

WV 2 Improvements – New Cumberland Environmental Justice Analysis Hancock County, West Virginia

State Project Number: U215-2-6.20.00

**U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration**



**West Virginia Department of Transportation
Division of Highways**



February 2019

The West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOT) is investigating transportation improvements for the Madison Street and Chester Street intersection (WV 2) in New Cumberland. WV 2 carries approximately 7,000 vehicles per day through the City of New Cumberland. Over 10 percent of these vehicles are trucks, many of them tractor trailers and other types of large, over-the-road vehicles. The efficient flow of this amount of car and truck traffic is hindered by two 90-degree turns and at-grade rail crossings on Madison and Chester Streets. The steep grade and tight width on Madison Street also compound traffic movement through New Cumberland, creating an undesirable condition for motorists and pedestrians.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 of February 11, 1994, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations*, requires that the proposed project be assessed to determine whether or not it will have a disproportionately high impact on minority or low-income populations within the area (OPUSA 1994). An analysis of potential environmental justice impacts was conducted to assess if there were environmental justice populations in the study area for all of the build alternatives, and if so, to determine if there would be a disproportionate effect on them from the proposed project. There are three fundamental principles at the core of environmental justice:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations;
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in, the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Environmental justice addresses potentially disproportionately high effects of proposed decisions on low-income populations and minority populations. The Federal Highway Administration defines “disproportionate impacts as adverse effects that are predominately borne by a minority population and/or a low-income population. Disproportionate effects are appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude on environmental justice populations than on nonminority or non-low-income populations (FHWA 2015).

Demographic Overview

Information from the *American Community Survey* was accessed from the U.S. Census Bureau (USCB 2018) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA 2019) environmental justice websites to determine the presence of any minority or low-income populations within the project area. Population estimates from 2017 were also reviewed.

The population of West Virginia during the 2000 U.S. Census was 1,808,344 (USCB 2000). By 2010, the statewide population had grown to 1,852,994 (USCB 2010). The population in Hancock County steadily increased from 1850 until it peaked in 1980 when it reached 40,418. It has been steadily declining since 1980 when the peak population was recorded. The most recent population estimate for Hancock County was 29,921 in 2017 (USCB 2018). Population projections for the area indicate the county's population will decline approximately 17 percent over the next 14 years (WVU 2014). As a comparison, the population of West Virginia is expected to grow by 1.4 percent by the year 2035. Table 1 provides a demographic overview of Hancock County, the City of New Cumberland, Census Tract (CT) 212, and CT 212 Block Group (BG) 2 as they relate to the State of West Virginia.

Table 1
Demographic Overview

Area	Population Characteristics					Low-Income Households		Housing	
	Total Population	White	African Amer.	Other Minority	Percent Minority	Total Low Income	Percent Low Income	Units	Households
Hancock County	29,921	28,535	640	746	4.6	3,319	26.0	14,413	12,760
City of New Cumberland	1,102	1,100	0	2	0.2	225	43.7	563	515
Census Tract 212	4,077	4,038	12	27	1.0	371	22.3	1,803	1,664
Census Tract 212 BG2	1,371	1,359	0	12	0.9	196	32.4	652	604
West Virginia	1,836,843	1,714,591	65,300	56,952	6.7	215,006	29.1	889,277	737,671

Methodology

The analytical methodology employs a comparative screening analysis that measures potentially impacted populations to determine if an environmental justice population would see a disproportionate impact when compared to the non-environmental justice populations. This

methodology identifies a threshold and compares block group data to that threshold. If block group data exceed the threshold, the potential for disproportionate effects to occur on that block group is judged to be present. It does not address potential impacts to individual members of environmental justice populations, instead evaluating impacts to neighborhoods as a whole.

The analysis utilized currently available information from the following U.S. Census units: Hancock County, the City of New Cumberland, and CT 212 Block Group 2. Population, race, household, and poverty data were retrieved directly from the U.S. Census American Fact Finder (USCB 2018). The factors used for the environmental justice screening are found in Table 2. Low-income populations were identified as households with yearly incomes less than \$25,000. Nationwide, a household of four with an annual income of \$24,600 is considered below the poverty level (USHHS 2017).

