

**APPENDIX 14**  
**RESPONSES TO COMMENTS**

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## **I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND NEED**

*No specific comments were received regarding this section.*

## **II. SOCIOECONOMIC AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND IMPACT ANALYSIS**

### **A. DEMOGRAPHY**

#### **II.A.1 Population Growth:**

The growth in population within the Study Area was based on the evaluation of the Cumulative Growth Development Scenario. In formulating this scenario, a number of steps were taken which are detailed in Section II, B, Land Use and Zoning, pages II-9 to II-20. The reader is also referred to the Land Use & Zoning portion of this Appendix.

A projected increase in population for the Study Area was determined by multiplying the number of housing units anticipated by an average household size of 2.56 persons per unit. The average household size is based on data supplied by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC). It should be noted that this scenario is only one of many potential growth scenarios which could occur as a result of development pressure during the 15-year planning period. If a demand for 1,584 housing units does not materialize, then the population for the Study area will not increase at the projected rate.

Population forecasts for this portion of the Town are higher than projections developed by the CDRPC. There are several reasons for this. First, the Town and Village Planning Boards are currently entertaining applications for 840 housing units in the Study Area alone. These projects alone could increase the Study Area population by over 2,150 people. Second, the

existence of over 2,500 acres of undeveloped land within an area that is heavily developed and centrally located within the Capital District Region has and will continue to experience significant pressure for growth. Nevertheless, changing economic conditions or more stringent controls on development could impact the level of growth that occurs in the Study Area during the 15-year planning period. Third, the target growth land use scenario evaluated in the CDTC studies for the Wolf Road and Albany County Airport Area Traffic Assessment Studies indicated that up to 1,734 new housing units could be expected by the year 2005. These study areas encompass an area somewhat smaller than the Airport Study Area as defined in the FGEIS. The portions of the Study Area not included in the CDTC studies can generally be described as the lands north of Route 7 and west of Vly Road within the Town of Colonie.

**II.A.2. Miscellaneous Comments:**

The comment is noted.

**B. LAND USE & ZONING**

**II.B.1. Development Scenario:**

The level of development evaluated in this document is not intended to be a development goal or objective. As stated on page II-9 of the FGEIS, the Cumulative Growth Scenario represents potential future conditions if no action is taken by local municipalities and involved agencies to control development in the Study Area beyond those land use controls which currently exist. The purpose of any EIS is to identify both impacts and mitigation measures associated with a given action. In instances when specific impacts and mitigation measures cannot be identified due to project uncertainties or a potential change in

the project, usually the impacts associated with the worst case situation should be evaluated. This analysis was conducted through the evaluation of impacts associated with the High Growth Future Development Scenario included in the FGEIS.

This type of analysis ensures that the proper magnitude of impacts are evaluated. If a lower level of development is evaluated and future conditions result in more aggressive growth, then a supplemental GEIS would be required for the Study Area. Through the evaluation of the Cumulative Growth Scenario, improvements necessary to support anticipated development can be planned, designed, and constructed in the most efficient and cost effective manner.

If growth occurs at a slower rate than anticipated, fewer public improvements will be necessary. Capital Improvement Plans normally phase improvements over a 3 to 5 year period. Annual monitoring of growth and adjustments to the Capital Improvement Plans will be necessary to ensure that the level of improvements and applicable mitigation fees are appropriate to support that development which actually occurs during the 15-year planning period.

The methodology used to develop the Cumulative Growth Scenario utilized a four-step process. This process included: a review of various development proposals under active consideration by the Town and Village Planning Boards, the inclusion of data from the 1988 Traffic Assessment for the Albany County Airport Area and Transportation System Plan for the Wolf Road/Airport Area prepared by the CDTC, the assignment of speculative development identified in the CDTC studies listed above to specific sites in the Study Area, and input from landowners of 5 acres or more within the Study Area. The methodology used to develop this scenario is also described in Section II,B, Land Use and Zoning, pages II-9 through II-20. The agricultural lands targeted to remain in production through the year 2005 were also based on contact with owners of these lands and assumptions made by CDTC (Section II,B, Land Use and Zoning, page II-10).

In regard to more specific questions about the projected square footage of commercial space and the number of housing units, the following clarification is offered. The combination of the Transportation System Plan for the Wolf Road/Airport Area and Traffic Assessment for the Albany County Airport Area prepared by the CDTC evaluated a "Target Growth Future" of approximately 6.1 million square feet of commercial development and 1,734 housing units. These studies did not include any projections for development in areas north of Route 7 between Vly Road and New Karner Road. Table II-B-2 of this FGEIS identifies 64 residential and commercial projects which were before the Village and Town Planning Boards at the time the GEIS process was initiated. This included 840 residential units and 2.8 million square feet of commercial space.

Consideration should also be given to the fact that the Study Area currently contains over 2,500 acres of undeveloped land and over 800 acres of active agricultural land. As a result, population growth in this portion of the Town may out-pace the growth rate for the Town as a whole.

As a result of the projected 1,583 housing units to be built by the year 2005, an additional 4,052 people (2.56 people/residential unit (CDRPC)) would reside in the Study Area. This estimate, combined with the population forecasted in the Boght Road - Columbia Street GEIS and growth in the remaining portions of the Town, would result in a Town-wide population of 99,677 in the year 2005.

The prediction of 23,000 new jobs for the Study Area is based on the construction of 7.4 million square foot of commercial space projected in the FGEIS. The guidelines used to estimate new jobs were based on those developed by the CDTC in the Proposed Transportation System Plan for the Wolf Road

/Airport Area to project future employment levels. Again, development may not occur by the year 2005 at the level projected in the FGEIS, however, if it does it is reasonable to assume that 23,000 new jobs would be created.

