no distinctive land, water, or vegetative features. Man-made development may include industrial buildings, roads, and transmission lines. .

The visual resources in the Project’s study area are presented below by category and located on maps included as Figure 4.4-1.

1) ***A property on or eligible for inclusion in the National or State Register of Historic Places [16 § 470a et seq., Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law Section 14.07]***

Exhibit 4.5 has determined the following: “According to the Phase II Study conducted along the entire Project ROW and within a 3-mile radius, a total of 51 properties are listed in the National Register, and 5 additional properties are eligible for listing.” (Cooperman, 2019.)

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site

The Martin Van Buren National Historic Site is located in Kinderhook, NY in Columbia County off of Old Post Road (State Route 9H). The Martin Van Buren National Historic Site is open to visitors year-round and tours of the mansion and grounds are offered from mid-May to the end of October annually. The fields behind the mansion are currently being used for a variety of agriculture uses. The site also includes hiking trails with interpretive signage. The scenic quality is high due to the historic man-made structures and landscape.

Top Cottage – part of the Home of Franklin D Roosevelt National Historic Site

Franklin D. Roosevelt designed Top Cottage to be his personal retreat and a place for his family gatherings and meetings with foreign dignitaries. Top Cottage is located in the Town of Hyde Park, which is within the Project’s study area. Top Cottage is open by reservation in the summer months and is closed from November to May. The scenic quality of Top Cottage is high due to the quality of the historic cottage structure and landscape setting.

Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site – Val-Kill

The Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site is comprised of 180 acres in the Town of Hyde Park, off of State Route 9G, which is within the Project’s study area. The house was originally a factory and became the first lady’s home after her husband’s death. Visitors can tour the house and the gardens. Other attractions of this site include hiking trails and bike trails. Val-Kill is located one mile from Top Cottage. Offsite views from the property are limited by vegetation and structures. The scenic quality of Val-Kill is high due to the house and related structures, gardens, diversity of vegetation, and proximity to the Hudson River.

2) State Parks [Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law Section 3.09]

Schodack Island State Park

Schodack Island State Park is located along the eastern shore of the Hudson River just south of the NYS Thruway Extension. Approximately seven miles of the Hudson River and Schodack Creek shoreline bound the 1,052-acre site. The day use area has eight miles of multi-use trails and multiple locations offering visitors panoramic views of the Hudson River. (New York State Parks, 2019). From many parts of the island there are views of an existing transmission line, the Alfred H. Smith Memorial Bridge, and the Castleton Bridge, all of which cross the Hudson River. The scenic quality is moderate, with views along the banks and in the river that include sheds, a transmission line, railroad tracks, and bridges.

Hudson River Islands State Park

Hudson River Islands State Park located near Schodack Landing is only accessible by boat. Facilities at this park include picnic areas and nature trails. Fishing and camping is permitted. Multiple viewing locations offer visitors panoramic views of the Hudson River. The scenic quality is high due to the Hudson River views.

Lake Taghkanic State Park

Located off NY State Route 82 in the southern part of Columbia County between the Towns of Gallatin and Taghkanic, Lake Taghkanic State Park has tent and trailer campsites as well as cabin and cottage camping facilities. The park also features two beaches, picnic areas, boat launch sites, paddleboat and kayak rentals, playgrounds, sports fields, a rentable pavilion, and a recreation hall and showers. Multiple viewing locations within the park are open and panoramic, though they are concentrated on Lake Taghkanic itself. The scenic quality is high due to the natural landscape and lake views. Approximately 100 acres on the western side of the State Park, including a portion of the main parking area, a basketball court and sports fields are within the Project's study area.

3) Heritage Areas (formerly Urban Cultural Parks) [Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law Section 35.15]

Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor

The Project's study area includes a small portion of southeastern corner of the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor (MVHC) which is located in the Towns of Coeymans and Bethehem. The MVHC is part of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (ECNHC). The ECNHC was designated by Congress in 2000 and has a mission "to preserve, promote, and celebrate our natural, cultural, and historic assets in order to enhance the quality of life and stimulate economic vitality throughout the corridor." In partnership with the National Parks Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior, the ECNHC Commission and the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund work to preserve and share the heritage of the Erie Canalway, promote the MVHC as a tourism destination, and foster vibrant communities connected by the waterway. (MVHCC, 2014). There are multiple open, panoramic views within the MVHC from Route 144/River Road and potentially I-87 (NYS Thruway) west of the Hudson River in Coeymans toward the Project's study area. The scenic quality is moderate due to the common nature of the features and the homes found along the MVHC. The portion of the MVHC that is included in the Project's study area is located 1.5 miles from the Transmission Line.

4) **The State Forest Preserve [NYS Constitution Article XIV]; Adirondack and Catskill Parks**

Not Applicable. No part of the Adirondack or the Catskill Park is located within 3 miles of the Project.

5) **National Wildlife Refuges [16 U.S.C. 668dd], State Game Refuges and State Wildlife Management Areas [ECL 11-2105]**

Stockport Flats Wildlife Management Area and Stockport Flats National Estuarine Research Reserve (NEER)

Stockport Flats State Wildlife Management Area is the northernmost site in the Hudson River Reserve, which is located on the east shore of the Hudson River in Columbia County in the Towns of Stockport and Stuyvesant. The primary purposes of the Stockport Flats State Wildlife Management Area are: wildlife management, wildlife habitat management, and wildlife-dependent recreation. Featured activities include hiking, hunting, trapping, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Views westerly from the Stockport Flats State Wildlife Management Area (particularly in proximity to Harrier Hill Park) to the Hudson River are open and panoramic. Manmade developments at the site include a gazebo, interpretive signage, fences, railroad tracks, and distribution lines.

Stockport Flats National Estuarine Research Reserve, or the NERR, is located north of the Stockport Flats State Wildlife Management Area. There are boat launches along the flats to canoe the marsh. The scenic quality of the NERR is moderate due to the presence of a gravel parking lot, partially screened house, and railroad tracks with a railroad bridge adjacent to the Hudson River.

Portions of both the Stockport Flats State Wildlife Management Area and NERR are located within the Project's study area.

Bronck Island Wildlife Management Area

Bronck Island is located in Greene County, north of the hamlet of Otter Hook. The NYSDEC owns the 185-acre Bronck Island parcel and Scenic Hudson owns the majority of the adjacent land (215 acres). Access to the Wildlife Management Area's campsites is via canoe. Scenic quality is assumed to be moderate-to-high due to proximity to the Hudson River, the lack of development, presence of wetland systems, and pastoral quality of the fields closest to Route 61.

Vosburgh Swamp Wildlife Management Area

Vosburgh Swamp WMA, located in the Town of Coxsackie, Greene County, contains over 270 acres. This natural area is located in the Columbia-Green North SASS and is managed by Scenic Hudson. Vosburgh Swamp is a nascent forested wetland with some ponds located on the west bank of the Hudson River. Views are enclosed by vegetation and scenic quality is rated as moderate to high.

6) **National Natural Landmarks [36 CFR Part 62]**

There are no National Natural Landmarks in the Project's study area.

7) **The National Park System, Recreation Areas, Seashores, Forests [16 U.S.C. 1c]**

There are no National Park Resources within the study area.

8) **Rivers designated as National or State Wild, Scenic or Recreational [16 U.S.C. Chapter 28, ECL 15-2701 et seq.]**

There are no rivers designated as National or State Wild, Scenic or Recreational in the Project's study area. Rivers that are eligible for listing are discussed in Sections 3.2 (Inventory of Visual Resources: Hudson River) and 3.3.2 (State Water Resources).

9) **A site, area, lake, reservoir or highway designated or eligible for designation as scenic [ECL Article 49 or DOT equivalent and APA. Designated State Highway Roadside]**

The road features listed below are designated scenic roads per Article 49 of the Environmental Conservation Law (NYSDOT 2014).

County Route 61

County Route 61 in Greene County is a designated Scenic Road. It is located about five miles north of the Village of Coxsackie and runs along the western boundary of the Columbia-Greene North Scenic Area of Statewide Significance (CGN-SASS). Views from the road are open to rolling pasture with scattered residences. Beyond the pasture, views are obstructed due to vegetation. The scenic quality is moderate due to the common nature of the landscape visible from the road. Approximately 3.4 mile of Route 61 are within the Project's study area. At its closest point, the Project will be approximately 2.1 miles from County Route 61.

New York State Route 9J – Stuyvesant

NY Route 9J in Columbia County is a designated Scenic Road in the Town of Stuyvesant from its junction with County Route 26A north about 2.0 miles. This stretch of road is located in the Columbia-Greene North SASS. Views from this location include the Hudson River and scattered homes. The scenic quality is moderate since the river is not the dominant feature and there are other manmade features. At its closest point, the Project will be approximately 1.3 miles to the east of New York State Route 9J in Stuyvesant.

New York State Route 9J – Stockport

NY Route 9J in Columbia County is a designated Scenic Road from its junction with Brickyard Road in Stockport south for less than a half mile toward the intersection with NY Route 9. This section of road is located in the Columbia-Greene North SASS. Views of the surrounding landscape are obstructed by scattered evergreen vegetation located in the fields to the east of the road. The scenic quality is moderate due to the lack of vegetative variety and relatively flat topography. At its closest point, the Project will be approximately 0.9 miles east of New York State Route 9J in Stockport.

New York State Route 385

NY Route 385 in Columbia County is a designated Scenic Road from the Village of Coxsackie south for approximately 3.5 miles. This section of road is located in the Columbia-Greene North SASS and is on the west edge of the Project's study area. Views are open to distant mountains and include scattered homes and electric lines. The scenic quality is moderate due to the number of man-made structures and lack of vegetative variety. At its closest point, the Project would be approximately 2.5 miles east of New York State Route 385.

NYS Scenic Byway: Taconic State Parkway

The Taconic State Parkway traverses four counties in New York, including Dutchess and Columbia Counties, and falls within the Project's study area. The Taconic State Parkway provides views of

many scenic, natural, cultural, recreational, and historic resources as it runs north-south through the eastern portion of the Hudson Valley. Views within the Project's study area are mostly limited and obstructed due to deciduous vegetation along the roadway. There are some locations in the Project's study area with open vistas from the Parkway to the Hudson Valley, but these occur inconsistently.

