Environmental Justice Technical Report

November 2016

Prepared for:

Federal Transit Administration and Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District

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Table of Contents

Figures

Tables

Appendices

Acronyms

ACS	American Community Survey
BMP	Best management practice
CMAP	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
CRP	Comprehensive Regional Plan
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EJ	Environmental Justice
EO	Executive Order
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
IHB	Indiana Harbor Belt
LOS	level of service
MED	Metra Electric District
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NICTD	Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District
NIRPC	Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission
NOI	Notice of Intent
NS	Norfolk Southern
ROW	Right-of-way
SSL	South Shore Line
US	United States
USDHHS	United States Department of Health and Human Services
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
VMT	vehicle miles traveled

1. INTRODUCTION

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) are conducting the environmental review process for the West Lake Corridor Project (Project) in Lake County, Indiana, and Cook County, Illinois, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other regulatory requirements. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is being prepared as part of this process, with the FTA as the Federal Lead Agency and NICTD as the Local Project Sponsor responsible for implementing the Project under NEPA.

1.1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to identify minority and low-income populations, or Environmental Justice (EJ) populations, within the Study Area and present the findings of an assessment to determine whether they would experience disproportionately high and adverse environmental impacts from the proposed Project. The potential for beneficial effects from the proposed Project is also assessed, and a discussion of avoidance and minimization strategies that may be needed to offset potential disproportionate impacts is presented. Finally, this report documents the manner in which EJ populations were ensured inclusion in the planning and project development process.

1.2 Project Overview

The environmental review process builds upon NICTD's prior West Lake Corridor studies that examined a broad range of alignments, technologies, and transit modes. The studies concluded that a rail-based service between the Munster/Dyer area and Metra's Millennium Station in downtown Chicago, shown on **Figure 1-1**, would best meet the transportation needs of the Northwest Indiana area. Thus, NICTD advanced a "Commuter Rail" Alternative for more detailed analysis in the DEIS. NEPA also requires consideration of a "No Build" Alternative to provide a basis for comparison to the Commuter Rail Alternative. In addition, a number of design variations are being considered related to alignment, stations, parking, and maintenance and storage facilities (see **Figure 1-2**).

1.2.1 No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative is defined as the existing transportation system, plus any committed transportation improvements included in the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission's (NIRPC) *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* (CRP) (NIRPC 2011) and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) *GO TO 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* (CMAP 2014) through the planning horizon year 2040. It also includes capacity improvements to the existing Metra Electric District's (MED) line and Millennium Station, documented in NICTD's *20-Year Strategic Business Plan* (NICTD 2014).

Figure 1-1 Regional Setting for West Lake Corridor Project

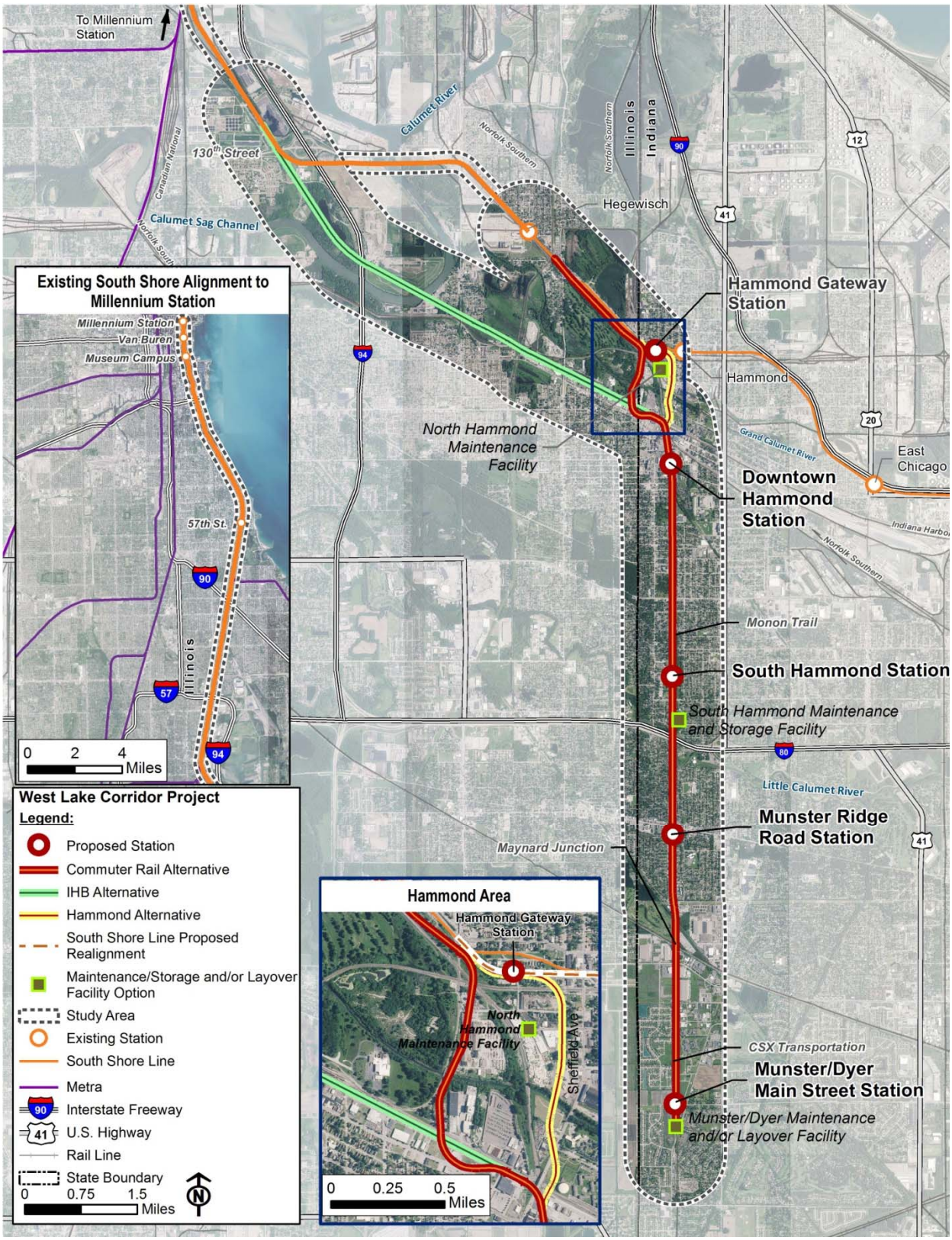

Figure 1-2 West Lake Corridor Project Study Area

1.2.2 Commuter Rail Alternative

The Commuter Rail Alternative would involve commuter rail service using electric-powered trains on an approximate 9-mile southern extension of NICTD's existing South Shore Line (SSL) between Dyer and Hammond, Indiana (see **Figures 1-2** and **1-3**). Heading north from the southern terminus near Main Street at the Munster/Dyer municipal boundary, the Project would include new track on a separate right-of-way (ROW) adjacent to, and east of, the CSX freight line in Munster. North of the proposed elevated crossing over another CSX freight line at the Maynard Junction, the proposed Commuter Rail Alternative alignment would use the publically-owned former Monon Railroad corridor in Munster and Hammond. North of downtown Hammond the track alignment would turn west under Hohman Avenue, and then continue north on new elevated track generally along the Indiana-Illinois state line to connect to the existing SSL southeast of the Hegewisch Station in Chicago. Project trains would operate on the existing MED line for their final 14 miles, terminating at Millennium Station in downtown Chicago. Station locations for the Commuter Rail Alternative would include Munster/Dyer Main Street, Munster Ridge Road, South Hammond, and Downtown Hammond.

Four design options to the Commuter Rail Alternative near the southern Project terminus include:

- **Commuter Rail Alternative Option 1**: Under this design variation, parking for the Munster/Dyer Main Street Station would be located on the east side of the station, and a vehicle maintenance and storage facility would be located south of 173rd Street in Hammond near the South Hammond Station. See **Figure 1-3**.
- **Commuter Rail Alternative Option 2**: Under this design variation, parking for the Munster/Dyer Main Street Station would be located on the west side of the existing CSX freight line. Main Street would be extended west from Sheffield Avenue using an underpass to cross the CSX railroad and Project ROW. The vehicle maintenance and storage facility would be located south of 173rd Street in Hammond near the South Hammond Station. See **Figure 1-3**.
- **Commuter Rail Alternative Option 3**: Under this design variation, the vehicle maintenance and storage facility would be located south of the Munster/Dyer Main Street Station, on the east side of the existing CSX freight line, at Munster/Dyer Main Street Station, instead of south of the South Hammond Station. Parking for the Munster/Dyer Main Street Station would be located on the east side of the station. See **Figure 1-3**.
- **Commuter Rail Alternative Option 4**: Under this design variation, the rail alignment would be routed above the existing CSX freight line at Maynard Junction, to land on the west side of the CSX freight line, and then continue south to the Munster/Dyer Main Street Station area. The Munster/Dyer Main Street Station and parking would be located west of the existing CSX freight line. A Main Street extension west under the CSX freight line and the Project ROW would be required. The vehicle maintenance and storage facility would be located south of 173rd Street in Hammond near the South Hammond Station. See **Figure 1-3**.

There are two design variations to the Commuter Rail Alternative related to the proposed alignment (i.e., the Indiana Harbor Belt [IHB] Alternative and the Hammond Alternative) as follows. See **Figures 1-4**, **1-5**, and **1-6**.