Finally, the FGEIS will allow the Town and Village of Colonie and Albany County to determine if the level of development, the associated physical and socio-economic impacts, and the mitigation measures are desirable or achievable. Existing Town and Village of Colonie zoning laws, as well as the regulations and guidelines of involved agencies, would permit this level of development to occur. As a result, involved agencies may wish to review existing regulations to determine if changes are necessary to control growth.

#### **II.B.2. Enplanements:**

The projected enplanements included in the DGEIS were based on the "Preferred Forecast" in the 1987 Upper Hudson Region Air Services Study prepared by Cress & Associates, Inc. for the CDRPC. Since that time, the CDRPC has reviewed and updated these projections (Upper Hudson Regional Aviation System Plan, Study of Service Demand CDRPC, June 1990) and determined that a more likely scenario is the "Low Range", defined in the 1987 study. As a result, enplanements may be expected to increase by 1.2 million, rather than 1.5 million annually as indicated in the DGEIS. As stated in the Executive Summary of the Upper Hudson Regional Aviation System Plan dated 1990, "Although total enplanements at the Airport are showing signs of slowing, that does not necessarily jeopardize the overall improvement program." The improvement program referred to is developed in the Draft Albany Airport Layout Plan and Land Use Study prepared in 1990 (Appendix 12). The CDRPC study further recommends that enplanements and economic trends should be monitored frequently to ensure that capital improvements at the Airport are phased in efficiently.

One recommendation of the FGEIS states that development trends in the Study Area must be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that public improvements keep pace with actual development. As stated in the FGEIS, a CIP must be developed to outline the phasing of necessary improvements. If necessary, the CIP can be modified based on changing conditions.

**II.B.3. Shaker Run Apartments:**

At the time the DGEIS was prepared, the Shaker Run Apartments proposal included 192 dwelling units. It is noted that the project size has been reduced to 184 apartments; however, a change of 8 units within the context of a study of this magnitude will have a negligible effect on the projected impacts or mitigation measures described in the FGEIS. It is further noted that the project has not yet been granted any approvals and the scale of the project is likely to be further refined in the months ahead.

**II.B.4. Cumulative Growth Scenario and LUMAC:**

Open space and Agricultural Lands identified in the Land Use Management Program Technical Report prepared by LUMAC and the Future Land Use Map included in the FGEIS were compared. The Future Land Use Map designates a larger area of open space within the Study Area than does the LUMAC Land Use Plan. Although under the Cumulative Growth Scenario more open space has been mapped, this does not represent an endorsement of any level of development (See Response II.B.1). However, this level of development could occur in the Study Area based on existing zoning and land use regulations currently in place.

**II.B.5. Agricultural Lands:**

Contact with area farmers was the largest factor contributing to the prediction that certain agricultural lands would remain in

active use through the year 2005. Projections developed by CDTC for their 1988 traffic studies covering the Study Area were also considered. General economic conditions as well as the specific financial situation of each land owner may alter this prediction. The FGEIS recognizes the problem of dwindling farmland and outlines mitigation measures on pages II-18 and II-19.

**II.B.6. Stewart Airport Impact:**

The development of Stewart Airport is in its infancy and the facility has only just begun to provide limited passenger service via regularly scheduled commercial airline flights. The future impact on operations at Albany Airport is not presently known. Nevertheless, Stewart Airport is being promoted as an option to passengers who reside in the lower Hudson Valley Region and would normally travel to New York City based airports for commercial air service. As a result, the impact of expanded operations at Stewart Airport is not likely to have a significant impact on Albany Airport passenger enplanements.

**II.B.7. Miscellaneous Comments:**

The comment is noted.

**II.B.8. Completion of SEQR Process and Initiation of Capital Improvement Plan:**

The purpose of the Airport Area FGEIS is to address questions and comments which were raised during the public review period for the Airport Area DGEIS. If the FGEIS is accepted as complete by the lead agency, a Findings Statement will be prepared. It is normally the responsibility of each involved agency to prepare their own independent findings. However, due to the cooperation between the Town of Colonie, Village of Colonie, and Albany County in



preparation of the GEIS, the preparation of a joint Findings Statement should also be considered. The Findings Statement will then serve as the framework for the preparation of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Prior to the preparation of the CIP a detailed intermunicipal agreement between the Town of Colonie, Village of Colonie, and Albany County should be developed to clearly delineate the responsibilities and obligations of each municipality. This is described in pages II-259 and II-260 of the FGEIS. Primarily, the intermunicipal agreement should address issues related to the collection of fees and the coordination of improvements for transportation, recreation, and water supply facilities.

The CIP is an important part of the overall planning process related to the Airport Area. The Findings Statement will aid in the identification of specific improvements that will be required as development progresses and should be used as a basis to formulate the CIP. The CIP process will identify and prioritize necessary infrastructure improvements, normally in 5-year increments. Once the CIP is adopted by the municipalities and implementation of specific projects are initiated, the CIP schedule should be reviewed and updated annually. This will ensure the proper timing of improvements especially if development proceeds at a different pace than that which was evaluated in the GEIS.

The primary goal of this GEIS process is to facilitate the development of a CIP that coordinates necessary improvements in an efficient, cost-effective manner. Municipal improvements will be phased in such a manner so that they can keep pace with development. As stated in the FGEIS, the Development Mitigation Cost system will be used to finance necessary improvements related to the Cumulative Growth Scenario. Existing deficiencies will not be financed through this system.