The scenic quality is moderate to high due to the valley views and horizontal alignment of the Parkway.

At its closest point (in the Town of Stanford), the Project will be approximately 1.5 miles from the Taconic State Parkway. In total, 20.9 miles of the Parkway fall within the Project's study area

10) Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance [of Article 42 of Executive Law]

Columbia – Greene North Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance

The Project's study area includes a portion of the Columbia-Greene North SASS (CGN-SASS), which is recognized for its scenic quality comprised of pastoral landscapes, working farms, and riverfront communities. The CNG-SASS is located predominately in the northwestern portion of the Project's study area from southwest of the proposed Knickerbocker Switching Station to just north of the City of Hudson. The CNG-SASS extends approximately 15 miles along the Hudson River from the vicinity of Schodack Landing in the southern portion of Rensselaer County (east side of river) and Coeymans hamlet in southern Albany County (west side of river) to just north of the City of Hudson in Columbia County (east side of river) and to the northern boundary of the Village of Athens in Greene County (west side of river). The SASS generally follows the State's east and west coastal zone boundaries along the Hudson River (see Figure 4.4-2, CNG-SASS Subunits).

The lands within the CNG-SASS are rural areas characterized by bluffs and ravines, pastoral landscapes, and river landings that have grown into incorporated villages and hamlets. Land near the river corridor is steep and wet and today it remains in a predominately natural state (NYS DOS 2004).

For purpose of scenic inventory and the evaluation, the CNG-SASS is subdivided into 29 unique subunits, each subunit has distinct patterns of landform, vegetation, water, and cultural resources. Six of the subunits are considered to have unique landscapes: Cossackie Village, Lampman Hill, Schodack Landing, Stuyvesant Farms, Nutten Hook Farms, and Nutten Hook.

The Stuyvesant Farms subunit (CGN-14) of the CNG-SASS is the only subunit that is within the Project's study area. This subunit lies east of the bluffs lining the Hudson River and extends south for three miles from the Columbia-Rensselaer County line. This subunit is approximately one mile wide and is located in the Town of Stuyvesant, Columbia County. The Stuyvesant Farms subunit is included in the CNG-SASS because it exhibits an unusual variety of highly diverse topography and vegetation. The mature woodlands present a contrast in texture with the open farm fields. The scenic quality of the subunit is high due to the scale and quality of its pastoral agricultural landscape and the aesthetic resources that are located there.

11) A State or federally designated trail, or one proposed for designation [16 U.S.C. Chapter 27 or equivalent]

The only State-designated trail within the Project's study area is currently under construction. The Albany-Hudson Electric Trail, or AHET, will be a shared-use bicycling and pedestrian trail along the 35-mile Albany-Hudson Electric Trolley corridor from Hudson, Rensselaer, running through Rensselaer and Columbia Counties. The AHET is be an important part of the Empire State Trail, and will provide a link between the

Capital Region and the Mid-Hudson Valley. The AHET will intersect the Project's main corridor in the northeastern corner of Stockport near Kinderhook Creek and the LKQ Broadway Auto Parts yard where the trolley corridor crosses the existing transmission line.

12) Adirondack Park Scenic Vistas [Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Map]

Not Applicable. The study area does not contain any portion of the Adirondack Park Land.

13) State Nature and Historic Preserve Areas [Section 4 of Article XIV of the State Constitution]

Hannacroix Creek Preserve, New Baltimore

Hannacroix Creek Preserve includes two parcels totaling approximately 24.5 acres on the western shore of the Hudson River in New Baltimore. The Preserve includes a 2.6 mile trail, that features a waterfall and is best used from January until October. Scenic quality is assumed to be moderate because of the presence of a deteriorating concrete edge along the river front, minimally developed landscape and views to the Hudson River.

Middle Ground Flats Unique Area Athens, Greene

Middle Ground Flats Unique Area is a 2-mile long wooded island in the Hudson River within the Town of Athens in Greene County and west of the City of Hudson and the Town of Greenport in Columbia County. The island features primitive campsites equipped with a picnic table, fire ring, grill and outhouses. Scenic quality is assumed to be high because of the minimally developed nature of the island landscape and views to the Hudson River.

Nutton Hook, Stuyvesant

Nutton Hook at Stockport, located in the Town of Stuyvesant, is the northern part of Stockport Flats WMA and NEER. It is accessible to the public and includes hiking trails, picnic tables, and interpretive panels relating the history of the ice harvesting industry and the R.W. Scott Ice House, which is listed on the National and New York State Registers of Historic Places. There is a hand boat launch on Ferry Road in Nutton Hook and at Stockport Creek. A loop hiking trail from Ferry Road goes to the Ice House (NYDEC 2019). The scenic quality is high due to the historic ice house and proximity to the Hudson River.

Stockport Flats National Estuarine Research Reserve (NEER) Stockport, Columbia

Stockport Flats National Estuarine Research Reserve (NEER) is located north of the Stockport Flats WMA, and it is largely a freshwater tidal wetland with minimal access. There are boat launches along the flats to canoe the marsh. The scenic quality of NEER is moderate because there are views of a rail road tracks with a railroad bridge adjacent to the Hudson River (NYDEC 2019).

Van Schaak Unique Area, Bronck Island, New Baltimore, Greene

The Van Schaak Unique Area is an approximately 24-acre parcel located on the western shoreline of the Hudson River in the Town of New Baltimore, Greene County. The parcel includes wooded areas and a network of wetlands. Access appears to be through the Bronck Island Wildlife Management Area. Scenic quality is assumed to be moderate to high due to the undisturbed nature of the landscape and its proximity to the Hudson River.

14) Palisades Park [Palisades Interstate Park Commission]

Not Applicable. No portion of Palisades Park is within the study area.

15) Bond Act Properties purchased under Exceptional Scenic Beauty or Open Space category

No Bond Act Properties purchased under Exceptional Scenic Beauty or Open Space were identified within the Project's study area.

16) National Heritage Areas (included in the 2018 Update to the NYSDEC Program Policy)

Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area of 1996

The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area was designated by Congress in 1996 and is one of the fifty-five federally-recognized National Heritage Areas throughout the United States. This heritage area covers four million acres between the Town of Waterford in Saratoga County to the northern border of New York City. Through a partnership with the National Park Service, Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area collaborates with residents, government agencies, non-profit groups and private partners to interpret, preserve and celebrate the nationally-significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley. The Heritage Area is managed by the Hudson River Valley Greenway.

The entire Project area is within this Heritage Area. An assessment of the entire heritage area has not been included in the VIA, but individual visual resources within the Project's study area that are within the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area – such as properties that are eligible for inclusion in the National or State Register of Historic Places, including the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (Val-Kill), the Top Cottage (Franklin D. Roosevelt's retreat), and the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site – have been evaluated in the VIA.

The other defining aesthetic resource of the Heritage Area is the Hudson River, which flows southward through eastern New York from the Adirondack Mountains to Upper New York Bay. Approximately 20 miles of the river are located in the Project's study area. Of these 20 miles, 9 miles (which are broken into two reaches) are eligible for the State's Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River list. The four mile southern reach, north of Hudson to south of Coxsackie, is eligible due to its fish and hydrologic values (USDA 2011). The five mile northern reach, which extends from north of the Town of Coxsackie to north of the Town of New Baltimore, is eligible as a wild and scenic river due to its historic and hydrologic values (USDA 2011).

3.3 Additional Visual Resources of State Importance

State resources listed below are within the Project's study area but are not specifically referenced in the NYSDEC Visual Policy. For each resource, a scenic quality rating of high, medium or low was assigned based on the general views of those individuals visiting each location.

3.3.1 State Forests

State Forests in New York are owned by the state but managed by other programs, divisions and agencies for the practice of forest or wildlife conservation (NYSDEC 2011). State forests provide wildlife habitat, watershed protection, timber production, open space, and outdoor recreation. Recreational uses include hiking, hunting, fishing, snowshoeing, and camping. Unpaved public access roads serve the state forests. There are no State Forests within the Project's study area.

3.3.2 State Water Resources

Certain rivers in New York State possess outstanding scenic, recreational, geological, ecological, historic and other similar values that are of statewide significance. There are four water resources within the study area

eligible or potentially eligible for designation as a National or State Wild, Scenic or Recreational. See section 3.2 for the definitions of each scenic quality rating. The Hudson River is described under National Heritage Areas above.

Claverack Creek

Claverack Creek is a 17.5-mile tributary to Stockport Creek in Columbia County near Claverack NY. Eight miles of this creek are eligible to be on State's Wild, Scenic and Recreational River list due to its recreation value and diversity of unique flow gradients including Class 4 rapids (USDA 2011). The wild and scenic reach is entirely in the Project's Study Area. Views from Claverack Creek are enclosed and screened by existing vegetation with partial views of manmade structures through the trees resulting in moderate scenic quality. One section of Claverack Creek – which is not considered to be a Wild, Scenic and Recreational River – crosses the Project's ROW.

Taghkanic Creek

Taghkanic Creek, located in Columbia County, is a 30-mile tributary to Claverack Creek. Twenty four miles of the creek is eligible to be on the State's Wild, Scenic and Recreational River list for its recreational value due to its diversity of unique flow gradients (USDA 2011). About 12 miles of the wild and scenic reach is in the study area including the confluence with Claverack Creek. Scenic quality is considered moderate due to the presence of numerous man-made structures. The transmission corridor crosses the creek at the edge of an agricultural field in the vicinity of Bells Pond Road in Livingston.

Wappinger Creek

Wappinger Creek, located in Dutchess County, is a major tributary to the Hudson River. The creek is approximately 41 miles long and its headwaters are at Thompson Lake. Fifteen miles of the Wappinger Creek are eligible to be on the State's Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River list because of its geologic value (i.e., from Thompson Lake and to Nooteming Lake) (USDA 2011). The last two miles are located in the Project's study area near Salt Point. Scenic quality is considered moderate due to visible man-made structures that span the creek. The section of Wappinger Creek adjacent to the Pleasant Valley Substation is not eligible to be on the State's Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River list, but is within the Project's study area.