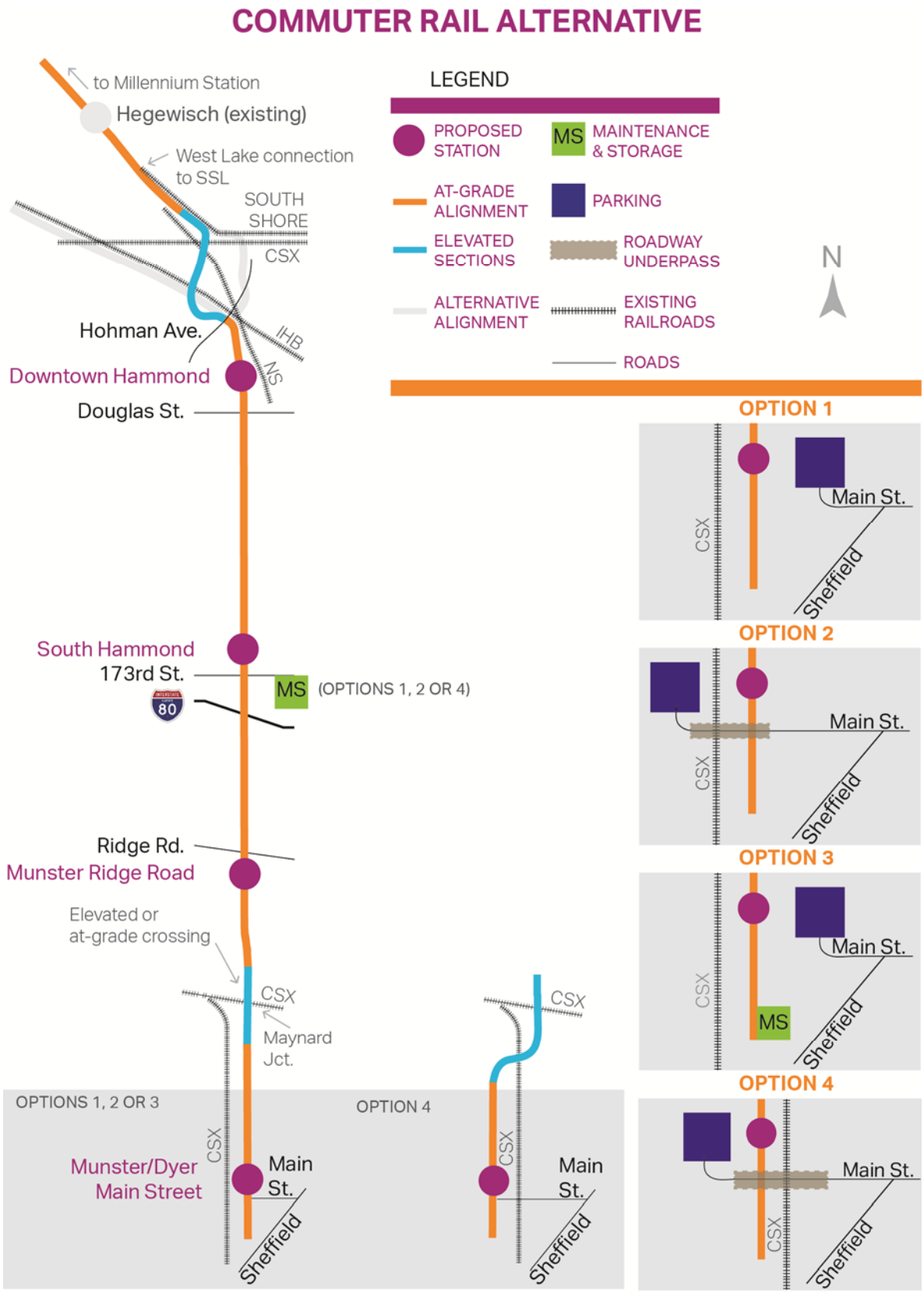

Figure 1-3 Commuter Rail Alternative Options

1.2.3 Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) Alternative

South of Douglas Street, the IHB Alternative duplicates the Commuter Rail Alternative Options described above. From downtown Hammond north of Douglas Street, the alignment of the IHB Alternative would turn west under Hohman Avenue in Hammond and would be constructed in the IHB freight line ROW west through Calumet City, Burnham, and Chicago, Illinois. West of Burnham Avenue, the IHB Alternative would bridge over the IHB and CSX freight lines, landing in the IHB Kensington Branch freight line ROW, and would include relocating and reconstructing the IHB freight line on a new adjacent track within the existing railroad ROW. The Project would then continue northwest to the proposed connection with the existing SSL near I-94 and 130th Street in Chicago. See **Figure 1-4**.

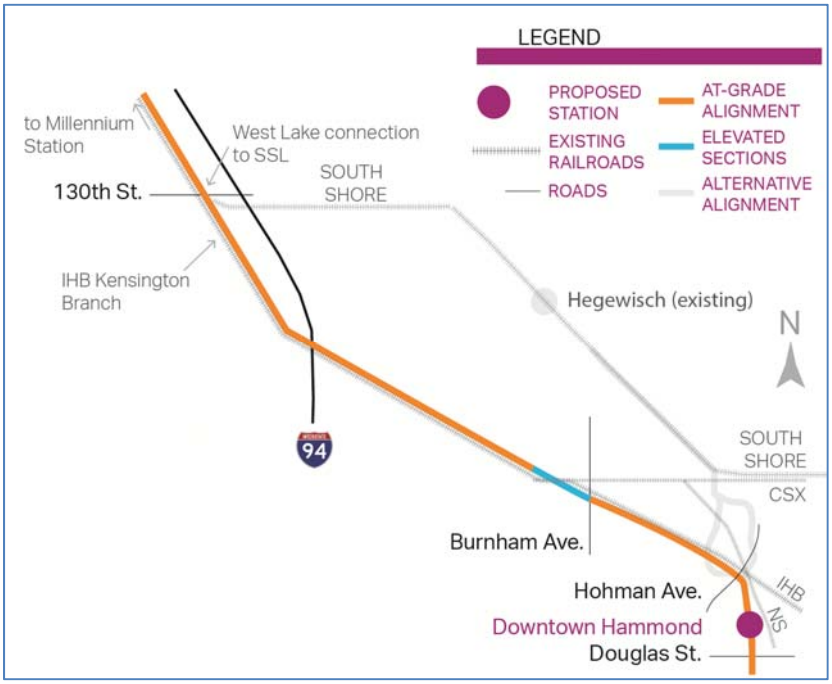

Figure 1-4 Indiana Harbor Belt Alternative

1.2.4 Hammond Alternative

South of Douglas Street, the Hammond Alternative is similar to the Commuter Rail Alternative described above. From downtown Hammond north of Douglas Street, the Hammond Alternative would extend north on embankment and bridges crossing over the IHB and Norfolk Southern freight lines immediately east of the Hohman Avenue overpass. The alignment would then extend northward and cross over Hohman Avenue just south of Michigan Street. The alignment would then continue north and west, crossing over the existing CSX freight line, and connecting with the existing SSL. See **Figure 1-5**.

Under the Hammond Alternative, the Hammond Gateway Station would be constructed in North Hammond and would replace the existing SSL Hammond Station (see **Figure 1-5**). The Hammond Alternative assumes the existing SSL track would be relocated between the existing SSL Hammond Station and the Indiana-Illinois state line to facilitate a passenger connection between the Project and the SSL at the Hammond Gateway Station on the Hammond Alternative. The alignments of both routes would be adjacent to one another at this location, allowing passengers to transfer at the combined station. During non-peak times, West Lake Corridor Project trains would operate as shuttles between Munster/Dyer Main Street Station and

Hammond Gateway Station, making connections with SSL service. **Figure 1-6** illustrates the SSL track relocation.