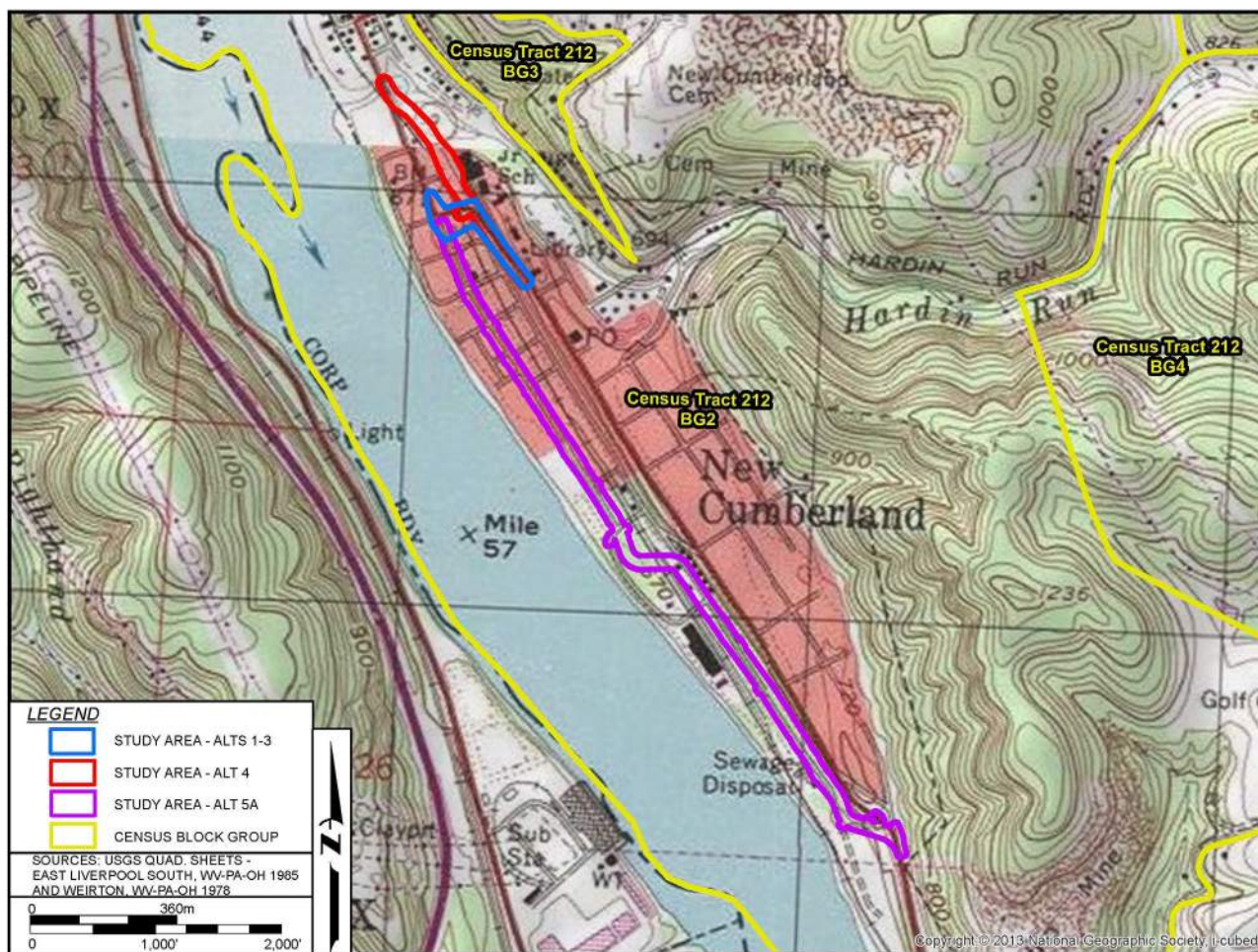
Table 2
Environmental Justice Screening Factors

Area	Total Population	White Population	Minority Population	Percent Minority	Low-Income Households	Percent Low-Income Households
Hancock County	29,921	28,535	1,386	4.6	3,319	26.0
City of New Cumberland	1,102	1,100	2	0.2	225	43.7
Census Tract 212 BG2	1,371	1,359	12	0.9	196	32.4

Findings

The minority population (0.9 percent) within the study area (i.e., CT 212 BG 2) did not exceed the screening threshold of Hancock County (4.6 percent) and is comparable to the City of New Cumberland (0.2 percent). With a percentage of 32.4, the low-income population of the study area exceeds the screening threshold of Hancock County. When compared to the low-income population within the City of New Cumberland as a whole (43.7 percent), the population of low-income peoples within the study area (32.4 percent) is less. Alternative 1 would require eight residential displacements; Alternative 2 would require one residential displacement; Alternative 3 would require eight residential displacements; Alternative 4 would require eight residential displacements; and Alternative 5A would require 12 residential displacements. Low-income populations exist throughout the City of New Cumberland; however, based on field observations

and residential displacements, Alternative 5A would have the greatest potential to impact low-income populations of any of the build alternatives analyzed for the project.



Disproportionately High and Adverse Effects

A disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority and low-income populations means an adverse effect that:

- Is predominately borne by a minority population and/or a low-income population, or
- Will be suffered by the minority population and/or low-income population and is appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effect that will be suffered by the non-minority population and/or non-low-income population.

The displacements would be managed in full compliance with the requirements of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

The project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.

Although there is a high percentage of low-income individuals in the study area, the project will eliminate a traffic bottleneck in New Cumberland with minimum impact on the community. By improving local transportation patterns, it will enhance community cohesion for all residents. Thus, the effects of the project are considered positive and will be shared by all populations within the area equally.

References

Federal Highway Administration. 2015. *Environmental Justice Reference Guide*. Washington, District of Columbia.

Office of the President of the United States. 1994. *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations*. Washington, District of Columbia.

United States Census Bureau. 2000. *Population Counts*. Washington, District of Columbia.

United States Census Bureau. 2010. *Population Counts*. Washington, District of Columbia.

United States Census Bureau. 2018. *American Community Survey*. Washington, District of Columbia.

United States Census Bureau. 2018. *American Fact Finder*. Washington, District of Columbia.

United States Department of Health and Human Services (USHHS). 2017. *Poverty Guidelines*. Washington, District of Columbia.

United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2019. *Environmental Justice Geographic Screening and Mapping Tool*. Washington, District of Columbia.

West Virginia University Bureau of Business and Economic Research (WVU). 2014. *Population Trends in West Virginia through 2030*. Morgantown, West Virginia.