3.4 Visual Resources of Local Importance

NYSDEC policy distinguishes National and State visually sensitive resources but also acknowledges that visual resources also occur at local levels through zoning, planning or other public means. Though some of these local resources may not have formal recognition through zoning or planning they are recognized here as visually sensitive areas. For each resource, a scenic quality rating of high, medium or low was assigned based on the general views users can see when visiting the location; definitions of each scenic quality rating are provided above. Most of the local resources described below have a moderate scenic quality rating due to views with common landscape features including typical vegetation and manmade elements.

3.4.1 Local Public Parks and Recreation Areas

Coxsackie Boat Launch at Riverside Park

The Coxsackie Boat Launch, located in the Town of Coxsackie in Greene County, is a concrete ramp with access to the Hudson River and adjacent parking for 36 cars and trailers. Views are open and panoramic with the Hudson River and opposite shoreline. Notable features visible at the park include the boat ramp/dock,

playground equipment, covered picnic structures, and pathway along the water. The park is on the edge of the developed Coxsackie downtown area and hosts a Farmer's Market. Scenic quality is high for the surrounding views of the Hudson River.

Lafayetteville Multiple Use Area

The Lafayetteville Multiple Use Area, located in the Town of Milan, Dutchess County, is a 715-acre area that contains one water feature (*i.e.*, Wilbur Pond). The MUA is located on the 3 mile boundary of the Project's study area, with approximately 12 wooded acres within the study area. The landscape within the Lafayetteville Multiple Use Area is characterized by forests and fields. The primary activities are hunting, hiking, and nature viewing, although there are no designated trails developed within the property. The scenic quality of the portion of the MUA within the Project's study area is low due to the low diversity of vegetation and proximity to the Taconic State Parkway.

Roeliff Jansen Kill State Multiple Use Area

Roeliff Jansen Kill State Multiple Use Area (MUA) is located in the Town of Milan just east of the Taconic State Parkway in Dutchess County. The MUA is listed on the NYSDEC website as a State Forest (NYSDEC 2019), but the only descriptors pertain to fishing rights along the Roeliff Jansen Kill. With little signage it can be assumed recreational users would be accessing the Roeliff Jansen Kill primarily for fishing. No recreational facilities were identified, and views are limited by the forested landscape. Scenic quality is moderate due to the predominant vegetation that is common throughout the region.

Milan Recreation Park

Milan Recreation Park, located on South Road in the Town of Milan, Dutchess County, is owned, managed, and maintained by the Town. The park contains a softball field, playground, and walking trail. The park is located adjacent to a recycling and transfer station and road maintenance facility. Existing man-made development includes the recreation facilities as well as the road maintenance facility. Views are open with low to moderate scenic quality.

The Helen Aldrich Park

The Helen Aldrich Park, located in the Hamlet of Salt Point, Town of Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County, is a 13.7-acre day use facility, with a softball field, tennis court, volley ball, basketball court, playground, and picnic pavilion. The park is also home to the Pleasant Valley Recreation Department offices, which are located in a former schoolhouse. Views are open within the park with some more panoramic views occurring in the open meadow area of the park. Most visible man-made features are residential development, along with the recreation facilities. Scenic quality is moderate.

Cady Recreation Park

Cady Recreation Park, located in the Town of Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County, consists of 16 acres with ballfields and recreation facilities. The portion of Wappinger Creek that is within the Project's study area also runs through the park. This park contains softball and baseball fields, a tennis court, storage buildings, and a picnic area. Views are enclosed and dominated by numerous large transmission lines connecting into the Pleasant Valley Substation. The substation is less than a quarter of a mile southwest of the park. Scenic quality is considered low due to existing transmission lines traversing the park and proximity to the substation.

Mosher Park

Mosher Park, located in the Village of Ravena, Town of Coeymans, Albany County, is the Town's main outdoor recreational area. It contains facilities for baseball, football, swimming, tennis, basketball, and picnics. Views are partially screened by vegetation and structures along the boundaries of the park property. Man-made features include the recreation facilities, adjacent residences and the access road and parking areas which result in moderate scenic quality.

Mills Park

Mills Park, located in the Town of Kinderhook, Columbia County, contains few recreation facilities other than park benches and picnic tables. Park views are predominately screened by vegetation and residential structures. Residential development dominates the views to the west and southwest resulting in moderate scenic quality.

Village Playground Park

Village Playground Park, located on Rothermel Avenue in the Town of Kinderhook, Columbia County contains baseball fields, a tennis court, a basketball court, a picnic pavilion, and playground equipment. Views are open and panoramic with some mountains silhouetted in the background. The mountains are partially screened by vegetation and structures along the boundaries of the park property. A prominent visual feature is the orchards adjacent to the park. Man-made features include the recreation facilities, adjacent residences, and a fence dividing the park from the orchard. Resulting scenic quality is moderate.

McQuade Park

McQuade Park, located on Mansion Street in the Village of Coxsackie, Town of Coxsackie, Greene County, contains baseball and softball fields, basketball and tennis courts, picnic areas, a playground, an outdoor ice rink. Views within the park are open to park facilities, but distant views are screened by vegetation and large structures along the boundaries of the park property. Man-made features include the recreation facilities and adjacent residences resulting in low to moderate scenic quality.

Four Mile Point Preserve

Four Mile Point Preserve, located in the Town of Coxsackie, Green County, is comprised of seven acres along the Hudson River. Facilities include observation platforms for wildlife viewing and hiking trails. There is access to the river for kayaking. This preserve is located in the Columbia-Green North SASS and is managed by Scenic Hudson. Four Mile Point contains mudflats, beaches and rocky headlands. Views are open to the Hudson River. The scenic quality is high due to proximity to the river with very minimal manmade features.

Greenport Conservation Area

Greenport Conservation Area, located along the Hudson River in the Town of Greenport, Columbia County, contains over 700 acres and is connected to the Greenport Town Park. It is owned by the Open Space Institute and managed by the Columbia Land Conservancy. Park facilities include four miles of trails, playgrounds, basketball court and picnic area. There are open views to the Hudson River from the banks; interior views are

enclosed by deciduous trees and dense cedar groves. Views toward the Project are screened by numerous manmade structures, primarily residential. The scenic quality is low to moderate.

Oakdale Park

Oakdale Park, located on 6th Street in the City of Hudson, Columbia County, contains basketball courts, a skate park, and a large lake with swimming facilities. Views within the park are open to courts and parking lots. Distant views are screened by vegetation, terrain, and residential structures along the boundaries of the property. Man-made features include recreation facilities, adjacent residences, a road, and parking areas. The scenic quality is low due to the numerous manmade structures that contrast with the surrounding landscape.

7th Street Park

7th Street Park, located in the City of Hudson, Columbia County, contains park benches, tree and shrub plantings, a fountain, a memorial, an art mural, and map signage. The well-used park is surrounded by residential and commercial structures that effectively screen views of the surrounding landscape in all directions, with the exception of views up Warren Street. The scenic quality of the park is low due to the lack of off-site views, topography, and diversity of vegetation.

Livingston Recreation Park

Livingston Recreation Park, located in the City of Hudson, Columbia County, contains basketball courts, tennis courts, a playground, a volleyball court, and a picnic pavilion. Views are partially screened by vegetation and residential structures along the boundaries of the park property. Man-made features include the recreation facilities and adjacent residences, a road and parking areas, resulting in moderate scenic quality.

Francis J. Mark Memorial Park (Clinton Hollow Road Park)

Francis J. Mark Memorial Park is located off Clinton Hollow Road, northwest of the Hamlet of Salt Point, NY. The park includes a picnic pavilion, a playground, a baseball field, a soccer field, a volleyball court, and a swimming pond. This is a day use park that closes at dusk. Views are open and panoramic within the park; distant views are screened by vegetation along the boundaries of the property. Man-made features include recreation facilities and structures such as a picnic pavilion, bathrooms, and storage sheds as well as the road and parking areas. Scenic quality is high due to the variations in topography and the water feature.

Greenfields Park

Greenfields Park, located east of the Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site in the Town of Hyde Park, Dutchess County, contains a playground, open space, a picnic pavilion, and a water feature. Open and panoramic views within the park are backdropped by vegetation along the boundaries of the park property and clusters within the park. Man-made features include the recreation facilities and structures, such as a picnic pavilion and ball field, as well as the road and parking areas, resulting in moderate scenic quality.

Bower Park

Bower Park, located on Ravine Road in the Town of Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County, contains soccer fields and walking paths, as well as the entrance to the Bower - Quarry Hiking Trails. Views are enclosed by the vegetation and terrain resulting in moderate scenic quality.

Beck Park

Beck Park, located in the Town of Hyde Park, Dutchess County, is considered a neighborhood park with a basketball court, a multi-purpose practice field, and playground equipment. It also has a forested section in the back of the park with older trails. Man-made features include recreation facilities and structures as well as the road and parking areas resulting in moderate scenic quality. Views within the park are open adjacent to the playground and basketball court, but are screened by vegetation when viewing in the direction of the Project.

Harrier Hill Park

Harrier Hill Park, a six-acre park located in the Town of Stockport, Columbia County, features bird watching, picnic areas, walking trails, and seasonal cross-country skiing and snowshoeing (ungroomed trails). There are open and panoramic views of the rolling terrain and the Hudson River. The background hills are partially screened by vegetation along the boundaries of the park property. The scenic quality is high due to the dominant views of the Hudson River.

Greenport Town Park

Greenport Town Park, a 625-acre natural area located in the Town of Greenport, Columbia County, provides views of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountain as well as upland meadows, deciduous forests, and an estuarine wetland, five miles of trails, a gazebo, overlook benches, and a picnic shelter (Columbia Land Conservancy, 2019). Views are open to park facilities and residential homes. Distant views are enclosed by vegetation; scenic quality is high.