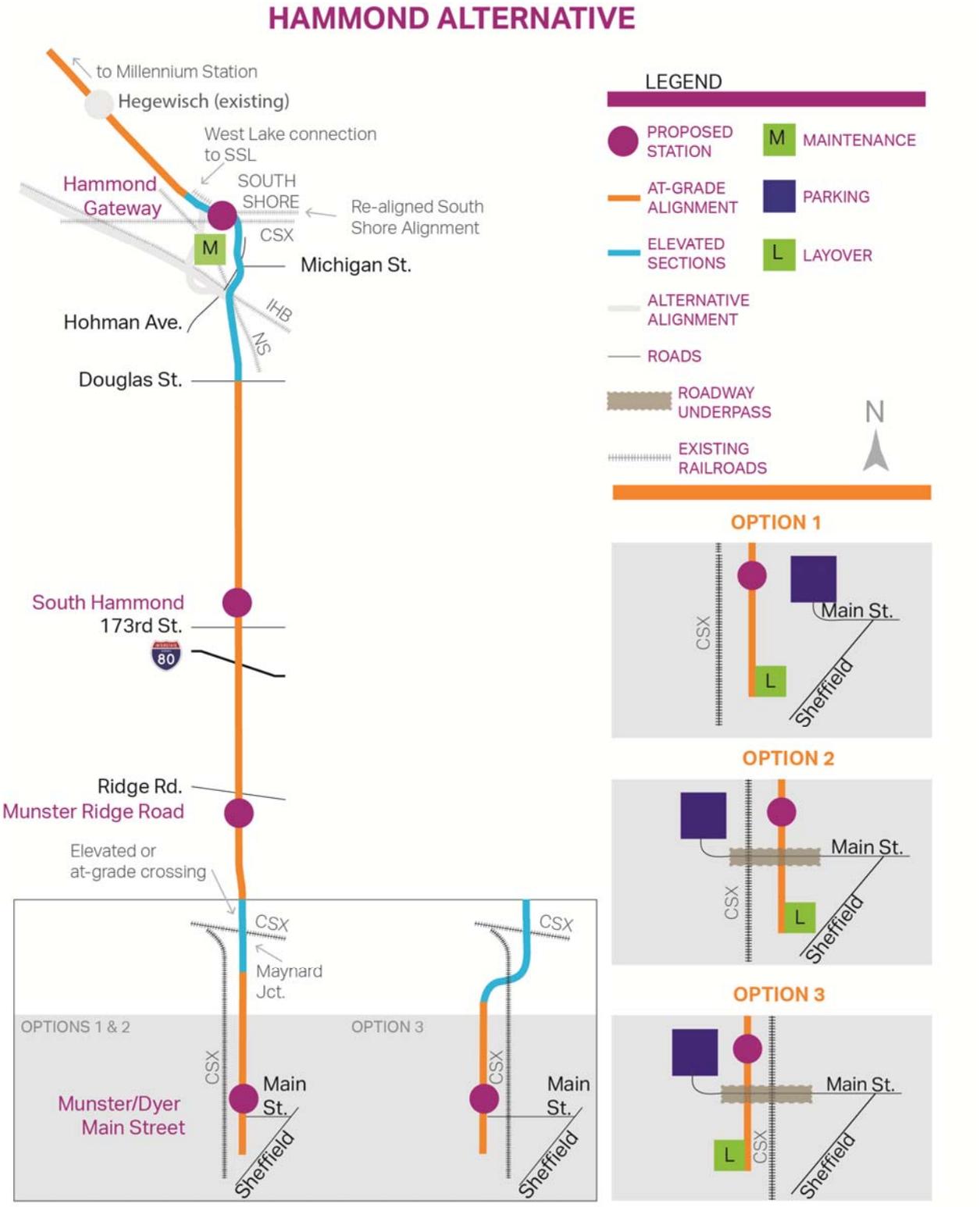

Figure 1-5 Hammond Alternative Options

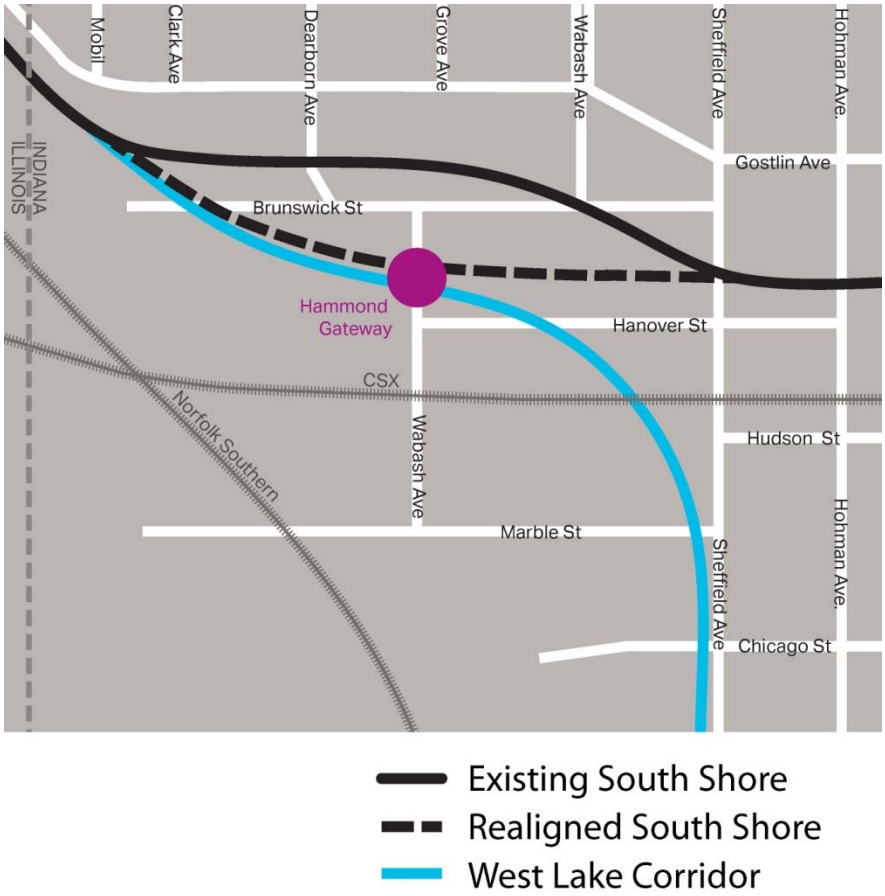

Figure 1-6 South Shore Line Proposed Realignment

A maintenance facility would be located immediately south of the Hammond Gateway Station. A separate layover facility at the southern end of the Project corridor, near the Munster/Dyer Main Street Station, would also be constructed, as shown on **Figure 1-5**. There are three design variations on how the layover facility, Munster/Dyer Main Street Station, and parking would be configured under the Hammond Alternative, as follows:

- **Hammond Alternative Option 1:** The Munster/Dyer Main Street Station, layover facility, and parking would be on the east side of the existing CSX freight line. See **Figure 1-5**.
- **Hammond Alternative Option 2:** The Munster/Dyer Main Street Station and layover facility would be on the east side of the existing CSX freight line, and the parking would be west of the CSX freight line. A Main Street extension west under the CSX freight line and Project ROW would be required. See **Figure 1-5**.
- **Hammond Alternative Option 3:** This option would require routing the Project above the existing CSX freight line at Maynard Junction, landing on the west side of the CSX freight line ROW, and continuing south to the Munster/Dyer Main Street area. The Munster/Dyer Main Street Station, layover facility, and parking would be located west of the existing CSX freight line. A Main Street extension west under the CSX freight line and the Project ROW would be required. See **Figure 1-5**.

1.2.5 Maynard Junction Rail Profile Option

One design variation is being considered for each Build Alternative—the Maynard Junction Rail Profile Option. Under this design variation, at Maynard Junction in Munster, the alignment would cross the existing CSX freight line in an at-grade profile instead of an elevated profile. The proposed alignment would remain east of the CSX freight line ROW for the Commuter Rail Alternative Options 1, 2, and 3 (see **Figure 1-3**), IHB Alternative Options 1, 2, and 3, and Hammond Alternative Options 1 and 2 (see **Figure 1-5**).

2. REGULATORY SETTING

Executive Order (EO) 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, was signed by President Clinton on April 11, 1994. This EO directs federal agencies to take appropriate and necessary steps to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse environmental effects of federal agency actions (including transportation projects) on minority and low-income populations (EJ populations). The following guidance documents were used to conduct this EJ analysis:

- **FTA Circular 4703.1, Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for Federal Transit Administration Recipients (United States Department of Transportation [USDOT] FTA 2012)**: Provides guidance for incorporating EJ principles into plans, projects, and activities receiving funding from FTA. The strategies developed under FTA Circular 4703.1 are intended to ensure that communities are provided the opportunity to offer input on the planning and design of a federal action, as well as effects and mitigation measures; and that disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income populations are appropriately addressed. FTA Circular 4703.1 also provides guidance on strategies to respond to the requirements of this act and ensure the needs of EJ persons are met, relative to access to information and opportunities to provide input for proposed federally-funded projects.
- **Updated Final Order on Environmental Justice, 5610.2(a) (USDOT 2012)**: Provides detailed procedures for identifying EJ populations and for determining disproportionately high and adverse effects to the targeted populations. It sets forth steps to prevent disproportionately high and adverse effects to minority or low-income populations through Title VI analysis and EJ analysis conducted as part of federal transportation and NEPA provisions. It also describes specific measures to be taken to address instances of disproportionately high and adverse effects.

3. METHODOLOGY

The following outlines the general methodology used to address EO 12898 in the Study Area. The process is based on guidance provided in FTA Circular 4703.1 (USDOT FTA 2012):

- Identify areas with minority and low-income populations (EJ populations) within the Study Area
- Identify the key issues for EJ populations
- Identify DEIS results for all populations without mitigation
- Identify DEIS results for all populations with mitigation
- Provide an overview of the efforts that NICTD has made to involve EJ populations in the Project's development
- Assess whether the Project Alternatives would result in disproportionately high and adverse environmental impacts to EJ populations, taking into consideration mitigation and enhancement measures and project benefits, as appropriate

Data Sources: The primary data source used for the identification of EJ populations was the United States (US) Census American Community Survey (ACS) five-year average data for 2009-2013. Other data sources were used to confirm the location of minority and low-income populations; these included information and data from CMAP and NIRPC.

Study Area: The Study Area for the EJ analysis includes the US Census block groups and tracts that are wholly or partially (i.e., 50 percent or more of the block group) within ½ mile on either side of the centerline of the proposed alignment, station areas, and maintenance facilities. The block group boundaries in the Study Area and along the existing MED/SSL are shown on **Figures 3-1** and **3-2**, respectively.

Identifying Minority, Low-Income Populations: The USDOT Updated Order on Environmental Justice (USDOT 2012) provides the following definitions for minority and low-income populations as addressed by EO 12898.

- **Minority Populations**: Any readily identifiable groups of minority persons who live in geographic proximity and, if circumstances warrant, geographically dispersed/transient persons (such as migrant workers or Native Americans) who would be similarly affected by a proposed USDOT program, policy, or activity. Minority includes persons who are American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African-American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander.
- **Low-Income Populations**: Any readily identifiable group of low-income persons whose household income is at or below the US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) poverty guidelines, and, if circumstances warrant, geographically dispersed/transient persons (such as migrant workers or Native Americans) who would be similarly affected by a proposed USDOT program, policy, or activity. USDHHS established poverty guidelines for 2013, which are presented in **Table 3-1**.

Table 3-1 2013 USDHHS Poverty Guidelines

Persons in Family/Household	Poverty Guideline
1	$11,490
2	$15,510
3	$19,530
4	$23,550
5	$27,570
6	$31,590
7	$35,610
8	$39,630

SOURCE: USDHHS 2013
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add $4,020 for each additional person.

Per the US Census, the average household size in the project Study Area is three persons per household; therefore, the poverty threshold for this analysis is approximately $11,500 annually (rounded threshold available in the ACS data). To identify all low-income populations, FTA Circular 4703 recommends including individuals whose family income is at or below 150 percent of the poverty line in addition to persons living below the poverty level (USDOT FTA 2012). Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis, low-income EJ populations also include those individuals with annual incomes of $17,200 or less.

Determining Potential for Disproportionately High and Adverse Impacts: The evaluation of the potential for disproportionately high and adverse environmental impacts to EJ populations considered the following factors relative to the Project Alternatives (i.e., considered the balance of effects once mitigation has been implemented) (USDOT FTA 2012):

- Increased traffic congestion and loss of safety
- Loss of availability of or access to community resources and services
- Loss of employment opportunities
- Displacement of people or homes
- Disruption of community cohesion caused by physical gaps or new barriers to interaction created within a community
- Environmental effects, such as exposure to noise, vibration, poor air quality, visual resources, or safety and security