### **II.B.9. LUMAC Recommendations:**

A goal of this FGEIS is to identify potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures associated with the Cumulative Growth Scenario. Any recommendations made in the LUMAC Technical Report which would tend to mitigate the impacts associated with this development have also been identified in the FGEIS. The decision to implement these mitigation measures rests with the lead agency and other involved agencies.

### **II.B.10. Growth Controls:**

The SEQR process allows applicants, agencies, and the public to identify impacts and mitigation measures of a particular action or set of actions. The numerous mitigation measures outlined in this document include, for example, growth controls such as rezoning within certain portions of the Study Area (FGEIS pages III-22 through III-37).

Once the FGEIS is accepted as complete, each involved agency is responsible for the preparation of a Findings Statement (SEQR Part 617.9). The Findings Statement in part, must incorporate those mitigation measures that are identified as practicable in the SEQR process. Once the Findings Statement is complete, the criteria outlined in it will be part of any approval process such as site plan and/or subdivision approval. If the Findings Statement identifies growth control measures or other regulatory changes, each agency will be responsible to implement these land use controls.

The SEQR process is not the final resolution of the issues addressed in the DGEIS, FGEIS and Findings Statement documents. The SEQR process

does, however, identify the steps that must be taken in order to mitigate to the extent practicable the impacts associated with the Cumulative Growth Scenario. The reader is referred to response 1 in this section for more information.

**II.B.11. "Real" Target Growth:**

The Cumulative Growth Scenario evaluated in the FGEIS is based on various assumptions described in Section II, B, Land Use and Zoning. Impacts and the suggested mitigation measures will vary if development occurs at a slower or more rapid pace. Capital Improvement Programs, land use controls, and community and agency land use goals will have to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that necessary improvements are keeping pace with actual development and that land use controls continue to be effective in meeting Town, Village, and County goals.

**II.B.12 Course and Pace of Development:**

The Cumulative Growth Scenario is an attempt to identify impacts associated with a fairly aggressive level of development (see response II.B.1., of this appendix). This level of development may or may not occur within the 15-year planning period. If the Town, Village, or County determines that the impacts associated with this level of development are unacceptable for socio-economic and/or environmental reasons, they must initiate steps to ensure that a lower level of development occurs. Some methods, as suggested in Section II, B of the FGEIS include rezoning certain parcels of land, creating greenbelts, implementing overlay districts, and limiting development in environmentally sensitive areas. A variety of other land use controls are described in Section III of the FGEIS.

**II.B.13. Optimum Level of Growth:**

The cost of providing adequate levels of service on Study Area roadways in order to keep pace with development is one of the primary factors in determining what level of development is acceptable. However, as part of this SEQR process a number of other factors must also be considered including impacts to the physical environment, land use, infrastructure, and community services. The Town, Village, and County must use this information to determine if this level of development is acceptable (see response II.B.1. above). If the lead agency or another involved agency determines that growth control measures are appropriate, it may be necessary to reevaluate impacts and mitigation measures as required. The list of recommendations provided by the Colonie Coalition of Homeowner Associations includes a variety of methods for controlling growth within the Study Area.

**II.B.14. Airport Development:**

The April 1990 draft Albany County Airport Updated Layout Plan and Land Use Study (ALP) has been included in the FGEIS as Appendix 12. The FGEIS evaluates, on a generic level, the impacts associated with the proposed improvements identified in the ALP and indentifies appropriate mitigation measures. The FGEIS does not; however, evaluate the site specific environmental impacts or the mitigation measures that may be required for full implementation of the ALP. Therefore, at such times when the phased improvements of the ALP are implemented, compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) will be required as may additional environmental review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR). These additional environmental reviews will analyze site specific impacts and mitigation measures associated with the proposed ALP improvements.

#### **II.B.15. Development Levels:**

The FGEIS reflects a level of development which could occur in the Study Area during the 15-year planning period if current zoning and other land use controls are maintained. It is one step in the process of determining what level and type of growth is acceptable from an environmental and socioeconomic viewpoint. Once this has been determined, it will be necessary for local municipalities to reevaluate existing land use controls, and guidelines and make appropriate changes. The costs associated with providing necessary infrastructure improvements to support a certain level of development are an important factor which government agencies use to determine the level and type of growth acceptable for the Study Area.

#### **II.B.16. Use of Overlay Map System**

Each section of the FGEIS presents various exhibits including existing land use, soils, vegetative communities, problem flooding areas etc. as necessary. These will be one of the tools utilized by the Town and Village of Colonie and Albany County in making future land use decisions within the Study Area.

#### **II.B.17. Projects Included in the GEIS Process:**

The Town of Colonie, as lead agency, adopted a Positive Declaration for the Airport Area on October 24, 1989. Any individual projects proposed within the Study Area boundaries that had not received a Positive or Negative Declaration in accordance with SEQR Part 617.6 prior to this date are subject to the findings to be adopted by the lead agency and other involved agencies.

**C. GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY, SOILS:**

**II.C.1. Miscellaneous Comments:**

The comment is noted.

**D. VEGETATION, WILDLIFE AND AQUATIC ECOLOGY:**

**II.D.1. Greenbelts:**

The Greenbelts as shown on Exhibit II-D-5 represent a conceptual plan for linking open space. Pages II-51 through II-53 of the FGEIS outline a number of mechanisms to establish greenbelts. If the involved agencies choose to pursue the idea of greenbelts, a more detailed plan could be developed and specific land areas could be identified. At that time, a determination would have to be made as to how these greenbelts would be established.