West Ghent Recreational Facility, Ghent

The West Ghent Recreational Facility, a 17-acre property located on County Route 22 (near the intersection with New York State Route 9H) in the Town of Ghent, Columbia County, contains tennis courts, basketball, playground and a Community Center building. The park is located adjacent to the Ghent Reformed Church and cemetery. The scenic quality is low to moderate due to recreational facilities.

Arthur Masten Sr., Memorial Park

The Arthur Masten, Sr. Memorial Park (Columbiaville Ballfield), a 14-acre park located on New York State Route 9 in the Town of Stockport, Columbia County, is currently being developed with a park pavilion, playground, walking path and open area for ball fields. Surrounded by residential development, several houses are visible from the park. The scenic quality is low to moderate due to its common landscape setting, lack of vegetative and topographic diversity, and surrounding development.

3.4.2 Golf Courses

The Project's study area contains two golf courses that are not specifically mentioned in any local land use plans or planning documents as protected visual features.

Columbia Golf and Country Club, Claverack

The Columbia Golf and Country Club, located in the Town of Claverack, Columbia County, is a private 18-hole golf course with tennis courts, a pool, and a restaurant/Club House. The property is rated as moderate for scenic quality rating due to surrounding views, topography and vegetation.

Red Hook Golf Club, Red Hook

The Red Hook Golf Club, located in the Town of Red Hook, Dutchess County, is an 18-hole golf course open to the public. The golf club is rated as moderate for scenic quality rating due to surrounding views, topography and vegetation.

4.0 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The VIA procedures used for the Project’s study are based on methodologies developed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (1980), U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Forest Service (1974), the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (1981), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,¹ and the NYSDEC (2000). These procedures are widely accepted as standard visual impact methodologies for energy projects, including prior Article VII project reviews. Recent projects that have used similar methodologies include the Empire State Line in Niagara County and the A&C Lines Project in Dutchess County. Specific techniques used to assess Project visibility and potential visual impacts are described in the following section.

4.1 Project Visibility

An analysis of Project visibility was undertaken to identify those locations within the Project’s study area where there is potential for the proposed structures and other facilities to be seen from ground-level locations. This analysis included identifying areas from which the proposed Project would be viewed using viewshed maps and subsequently verifying Project visibility in the field.

4.1.1 Viewshed Analysis

To evaluate potential Project visibility, a viewshed analysis was conducted for the existing and proposed transmission line structures along the Project’s ROW. Information on the location and height of the existing and proposed structures was based on the preliminary engineering design. Existing structures are typically lattice structures, which range in height from 65 feet to 90 feet above ground level. The Project’s monopole structures are typically no more than 10 feet taller than the existing lattice towers they replace and are fewer in quantity than the existing structures.

A GIS-based surface model viewshed analysis was prepared for the existing and proposed transmission line structures to delineate areas of theoretical Project visibility and specifically to determine (1) where the Project may be more visible than the existing transmission infrastructure, (2) where the Project and existing infrastructure are equally visible, and (3) where the Project may be less visible than the existing infrastructure. The analyses relied on a Digital Surface Model (“DSM”) to represent vegetation and structures in the landscape, as well as a Digital Terrain Model (“DTM”) to represent topography only (i.e., bare earth conditions). The analysis was conducted using ESRI ArcGIS Pro software.

The DTM and DSM used to represent the landscape in the computer-based viewshed analysis are derived from LiDAR point cloud data, which was taken from The National Map produced by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The point cloud data was processed to create 10-foot resolution surface models. The viewer height was assigned to five feet above the terrain to represent a typical viewer in the landscape. In the viewshed analysis, Project components are counted as ‘visible’ if the computer determines that a single point on the component would be seen from a point on the ground and not blocked by topography, vegetation, or buildings.

¹ Smardon, et al., 1988.

As an initial screening tool, the computer-based viewshed analysis is useful in determining the geographic extent of potential Project visibility, identify visually sensitive resources with potential visibility, and select places to conduct field investigations to further understand Project visibility. However, there are shortcomings to computer-based viewshed analyses. It does not determine the degree of visibility based on distance or the number of visible structures. It also does not take into account the observer's visual acuity or localized atmospheric conditions.

The viewshed analysis modelled the potential visibility of the proposed structures based on topography, surface structures, and vegetation (DTM and DSM) which takes into account three-dimensional features in the landscape – in addition to topography – that would block views of the Project facilities. The vegetative landscape patterns, rolling topography, and scattered development characteristic of the Hudson River Valley play an important role in screening the Project's visibility, making the DSM essential data to include in the computer-based analysis.

The preliminary viewshed analysis indicated that there was the potential for Project visibility at 23 sites that are considered visual resources in the NYSDEC Visual Policy. That number dropped to 4 visual resources that will have varying levels of Project visibility, following field checking and further computer modeling.

4.1.2 Field Verification

The theoretical visibility indicated by the viewshed analysis overstates actual visibility due to absolute calculations (*i.e.*, if any portion of a structure may be visible from a distance of three miles, even 1 inch or less, the analysis would result in “potential visibility”). As noted above, viewshed analyses do not consider observers' visual acuity, the number of structures visible, the distance to a visible structure, or atmospheric conditions, factors that may significantly reduce the ability of a person to see Project components at further distances.

To evaluate the potential visibility of the proposed Project as indicated by the GIS-based surface model viewshed analysis, 126 potential public viewpoints within three miles of the Project's centerline were visited and documented in the field during April and May of 2019. This included recognized visual resources as well as other publicly accessible locations that may have visibility of the Project. While the fieldwork focused on the defined visual resources, the field evaluation team also visited publicly-accessible sites of local sensitivity. Initial fieldwork was supplemented by Project research, mapping, and photosimulations prepared by TetraTech between 2013 and 2015 for Segments A and B. .

Field verification determined that the majority of the visual resources within the Project's study area will have no views of the transmission structure, conductors, or stations. Visibility of the existing transmission lines is generally limited to areas at or adjacent to sites where the ROW crosses public roads, and locations where residential development has occurred in proximity to the existing transmission corridor. The limited visibility is also due to the topographic variation, wide spread forest vegetation, and man-made development such as residential structures that characterize the majority of the Project's study area. Viewpoint locations within the study area are shown in Figure 4.4-1, Project's Study Area Maps.

Longer distance views are generally confined to undeveloped open space (including active agriculture), transportation corridors, water bodies and a few residential developments/neighborhoods with limited vegetative screening. However, landscape trees, hedgerows, and patches of forest vegetation provide at least partial screening of views to the existing transmission lines from many of these areas. Where visible, the existing lines are typically seen in the foreground (under 0.5 mile) by drivers, local residents, and recreational

users. Where the transmission line crosses public roads, open views are generally restricted to the cleared ROW (i.e., under the lines, looking down the ROW). In these views the existing transmission structures and linear orientation of the lines and maintained ROW can clearly be seen. Where the transmission structures are close to the viewer and not screened by vegetation or structures, they are often silhouetted against the sky. Where switching station/substations are visible, the majority of the lower components are visible against a wooded backdrop. The road-crossing views are generally of short duration and typically obscured by existing vegetation once the viewer is outside the limits of the cleared ROW. In some agricultural areas, lack of intervening trees provides longer duration views to the existing transmission lines. In these situations, portions of the lines can be seen in front of, or above, the existing vegetation.

During field review, views toward the existing and proposed transmission line were documented from representative and sensitive viewpoints with photographs and field notes capturing federal, state, and local areas of visual sensitivity. When photographing the existing landscapes, the visual team used a Nikon D750 digital camera (full frame digital camera equipped with a 24–120 mm zoom lens set at 50 mm) to closely approximate the field of view of the human eye. The data points were collected using a GPS device mounted to the camera and by a GIS-based data collector on a handheld device. The GPS unit documented the date, time, and location (lat./long.) of each photo. Existing transmission structures in the Project’s ROW were used as locational reference points during field review. The photographs taken during field evaluations were used to determine where the Project’s facilities might realistically be visible and which viewpoints would be most appropriate to use in the preparation of photosimulations.

4.2 VIA Methodology

4.2.1 Viewpoint Selection

Six viewpoints were chosen from the 2019 fieldwork photography to examine the effects of the Project on landscapes that are representative of those found within the study area. These locations were chosen to illustrate the anticipated change between existing and proposed conditions where the Project will be highly visible to the public. Photosimulations depicting views from each of these locations are included as Figure 4.4-3. Additional photographs are also included with the photosimulations to provide context for each viewpoint.

Several criteria were used to select these viewpoints. The selected photographs should:

- provide clear, unobstructed views of the Project (as indicated by visibility of the existing transmission lines);
- illustrate the Project’s visibility from sensitive resources that have open views of the transmission corridor;
- illustrate representative views of the affected landscape within the Project’s study area;
- illustrate views of the Project that would be available to the general public within the Project’s study area; and,
- illustrate typical views under different lighting conditions and from different viewer perspectives to show the range of visual change that would occur with the Project in place.

4.2.2 Photosimulations

To show anticipated visual changes that will result from the proposed Project, computer-generated photosimulations were created to present an accurate photographic representation of the Project from six selected viewpoints. These six locations, described below, were chosen to illustrate the anticipated change between existing and proposed conditions where the Project will be highly visible to the public. Photosimulations depicting views from each of these locations are included as Figure 4.4-3. Additional photographs are also included with the photosimulations to provide context for each viewpoint. Figure 4.4-4 provides the photos taken to develop the photosimulations and perform the visual assessment.

The photosimulations were developed using Autodesk 3D StudioMax 2019 to create a simulated perspective (camera view) to match the location, bearing, and focal length of the viewpoint (existing conditions) photograph. A three dimensional (“3-D”) topographic mesh of the landform (based on DEM data) was then brought into the 3-D model space. Minor adjustments were made to camera and target location, focal length, and camera roll to align all modeled elements with the corresponding elements in the photograph that serve as control points. This assures that any elements introduced to the model space (i.e., the proposed transmission structures, access roads, etc.) will be shown in accurate proportion and perspective to the existing landscape elements in the view.

