



IMPEDIMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE USE AND DISPOSITION OF THE ROBERT MOSES PARKWAY

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**NIAGARA POWER PROJECT (FERC NO. 2216)
FUTURE USE AND DISPOSITION OF THE ROBERT MOSES PARKWAY**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall objective of this study is to summarize information related to a particular segment of the Robert Moses Parkway (Parkway), a four-lane north-south arterial extending from the North Grand Island Bridges in the south to the Town of Porter in the north. The New York Power Authority (NYPA) constructed most of the Parkway in 1962 at the time of Niagara Power Project (NPP) construction.

The Parkway has been subject to criticism by some for having negatively impacted the “naturalness” of the Niagara gorge rim, and for having greatly reduced Niagara River Gorge accessibility. To address these perceived issues, many have urged modifications to the Parkway design. Some have advocated removing the Parkway entirely. Others prefer the status quo.

The Robert Moses Parkway has been the subject of a large number of proposals, plans, and studies since the early 1970s; virtually all of them conceptual plans that have never been implemented (paper studies). From 2001 to 2003, however, a pilot study was carried out by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) on behalf of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historical Preservation (NYSOPRHP) to determine the effect of converting one side of a five-mile stretch of parkway to a foot and bicycle trail, restricting motor traffic, and increasing cross-Parkway access to the gorge.

This report summarizes the conclusions of all proposals, plans, and studies, including the recent pilot study. It also summarizes impediments to permanent modifications of the Parkway, as well as identifying opportunities for making such modifications.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The New York Power Authority (NYPA) is engaged in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing of the Niagara Power Project (NPP) in the Town of Lewiston, Niagara County, New York. The present operating license of the plant expires in August 2007. As part of its preparation for the relicensing of the NPP, NYPA is developing background information related to the ecological, engineering, recreational, cultural, and socioeconomic aspects of the Project. The FERC Project boundary is shown in [Figure 1.1-1](#).

The Robert Moses Parkway (Parkway), a large portion of which was completed in 1962 by NYPA, today extends approximately 14 miles from the North Grand Island Bridges to Fort Niagara State Park ([Figure 1.1-2](#)). The Parkway was designed to link a series of state-owned parks in Niagara County, facilitating scenic and recreational automobile usage. As built, the Parkway passed through the historic Niagara Reservation State Park and Prospect Park. In the late 1970s, the Parkway was removed from a portion of the Reservation. It has been argued by members of some stakeholder groups in the FERC relicensing process that the Parkway has not been a boon to the region, but rather has destroyed natural habitat and reduced access to the Niagara gorge.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of this report are as follows:

- Describe the roles and responsibilities of NYPA, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and New York State Department of Transportation regarding the Parkway and its associated lands;
- Describe regulatory obligations regarding any proposed changes to the utilization of the Parkway and its associated lands;

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- Describe proposed redevelopment plans affecting or affected by the Parkway;
- Describe results of ongoing pilot studies as they relate to the Parkway;
- Describe the Robert Moses Parkway historical purpose and intent, functional classification (DOT classification), and service role within the existing transportation network based on existing information;
- Identify impediments and opportunities related to the future of the Robert Moses Parkway.

1.3 Investigation Area

The section of the Parkway being investigated for this report runs from the North Grand Island Bridges to the Ridge Road interchange in the Town of Lewiston, a distance of approximately 10.8 miles. ([Figure 1.3-1](#) and [Figure 1.3-2](#)). The section of the Robert Moses Parkway north of the Upper Mountain Road interchange was paid for and constructed by the New York State Department of Public Works. This agency no longer exists and the ownership and maintenance of this section of the Robert Moses Parkway is now the responsibility of the New York State Department of Transportation. The section south of the interchange, extending approximately 9.3 miles to the Grand Island Bridges, was constructed by NYPA. The portion of the Parkway between Niagara Reservation State Park and the Ridge Road interchange in the Town of Lewiston has been the focus of public attention for many years

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**FIGURE 1.1-1
FERC PROJECT BOUNDARY**

[NIP – General Location Maps]

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**FIGURE 1.1-2
ROUTE OF ROBERT MOSES PARKWAY**

[NIP – General Location Maps]

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**FIGURE 1.3-1
ROBERT MOSES PARKWAY INVESTIGATION AREA**

[NIP – General Location Maps]

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**FIGURE 1.3-2
ROBERT MOSES PARKWAY INVESTIGATION AREA WITH DIGITAL ORTHOIMAGERY**

[NIP – General Location Maps]

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2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Niagara Power Project

The Niagara Power Project, owned and operated by the New York Power Authority (Power Authority, Authority, or NYPA), was licensed by the Federal Power Commission in 1958. Construction of the Project began in 1958, and generation of electricity commenced in 1961. The original 50-year operating license expires in August 2007.

2.2 Robert Moses Parkway

2.2.1 Description

The Robert Moses Parkway, named for the chairman of the Authority at the time of NPP construction, is a four-lane, limited-access highway running from the North Grand Island bridges in the south to Fort Niagara State Park in the north. Over most of its length it is divided, with a grass median. As built, it provides two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction. To preserve its scenic nature, and because of clearance restrictions at the North Grand Island Bridges, the Parkway is designated as a non-commercial route, with a posted speed limit along the divided sections of 55 mph.