**II.D.2. Hydric Soils:**

The Town of Colonie recently developed a policy regarding lands that could be considered jurisdictional wetlands by the Army Corps of Engineers under Section 404 of the Clean Waters Act. As development plans are pursued, individual applicants are responsible for contacting and securing the necessary approvals from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and accommodating those wetlands into a project's design prior to submitting concept development plans to the Town of Colonie Planning Board.

**II.D.3. Management of Airport Lands for Habitat:**

Airport lands could potentially be managed for short grass species and habitat. The County will have to evaluate this option in regard to economic and safety considerations. Any action taken by the Airport in this matter would have to meet FAA safety requirements.

**ILD.4. Field Investigations:**

Data utilized for these investigations was obtained from various sources including the NYSDEC Wildlife Resources Center and Albany County Planning Department as well as various publications as listed in the Reference Section of the FGEIS. Field visits were conducted at various locations throughout the Study Area to verify information collected above. The results of these field visits and data collection efforts are shown in Exhibits II-D-1, II-D-2, II-D-3, II-D-4, and II-D-5.

**ILD.5. Miscellaneous Comments:**

The comment is noted.

**E. GROUNDWATER**

**ILE.1. Protection of Resources:**

Section II,E, Groundwater and II,F, Hydrology, Drainage, and Water Quality identify mitigation measures that, if implemented, would protect groundwater resources. The lead agency notes the comments of NYSDEC Region IV office regarding protection of groundwater resources. Section II,E has been revised to address these comments. Appendix 15 has been added to the FGEIS to incorporate a copy of the draft Schenectady Intermunicipal Watershed Rules and Regulations provided to the lead agency by the NYSDEC Region IV office.

**ILE.2. Miscellaneous Comments:**

The comment is noted.

**F. HYDROLOGY, DRAINAGE AND WATER QUALITY**

**II.F.1. Stream Protection:**

The Town of Colonie has a Watercourse Protection Law which protects certain streams from encroaching development. The FGEIS acknowledges the existence of these regulations and recommends that they continue to be enforced.

**II.F.2. Shaker Creek in the Village of Colonie:**

At the time the DGEIS was prepared, the proposed Shaker Run Apartments had not received any final approvals. As a result, it was recommended that the portion of Shaker Creek within the Village be protected in accordance with the same guidelines outlined in the Town Watercourse Area Management Ordinance. The agreement reached between the NYSDEC, Village of Colonie and the applicant should achieve in the same goal, the protection of Shaker Creek.

**II.F.3. Stormwater Management:**

The FGEIS identifies stormwater management practices that, if implemented, will protect surface and groundwater resources. It is believed that the most successful program of protection will result from the use of standardized stormwater management practices. It is recognized that a majority of the Shaker Creek watershed in the Village is developed; however, there is potential for some additional development or redevelopment in the Village which may impact a portion of the Shaker Creek watershed. Therefore, standardized stormwater management practices are recommended for this area of the Village.



**II.F.4. Miscellaneous Comments:**

The comment is noted.

**II.F.5. Stormwater Runoff Controls:**

Due to the frequent flooding problems in the Shaker Creek watershed, several modifications to the Town's current stormwater regulations were suggested. These recommendations included limiting the 50-year post-development discharge to the 50-year pre-development level (page II-95); however, this recommendation is based on conditions in the Shaker Creek watershed and is limited to that watershed.

In addition, the current Town policy ensures that peak mitigation will be provided for the 25-year event (page II-87). Standard engineering practices require that detention structures be designed for safe passage of the 100-year storm.

**G. UTILITIES**

**II.G.1. Availability of Electric and Gas:**

The reader is referred to page II-104 and Appendix 1 of the FGEIS. The information regarding capacity and potential improvements to Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation (NMPC) facilities was provided by NMPC based on the potential impacts identified under the Cumulative Development Scenario.

**II.G.2. Improvements to the Existing Sanitary Sewer System:**

The location and sizing of the sanitary sewer collection system was determined by the Town of Colonie Pure Waters Department during the formation of this improvement area. Contact with the Pure Waters Department (pages II-114 and II-116) indicated that the sewer system is capable of handling the

additional wastewater flows that would result from the Cumulative Growth Scenario. Also, as stated on page II-116, connections to the sanitary system are the financial responsibility of each developer and subject to the approval of the Town of Colonie Pure Waters Department.

**II.G.3. Miscellaneous Comments:**

*The comment is noted.*

**H. TRANSPORTATION**

**II.H.1. Methodology Used to Determine Required Improvements:**

The process of identifying existing deficiencies as well as future roadway improvements in the Study Area involved a series of steps which follow standard engineering practices and are accepted by the NYSDOT. In regard to existing deficiencies, please refer to Section II,H, Transportation, pages II-125 through II-128. Based on an analysis of existing highway capacities and levels of service for Study Area roadways, a number of existing deficiencies were identified as outlined on Table II-H-2. These deficiencies had been previously identified by the CDTC and this agency estimated the cost of these improvements between \$8,420,000 and \$11,780,000. These costs have not been included in the Development Mitigation Costs outlined in Table II-O-5.

Table II-H-2, which outlines existing deficiencies in the Study Area, does not include a new Northway Exit 3 or north-south arterial, although under the Cumulative Growth Scenario these improvements will be necessary by the year 2005. The improvements to various intersections at Route 7, Albany Shaker Road and Watervliet Shaker Road, which were identified in Table II-H-2, were not included in Table II-O-5, Development Mitigation Costs.

