

A. INTRODUCTION

This section assesses whether changes in the Project and in background conditions since 2006 would result in any new or different significant adverse neighborhood character impacts that were not previously identified in the 2006 FEIS. The regulatory context and methodology for this analysis are the same as described in the 2006 FEIS.

B. CHANGES IN BACKGROUND CONDITIONS

As discussed in Section 2, “Analytical Framework,” in connection with the preparation of this Technical Memorandum, background conditions and the status of development projects anticipated for completion through 2015 have been updated for the FEIS study area. Overall, the total development anticipated to be completed by the Project’s 2015 Build year is similar to the total development anticipated to have been completed by 2010 (as analyzed in the 2006 FEIS) but with a smaller amount of office and community facility development and more hotel, residential, and retail development.

The 2006 FEIS examined neighborhood character within a ¼-mile study area. This radius encompasses portions of four districts and neighborhoods, including a superblock corridor that contains the Farley Complex, Hell’s Kitchen, the Garment Center/Herald Square commercial district (in which the Development Transfer Site is located), and the residential neighborhood of Chelsea. A variety of conditions characterize these four distinct neighborhoods, and this would continue to be the case with the anticipated changes in background conditions through 2015. The development over the Penn Station Rail Yard on Ninth Avenue between West 31st and 33rd Streets would continue to diminish the visibility of transportation uses in the area, add density and height on Ninth Avenue, and greatly strengthen the commercial character of the corridor. Hell’s Kitchen would be expected to strengthen as a cohesive residential and commercial neighborhood in the Future Without the Proposed Action. The character of the Chelsea neighborhood and the Garment Center/Herald Square commercial district still would not be expected to substantially change, although the Garment Center/Herald Square trend of replacement of some manufacturing uses with commercial and residential uses would be expected to continue.

In summary, the character of the various neighborhoods within the study area would remain similar to what was described in the 2006 FEIS, even though there would be more of a trend toward residential, hotel, and retail development than office uses with the changes in background conditions and the addition of different No Build projects. Therefore, the changes in background conditions since 2006 and future conditions anticipated through 2015 would not substantially alter the conclusions presented in the FEIS for neighborhood character.

C. PROJECT DESIGN CHANGES

FARLEY COMPLEX—PHASE 1

The proposed below-grade changes to the Project do not include any changes to its proposed uses, and would not require any new structures or expansion of building floor area. The proposed changes would modify the Farley Building to accommodate the proposed passenger rail uses—as anticipated in the 2006 FEIS—although the configuration and design of these modifications would be somewhat different than previously analyzed. Therefore, the proposed below-grade changes would not change the FEIS conclusion that the Project would not result in significant adverse environmental impacts with respect to neighborhood character.

FARLEY COMPLEX—PHASE 2

AMTRAK STATION OPTION

The proposed changes under the Amtrak Station Option would not involve any alterations to the overall program of uses for the Project. Although the primary occupant of the station would change, as would some design elements, these changes would not require any new structures or expansion of building floor area. The Amtrak Station Option would be expected to improve the appearance and activity level of the Eighth and Ninth Avenue streetscapes and attract new office workers, residents, and visitors to the project site and surrounding area who would utilize the neighborhood streets. As in the 2006 FEIS, the proposed changes are anticipated to improve the neighborhood character of the area immediately surrounding the Farley Complex between West 31st and West 34th Streets and Eighth and Ninth Avenue. The Amtrak Station Option would not introduce any new economic activities to the study area or alter existing economic patterns, and it would not directly displace any uses or properties. All of the proposed uses are well established and present in the study area that is characterized by a dense and diverse amount of economic activity in and around Penn Station and the Farley Complex. The Amtrak Station Option also would have a beneficial effect on the neighborhood character of Hell's Kitchen as the proposed Moynihan Station would provide new transit uses to support the existing and emerging residential uses in the area. Although the Amtrak Station Option would be anticipated to result in a slight increase in traffic in the area immediately surrounding the Farley Complex, this would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. Similarly, noise levels would continue to be at typically high levels associated with a midtown urban location.

In summary, while the Amtrak Station Option, like the Project assessed in the 2006 FEIS, would bring physical changes to the Farley Building, new uses to the site, and generate increased activity at and around the site (i.e., additional traffic and pedestrian movements), these changes would not adversely affect neighborhood character. Therefore, the proposed changes under the Amtrak Station Option would not change the FEIS conclusion that the Project would not result in significant adverse environmental impacts with respect to neighborhood character.

OPEN STATION OPTION

The Open Station Option would be more similar in terms of station layout to the station design examined in the 2006 FEIS than would be the Amtrak Station Option. The non-station development portion of the Open Station Option would also be similar to the Amtrak Station Option, but there would be some minor differences in the layout of retail spaces on the street and concourse levels, a slightly different configuration of the retail entrances on West 31st and West

Moynihan Station Development Project Technical Memorandum

33rd Streets, and a different configuration of elevators in the 32nd Street corridor between the Intermodal Hall and Ninth Avenue. In addition, the Open Station Option would include USPS space and a shared loading area on the main concourse level of the Western Annex in keeping with the design assessed in the 2006 FEIS.

The proposed changes under the Open Station Option would not involve any alterations to the overall program of uses for the Project and would not require any new structures or expansion of building floor area. The Open Station Option, like the Amtrak Station Option, would be expected to improve the appearance and activity level of the Eighth and Ninth Avenue streetscapes and attract new office workers, residents, and visitors to the project site and surrounding area who would utilize the neighborhood streets. As in the 2006 FEIS and as with the Amtrak Station Option, the proposed changes are anticipated to improve the neighborhood character of the area immediately surrounding the Farley Complex between West 31st and West 34th Streets and Eighth and Ninth Avenue. The Open Station Option would not introduce any new economic activities to the study area or alter existing economic patterns, and it would not directly displace any uses or properties. All of the proposed uses are well established and present in the study area that is characterized by a dense and diverse amount of economic activity in and around Penn Station and the Farley Complex. The Open Station Option, like the Amtrak Station Option, would also have a beneficial effect on the neighborhood character of Hell's Kitchen as the proposed Moynihan Station would provide new transit uses to support the existing and emerging residential uses in the area. Although the Open Station Option would be anticipated to result in a slight increase in traffic in the area immediately surrounding the Farley Complex, this would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. Similarly, noise levels would continue to be at typically high levels associated with a midtown urban location.

In summary, while the Open Station Option, like the Amtrak Station Option and the project assessed in the 2006 FEIS, would bring physical changes to the Farley Building, new uses to the site, and generate increased activity at and around the site (i.e., additional traffic and pedestrian movements), these changes would not adversely affect neighborhood character. Therefore, the proposed changes under the Open Station Option would not change the FEIS conclusion that the Project would not result in significant adverse environmental impacts with respect to neighborhood character. *