Using the camera view as guidance, the visible Project elements are then imported to the model space and set at the proper coordinates. Once the proposed Project is accurately modeled within the camera view, a lighting system is created using 3D StudioMax software to replicate the position of the sun at the time and date the photograph was taken. The model is then rendered in 3D StudioMax and superimposed over the photograph in Adobe Photoshop CC. Portions of the Project components that are located behind trees, structures, or topography are then masked out. In views where haze is obviously present in the background, a minimal haze layer is placed over the more distant Project elements to increase realism.

Photosimulation 1 provides existing and proposed views in the vicinity of the new Knickerbocker Switching Station from Muitzeskill Road in the Town of Schodack, Rensselaer County. Proposed views face northwest through southeast toward the proposed switching station. The photosimulation shows the proposed switching station within the existing utility ROW, perimeter fencing, and an access road off Muitzeskill Road.

Photosimulation 2 provides existing and proposed views of the Project’s ROW from County Road 26A in the Town of Stuyvesant, Columbia County. Proposed views face northwest through northeast toward the existing ROW corridor. The photosimulation shows the galvanized monopole structures that will be constructed to replace the existing structures; the closest proposed structure to the road is 85 feet tall and approximately 230 feet from the road. The Project will be visible to motorists on Route 26A over open agricultural fields, similar to the existing transmission infrastructure currently visible.

Photosimulation 3 provides existing and proposed views in the vicinity of the expanded Churchtown Switching Station in the Town of Claverack, Columbia County. Proposed views face northwest through northeast toward the existing utility ROW. The photosimulation shows the expanded Churchtown Switching Station and proposed transmission structures that will be visible from Orchard Road.

Photosimulation 4 provides existing and proposed views of the Project’s ROW along Highway 82 in the Town of Livingston, Columbia County. Proposed views face northwest through northeast toward the existing utility ROW. This photosimulation shows the galvanized monopole structures that will replace two existing side-by-side sets of 115 kV lattice structures currently within the ROW. The closest proposed structure is 95 feet tall and approximately 570 feet from the viewpoint. The Project will be seen over open fields when

approaching the crossing along Highway 82, similar to the existing transmission infrastructure currently visible.

Photosimulation 5 provides existing and proposed views of the Project's ROW along Highway 199 in the Town of Milan, Dutchess County. Proposed views face northwest through northeast toward the existing utility ROW. The photosimulation shows the galvanized monopole structures that will replace two existing side-by-side sets of 115 kV lattice structures. The Project's structures will be approximately the same height as the existing lattice structures (that will remain) that support two 345 kV transmission lines. The closest proposed structure is 95 feet tall and approximately 480 feet from the viewpoint. The visual effect of the Project will be similar to the existing transmission infrastructure currently visible.

Revised Photosimulation 6 (Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station Redesign) provides existing and proposed views in the vicinity of the proposed Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station in the Town of Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County. Proposed views face northeast through southeast toward the existing transmission line corridor from Van Wagner Road. The revised photosimulation shows the proposed galvanized steel structures approaching and the proposed Van Wagner Capacitor Bank. The tallest permanent visible transmission line structure (structure 516.5) will be approximately 95 feet tall and located approximately 60 feet from the edge of the road. The tallest structure within the capacitor bank station will be 85 feet tall (100 feet with lightning mast). At its closest point, the station will be ~~and~~ approximately 260/100 feet from Van Wagner Road. Two strips of trees and understory vegetation will remain along Van Wagner Road: and a strip approximately 45 feet deep by 130 feet along Van Wagner Road to the north of the driveway; and a strip approximately 45 feet deep by 125 feet along Van Wagner Road south of the driveway. Approximately 25 feet of existing vegetation will be maintained between the substation and Van Wagner Road. A motorist traveling south on Van Wagner Road will see the existing ROW clearing, existing and proposed structures and the capacitor bank station for approximately 15 seconds, approaching and traveling within the existing utility corridor for approximately 650 feet, traveling 30 mile per hour. A motorist traveling north on Van Wagner Road will see the existing ROW clearing, existing and proposed structures and the capacitor bank station for less time (approximately 10 seconds) due to the alignment of the road and the preserved vegetation.

4.2.3 Visual Impact Assessment

Visual impact can be defined as the change in visual quality that would result from a proposed project, or the difference between existing visual quality and visual quality with the implementation of the proposed project. The resulting VIA describes the amount of contrast with the existing landscape caused by a project. The degree to which a project adversely affects the visual quality of the landscape is directly related to the amount of visual contrast between it and the existing landscape character (BLM 1986).

4.2.3.1 Contrast

Impacts to visual resources were assessed by performing a contrast analysis for the proposed Project and identifying impacts to landscape quality and sensitive viewers/viewpoints resulting from the proposed transmission facility. Contrast is an important assessment criterion used by both the USDA Forest Service's Scenery Management System (SMS) and the BLM's Visual Resource Management (VRM) system to measure the degree of physical change in the landscape without regard to how the change is seen by viewers, sensitivity of viewpoints or viewing conditions. NYDEC Policy states: "A visual impact may also be considered in the context of contrast (NYSDEC, 2000)."

Contrast in the landscape is determined by the differences in form, line, color, texture, scale, and landscape juxtaposition between the existing conditions and the proposed action. In the context of the proposed Project,

visual contrast may result from (1) landform modifications that are necessary to prepare the Project's ROW for construction; (2) the removal of vegetation to construct and maintain the transmission lines, roads, and stations; (3) the construction of temporary and permanent access roads required to erect and maintain the transmission lines and stations; and (4) the introduction of transmission line and station facilities into the landscape setting.

There are many environmental factors that can influence the amount of visual contrast introduced by project components (BLM 1986a):

- Distance – The contrast created by a project usually decreases as viewing distance increases.
- Available Panorama – The more the proposed facilities are visible, the greater the likelihood of visual contrast.
- Angle of Observation – Viewing the project from different angles can greatly affect the apparent size of a project and the resulting level of visual contrast.
- Length of Time in View – The longer the project is in view, the greater the level of visual contrast.
- Relative Size or Scale – The level of visual contrast created by a project is directly related to its size and scale compared to the surrounding landscape it is located in (and whether the project will be dominant or co-dominant within the landscape).
- Lighting Conditions – The direction and angle of the sun affects the color, intensity, shadow, reflection, form, and texture of visual aspects of proposed project components.

Contrast levels were assigned to each of the sensitive viewpoints during field visits and were later confirmed through viewshed analysis, line of sight (LOS) analysis, and computer model overlays as necessary. The following is a description of possible situations that could affect visual contrast (BLM, 1986b):

- Strong Visual Contrast
 - Construction of new access roads in steep terrain.
 - Removal of dense riparian or forest vegetation for ROW clearing, structure sites, or access roads.
 - Landscapes that have no existing transmission lines or other overhead utilities.
- Moderate Visual Contrast
 - Upgrading existing access roads or construction of new access roads in rolling terrain with occasional short, steep slopes.
 - Removal of agricultural vegetation or grassland for site improvements or access road construction.
 - Proposed project elements are somewhat larger in scale compared to existing, nearby, or parallel utility facilities.
- Low Visual Contrast
 - Use of existing access or construction roads.
 - Minimal removal of existing vegetation.

- Presence of nearby transmission facilities of similar scale, design, and materials.
- No Visual Contrast
 - Construction activities are not visually evident from aesthetic resources.
 - Proposed project is smaller in scale compared to the existing nearby utility facilities.
 - Management of existing vegetation is not highly visible.
 - Replacing existing conductors within an existing transmission line corridor, with no change to pole height or type

4.2.3.2 Impacts to Scenic Quality

The determination of scenic quality impacts is based upon an evaluation of the Project's contrast on the scenic quality of the landscape (aesthetic resources) within three miles of the Project. Table 4-1 Scenic Quality Impacts defines the scenic quality impact ratings as they relate to scenic quality and project contrast.

Distance from the Project will affect the apparent size and degree of contrast between the Project and its surroundings. In particular, differences in the visibility of a project depend on whether the project appears in the foreground, middleground, or background of views and viewsheds within the Project's study area for from a specific visual resource or visually sensitive area.

Consistent with PSL Article VII requirements, the visual analysis for the Project is limited to the six-mile wide study area, centered on the Transmission Line, such that all views of the Project would be considered foreground or middleground views. Therefore, foreground and middleground distance zones referenced in the NYSDEC's Program Policy have been used to assess visual impacts of the Project, as discussed below.

The foreground of a view or viewshed has been defined as the area within 0 to 0.5 mile from a specific vantage point. At a foreground distance, viewers typically have a very high recognition of detail. Cognitively, in the foreground zone, human scale is an important factor in judging spatial relationships and the relative size of objects. From this distance, the sense of form, line, color and textural contrast with the surrounding landscape is highest and the visual impact of a project is likely to be considered the greatest at a foreground distance.² The majority of views described in the Project's VIA are in the foreground where transmission lines cross roads or are adjacent to agricultural fields

The middleground of a view or viewshed has been defined as the area within 0.5 to 3 miles from a specific vantage point. At a middleground distance, elements of a project begin to visually merge or join with the existing landscape and setting. Colors and textures become somewhat muted by distance, but are still identifiable. Visual detail is reduced, although distinct patterns may still be evident. Viewers from middleground distances characteristically recognize surface features such as tree stands, building clusters and small landforms. Scale is perceived in terms of identifiable features of development patterns. From this distance, the contrast of color and texture are identified more in terms of the regional context than by the immediate surroundings.³

Finally, at a background viewpoint (greater than three miles), changes to the landscape are highly visible only if they present a noticeable contrast in form, line, or scale. The effects of atmospheric haze would also

² NYSDEC 2000

³ *Id.*

significantly reduce views of clearings and structures. No viewpoints in the background distance zone were evaluated.