The steps used to determine future transportation needs are identified on pages II-129 through II-136 of the FGEIS. The methods used to identify transportation needs are consistent with accepted engineering practice and NYSDOT procedures. The recommended improvement package will provide motorists with efficient travel routes throughout the Study Area. The locations and extent of these improvements are based partially on existing and future traffic distribution patterns. It is unlikely that large numbers of motorists will consciously choose less efficient or indirect routes when traveling between two destinations.

The determination that the five percent of future traffic growth in the Study Area is based on background growth rates developed by the CDTC. Background growth rates vary based on the level of development being considered in a specific location. In the Cumulative Growth Scenario, the level of development is concentrated and nearly 21,000 new pm peak hour trips will be generated.

#### **II.H.2. Albany Shaker Road Traffic Projections:**

The Anderson PUD was considered during the transportation analysis for Albany Shaker Road. This project includes a proposed access road to be located between Sand Creek and Albany Shaker Roads. The distribution analysis was based, in part, on the construction of Exit 3 and the new arterial between Wolf Road and Route 7. The distribution analysis indicated that the increase in traffic on this section of Albany Shaker Road is somewhat less than traffic increases on other major roadways in the Study Area.

#### **II.H.3. Office and Retail Development:**

Trip generation rates for each potential project were based on Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) guidelines. These guidelines distinguish between a large number of land use types including retail, office, manufacturing, warehouse, and residential uses. Table II-O-5 which estimates

Development Mitigation Costs for the Study Area, illustrates the delineation of transportation costs into five categories including: airport, residential, office, retail, and industrial uses. These costs were based on the increase in expected traffic for each land use type listed above.

#### **II.H.4. NYS Route 7 Widening:**

The recommendation that Route 7 be widened to include 3 through lanes in each direction between I-87 and the Schenectady County Line is based on traffic projections which would result if development occurred as anticipated under the Cumulative Growth Scenario. It is not meant to imply that there are not difficulties associated with the implementation of this improvement, especially in terms of economic impacts and ROW needs. If this transportation improvement is unacceptable to the lead agency or other involved agencies, they must take steps to ensure that acceptable levels of service can be maintained on this roadway. This could be accomplished through measures to control growth or by evaluating alternative roadway improvements.

The NYSDOT has indicated that they will begin a major reconstruction of Route 7 between the Northway (I-87) and the Schenectady County line in 1991. This project will provide two through lanes in each direction and a continuous left-turn median on Route 7 between Wade Road and St. David's Lane. They have indicated that, during the 15-year planning period, they do not plan to further widen Route 7 to accommodate six lanes of traffic. Should this be the case, other actions should be considered to reduce traffic congestion on this roadway.

Continuous concrete barriers could be placed between eastbound and westbound lanes to limit left turns only to key intersections such as Albany Shaker Road. A series of service roads could be constructed parallel to and

behind existing properties with frontage on Route 7 to separate local traffic (those vehicles making multiple stops) from through traffic. Neither of these improvements is likely to be completely successful in mitigating traffic impacts anticipated for Route 7 under the Cumulative Growth Development Scenario. Nevertheless, the lead agency and the involved agencies should consider these options as well as others identified in this FGEIS when evaluating necessary highway improvements within the Route 7 corridor.

#### II.H.5. Existing Roadway Deficiencies:

The focus of the DGEIS was to identify the impact which future development would have on the roadways within the Study Area through the year 2005. Existing roadway deficiencies in the Study Area cannot be attributed to development which has yet to occur. As a result, the capital costs of improvements identified to correct existing roadway deficiencies cannot be assessed to future development. Nevertheless, it is essential that the list of existing transportation deficiencies be addressed prior to the consideration of the transportation improvements identified as part of the Cumulative Growth Scenario. This will ensure that the complete package of improvements is successful in meeting the goal of providing orderly and efficient traffic movement within the Study Area. The Town and Village of Colonie and Albany County will have to consider various funding mechanisms to pay for construction of these short-term roadway improvements.

The use of Transportation Development Districts (TDDs) as discussed in the CDTC Draft Procedures for Public/Private Highway Financing In The Capital District may be one mechanism which could help fund these improvements. TDDs are also discussed on pages II-263 through II-264 of the FGEIS as a means of financing future improvements. Although the implementation of these existing deficiencies is an important issue, it is not within the scope of this FGEIS.

#### **II.H.6. Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Strategies:**

A 25 percent reduction in traffic (FGEIS page II-134) through the implementation of TSM strategies is an optimistic goal. Based on the level of growth evaluated in the FGEIS, however, this goal must be reached to maintain acceptable levels of service on Study Area roadways through the end of the 15-year planning period. All recommended improvements were based on the assumption that this reduction in traffic would be accomplished. Another option to consider is an even more extensive level of highway improvements, a choice that will be more costly and require more ROW acquisition than what is currently proposed in the FGEIS.

The traffic impacts and improvements associated with the Cumulative Growth Scenario are significant. The function of the FGEIS is to identify impacts and potential mitigation measures associated with this level of growth. The lead agency and involved agencies must determine, based on the information provided in the FGEIS, if this level of growth and the associated impacts and mitigation measures are acceptable and feasible to accomplish. If the Town and Village of Colonie and Albany County do not feel that a 25 percent reduction in traffic can be accomplished through TSM strategies, other options must be considered. These could include: a more extensive improvements package, accepting a decreased level of service on area roadways, or the consideration of various growth controls which will reduce traffic generation.

#### **II.H.7. I-87 Interchange:**

The recommendation of new I-87 interchanges is one option to mitigate traffic impacts resulting from development in the Study Area. These suggested improvements which are shown on Exhibit II-H-4 and II-H-5 are conceptual and more detailed engineering and planning will be required. Technical issues

regarding design and spacing of an interchange would have to be addressed in a detailed transportation study. The alignments as shown in the FGEIS generally follow those included in the CDTC reports: Traffic Assessment for the Albany County Airport Area and Proposed Transportation System Plan for the Wolf Road/Airport Area.