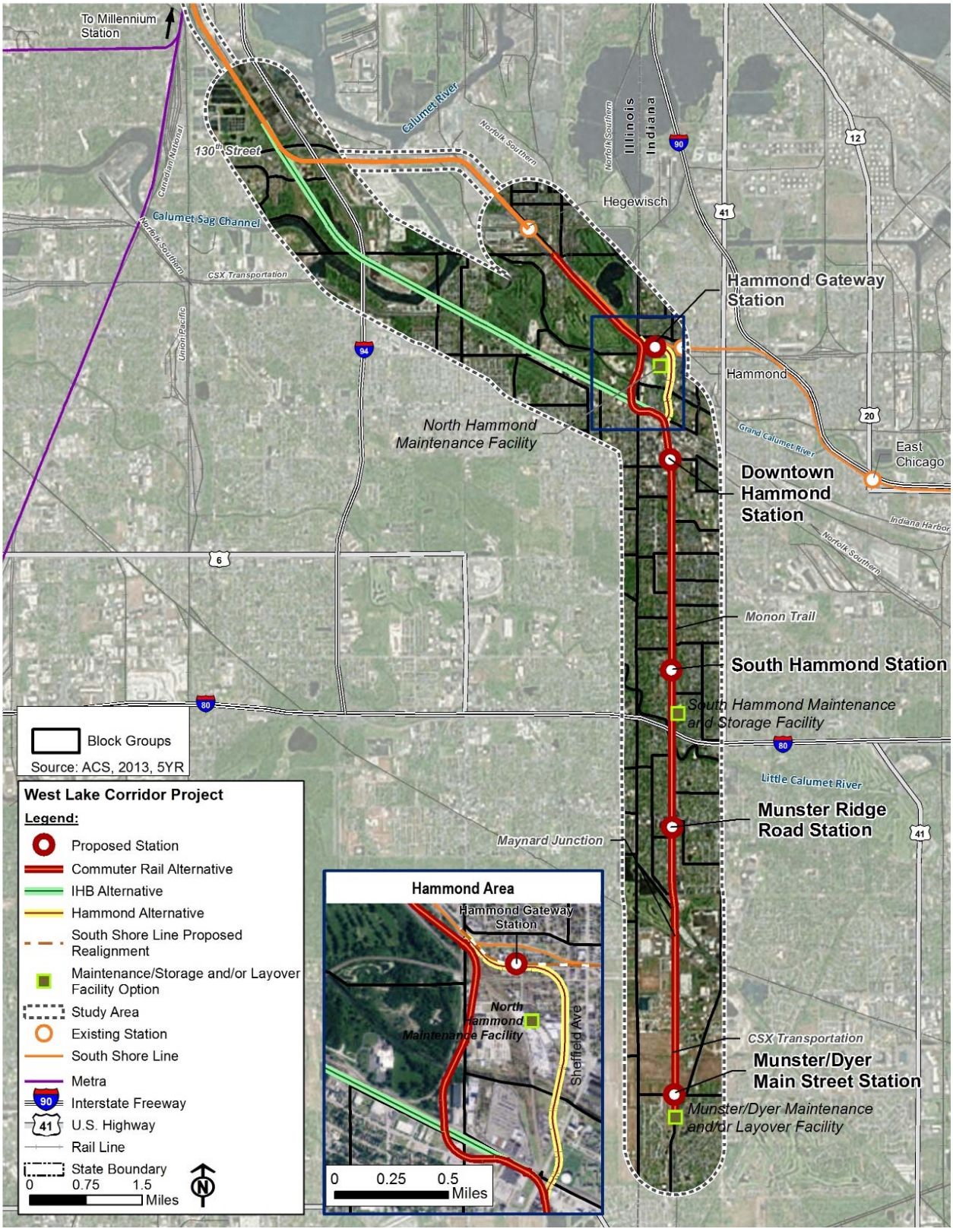

Figure 3-1 US Census Block Group Boundaries in the Study Area

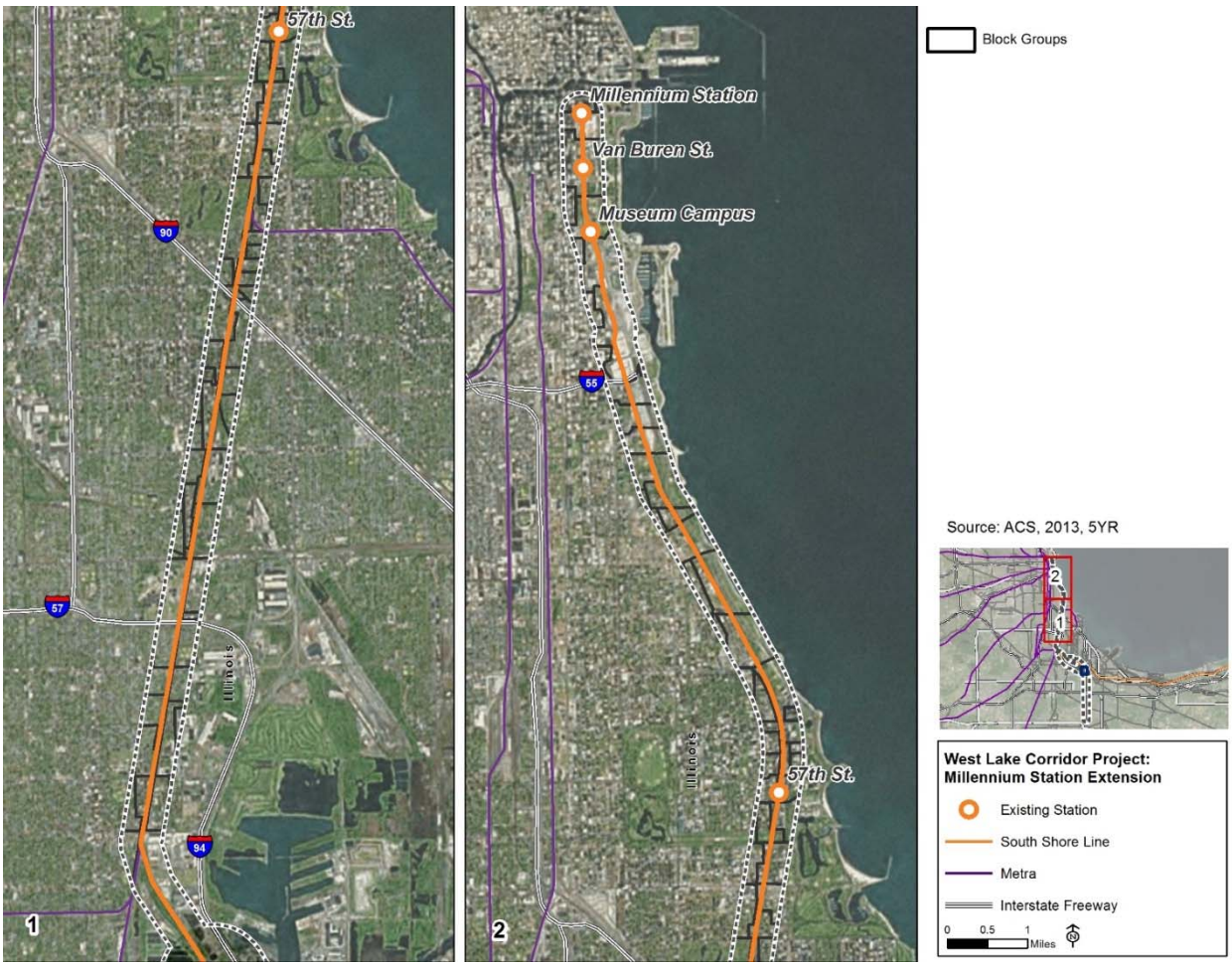

Figure 3-2 US Census Block Group Boundaries along the Existing MED/SSL

4. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Race and Ethnicity

Table 4-1 summarizes the percentage of minority populations in each Study Area jurisdiction along with several larger geographies for comparison purposes. A detailed listing of minority populations by block group is provided in **Appendix A**. **Figures 4-1** and **4-2** also show the distribution of minority populations in the Study Area and along the MED/SSL, respectively, at the more detailed block group level.

Table 4-1 indicates a 9 percent minority population located in the Study Area in Dyer, increasing to 47 percent minority in Hammond, and then rising to 82 percent along the existing City of Chicago MED/SSL portion of the Study Area. Minority populations are most concentrated in Hammond, along the proposed IHB alignment, and in the Cook County portion of the Study Area along the existing MED/SSL in Chicago.

Overall, the Study Area has a higher concentration of minority populations than either the NIRPC or CMAP regions as a whole. The data also indicate that the Study Area has a comparatively low level of ethnic diversity south of downtown Hammond and relatively high concentration north of there, with the exception of the neighborhood surrounding the Hegewisch Station.

Table 4-1 Race and Ethnicity in the Study Area

Study Area Geography	Total Population	White, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	African-American	Asian	American Indian/ Native Alaskan	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	Other	Minority
Dyer	14,886	86%	5%	3%	3%	0%	0%	1%	1%	9%
Hammond	23,737	49%	40%	26%	1%	1%	0%	4%	27%	47%
Munster	12,304	82%	9%	6%	9%	1%	0%	3%	6%	16%
Chicago West/IHB Portion	16,988	43%	27%	54%	0.5%	1%	0%	2%	4%	54%
Chicago MED/SSL Portion	125,841	15%	4%	76%	6%	0%	0%	2%	1%	82%
Cook County Portion	23,708	21%	16%	73%	1%	0%	0%	1%	6%	45%
Study Area Total	**221,323**	**30%**	**13%**	**56%**	**4%**	**1%**	**0%**	**2%**	**6%**	**67%**
NIRPC Region	770,951	66%	13%	28%	1%	1%	0%	2%	6%	34%
CMAP Region	8,432,516	63%	21%	23%	7%	1%	0%	2%	9%	37%
State of Illinois	12,859,995	77%	16%	14%	5%	0%	0%	2%	2%	27%
State of Indiana	6,619,680	86%	6%	9%	2%	0%	0%	2%	3%	15%

SOURCE: US Census Bureau, ACS 2009-2013

Note: Census data indicate that there are no Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders located in the Study Area, the regions, or states.

