



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Nassau Hub Study Overview

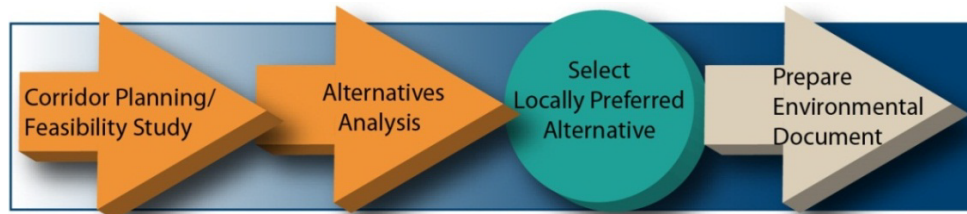
Nassau County has completed an Alternatives Analysis (AA) to address transportation problems in the area known as the Nassau Hub. The AA comprises the first phase of the Nassau Hub Study, the purpose of which is to define new transportation options and identify land use strategies that will help promote economic development, create jobs in the Study Area, and improve access and mobility; this, in turn, will enhance the quality of life for all Nassau County residents. The AA examined opportunities for introducing realistic and practical transit improvements within the Hub Study Area, and was conducted in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and in accordance with FTA requirements. The purpose of the AA is to select a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). This AA Report documents the technical studies and public and agency involvement comprising the AA process and recommends the LPA.

Following formal selection of the LPA and with the FTA's concurrence, Nassau County will conduct an environmental review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. The review will result in the preparation of a draft environmental document (Environmental Assessment [EA] or Environmental Impact Statement [EIS]) for public review and comment. Nassau County anticipates that the environmental review will be concluded with a final EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) and, if successful, federal funding to implement the LPA.

Transit projects seeking funding from the FTA New Starts or Small Starts program must follow a standard process (see Figure 1-1). New/Small Starts is the Federal funding program for new transit initiatives and Nassau County must follow a prescribed process to be eligible to receive these funds. An important early step in this standardized planning process is the preparation of an AA that documents existing and future transportation problems, evaluates a range of potential alternatives to address those problems, and selects an LPA.<sup>1</sup> An environmental review document is then prepared to fully disclose any potential impacts of the LPA on the human and natural environment. During both the AA and environmental review processes, the public and other stakeholders are given opportunity to review the analyses and provide comments and other input.

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<sup>1</sup> The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users ([SAFETEA-LU] Public Law 109-59), which governed federal surface transportation spending until its expiration in 2009, required that an AA be completed before a project sponsor could apply to the FTA Capital Investment Program (Section 5309). The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21), enacted in 2012, eliminated the requirement for a stand-alone AA under Section 5309 and instead relies on the evaluation of options that may occur during the metropolitan planning process and the review of alternatives that occurs to meet NEPA requirements. Project sponsors may still conduct a stand-alone AA separate from the NEPA review if they wish. This may ultimately streamline the environmental review process because the results of prior planning work evaluating alternatives may be incorporated in the NEPA review ([http://www.fta.dot.gov/12304\\_15522.html](http://www.fta.dot.gov/12304_15522.html); information retrieved August 1, 2014).

*Figure 1-1: AA/EIS Process Flow Chart*

Source: Jacobs, 2010.

## 1.2 Background

In 2003, the Nassau County Planning Department<sup>2</sup> began efforts to position the County to be eligible for Federal grants related to improving, upgrading and extending the transit network within the County, specifically the Study Area. The results were documented in the 2006 *Nassau Hub Major Investment Study Final Report* (the MIS) that examined and analyzed the demographic, economic and transportation issues within an area known as the “Nassau Hub.” The MIS concluded that the County should further study potential transit and related land use improvements, within the context of the FTA’s project development process.

## 1.3 The Nassau Hub Study Area

### 1.3.1 Primary Study Area

The Nassau Hub Primary Study Area (Study Area) occupies an approximate 11.7 square-mile area in the heart of Nassau County, and is home to Hofstra University (existing campus and planned medical school), Nassau Community College, Museum Row, the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, the County Government Center, Nassau University Medical Center, Mitchel Field, Eisenhower Park, Roosevelt Field, and other notable County features (see Figure 1-2). Additionally, thousands of residents, employees, students and others live and work in the area. This crucial economic center, so vital to the future of Nassau County, has substantial traffic congestion, lacks efficient and direct transit choices and includes large areas of disjointed land use patterns. These factors have contributed to long commutes, decreased environmental quality, and overall difficulty in traveling to, from and within the area.