Table 4-1: Scenic Quality Impacts

Scenic Quality	Project Contrast				
	Strong	Moderate-Strong	Moderate	Moderate-Low	Low
High	High	High	Moderate-High	Moderate	Moderate
Moderate	High	Moderate-High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Low
Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Low	Low	Low

4.2.3.3 Impacts to Sensitive Viewers

Impacts to sensitive viewers were determined based on anticipated contrast levels, potential level of user concern, distance zones (0 to 0.5 mile, 0.5 to 3 miles, greater than 3 miles), and Project visibility. Distances beyond 3 miles were considered to be in the background; no viewpoints were identified beyond the 3 mile threshold. Table 4-2 defines the sensitivity level/user concern impact ratings as they relate to project contrast and distance from Project facilities.

The impact analysis was conducted from the selected viewpoints that were identified in the viewshed analysis as having visibility of the proposed Project and which were field verified.. Viewpoint visual impact summary tables are located in the impacts section.

Table 4-2: Sensitivity Level/User Concern Impacts

Project Visibility	Project Contrast				
	Strong	Moderate-Strong	Moderate	Low-Moderate	Low
0 - 0.5 mile	High	High	Moderate-High	Moderate	Moderate
0.5 – 3 miles	Moderate-High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Low	Low
Greater than 3 miles	Moderate	Moderate-Low	Moderate-Low	Low	Low

4.2.3.4 Overall Project Impacts

The overall visual impact is determined by combining the level of visual resource change with the degree to which viewers are likely to be impacted and react adversely to the change. The NYSDEC visual policy defines significant aesthetic impacts as those that diminish public enjoyment and appreciation of a resource or impair its character or quality. To make a determination of overall project impacts, the analysis considers the following factors:

- Distance of the resource from the Project (foreground, middleground or background)
- The number of people expected at the affected resource (where data is available)
- The extent of Project impact to the resource
- The degree of contrast with the surrounding landscape created by the Project
- The duration of the view (extent of visibility from each resource)

- Duration of the impact (short term vs. long term effects)

Potential visual impacts of the Project were determined for each visual resource by assessing the scenic quality impacts as compared to levels of viewer sensitivity. Table 4-3, Overall Project Impacts, defines the overall Project impact ratings as they relate to scenic quality impacts and user concern impacts.

Table 4-3: Overall Project Impacts

Scenic Quality Impacts	User Concern Impacts				
	High	Moderate to High	Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low
High	High	High	Moderate-High	Moderate	Moderate
Moderate-High	High	Moderate-High	Moderate	Moderate	Low-Moderate
Moderate	Moderate-High	Moderate	Low-Moderate	Low-Moderate	Low-Moderate
Moderate-Low	Moderate	Low-Moderate	Low-Moderate	Low	Low
Low	Low-Moderate	Low-Moderate	Low	Low	Low

Descriptions of each impact rating identified in Table 4-3 are provided below:

- *Low* – Minor adverse change to the existing visual resource, with low viewer response to change in the visual environment (Not Significant)
- *Low to Moderate* – Minor to moderate adverse change to the existing visual resource, with low to moderate or moderate viewer response to change in the visual environment (Not Significant)
- *Moderate* – Moderate adverse change to the visual resource with moderate viewer response (Potentially Significant and Adverse)
- *Moderate to High* – Moderate adverse visual resource change with high viewer response or high adverse visual resource change with moderate viewer response (Potentially Significant and Adverse)
- *High* – A high level of adverse change to the resource or a high level of viewer response to visual change such that without effective mitigation or project redesign significant thresholds would be exceeded (Significant and Adverse).

5.0 VIA SUMMARY

The Project’s VIA focuses on the identification and characterization of visual impacts associated with the proposed Project. A visual impact would result if any of the following were to occur from the construction or operation of the proposed Project:

- An observable change in the foreground character or scenic quality of a visually important landscape.
- An observable change in a landscape that are seen from sensitive public viewer locations such as locally sensitive areas (*e.g.*, roadside parks, scenic overlooks, or historic structures) or public locations with special scenic, historic, recreation, cultural, and/or natural qualities that have been recognized as such through legislation or some other official declaration.
- A high visual impact would occur at a location where Project components would be dominant or readily apparent from significant public viewing locations/viewpoints; would introduce forms,

lines, colors, and/or textures that are very inconsistent with the existing landscape; would cause high levels of contrast; or would be significantly out of scale with existing landscape elements.

- A moderate visual impact would occur at a location where Project components would be co-dominant or apparent from public viewing locations/viewpoints that receive moderate use; would introduce forms, lines, colors, and/or textures that are moderately inconsistent with the existing landscape; would cause moderate levels of contrast; or would be somewhat out of scale with existing landscape elements.
- A low visual impact would occur at a location where Project components would be subordinate or slightly visible from public viewing locations/viewpoints that receive little or no use; would introduce forms, lines, colors, and/or textures that are slightly inconsistent with the existing landscape; would cause low levels of contrast; or would be slightly out of scale with existing landscape elements.

The results of the viewshed analysis are graphically depicted on Maps 1-4 of Figure 4.4-5.

5.1 Impacts on NYSDEC Aesthetic Resources

Table 5-4 summarizes the impacts to the 23 NYSDEC-defined aesthetic resources identified in the Project’s three-mile study area.⁴ The table is based upon viewing distance, Project visibility, scenic quality ratings (Table 4-1), view sensitivity (Table 4-2), and overall Project impacts (Table 4-3), which are derived from viewshed analyses, contrast rating forms, visual simulations, and computer model overlays. The determination of Overall Visual Impacts reflects the visual impacts to both scenic quality and viewers. Aesthetic resources with potential views of the Project are indicated with a light purple background.

In the Visibility column a ‘Yes’ indicates that there will be a view of the Project, as confirmed in the field. A ‘No (FC)’ indicates the preliminary viewshed analysis determined that there may be a view of the Project, but the fieldcheck (FC) determined that there will be no visibility.

Table 5-4: Summary of NYSDEC Aesthetic Resources

Place	Location	Distance (miles)	Visibility	Scenic Quality Rating	Contrast	Scenic Quality Impact	User Concern Impact	Overall Visual Impact
1. A property on or eligible for inclusion in the National or State Register of Historic Places (<i>Properties of historic significance</i>)								
Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (Val-Kill)	Hyde Park	2.9	No	High	None	None	Low	None
Martin Van Buren National Historic Site (Lindenwald)	Kinderhook	2.3	No	High	None	None	Low	None
Top Cottage, FDR Retreat	Hyde Park	2.6	No (FC)	High	None	None	Low	None
2. State Parks								

⁴ This number includes the additional category (*i.e.*, National Heritage Areas) included in the 2018 Draft of the NYSDEC Program Policy.

Table 5-4: Summary of NYSDEC Aesthetic Resources

Place	Location	Distance (miles)	Visibility	Scenic Quality Rating	Contrast	Scenic Quality Impact	User Concern Impact	Overall Visual Impact
Hudson River Islands State Park	Stockport	1.6	No (FC)	High	None	None	Low	None
Lake Taghkanic State Park	Taghkanic	2.7	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Schodack Island State Park	New Baltimore, Schodack, Stuyvesant	0.8	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
3. Urban Cultural Parks (Heritage Areas)								
Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor	Bethlehem, Coeymans	1.5	Limited	Moderate	Low to None	Moderate - Low	Low	Low
4. The State Forest Preserve (Not applicable; limited to Adirondack and Catskill Parks)								
5. National Wildlife Refuges, State Game Refuges and State Wildlife Management Areas (National Wildlife Refuges and State Game Refuges)								
Bronck Island WMA	New Baltimore	1.8	No	Moderate to High	None	None	Low	None
Stockport Flats WMA	Stockport	1.8	No (FC)	High	None	None	Low	None
Stockport Flats National Estuarine Research Reserve	Stockport	1.4	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Moderate	None
Vosburgh Swamp WMA	Athens, Coxsackie	2.7	No (FC)	Moderate to High	None	None	Low	None
6. National Natural Landmarks (None)								
7. The National Park System, Recreation Areas, Seashores, Forests (None other than those listed under 1. National Register properties)								
8. Rivers designated as National or State Wild, Scenic or Recreational (None)								
9. A site, area, lake, reservoir, or highway designated or eligible for designation as scenic								
County Route 61	Coxsackie	2.1	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
NY Route 9J	Stuyvesant	1.3	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
NY Route 385	Coxsackie	2.5	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
NY Route 9J	Stockport	0.9	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Taconic State Parkway	Columbia / Dutchess Counties	1.5	No (FC)	High/ Moderate	None	None	Low	None
10. Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance								

Table 5-4: Summary of NYSDEC Aesthetic Resources

Place	Location	Distance (miles)	Visibility	Scenic Quality Rating	Contrast	Scenic Quality Impact	User Concern Impact	Overall Visual Impact
Columbia - Greene North SASS	Athens, Coeymans, Coxsackie, Greenport, New Baltimore, Schodack, Stockport, Stuyvesant	Project Crosses within SASS, Ridge Road	Yes (Stuyvesant Farms subunit only)	Moderate	Low	Moderate-Low	Moderate	Low to Moderate
11. A State or federally designated trail, or one proposed for designation								
Albany-Hudson Electric Trail (under construction)	Stockport	Crosses	Yes	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate (anticipated)	Low at crossing
12. Adirondack Park Scenic Vistas (Not applicable)								
13. State Nature and Historic Preserve Areas								
Hannacroix Unique Area	New Baltimore	1.6	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Moderate	None
Middle Ground Flats Unique Area	Athens	2.5	No (FC)	High	None	None	Moderate	None
Nutten Hook State Unique Area	Stuyvesant	1.6	No (FC)	High	None	None	Moderate	None
Van Schaak Unique Area	New Baltimore	2.0	No (FC)	Moderate to High	None	None	Moderate	None
14. Palisades Park (Not applicable)								
15. Bond Act Properties purchased under Exceptional Beauty or Open Space category (<i>purchased under Exceptional Beauty category</i>) (None)								
(16. National Heritage Areas: In 2018 DRAFT Update to NYSDEC Program Policy)								
Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area		Entire Project within area	Yes	High/Moderate /Low	Low	Moderate-Low	Moderate	Low to Moderate

5.2 Impacts on Local Resources

Table 5-5 summarizes the potential visual impacts to local resources. The table is based upon viewing distance, Project visibility, scenic quality ratings (Table 4-1), view sensitivity (Table 4-2), and overall Project impacts (Table 4-3), which are derived from viewshed analyses, contrast rating forms, visual simulations, and computer model overlays. The determination of Overall Visual Impacts reflects the visual impacts to both scenic quality and viewers. Aesthetic resources with potential views of the Project are indicated with a light purple background.