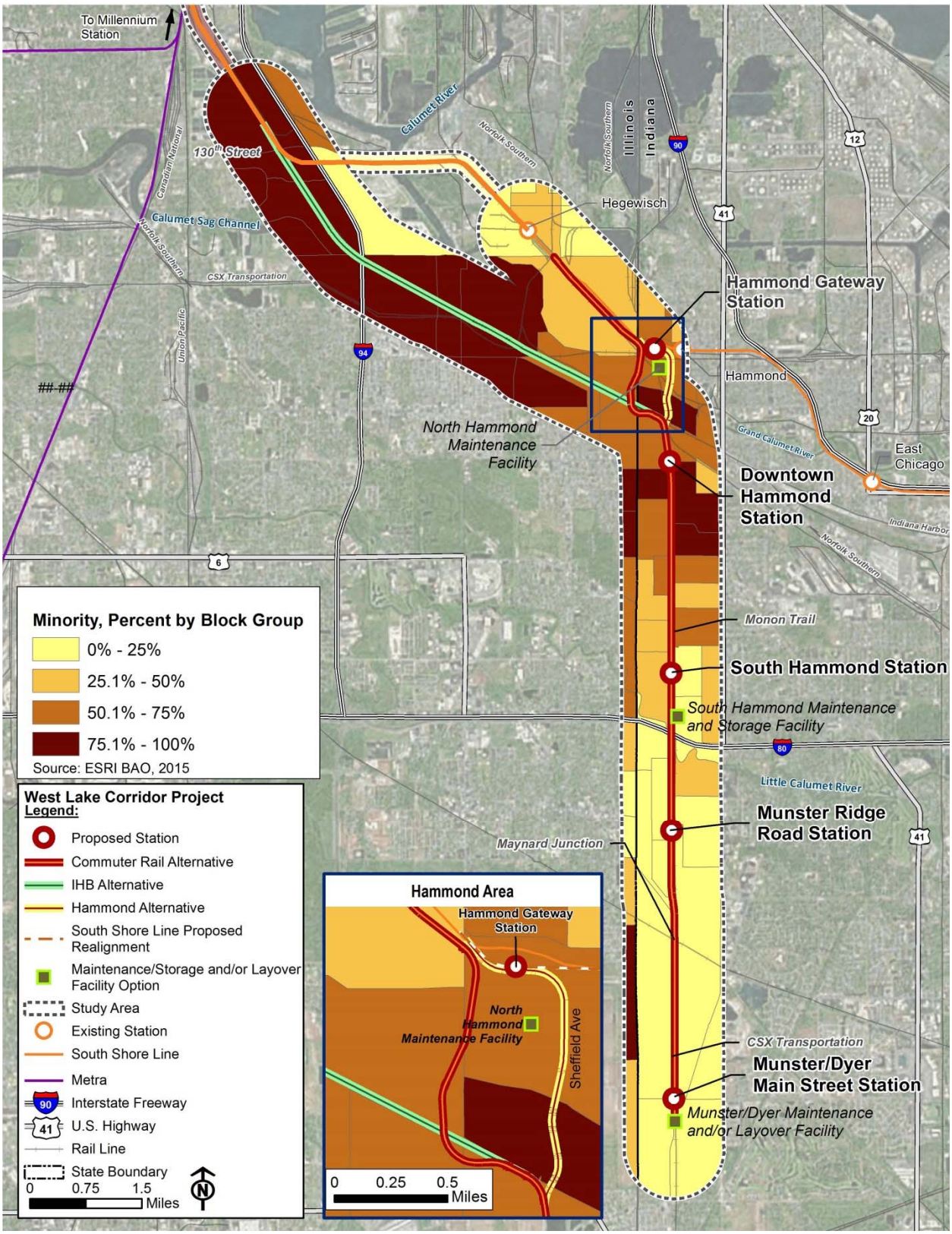

Figure 4-1 Minority Populations in the Study Area

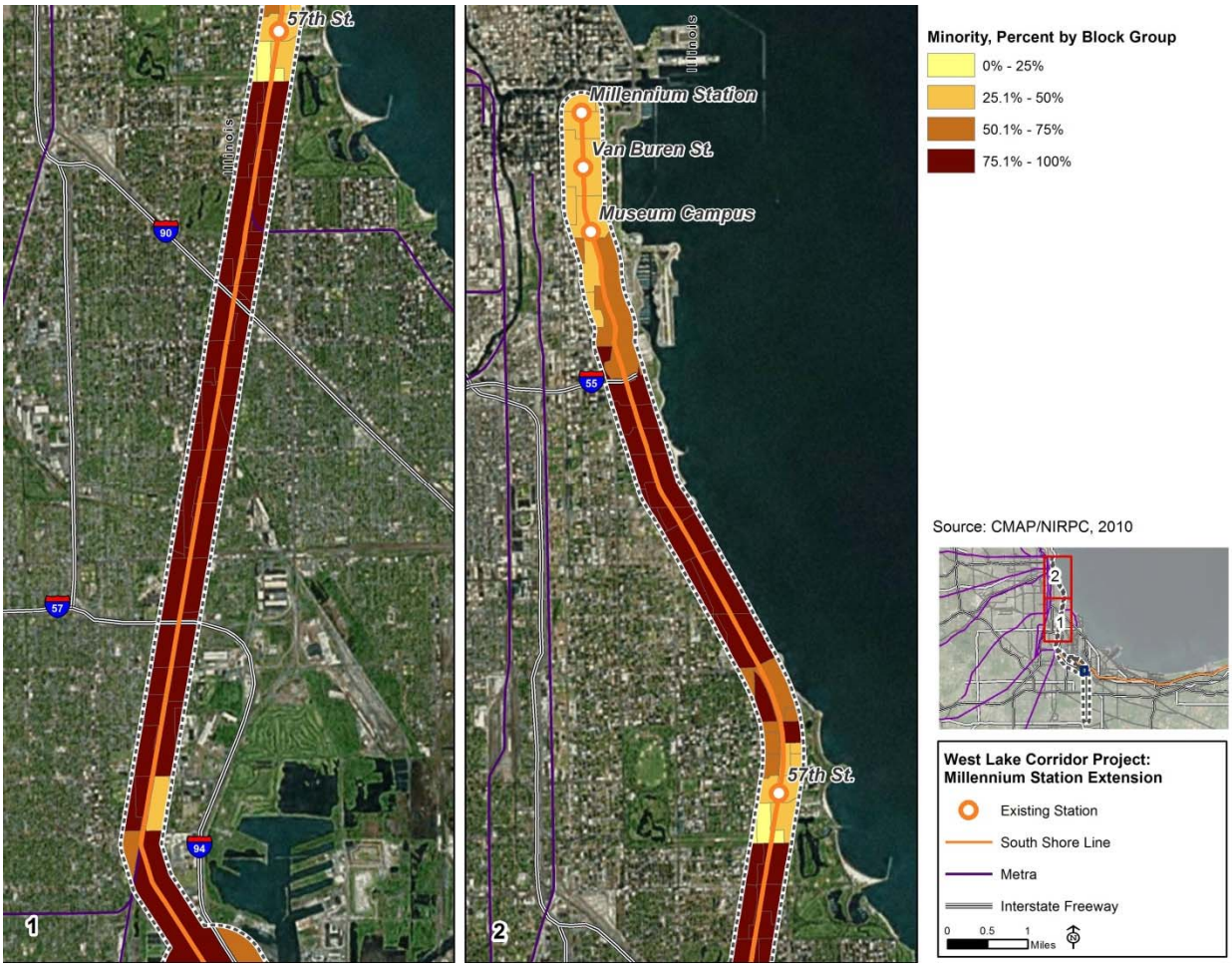

Figure 4-2 Minority Populations along the Existing MED/SSL

4.2 Income and Poverty

Table 4-2 summarizes populations living below the poverty level in the Study Area. A detailed listing of low-income populations by block group is provided in **Appendix A**. The lowest median household incomes and, therefore, higher poverty levels can be found in Hammond, along the proposed IHB Alternative alignment and along the existing MED/SSL in Chicago. The highest concentrations of low-income populations in the Study Area occur in three locations: (1) just north of downtown Hammond, (2) at the northern edge of the proposed IHB Alternative alignment, and (3) in large pockets along the MED/SSL portion of the Study Area. As a whole, the Study Area has a lower median income and higher poverty levels than the NIRPC and CMAP regions.

Table 4-2 Median Household Income and Poverty in the Study Area

Geography	Median Household Income	Percentage at or Below Poverty	Percentage at or Below 150% of Poverty
Dyer	$76,776	3.2%	5.6%
Hammond	$40,379	23.2%	39.2%
Munster	$82,367	6.8%	13.9%
Chicago West/IHB Portion	$50,133	23.0%	34.6%
Chicago MED/SSL Portion	$42,364	27.1%	36.3%
Cook County Portion	$59,140	17.5%	27.3%
Study Area Total	**$44,962**	**25.9%**	**36.5%**
NIRPC	$50,391	19.2%	29.5%
CMAP	$66,076	14.7%	23.5%
Illinois	$56,798	14.1%	22.8%
Indiana	$48,248	15.3%	24.9%

SOURCE: US Census Bureau, ACS 2009- 2013.

The data suggest that the Study Area contains a predominance of lower income people living in urban and suburban areas and in proximity to the existing MED/SSL. Higher income commuters are traveling to Chicago-area destinations from the more suburban parts of the Chicago metro area, which is common throughout the United States and in similar metro areas. **Figures 4-3** and **4-4** show the distribution of the population at or below the poverty level in the Study Area and along the existing MED/SSL, respectively. Figures **4-5** and **4-6** show the distribution of the population at or below 150 percent of the poverty line in the Study Area and along the existing MED/SSL, respectively.

4.3 Summary

In summary, the analysis of the demographic data indicates that:

- The majority of the Study Area includes US Census block groups with an EJ population consisting of either low-income populations, minority populations, or both.
- The occurrence of EJ populations generally increases from the southern end of the Study Area to its northern end. The exception is the Hegewisch neighborhood, which appears to be generally wealthier and less diverse than the Chicago neighborhoods that surround it and the rail corridor farther north.
- Low-income and minority populations in the Study Area are most concentrated in Hammond, along the northern end of the proposed IHB alignment in Chicago, and in extensive pockets along the existing MED/SSL portion of the Study Area.
- There is more poverty at the northern limits of the Study Area than in the remainder. The presence of households at 150 percent of the poverty level is the predominant income factor identifying low-income EJ concentrations for the majority of the Study Area.