The Primary Study Area was established as the geographic focus of this Study and is the area where it was anticipated the majority of physical improvements associated with any given alternative may occur.

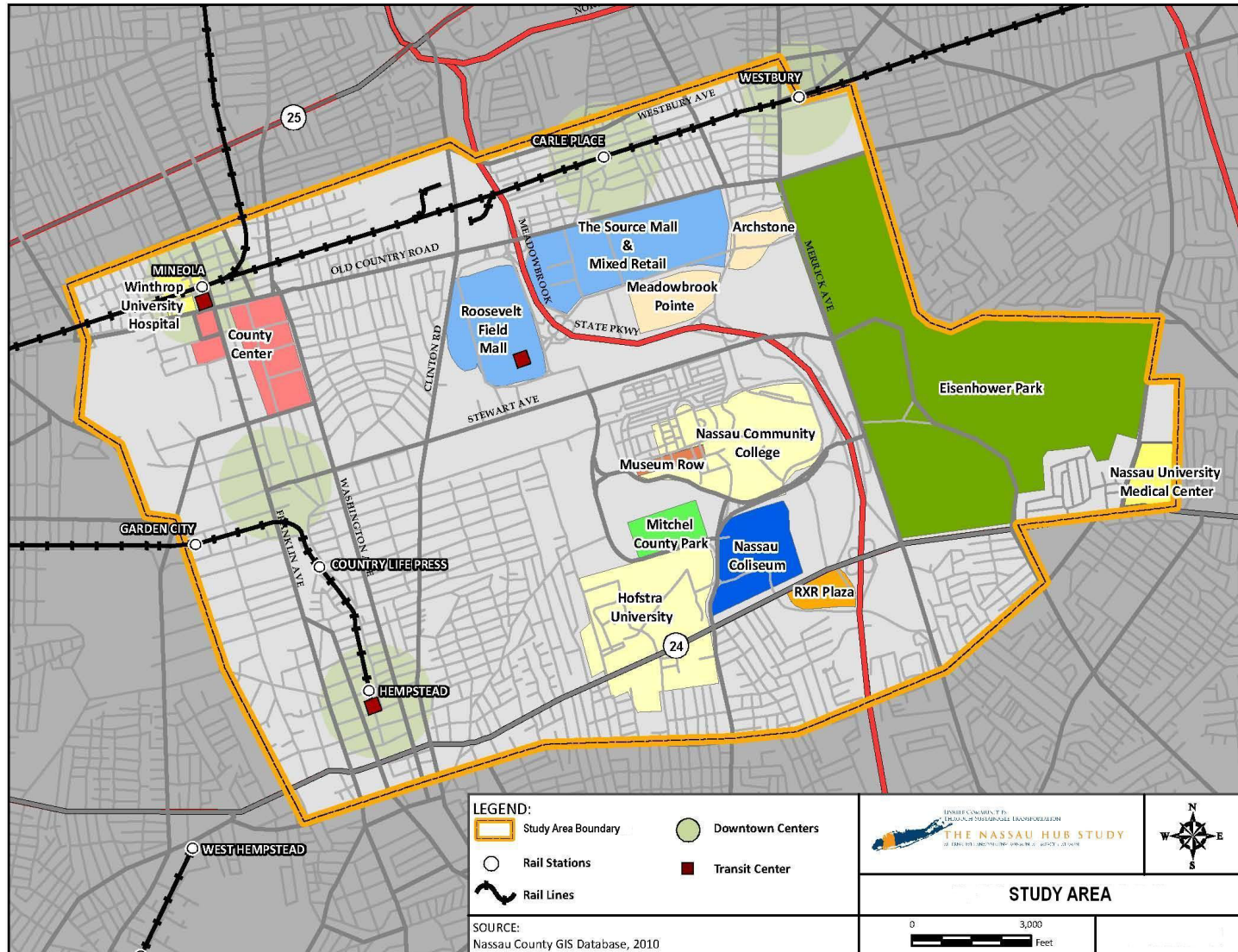
### 1.3.2 Regional Study Area

A Regional Study Area has also been defined and refined during the Study based on travel patterns, potential opportunities for connections among activity centers, and key economic development opportunities outside the Study Area. Building on the conclusions of the MIS, coupled with a need to incorporate areas that have the greatest potential for economic development, boundaries were initially established. As the Study progressed, the Regional Study Area was expanded to capture the context of the larger travel market to the Study Area and to be consistent with the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council’s (NYMTC) 2014 – 2040 Regional Transportation Plan, or Plan 2040 (see Figure 1-3).