In the Visibility column a ‘Yes’ indicates that there will be a view of the Project, as confirmed in the field. A ‘No (FC)’ indicates the preliminary viewshed analysis determined that there may be a view of the Project, but the fieldcheck (FC) determined that there will be no visibility. An asterisk (*) indicates the viewshed analysis determined that there may be a view of the project from open fields, but any visibility would be greatly diminished by the effects of distance. The Project crosses over Claverack Creek in a location that is

not eligible for listing as a State Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River. An existing substation is located adjacent to Wappinger Creek, in an area that is not eligible for listing as a State Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River.

Table 5-5: Summary of Local Aesthetic Resources

Place	Location	Distance (miles)	Visibility	Scenic Quality Rating	Contrast	Scenic Quality Impact	User Concern Impact	Overall Visual Impact
Coxsackie Boat Launch at Riverside Park	Coxsackie	2.3	No (FC)	High	None	None	Low	None
Lafayetteville Multiple Use Area	Milan	2.9	No (FC)	Low	None	None	Low	None
New Baltimore Forest Preserve Detached Parcel	New Baltimore, Coxsackie	2.8	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Roeliff Janskill Multiple Use Area	Milan	2.9	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Greenport Town Park	Greenport	1.5	No (FC)	High	None	None	Low	None
Harrier Hill Park	Stockport	1.8	No (FC)	High	None	None	Moderate	None
Taghkanic Creek	Livingston	0	Yes (Crosses)	Moderate	Low	Low to Moderate	Moderate	Low
Claverack Creek	Claverack	0	Yes (crosses)	Moderate	Low	Low to Moderate	Moderate	Low
Cady Recreation Park	Pleasant Valley	0.2	Yes (adjacent to Pl Valley Subs)	Low	Low	Low to Moderate	Low	Low
Wappinger Creek	Dutchess County	0.1	No	Moderate	None	None	Moderate	None
Beck Park	Hyde Park	2.0	No	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Bower Park	Pleasant Valley	0.8	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Greenfields Park	Hyde Park	2.0	No	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Helen Aldrich Park	Pleasant Valley	2.4	No	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Francis J. Mark Memorial Park	Clinton	0.4	No (FC)	High	None	None	Moderate	None
Milan Recreation Park	Milan	2.5	No	Low-Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Livingston Recreation Park	Livingston	0.5	No	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
South Bay Creek	Hudson	2.6	No	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
7th Street Park	Hudson	2.3	No (FC)	Low	None	None	Low	None
Oakdale Park	Hudson	1.5	No	Low	None	None	Low	None
Greenport Conservation Area	Greenport	1.5	Yes*	Low to Moderate	None	None	Low	None

Table 5-5: Summary of Local Aesthetic Resources

Place	Location	Distance (miles)	Visibility	Scenic Quality Rating	Contrast	Scenic Quality Impact	User Concern Impact	Overall Visual Impact
Four Mile Point Preserve	Coxsackie	2.4	No	High	None	None	Low	None
McQuade Park	Coxsackie	2.9	No	Low-Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Village Playground	Kinderhook	2.1	No (FC)	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Mills Park	Kinderhook	2.4	No	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Mosher Park	Coeymans	3.0	No	Moderate	None	None	Low	None
West Ghent Recreation Facility	Ghent	1.7	No (FC)	Low to Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Arthur Masten Sr. Memorial Park	Stockport	0.8	No (FC)	Low to Moderate	None	None	Low	None
Columbia Golf and Country Club	Claverack	1.8	No	Moderate	None	Low to Moderate	Low	None
Red Hook Golf Club	Red Hook	1.2	Yes*	Moderate	Low	Low to Moderate	Low	None

5.3 Summary of Visual Impacts by Project Section

Potential visual impacts are discussed below by each of the four Project sections. The narrative focuses on differences in Project engineering that change throughout the length of the Project and result in varying degrees of visual impact

5.3.1 Project Section 1: Knickerbocker to Churchtown

The Knickerbocker to Churchtown Section includes the replacement of existing 115 kV lattice structures with galvanized monopole structures with double circuit 115 kV and 345 kV transmission lines. On average the new structures will be approximately 10 feet taller than the existing structures. The typical ROW in Section 1 is 125 feet in width. Throughout most of its length, the existing cleared ROW will remain at 125 feet. In the 5.3-mile section north of Churchtown, the cleared ROW currently ranges from 90.5 feet to 125 feet in width; this will be increased by up to 34.5 feet in limited locations to bring the total cleared width up to 125 feet.

Potential visibility from three locations within Project Section 1 were evaluated: (1) CNG-SASS in the Towns of Stuyvesant, Stockport, and Greenport, Columbia County; (2) Muitzeskill Road in the Town of Schodack, Rensselaer County; and (3) County Road 26A in the Town of Stuyvesant, Columbia County.

Columbia-Greene North Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

Five viewpoints were used in the visual impact analysis for the CNG-SASS subunit, including points in Stuyvesant on Ridge Road (at the Project crossing and parallel to Project corridor) and New York State Route 9J Scenic Byway; points in Stockport at Arthur Masten Sr. Memorial Park and Stockport Flats Wildlife Management Area (with adjacent Harrier Hill Park), and the Greenport Town Park in Greenport. The existing transmission line is screened by vegetation from all viewpoints except for Ridge Road, which is located on

the eastern edge of the CNG-SASS. The Project will be screened from New York State Route 9J Scenic Byway, Arthur Masten Sr. Memorial Park, Stockport Flats Wildlife Management Area, and the Greenport Town Park by intervening vegetation.

The Project will be equally visible as the existing transmission line from Ridge Road at the crossings and along the 1.7-mile section running parallel and located 0.25 mile east of the Project. With a speed limit of 45 mph, the duration of exposure is approximately 2.3 minutes. The scenic quality of the views from Ridge Road are rated as moderate due to the pastoral landscape quality, minimal variation in topography, diversity in vegetation patterns, and presence of man-made structures (including the existing transmission line) that detract from the overall scenic quality. The level of Project contrast is rated as Low because the new structures will be of a similar scale, height, color, and location as the existing transmission line. The monopole structure will be of a simpler line and form than the existing lattice structures. The resulting Scenic Quality Impact is rated Moderate-to-Low. Because the Project is located within the foreground (0-0.5 mile) of Ridge Road and the CNG-SASS and the level of contrast is rated Low, the user sensitivity level/user concern was rated Moderate. The overall visual impact of the Project from Ridge Road within the CNG-SASS is rated as Low-Moderate and is consistent with what is there today.

Knickerbocker Switching Station on Muitzeskill Road in Schodack (See Figure 4.4-3, Photosimulation 1)

The Knickerbocker Switching Station will be located approximately 2.0 miles east of the Hudson River, 800 feet south of the Governor Thomas E. Dewey Thruway, and 325 feet east of Muitzeskill Road in Schodack, Rensselaer County. There is one existing 345 kV transmission line and two 115kV transmission lines in proximity to the new switching station location. The switching station will occupy approximately 8.5 acres and will be located wholly on a utility-owned site.

The scenic quality of Muitzeskill Road is rated Low due to the common patterns of rural development, the presence of the existing transmission lines, and proximity to the New York Thruway and a railroad line. The level of contrast is rated as Moderate because the proposed switching station is sited within the existing 345 kV transmission line ROW and the switching station components will be similar in color, line, and form to the existing transmission line structures located in the field west of the switching station site. However, the density of components will be increased in comparison to existing conditions. The Scenic Quality Impacts rating is Moderate-to-Low. Because the Project is located within the foreground (0-0.5 mile) of the road and the level of contrast is rated Moderate, the user sensitivity level/user concern was rated Moderate-to-High. The overall visual impacts of the Project from Muitzeskill Road is rated as Low-Moderate and is consistent with what is there today.

County Road 26A (See Figure 4.4-3, Photosimulation 2)

County Road 26A runs generally west/east through the Town of Stuyvesant, Columbia County between New York State Routes 9J and 9. The land use pattern along this road is low density rural residential with open agricultural fields ranging from 30 acres to 100+ acres in size. The road has gentle horizontal curves and average travel speeds in excess of 45 mph. The existing transmission line is visible for 0.25-0.5 mile over the open fields when approaching the crossing from either direction. The scenic quality is rated Low due to the common patterns of rural development. The level of contrast is rated Low because the new structures will be similar in scale, height (typically 10 feet taller or less), color, and location as the existing transmission line. The monopole structures will be of a simpler line and form than the existing lattice structures. The resulting Scenic Quality Impacts is rated Low. Because the Project is located within the foreground (0-0.5 mile) of the road and the level of contrast is rated Low, the user sensitivity level/user concern was rated Moderate. The overall visual impact from County Road 26A is rated Low and is consistent with what is there today.

Relatedly, most of the road crossings in this Project section have similar overall visual impact ratings of Low-to-Moderate where open agricultural fields are adjacent to the existing and proposed crossing. Exceptions are the crossings of higher traffic volume roads US Highway 9 in the Town of Stockport and Route 23B in the Town of Claverack, where the Project corridor is adjacent to mixed-use commercial and industrial development and vegetation along the roads limits views to within the crossing itself. In these locations, the overall visual impact rating is Low and is consistent with what is there today.