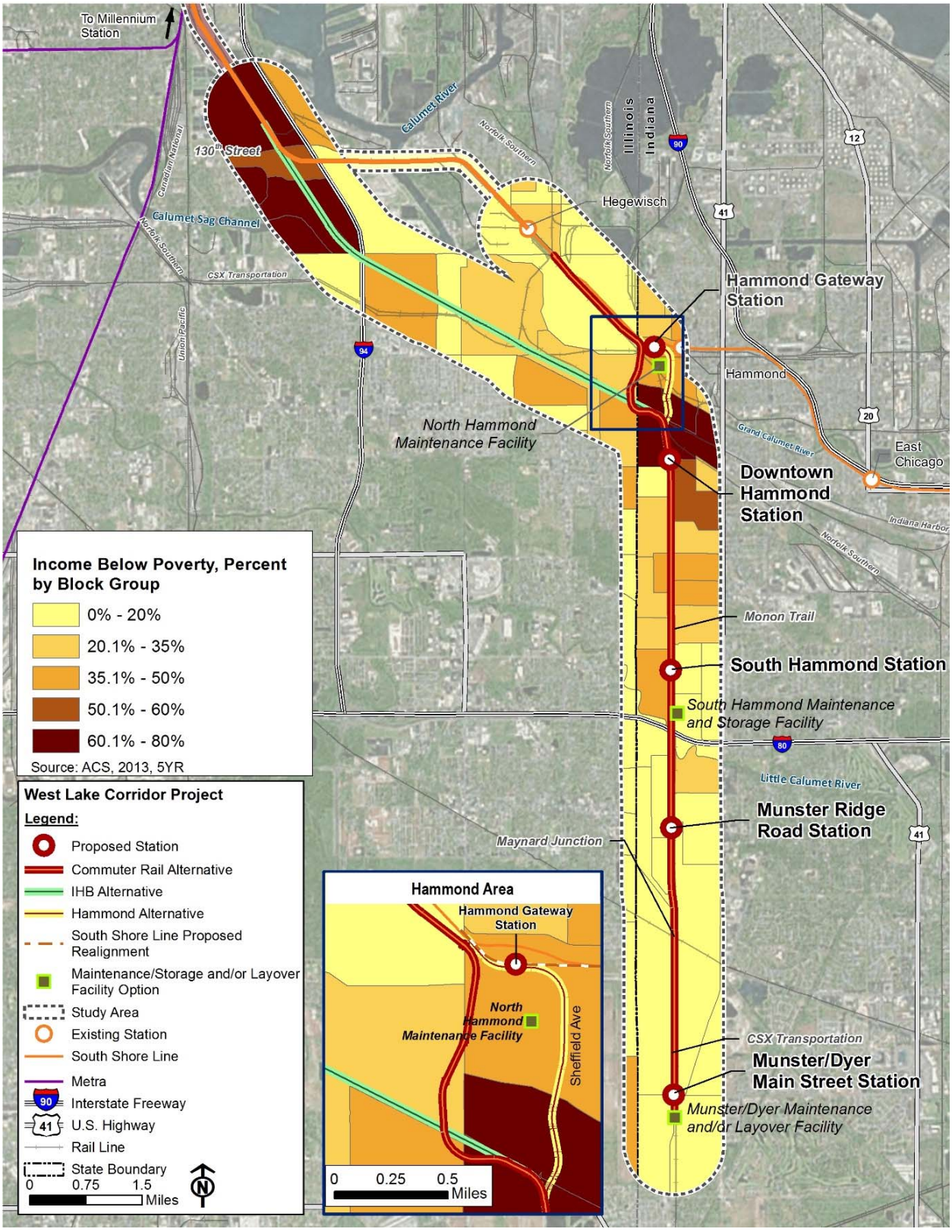

Figure 4-3 Populations below the Poverty Level in the Study Area

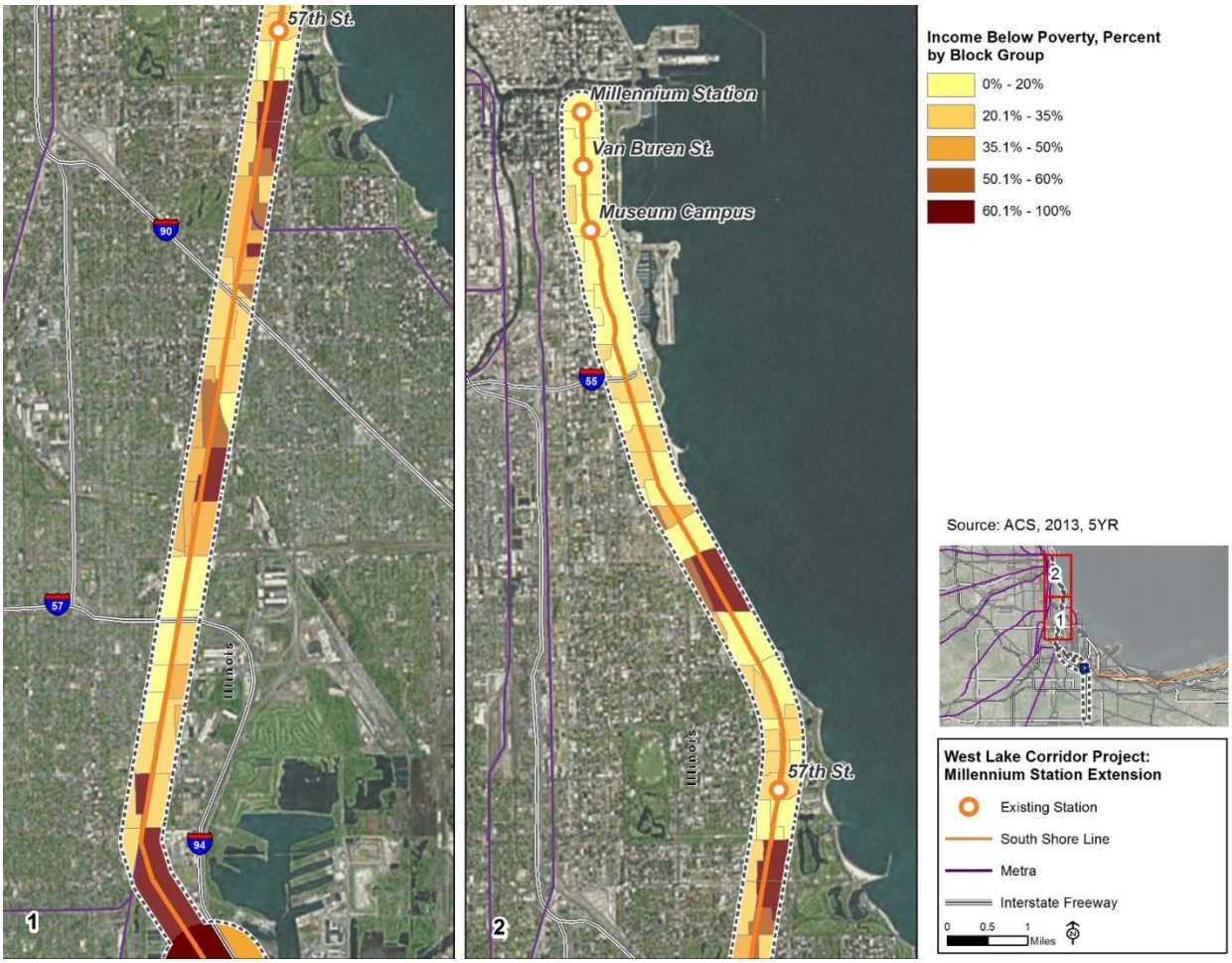

Figure 4-4 Populations below the Poverty Level along the Existing MED/SSL

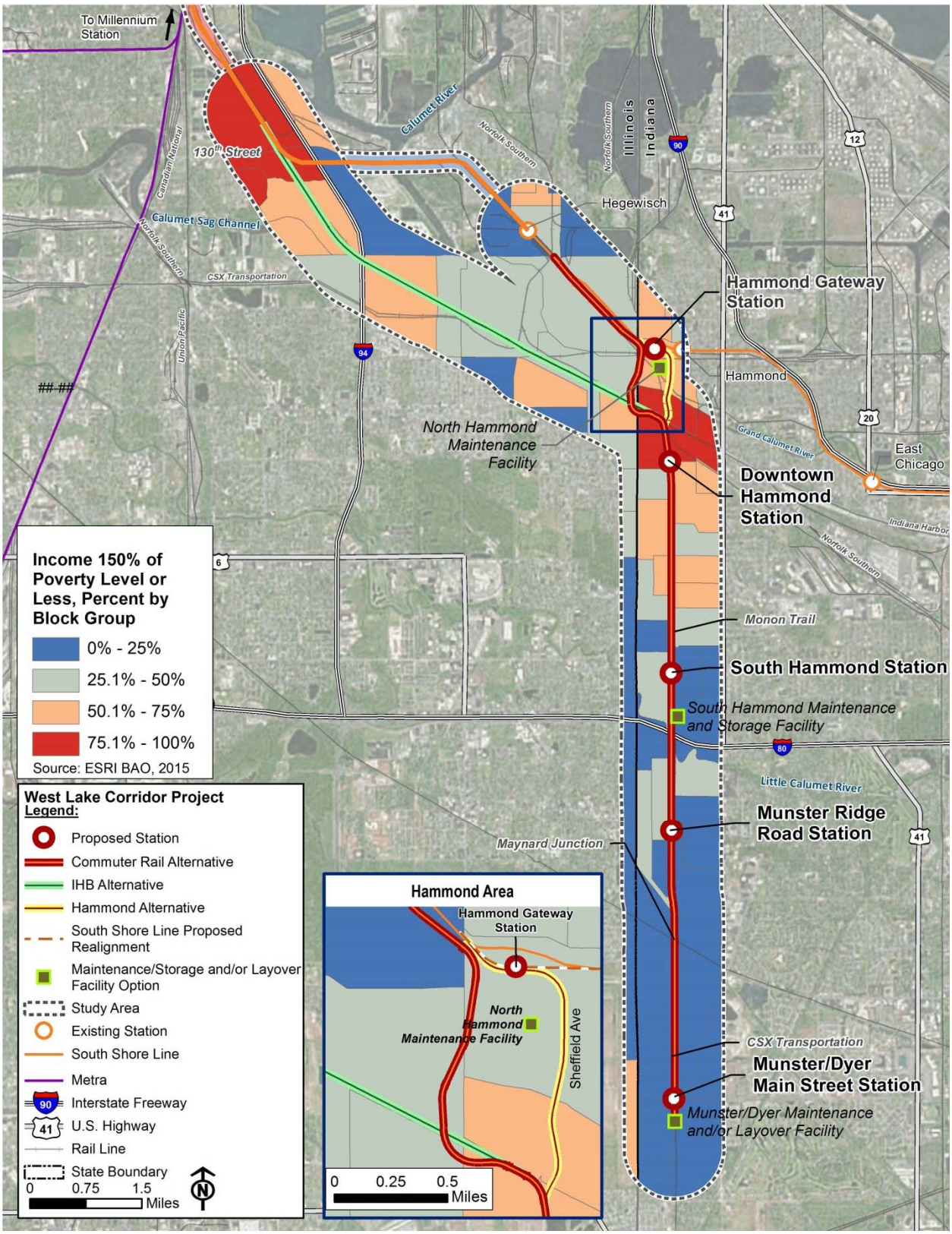

Figure 4-5 Populations at or below 150% of the Poverty Level in the Study Area

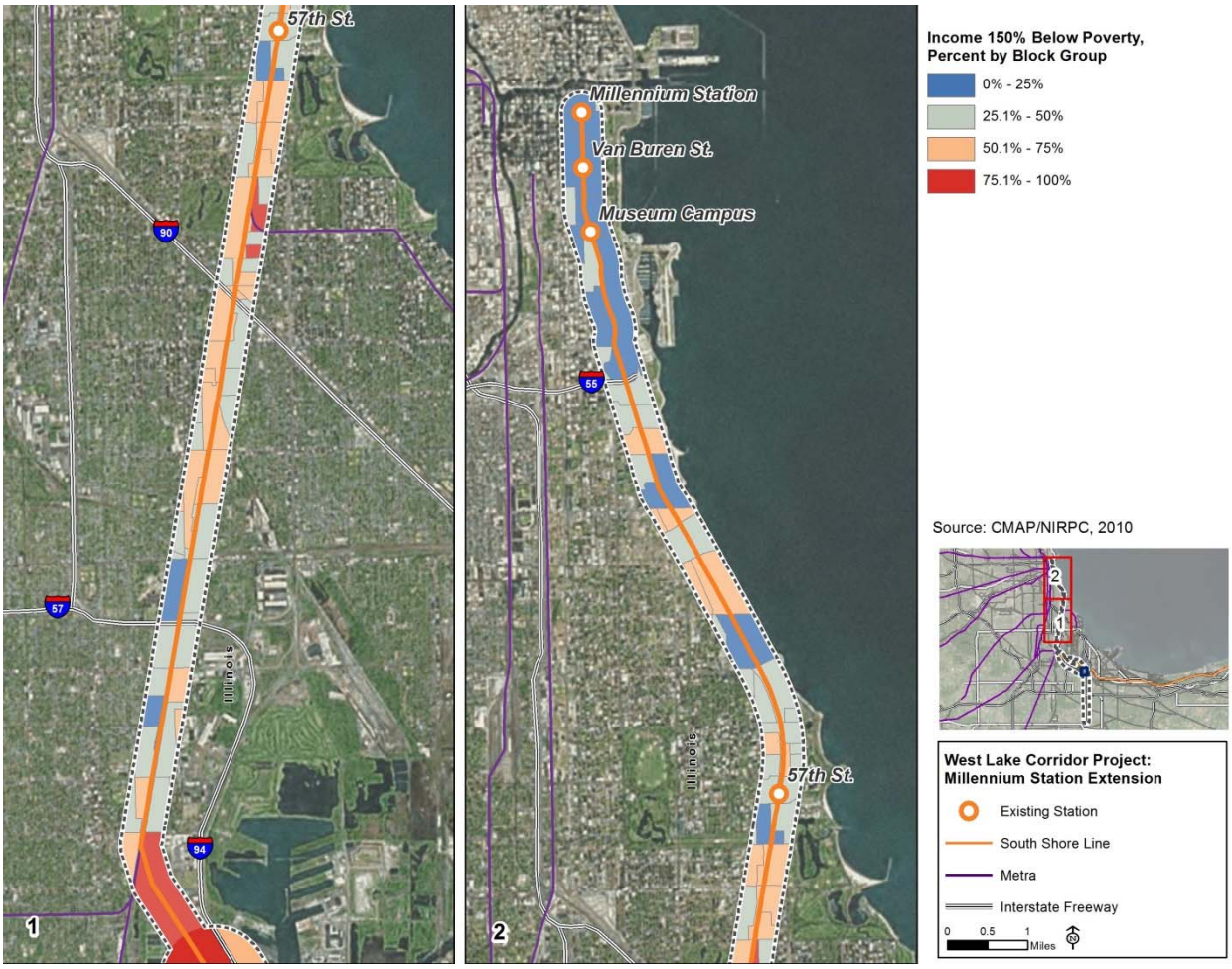

Figure 4-6 Populations at or below 150% of the Poverty Level along the Existing MED/SSL

4.4 Public Outreach

The findings of the EJ analysis helped to inform the public outreach efforts for this Project. **Table 4-3** indicates the predominant languages spoken by minority persons in the Study Area. The Hispanic population was the largest non-white ethnic group identified from the ACS data; therefore, Spanish language translation at public meetings and Spanish translations of project outreach materials were available upon request, although no requests were made.

Table 4-3 Spoken Languages in the Study Area

Geography	English Only	Spanish	Other Indo-European Languages	Asian and Pacific Island Languages	Other Languages	ESL
Dyer	85.7%	4.5%	6.8%	2.2%	0.7%	3.6%
Hammond	73.4%	22.6%	3.0%	0.6%	0.3%	5.2%
Munster	77.8%	10.4%	8.9%	2.3%	0.6%	3.2%
Chicago West/IHB Portion	66.8%	21.3%	7.1%	3.2%	1.3%	9.0%
Chicago MED/SSL Portion	85.5%	3.9%	4.1%	4.3%	2.1%	3.0%
Cook County Portion	67.4%	18.1%	9.2%	3.5%	1.5%	8.3%
Study Area Total	**82.3%**	**9.7%**	**3.9%**	**2.8%**	**1.4%**	**3.1%**
NIRPC	84.8%	9.8%	3.3%	0.8%	0.4%	2.3%
CMAP	69.6%	16.8%	8.7%	3.5%	1.2%	7.4%
Illinois	78.5%	10.9%	0.6%	0.2%	0.0%	0.4%
Indiana	91.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%

SOURCE: US Census, ACS 2013 – 5-Year Data
NOTE: ESL – English as a Second Language

The outreach process for this study included the formal Scoping Meetings, along with a series of public workshops. The FTA issued the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in the Federal Register, Volume 79, Number 189, on September 30, 2014. The NOI notified interested parties regarding the intent to prepare the EIS, provided information on the nature of the proposed Project and possible alternatives, and invited public participation in the environmental review process. To reach EJ populations, email invitations were sent to organizations that represent EJ communities. A total of 27 EJ organizations, listed below, were contacted:

- Active Transportation Alliance
- Baptist Ministers
- Bishop Tavis Grant II
- Boys and Girls Club Northwest Indiana
- City of Gary
- City of Michigan City
- Civic Leaders
- Deaf Services, Inc. - Tradewinds
- Dyer Redevelopment Commission
- Gary Chamber of Commerce
- Gary Public Transportation Corporation
- Hammond Hispanic Community Committee
- Hammond Redevelopment Commission
- Hoffman Street Baptist Church
- Interfaith Clergy Council
- Michigan City Housing Authority
- Michigan City Human Rights Department
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People - Gary Chapter
- North Central Community Action Agencies
- Northwest Indiana Baptist Association
- Northwest Indiana Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Northwest Indiana Federation of Interfaith
- Northwest Indiana Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Porter County Aging and Community Service
- Unity Foundation of LaPorte County
- Urban League of Northwest Indiana
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services of Gary

The 30-day Scoping Period began on October 13, 2014, and ended November 11, 2014. The FTA and NICTD invited agencies and organizations by letter to participate in the Scoping process and attend Scoping Meetings. NICTD issued a press release and advertised the public Scoping process and meetings in three newspapers, *Sun Times*, the *Times of Northwest Indiana*, and *Gary Crusader*. NICTD also posted an announcement of the meetings on the Project's website, sent emails to stakeholders listed in the Project database, distributed Project flyers, and mailed postcards to more than 19,500 residences and businesses in the Study Area.

FTA and NICTD held both the Agency and Public Scoping Meetings for the Project on October 28, 2014, at the Center for Visual and Performing Arts, 1040 Ridge Road, Munster, Indiana. Meeting participants were asked to sign in and were given a project fact sheet, Section 106 handouts, and comment cards. The meeting began with a welcome and definition of meeting format, which was followed by a PowerPoint presentation that summarized the purpose of the Project, study process and execution timeline, alternatives being considered, and key environmental considerations. An open house was convened after the presentation. During this time, meeting participants were able to walk around the room and learn more about the Project via display boards. Project staff was available to provide additional information and answer questions. Participants were able to provide verbal comments directly to a court reporter who was present onsite and/or they could submit written comments on the provided comment cards. Completed comment cards could be submitted at the meeting or submitted after the meeting.