<sup>2</sup> The Nassau County Planning Department is now the Nassau County Department of Public Works/Planning Division.



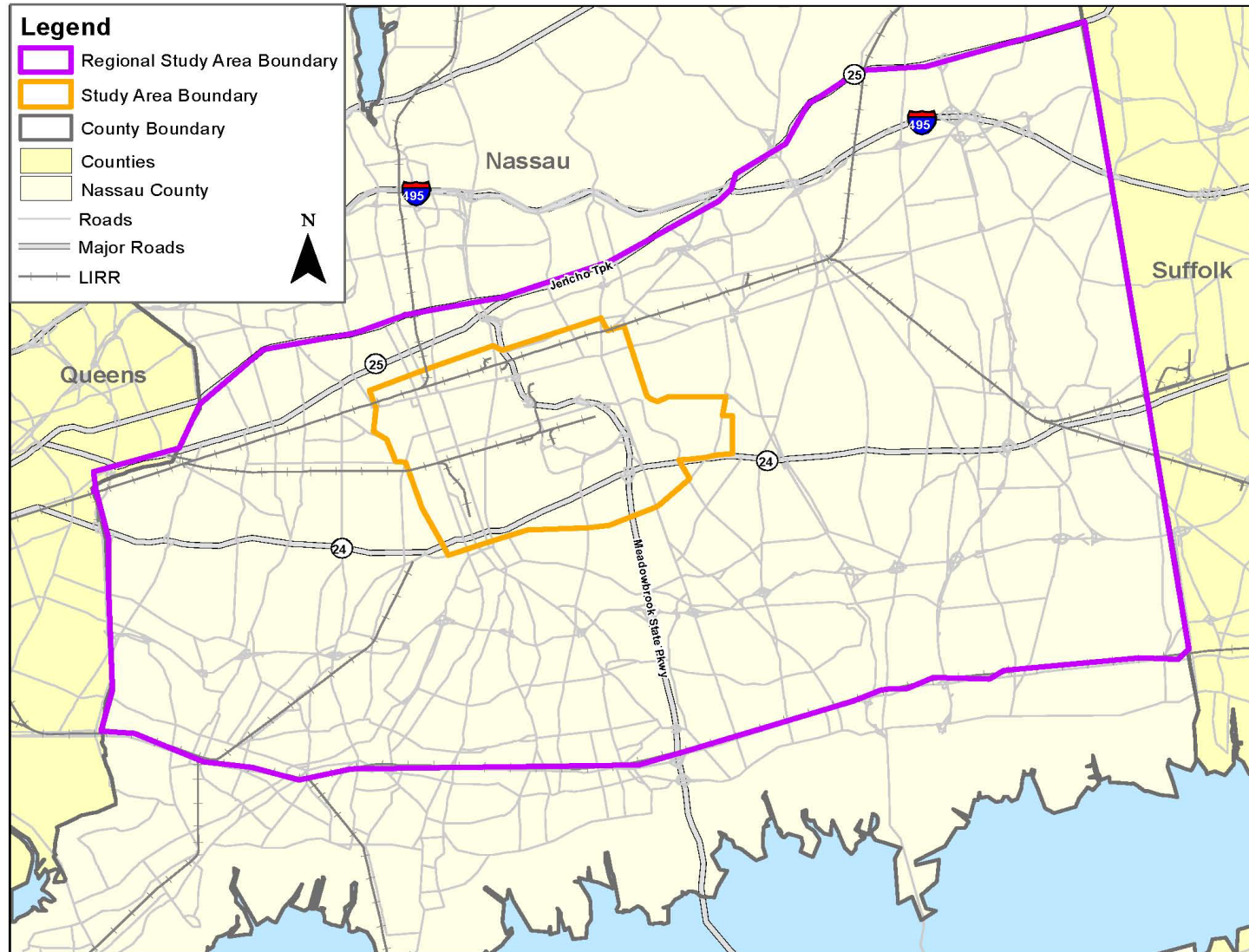
Figure 1-2: Study Area



Source: Jacobs, 2010.



Figure 1-3: Regional Study Area



Source: Jacobs, 2010.