5.3.2 Project Section 2: Churchtown to Pleasant Valley

ROW widths within Section 2 vary from 125 feet just south of Churchtown to 400 feet in a 6-mile segment at the midpoint between Churchtown and Pleasant Valley. In most locations, the cleared width will remain the same. Refer to the cross-sections in Exhibit 5 for further details. The exceptions are the two segments north (3.9 miles) and south (5.4 miles) of the Blue Store Tap, where the clearing will increase by up to 12.5 feet to achieve a 150-foot ROW. Additionally, a 0.7-mile segment at the very southern end in Pleasant Valley will also be cleared up to an additional 12.5 feet to bring the total cleared width up to 250 feet.

Potential visibility from three locations within Project Section 2 were evaluated: the Churchtown Switching Station; State Highway 82; and, State Highway 199.

Churchtown Switching Station (Orchard Road, See Figure 4.4-3, Photosimulation 3)

The existing Churchtown Switching Station located approximately 500 feet south of Schoolhouse Road and Route 23 and 250 feet north of Orchard Road in Claverack will be rebuilt and expanded within the existing ROW. The existing transmission lines connecting to the switching station will be rebuilt. The existing 1.0 acre substation is visible from Orchard Road and the access road to the Claverack Highway Garage Facility. The existing switching station is not visible from Schoolhouse Road and Route 23 due to intervening vegetation. The proposed substation will be approximately 2.0 acres in size and accessed from Orchard Road within the existing access road.

The scenic quality of Orchard Road is rated Low due to the common patterns of rural development, and the presence of existing transmission lines. The level of contrast is rated Low because the existing switching station is being rebuilt and enlarged in same area and the proposed components will be similar in color, line, and form to the existing switching station. The Scenic Quality Impact rating is Low. Because the Project will be located within the foreground (0-0.5 mile) of Orchard Road and the level of contrast was rated Low, the user sensitivity level/user concern was rated Moderate (see Table 4.4-2). The overall visual impact of the rebuilt Churchtown Switching Station from Orchard Road is rated Low.

Highway 82 (See Figure 4.4-3, Photosimulation 4)

State Highway 82 traverses the Towns of Greenport, Livingston, and Taghkanic, Columbia County, within the Project's study area from the Rip Van Winkle Bridge to the Taconic State Parkway. The land use pattern along this highway is low density rural residential with open agricultural fields and occasional commercial businesses. The existing ROW crossing contains four 115 kV transmission lines mounted on two side-by-side double circuit lattice structures, approximately 80 feet in height. The existing transmission lines are highly visible over the open fields when approaching the ROW crossing heading southbound but are more filtered through roadside vegetation when heading north. All of the existing 115 kV transmission structures

will be removed and replaced with galvanized steel monopole structures that will support the Transmission Line. Three of the existing 115 kV transmission lines are proposed to be permanently removed. The new structures will be approximately 10 feet taller than the existing structures on average. The cleared ROW width will remain the same and the net result will be fewer overall structures and transmission lines within the Project's ROW.

The scenic quality is rated Low due to the common patterns of rural development, commercial development, and the presence of two sets of existing lattice transmission structures. The level of contrast is rated Low because there will be a substantial reduction in the number of structures and lines and the proposed monopole structures will be of a similar scale, height, color, and location as the existing lattice structures. The lines and forms of the proposed monopole structures will be a simpler than the existing lattice structures. The resulting Scenic Quality Impact is rated Low. Because the Project is located within the foreground (0-0.5 mile) of the road and the level of contrast is rated Low, the user sensitivity level/user concern was rated Moderate.

The overall visual impact of the Project at the Highway 82 crossing is rated Low and is consistent with what is there today

State Highway 199 (See Figure 4.4-3, Photosimulation 5)

State Highway 199 traverses the Towns of Red Hook and Milan, Dutchess County, within the Project's study area. Land uses along the highway surrounding the existing transmission lines include low density and suburban residential, agriculture (orchards), and scattered commercial development. Highway 199 is a high-volume road with travel speeds in excess of 45 mph. The existing utility ROW crossing contains two 345 kV transmission lines on steel lattice structures (approximately 100 feet in height) and four existing 115 kV transmission lines located on steel lattice structures (approximately 80 feet in height), with two lines mounted on each of the two 115 kV transmission structures. All of the 115 kV transmission structures are proposed to be removed and replaced with galvanized steel monopole structures approximately 100 feet in height that will support a new double-circuited 345/115 kV transmission line and one 115 kV transmission line. Three of the existing 115 kV transmission lines will be permanently removed. The two existing 345 kV transmission lines and associated structures are not part of the Project and will remain. The cleared ROW width will remain the same and the net result will be fewer overall structures and transmission lines within the ROW.

The scenic quality is rated Low due to the common pattern of rural development and the presence of four existing transmission lines. The level of contrast is rated Low because there will be a reduction in the number of structures and lines and the proposed structures will be of a similar scale, height, color, and location as the existing transmission line structures that will remain. The resulting Scenic Quality Impacts is rated Low. Because the Project is located within the foreground (0-0.5 mile) of the road and the level of contrast was rated low, the user sensitivity level/user concern is rated Moderate.

The overall visual impact from Highway 199 is rated Low and is consistent with what is there today.

5.3.3 Project Section 3: Blue Stores Tap Line

The 2.2-mile Blue Stores Tap, in the Town of Livingston, Columbia County, will be rebuilt from the Blue Stores Substation east of Route 9 to the Project ROW. The land use surrounding the existing substation is village residential at the intersection of Route 9, Bingham Mill Road, Route 8, and Route 31. This section of New York State Route 9 is a designated New York State Bicycle Route and runs along the majority of the study area within Columbia and Dutchess Counties. One of the ROW's two existing 115 kV transmission

lines, supported by wooden H-frames structures, will be replaced with new 115 kV transmission line H-frame structures. The cleared ROW will remain at 100 feet throughout this segment.

The scenic quality of Segment 3 of the Project is rated as Moderate due to the patterns of village residential development, the designation of Route 9 as a State Bicycle Route, and the presence of the substation and two existing transmission lines within the 125-foot-wide ROW. The level of contrast is rated as Low because the proposed structures will be a similar scale, height, and location as the existing transmission line structures to remain. The resulting Scenic Quality Impact is rated as Moderate-to-Low. Because the Project is located within the foreground (0-0.5 mile) of the road and the level of contrast is rated as Low, the user sensitivity level/user concern was rated as Moderate.

The overall visual impact from Highway 9 is rated Low-to-Moderate and is consistent with what is there today.

5.3.4 Project Segment 4: Pleasant Valley to Van Wagner

The ~~two Project's~~ 345 kV electric transmission line circuits will connect the existing 345 kV Pleasant Valley Substation to the proposed Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station site, located 0.8 mile northwest of the substation and east of Van Wagner Road in the Town of Pleasant Valley, Dutchess County. The capacitor bank site is located entirely ~~within an~~ existing utility-~~owned land-ROW~~, including an area currently managed as mixed woodlands. Approximately 1.7 acres of tree clearing will be required to install the station and the access road off Van Wagner Road. A driveway will be constructed on the east side of Van Wagner Road south of the transmission line corridor to provide construction/maintenance access to the station. The driveway will remove approximately 100 feet of mixed woodland where it intersects the road. Two strips of trees and understory vegetation will remain along Van Wagner Road: and a strip approximately 45 feet deep by 130 feet along Van Wagner Road to the north of the driveway; and a strip approximately 45 feet deep by 125 feet along Van Wagner Road south of the driveway. Approximately 25 feet of existing vegetation will be maintained between the substation and Van Wagner Road. Non-capable vegetation will be maintained within the transmission line corridor.

Land uses surrounding the capacitor bank site include a horse farm and village and suburban residential development. The Joseph D'Aquanni West Road School is located approximately 1,800 feet northeast of the Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station site. Existing transmission line structures are currently visible from sports fields south of the school building. The proposed capacitor bank site will likely be screened by existing vegetation from the sports fields, but the ~~rebuilt~~ 345 kV structures approaching and leaving the new Capacitor Bank Station may be visible at a distance of approximately 1,000 feet.

Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station (See Figure 4.4-3, Photosimulation 6)

The scenic quality of the Project in Segment 4 is rated as Moderate due to the patterns of village residential development, the distant views toward low hills, and the presence of the two existing transmission lines. The level of contrast is rated Moderate. The proposed Van Wagner Capacitor Bank Station represents an intensification of the transmission infrastructure at this location. The resulting Scenic Quality Impacts is rated Moderate. Because the Project is located within the foreground (0-0.5 mile) of the road and the level of contrast was rated as moderate; the user sensitivity level/user concern is rated Moderate-High (*see* Table 4.2). The overall visual impact from Van Wagner Road is rated Moderate, ~~and is consistent with what is there today.~~

6.0 MITIGATION

No significant visual impacts were identified for the Project; therefore no mitigation measures are proposed. As may be required, mitigation measures will be developed during preparation of the EM&CP on a case-by-case basis in consultation with affected stakeholders to reduce impacts in specific locations.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Visual impact occurs when there is a detrimental effect on the perceived beauty of a place or structure. Significant visual impacts are those that may cause a diminishment of the public enjoyment and appreciation of an inventoried resource, or one that impairs the character or quality of such a place. Proposed large facilities by themselves should not be a trigger for a declaration of significance. Instead, a project by virtue of its siting in visual proximity to an inventoried resource may lead staff to conclude that there may be a significant impact.” (NYSDEC, 2019)

The Project will not have an unreasonable adverse visual impact on the three-mile study area on either side of the Project’s ROW. This conclusion is based upon an evaluation conducted in accordance with NYSDEC Visual Policy of (1) the potential contrasts that will result from the Project, (2) visual effects that it will have on scenic quality and aesthetic resources within three miles of the transmission line corridor, and (3) the effect of the view of the Project on viewers who will encounter the corridor. The overall aesthetic character and visual quality of the Project corridor will not be substantially altered by the Project.

The Project’s potential for adverse visual impacts has been significantly reduced by using an existing transmission line corridor that will require minimum additional clearing to accommodate the Project. This is a significant benefit when compared to the inevitable impacts that would result from siting the Project in a new transmission line corridor in a largely rural setting. In many locations, the Project may actually be seen as a visual benefit by reducing the number of visible structures and using a simpler monopole design to replace the more complex lattice structures.

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