In November 2015, NICTD hosted four workshops to update the public, public officials, and agencies on the Project and to provide an opportunity for attendees to comment on the proposed station locations, maintenance facility locations, layover track, and alignment. One workshop was held specifically to encourage attendance by agencies and local public officials. The Project Team then conducted three additional public workshops at locations in Dyer, Hammond, and Munster. Each of the locations was Americans with Disabilities Act accessible, centrally located, and provided ample free parking.

To maximize outreach to corridor stakeholders, the workshops were announced on the Project website (http://www.nictdwestlake.com/); in three separate e-mails to contacts in the Project database and to organizations that represent EJ communities; and via direct phone calls to EJ leaders (phone calls were made at four different time periods leading up to the workshops). Public input received from EJ populations and non-EJ populations informed the design of the Build Alternatives and the development of measures to minimize and mitigate potential impacts. A total of 27 EJ organizations were contacted for these public workshops. Details of these workshops are documented in the *West Lake Corridor Project November Workshops Meeting Summary* (AECOM 2016).

5. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section includes discussion of Project impacts and benefits, and the potential for disproportionately high and adverse effects on EJ populations in the Study Area. An impact would be disproportionately high and adverse if the effect (1) would be predominantly borne by an EJ population or (2) would be suffered by the EJ population and would be appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effect suffered by the non-EJ population.

While the No Build Alternative would result in few impacts, the substantial benefits related to improved transit access would also not be realized. The Project would provide an additional and affordable transit option for travel in the Study Area, and include the following primary benefits.

- Include improvements to connectivity and mobility;
- Provide access to jobs, services, education, and entertainment;
- Provide access to other transit services;
- Result in travel time savings and improvements to travel reliability; and
- Offer the potential for economic opportunities through associated development In those areas where stations are proposed.

Other benefits of the Project include the following:

- Employment opportunities due to construction and operations, as well as the potential for job-based redevelopment/development opportunities in the areas surrounding stations.
- Shortened distance that passengers travel in accessing stations. This would reduce the overall door to door commute time for Project riders, and reduce congestion on north/south roadways, particularly in EJ areas.
- Increased efficiency provided to the transportation network in Northwest Indiana. The Project would have a reduction of over 100,000 VMT per year (122,350 for the Hammond Alternative) from the region's transportation network. Lower VMT levels would reduce congestion, saving those who use the roads both time and money.
- Economic benefits to the region by connecting Northwest Indiana residents to the high wage jobs in Chicago. Though residents may work in Chicago, wages would return to Northwest Indiana and be used to purchase homes, enroll in school, and buy goods and services. Allowing residents to take advantage of Chicago wage premiums while also benefiting from Indiana's lower cost of living presents very desirable economic opportunities for Northwest Indiana (Policy Analytics LLC 2014).
- Competitive advantages for existing and future businesses located in the Study Area due to the additional transportation capacity.
- Reduced transit travel time and more reliable, more frequent, and higher capacity service for transit riders.
- Improved mobility through the Project vicinity and improved connections to employment, education, shopping, medical services, recreation, and cultural opportunities.
- Reduced air emissions.

- Opportunities for improved overall health of the users of the Project by increasing opportunities to walk and bicycle to stations and other parts of the Study Area.

While all populations within the Project's service area would realize these benefits, they would accrue to a higher degree to minority and low-income populations within the Study Area due to a higher reliance on transit in those communities. The Build Alternatives would improve accessibility for all communities, including low-income and minority populations. Having a station in one's neighborhood would provide access and mobility improvements for EJ populations. Three of the proposed five stations considered for the Build Alternatives would be located in areas with high concentrations of EJ populations.

For the purposes of analyzing the potential impacts to EJ populations, the levels of impact associated with all resource areas are presented. The impacts associated with each resource were identified through the environmental analysis. Only those resources with adverse effects after mitigation are evaluated for disproportionate high and adverse impacts to EJ populations. The following resources are grouped into three categories: 1) limited or no impacts, 2) no impacts after mitigation, and 3) impacts before and after mitigation.