**II.H.8. Widening of I-87 Mainline:**

The comment is noted. The DGEIS stated that a greater planning effort would be required to completely address all the future transportation needs along the I-87 mainline from Albany to Saratoga Springs. This effort is beyond what can be accomplished within this GEIS process.

**II.H.9. Phased Implementation:**

The FGEIS recommends that a single agency coordinate the necessary transportation improvements planned for the Study Area. For this agency to work effectively a CIP, as described in response II.B.1. of this appendix, must be developed. CIPs normally cover a 3-5 year period and are reviewed annually. This will give the agency responsible for coordinating the highway improvements, as well as other involved agencies such as the NYSDOT, the ability to ensure that improvements are implemented in a coordinated manner and are able to keep pace with future development in the Study Area.

**II.H.10. Miscellaneous Comments:**

The comment is noted.

**II.H.11. Traffic Projections:**

The traffic analysis in the FGEIS includes existing as well as future conditions. Table II-H-3 summarizes existing as well as future traffic

volumes for the pm peak hour. Traffic volumes for the year 2005 include not only traffic generated as a result of the Cumulative Growth Scenario but, existing background traffic and background traffic growth.

**II.H.12. Target Growth Scenario:**

As stated in the Notes to Readers page found in the front of the Executive Summary of the FGEIS, the name "Target Growth" scenario has been changed to the "Cumulative Growth Scenario."

**II.H.13. Further Traffic Analysis:**

It was acknowledged during the preparation of the DGEIS that there are an unlimited number of development possibilities that could be evaluated. The Cumulative Growth Scenario, which represents a fairly aggressive level of development, was chosen to gain an understanding of the magnitude of impacts associated with this level of development.

Upon the completion of the FGEIS, the lead agency as well as each involved agency will be required to prepare a Findings Statement. Following this, CIPs must be prepared to identify the level and timing of the necessary improvements. The pace of development will impact the level of necessary improvements. In addition, any plans to construct roadway improvements will require further engineering studies and detailed design plans. It is these studies and plans that will determine the exact location and magnitude of any necessary improvements.

The purpose of the FGEIS is to identify the impacts and mitigation measures which may occur based on the analysis of various levels of



development in the Study Area. A package of transportation improvements is proposed in the FGEIS to mitigate transportation impacts of development anticipated under the Cumulative Growth Scenario.

**II.H.14. Impacts to the Residential Community:**

Many of the improvements outlined in the FGEIS include road widenings which may require additional ROW. These widenings, while having the positive impact of improving traffic movement, may have some negative impacts to homeowners along these roads. Homeowners will be faced with the possibility more traffic related noise, the taking of portions of yards for ROW, and more difficult access to and from their residences.

**II.H.15. Application of TSM Strategies:**

Some type of regional approach to TSM strategies will be necessary to operate an effective and successful program. The Town and Village of Colonie and Albany County will need to determine how and when these strategies will be applied.

**II.H.16. Proposed I-87, Exit 3:**

The proposed I-87 Exit 3 would divert traffic from Wolf Road to I-87, thereby reducing traffic volumes that are currently using the most heavily traveled section of Wolf Road. This improvement was also recommended in the 1988 CDTC study, Traffic Assessment for the Albany County Airport Area, as being necessary to allow surrounding roadways to operate at acceptable levels of service. The FGEIS does not recommend additional through lanes on Wade Road; however, various intersections in the Study Area will need to be widened to provide exclusive turning lanes.

Having all truck traffic exit I-87 at Exit 5 and closing the western ramp would have to be studied in greater detail to determine if this citizen's suggestion is a viable solution. Requiring all trucks to exit I-87 at Exit 5 would require improvements to the roadway system to accommodate heavier vehicles. Removing truck traffic at Exit 5 may not decrease traffic volumes sufficiently to mitigate the need for I-87 Exit 3.

The proposed I-87 Exit 3 will result in both economic and environmental impacts. Nevertheless, these impacts must be weighed against the resulting impacts on Study Area roadways if the improvements are not constructed and levels of service are allowed to further decline.

**II.H.17. Proposed North-South Arterial:**

The methods used to develop the Cumulative Growth Scenario are described in the FGEIS pages II-9 through II-20 and in Response II.B.1. As stated on page II-135, the proposed north-south arterial is necessary to provide adequate levels of service on Albany Shaker Road and other area roadways. Page II-136 indicates that the arterial will significantly improve operating conditions along Albany Shaker Road and at the I-87 Exit 4 interchange as well as provide a better link from I-87 to the Airport.

Option 2 roadway improvements, which include a tunnel under the north-south Airport runway, was recommended to reduce significant impacts to the Watervliet Shaker Historic District that would result from the implementation of Option 1 roadway improvements. Without the full interchange at Exit 3 of I-87 coupled with the north-south arterial (as shown in either Option 1 or Option 2), there would not be enough capacity at Albany Shaker Road to accommodate all of the projected traffic demand.

A level of service D is an acceptable level of service based on NYSDOT standards. In some cases the improvements necessary to obtain levels of service A through C would be impracticable based on physical constraints or economics. If the arterial was not constructed, Albany Shaker Road would have to be widened to 4 lanes in each direction to accommodate the projected future traffic volumes.

**II.H.18. Northway Exit 6:**

Page II-139 of the FGEIS recognized that even with the improvements at Wade Road and NYS Route 7, the link between Wade Road and the I-87 Exit 6 interchange and the interchange itself will continue to operate at level of service F during peak hour conditions. The interchange overpass is already 7 lanes wide; therefore, future improvements of any significance at this overpass are not feasible. To accommodate the traffic projected under the Cumulative Growth Scenario, a multi-level grade separated interchange would likely be required. This would eliminate much of the existing commercial development in this area. For this reason, efforts were concentrated to improve the Exit 4 and Exit 5 interchanges of I-87. A higher percentage of traffic accesses the Study Area at these two interchanges than at Exit 6. Transportation improvements identified in Option 1 and Option 2 would divert some traffic from Exit 6 to Exit 4 or 5 of I-87. However, improvements of any significance to the Exit 6 interchange of I-87 area may not be feasible.

**II.H.19. Route 7 Bypass:**

The route from Sicker Avenue to Kelly Road, Old Niskayuna Road and Exit 5 of I-87 would primarily serve as a local bypass for Route 7 rather than a service road. The intent of service roads is to provide direct access to establishments and developments immediately adjacent to the mainline while limiting

interruptions of traffic flow. The connection of these two-lane roads would not significantly alter the traffic volumes along Route 7. The circuitous routing would also make it less attractive to potential users.

**II.H.20. Short-term Improvements:**

The list of short-term improvements in Table II-H-2 represents mitigation measures necessary to correct existing traffic deficiencies. The implementation of these improvements will result in more efficient traffic movement in the Study Area, but will not address any future deficiencies resulting from the Cumulative Growth Scenario.

The proposed widening of Watervliet Shaker Road in the vicinity of Ann Lee Pond will have an impact on the character of the area including potential impacts to the Watervliet Shaker Historic District and the Ann Lee Pond Nature and Historic Preserve. This would have to be taken into consideration during the detailed design of this improvement.

**II.H.21. Airport Access Road:**

Closing of the Airport Access Road to through traffic is based on a conceptual plan for terminal expansion prepared by an architect for Albany County.

**II.H.22. Transportation Options:**

Both transportation options outlined in Section II,H of the FGEIS will have environmental impacts including impacts to agricultural lands. It will be the responsibility of the lead agency and other involved agencies to determine what level of improvements are acceptable from an environmental and economic standpoint and the steps necessary to ensure that the appropriate level of improvements are implemented.

#### **II.H.23. Route 7 Widening:**

The NYSDOT has indicated that there are not any plans to widen Route 7 to six lanes; however, the traffic which would result from the Cumulative Growth Scenario would require this improvement for an acceptable level of service to be maintained at the end of the 15-year planning period. There would be practical difficulties associated with widening Route 7, including extensive acquisition of businesses and residences. Although Route 5 currently carries a higher volume of traffic than Route 7, the location and scale of future developments proposed for Route 7 as outlined in the FGEIS indicates that Route 7 will carry a higher volume than Route 5 at the end of the 15-year planning period.

#### **II.H.24. Magnitude of Impacts:**

The FGEIS makes no assumptions that the environmental and fiscal impacts associated with the Cumulative Growth Scenario can be completely mitigated. Even if every mitigation measure is successfully implemented, the economic costs will still be substantial. One purpose of the GEIS process was to evaluate impacts and mitigation measures associated with the Cumulative Growth Scenario. During the preparation of the Findings Statement(s) each involved agency must identify what mitigation measures are appropriate and will be required. If some mitigation measures are deemed impractical due to economics or other constraints, then these agencies will have to take steps to ensure that a reduced level of growth occurs within the Study Area.

#### **II.H.25. Impacts on Route 9:**

The construction of the Watervliet Shaker Road tunnel under the north-south Airport runway may have an impact on traffic patterns beyond the limits of the Study Area. As indicated on page II-155 of the FGEIS, the traffic

analyses have not attempted to address the more regional needs that may develop along the mainline of I-87 due to the increased traffic demand that is expected from development within the Study Area. This is beyond the scope of this GEIS. The traffic analyses have, however, attempted to address the transportation improvements which are necessary to adequately support development in the Study Area based on the Cumulative Growth Scenario.

**II.H.26. Existing TSM Programs:**

The TSM programs described in the DGEIS are limited to three major programs which are the most successful and easiest to implement. This included ride sharing programs, variable work hour programs and, transit programs. One or more elements of each of these TSM programs is currently being implemented in the Capital District. It is recognized that very aggressive TSM Programs will be required to achieve a 25 percent reduction in the additional Peak Hour traffic demand in the Study Area.

**II.H.27. Cost of TSM Programs:**

The cost of implementing TSM Programs will vary depending on which TSM Programs are implemented and the degree to which local authorities will be able to transfer the cost of implementing these programs to the private developer. The FGEIS indicates that 77 percent of all new traffic generated under the Cumulative Growth Scenario is related to office development and, therefore, an opportunity exists to require developers to incorporate mandatory TSM Programs as part of the project review process (see page II-167). The degree to which this effort is successful will depend to some extent on the individual Findings of the lead agency and other involved agencies.

Based on information provided by the CDTC, a number of communities across the country have instituted TSM Programs which require employer participation and/or provide direct staff support to alleviate traffic problems. If a serious attempt is made to establish TSM programs which include substantial financial incentives along with commuting alternatives which compete with the private automobile, travelers will leave their vehicle for other means of commuting to and from work. If these factors are confronted by a TSM program, trip reductions in the range of 20 to 40 percent are possible.