1. **Resources with Limited or No Adverse Impacts:** The Build Alternatives would have no impacts or limited impacts on the following resources as shown in **Table 5-1:**

- Public Transportation
- Parking
- Land Use and Zoning
- Air Quality
- Energy

2. **Resources with No Adverse Impacts after Mitigation:** The Build Alternatives would have no impacts after mitigation on the following resources as shown in **Table 5-1**:

- Freight Rail
- Bicycle and Pedestrian
- Traffic
- Land Acquisitions and Displacements
- Socioeconomics and Economic Development
- Cultural Resources
- Safety and Security
- Noise
- Vibration
- Soils, Geologic Resources, and Farmlands
- Water Resources
- Biological Resources (Wildlife Habitat and Threatened & Endangered Species)
- Hazardous Materials
- Utilities

3. **Resources with Adverse Impacts after Mitigation:** The only resources with adverse impacts after mitigation, as shown in **Table 5-1**, include:

- Neighborhood and Community Resources: Long-Term Operating Effects
- Visual Resources: Long-Term Operating Effects

Table 5-1 Summary of Effects for Resources

Resource	No Build Alternative	Build Alternatives	Analyze for Potential High and Adverse Impacts on EJ Communities
Public Transportation	**1**	1	No
Freight Rail	**1**	**2**	No
Bicycle and Pedestrian	**1**	**2**	No
Traffic	**1**	**2**	No
Parking	**1**	**1**	No
Land Use and Zoning	**1**	**1**	No
Land Acquisitions and Displacements	**1**	**2**	No
Socioeconomics and Economic Development	**1**	**2**	No
Neighborhoods and Community Resources	**1**	**3**	**Yes**
Cultural Resources	**1**	**2**	No
Visual Resources	**1**	**3**	**Yes**
Safety and Security	**1**	**2**	No
Noise	**1**	**2**	No
Vibration	**1**	**2**	No
Air Quality	**1**	**1**	No
Energy	**1**	**1**	No
Soils, Geologic Resources, and Farmlands	**1**	**2**	No
Water Resources	**1**	**2**	No
Biological Resources	**1**	**2**	No
Hazardous Materials	**1**	**2**	No
Utilities	**1**	**2**	No

[1] No disproportionate adverse effect before mitigation (no mitigation required).
[2] No disproportionate adverse impacts after mitigation.
[3] Adverse impact after mitigation.

5.1 Long-Term Operating Effects

5.1.1 No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative is not expected to result in negative environmental impacts to EJ populations. However, EJ populations would not receive the benefits of commuter rail service, or commuter rail construction, operations, or maintenance job opportunities if the Project is not constructed. The No Build Alternative would not improve transit travel-time savings, enhance regional mobility, or boost employment opportunities.

5.1.2 Build Alternatives

In general, each Build Alternative would have similar levels of potential adverse effects, although there would be some variation in the potential impacts among the various options for each Build Alternative. Measures to reduce harm (through avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or enhancement) would be employed in all affected areas to the extent reasonably feasible. After mitigation, potential impacts from the Project would exist for neighborhoods and community resources as well as visual resources. These resource categories were examined further in this EJ analysis. The Maynard Junction Rail Profile Option was not included in this analysis because, when it is included with the applicable Build Alternative Options, it would not materially change the level of potential adverse effect for these Build Alternative Options.

Neighborhoods and Community Resources

The Build Alternatives would have potential long-term adverse impacts on neighborhoods and community resources that cannot be entirely mitigated due to the permanent presence of the proposed commuter rail related infrastructure. **Section 4.7.5** describes the proposed mitigation, which includes designing facility lighting at proposed stations and the maintenance and/or storage facility to reduce impacts from glare, reduce spillage of light onto neighboring properties and adjacent roadways, and design facilities to complement or blend with surrounding communities.

Introduction of commuter rail service would affect the perceived or actual connectivity of neighborhoods where no rail operations currently exist, primarily between Fisher Street in Munster and downtown Hammond. Neighborhood housing would be affected by localized changes in noise, light, and glare from adjacent commuter rail related facilities (e.g., proposed stations, or a maintenance facility). These improvements are spread over the length of the proposed alignment and the effects are distributed across the Study Area, affecting both EJ and non-EJ populations.

The Build Alternatives would be adjacent to community resources within the Study Area, such as trails, parks, and schools. In instances where the proposed alignment is in close proximity to community resources, users of the resources could experience changes in the visual context and/or noise levels; however, the Project would not substantially impair the use of community resources.

By reducing transit travel time and providing more reliable, more frequent, and higher capacity service for transit riders, the Project would improve connections to employment, education, shopping, medical services, recreation, and cultural opportunities. The Build Alternatives would offer the potential for reduced air emissions, economic development around proposed stations, and economic benefits from connecting Northwest Indiana residents to the high wage jobs in

Chicago. Therefore, the Build Alternatives would provide important benefits for the neighborhoods and communities within the Study Area.

Visual Resources

The Build Alternatives would introduce new commuter rail related elements such as track and catenary infrastructure to the Study Area. Of these elements, the track and catenary structure would be located throughout the Study Area, which would change the visual character. While these project elements cannot be avoided, they would not be vastly different from existing transportation or utility infrastructure. In the cases of elevated alignment and commuter rail related facilities, the visual impact would be greater. The Project would be elevated at the Maynard Junction in Munster and north of Douglas Street in Hammond. The portion over the Maynard Junction would be visually consistent with other elements in the area (e.g., existing freight rail lines and the high-tension power lines). Similarly, while the elevated portion north of Douglas Street would introduce a new visual element it would not be dissimilar from the existing Hohman Avenue overpass in this area.

While the visual effects from the Project would be minimized through context-sensitive design, they would not be completely mitigated. For instance, landscaping would only partially reduce the visibility of the track, passing trains, and the catenary infrastructure. There would be visual effects throughout the Study Area, affecting both EJ and non-EJ populations.

5.2 Construction-related Impacts

No construction-related impacts are anticipated as part of the No Build Alternative. Potential impacts associated with other projects under the No Build Alternative would be evaluated separately as part of the planning for those projects.

Construction-related impacts are anticipated to be similar among each Build Alternative. Communities near construction areas may also experience temporary limited access or detours during construction. These impacts are likely to be felt throughout the Study Area, north of downtown Hammond during construction of the elevated rail structure and south of Hammond during development of new stations, maintenance and storage facilities, parking access, and track improvements.

5.3 Conclusion

The benefits, impacts, and mitigation measures associated with the Project Build Alternatives would occur throughout the Study Area, affecting both EJ and non-EJ populations alike. The adverse effects remaining after mitigation for neighborhood and community resources as well as visual resources would not be predominantly borne by EJ populations, nor would impacts be appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude on EJ populations than on non-EJ populations.

As previously stated, mitigation measures identified throughout **Chapters 3, 4,** and **5** of this DEIS address impacts from commuter rail operations and construction activities. These mitigation measures would be applied consistently throughout the Study Area to areas with EJ and non-EJ populations. The Project offers substantial benefits that would accrue to all resident populations, including EJ populations. Although the Build Alternatives would still have adverse impacts on EJ populations, these impacts would not be disproportionately high and adverse. Therefore, no EJ-specific mitigation measures have been identified beyond the mitigation measures already identified in this DEIS.

6. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A
2009 - 2013 ACS Census Block Group Data

2009 - 2013 ACS Census Block Group Data

Geographic Area	Census Tract	Block Group	Percentage of Population Considered Minority	Percentage of Households below Poverty Level	Percentage of Households at or below 150% of Poverty Level
Dyer	042801	2	6.6%	9.6%	16.2%
		3	7.0%	2.1%	12.0%
		4	17.3%	5.1%	25.6%
	042802	2	3.6%	2.8%	10.6%
		3	6.6%	5.0%	6.3%
Munster	040300	1	34.7%	17.2%	23.1%
		2	5.6%	10.9%	27.7%
		3	14.0%	22.4%	25.8%
		4	10.5%	17.6%	21.2%
		5	18.1%	0.0%	0.0%
		6	20.2%	7.8%	7.8%
	040402	1	22.0%	8.1%	11.8%
Hammond	020400	3	60.7%	33.7%	57.8%
		2	53.5%	40.9%	54.2%
	020600	1	86.2%	87.7%	91.1%
		2	54.5%	73.0%	78.5%
	020700	1	71.9%	38.9%	45.2%
		2	39.9%	9.2%	26.5%
		3	92.0%	23.0%	27.0%
		4	75.5%	53.3%	59.4%
		5	77.2%	19.6%	50.8%
	021400	1	60.3%	30.2%	48.5%
		2	46.8%	44.2%	57.5%
		3	59.3%	23.5%	34.0%
	021500	1	31.8%	24.4%	24.4%
		2	41.4%	29.9%	35.2%
		3	42.1%	21.0%	44.8%
	021600	1	43.5%	25.9%	36.4%
		2	5.3%	15.9%	30.7%
		3	12.6%	10.7%	28.0%
Suburban, IL	825700	1	28.4%	27.6%	33.3%
		2	76.4%	23.3%	39.4%
		3	93.3%	18.4%	26.2%
	825801	3	99.8%	35.6%	53.9%
	825802	3	77.3%	10.3%	15.9%
	825900	1	85.9%	22.6%	44.7%
		2	55.0%	15.3%	33.5%
	826000	1	62.4%	41.2%	51.9%
		2	72.9%	17.6%	30.9%
		3	66.5%	18.3%	43.1%
	826100	1	87.2%	34.2%	35.9%
		2	75.5%	0.0%	7.7%
	826202	1	56.4%	15.9%	22.4%
		2	90.8%	22.5%	36.4%
Chicago	540101	1	88.0%	65.6%	68.9%
		3	100.0%	72.6%	74.4%
		4	100.0%	30.6%	100.0%
	540102	1	100.0%	82.9%	92.0%
		2	100.0%	44.5%	75.0%

Geographic Area	Census Tract	Block Group	Percentage of Population Considered Minority	Percentage of Households below Poverty Level	Percentage of Households at or below 150% of Poverty Level
		2	7.7%	11.6%	28.1%
		3	31.3%	40.2%	44.5%
		4	43.3%	3.9%	57.1%
		2	7.2%	19.0%	31.1%
	Study Area Totals		**67.0%**	**25.9%**	**36.5%**
	NIRPC Totals		34.0%	19.2%	29.5%
	CMAP Totals		37.0%	14.7%	23.5%

SOURCE: 2009-2013 ACS Data