Major ridesharing programs which do not offer financial incentives to travelers historically have resulted in trip reductions of 8 to 16 percent. Major ridesharing programs which do offer financial incentives to travelers have historically resulted in trip reductions in the range of 20 to 40 percent. These financial incentives vary with the types of programs offered; however, incentives offered in TSM programs around the country range between \$20 to \$40 per month for each trip saved. In addition, the CDTC has indicated that the cost to institute and maintain a TSM program might range between \$200,000 to \$300,000 annually for staffing and office space. Additional funding to market a program effectively could cost up to an additional \$300,000 annually, based on the experience of the City of San Diego in establishing their TSM program in 1990.

Undoubtedly, financial incentives would be required to achieve a 25 percent reduction in the additional Peak Hour traffic demand in the Study Area as stated in the FGEIS. This represents a reduction of approximately 5,200 trips at the end of the 15-year planning period. Financial incentives, as outlined above, would cost approximately \$1,250,000 to \$2,500,000 annually. Add the estimated expenditures for staffing, office space, and marketing and these costs could climb to \$1,750,000 to \$3,100,000 per year.

Some of these expenditures would be borne by the employers who could be required to provide some or all of the financial incentives offered to employees. In turn, some of the incentives could be partially funded through employee charges such as parking permit fees for those who did not participate in a ride sharing program. Nevertheless, the cost of implementing a TSM program for the Study Area should be carefully considered to assure that the program is properly administered and promoted. In this manner, the program will meet its goal of reducing traffic congestion in the Study Area.

#### **II.H.28. Arterial Management:**

Arterial management is an important aspect of managing any roadway system. During the site plan review process each municipality should evaluate new roadways and access points as well as roadway improvements to identify the potential for shared driveways, thus reducing curb cuts. This would be particularly applicable to larger sites being developed for mixed use. Page II-138 describes the concept of limiting access in order to maintain the effectiveness of an arterial as it relates to Route 7. This concept could be applied to other major roadways in the Study Area.

#### **II.H.29. Organization of Highway Improvements:**

Transportation improvements identified in Section II,H of the FGEIS, were presented as two separate improvement options, one of which attempted to offer an alternative which would avoid the environmental and historical impacts associated with the Watervliet Shaker Historic District and Ann Lee Pond. The proposed improvement options were organized according to the major roadways which traverse the Study Area.



**II.H.30. Acceptable Standards:**

The traffic improvements identified in the FGEIS are necessary to maintain acceptable levels of service based on current NYSDOT standards. They are not intended to replicate traffic conditions of 10 or 15 years ago.

**II.H.31 TSM Jurisdiction and Implementation:**

The FGEIS identified TSM measures as a means to reduce traffic volumes especially during the peak hours. Although this analysis was limited to the Study Area, a successful TSM program needs to be implemented on a regional level. The smallest unit to be considered for TSM programs would probably be at the Town level. Municipalities within Albany County should work with the Capital District Transportation Authority, and the CDTC to identify appropriate TSM strategies. Large employers should be targeted for their participation in a TSM program. See also response II-H-27.

**II.H.32 Sidewalks on Sand Creed Road:**

Sidewalks adjacent to Sand Creek Road as well as along other Study Area roadways could be considered to provide safe pedestrian walkways between destinations. Although sidewalks could be constructed at any time, the most cost effective method would be to include provisions for sidewalks during any roadway reconstruction. Finally, Section ILL - Recreation, recommends the

development of a network of bike trails/pedestrian walkways between existing and future residential and commercial parcels to provide residents and employees with opportunities for passive recreation activities and pedestrian access between locations.

## **I. AIR QUALITY**

### **III.1. Air Analysis:**

The Level I air analysis is meant to be a screening technique to allow the Town and Village of Colonie, and Albany County to identify areas of potential carbon monoxide impacts resulting from increased vehicle traffic. The FGEIS recommends on page II-172 that further analysis of six intersections should be conducted to determine if EPA threshold standards are exceeded.

### **III.2. Health Impacts:**

Increases in carbon monoxide levels may result in health impacts to all segments of the population. This is the reason 11 intersections were evaluated for carbon monoxide levels and a recommendation made that Level 2 and, if necessary, Level 3 air quality analysis be conducted. If the roadway improvements recommended to alleviate traffic impacts are implemented, more detailed environmental analysis will be necessary to evaluate site specific impacts. This will include impacts on air quality.

### **III.3**

The comment is noted.

## **J. NOISE**

### **II.J.1. Projected Expansion of Hangar Facilities:**

The Updated Airport Layout Plan and Land Use Study included in Appendix 12 of this FGEIS considers future development at Albany County Airport. Based on this plan, it is likely that future aircraft maintenance activity will be located in the northeast and northwest quadrant of the Airport. As discussed on page II-185, the construction of a noise abatement facility is one method which the Airport and the airlines may consider in future plans for expansion to avoid noise impacts related to engine run ups.

### **II.J.2. Landscaping Techniques to Limit Noise:**

The 1981 ANCLUC study indicated the use of earthen berms or landscaping to reduce aircraft engine noise would only be marginally effective in limiting noise to the Ann Lee Home because of its close proximity to the Airport. The effectiveness of such treatment diminishes rapidly when the distance between an aircraft and noise receptor (e.g. residence) increases. Therefore, such treatment is not likely to have a significant impact in reducing noise from engine run ups for outlying residential areas.

The relocation of hangar facilities will not have a significant impact in reducing noise from engine run ups for outlying areas. The Airport is located on nearly level terrain and, based on the complaints received at the Airport Director's office, residential areas up to one mile away are adversely affected by nighttime run ups. Within a one mile radius, residential areas surround the airport. Moving hangar facilities would have a negligible impact on