The southernmost portion of the Parkway (which actually runs east-west), links I-190 at the North Grand Island Bridges to the City of Niagara Falls at Buffalo Avenue/Quay Street ([Figure 1.1-2](#)). Since the late 1970s, the Parkway has been closed to northbound traffic at this point. Traffic that was originally routed through the Niagara Reservation State Park has been for the most part removed from the Reservation, although remnants of the Parkway preserve a connection, via Rainbow Boulevard, to the point at which the Parkway continues northward as a two-lane, two-way divided highway. Southbound traffic through this area continues from the Parkway via Rainbow Boulevard South to Quay Street where an entrance ramp is provided for re-entry onto the four-lane divided section of the Parkway. Niagara Reservation State Park traffic from the east can access the Niagara Reservation's main entrance at

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Prospect Street by proceeding along the northbound lane of the Parkway, which is a one-way scenic park drive between Quay Street and Prospect Street.

From north of Main Street, the Parkway continues northward to its terminus in the Town of Porter (Lake Avenue, or NY State Route 18), where access is provided to Fort Niagara State Park.

2.2.2 Historical Setting

In 1887, famed landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., discussed the concept of a (carriage-) road called the “*Riverway*” along the Niagara River in his *General Plan for the Improvement of the Niagara Reservation* (co-authored with Calvert Vaux) (Historic Plan). Olmsted notes that the plan for the Riverway is to extend throughout the length of the Reservation. The plan states that this Riverway is a necessity, should be kept as far as possible from the shore, and should contain an alignment “...discontinuous with straight outlines and angular changes in direction”.

In the late 1950s, as part of its construction of the Niagara Power Project, the Power Authority of the State of New York constructed 9.3 miles of parkway on lands it owned along the Niagara River. This Robert Moses Parkway, completed in 1962, extended from the North Grand Island Bridges in the south to the Upper Mountain Road interchange in the Town of Lewiston to the north.

2.2.3 Ownership and Administration within the Investigation Area

2.2.3.1 Land Ownership

The entire waterfront (defined as the area between the inland boundary of the Parkway and the shoreline) in the Investigation Area is owned by the State of New York, either in the name of the People of the State of New York or in the name of particular state entities. NYPA and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) exercise control and jurisdiction over most of the waterfront. The Niagara Falls Bridge Commission owns the property adjacent to the

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Rainbow Bridge, Whirlpool Bridge and Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. See [Figure 2.2.3.1-1](#) depicting land owned by NYPA along the Parkway corridor.

NYPA owns the waterfront from the North Grand Island Bridges to the Niagara Reservation State Park, from the northern boundary of the Niagara Reservation State Park to the remnant of Bath Avenue just north of the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge, and from the northern boundary of Devils Hole State Park to the east-west northern boundary of Artpark, approximately coincident with Tuscarora Street in the Village of Lewiston (with two minor exceptions in this area). It should also be noted that ownership in the “gap” between the second and third areas so listed is complicated; NYPA owns certain incidental fragments of property under and adjacent to the Parkway proper, and it also owns two non-connecting sections of the right of way for the Great Gorge Railroad, which ran along the base of the Gorge. See [Figure 2.2.3.1-1](#) for a map of the Parkway within the NPP Boundary.

2.2.3.2 Parkway Administration

That portion of the Parkway constructed by NYPA, extending approximately 9.3 miles from the Grand Island Bridges to the intersection with Upper Mountain Road, is administered by NYSOPRHP. Maintenance responsibilities are coordinated with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), Region 5, Buffalo, New York.

The responsibility for operation and maintenance (O&M) of the Parkway was transferred from NYPA to NYSOPRHP pursuant to NYPA Trustee Resolutions of 1961 and 1964 and a letter agreement from the latter year and from NYSOPRHP to NYSDOT in 1975 pursuant to an agreement and state budget resolution (1975/76 State Finance Act).

With respect to the entire Investigation Area, any significant change in the Parkway’s configuration, management, or usage would need to be reviewed and approved by NYSDOT. In addition, approximately 5.85 miles of the Parkway is within the Boundary established pursuant to the Project license granted by FERC, which means that any significant change with respect to those portions of the

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Parkway so included would be subject to approval by FERC. It should be noted that FERC approval would pre-empt any competing state jurisdiction.

Portions of the roadway are part of the National Highway System (NHS), and are therefore subject to the requirements of the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (USDOT-FHWA).

2.2.3.3 NYSDOT Functional Classification and Service Role

The Robert Moses Parkway's DOT functional classification is "Principal Arterial Non-connecting Link." Functional classification is the process by which streets and highways are grouped according to the character of their intended use. The basis of the system is the relationship between the roads and the functions they serve, the relevant functions being generally grouped into two fundamental services: (1) access to property, and (2) travel mobility. Most roads perform varying degrees of these services and the combination of these services determines the road classification (i.e., Local Road, Collector Road, and Arterial).

The Parkway's Federal Aid Highway classification is "Federal-Aid Urban System." This classification is also based on the type of area served, which is in turn based on the U.S. Bureau of the Census definitions of urban area, small urban area, and rural area. The rules governing the Federal Aid Highway classification system require that the urban area boundary smooth out irregularities; encompass fringe areas of residential, commercial, industrial, national defense, and transportation significance; include major highway interchanges where appropriate; and consider transit service areas. This system of classification is used in developing long-range transportation plans and determining federal aid funding categories. Classification under this system does not, however, mean that federal funds are automatically available for improvements.

The Parkway has served as a transportation link between the City of Niagara Falls and points north, south, east, and west. Communities to the north of the City of Niagara Falls, especially, perceive the Parkway as a vital transportation link (i.e., commuter route).

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2.2.4 Criticism

For years, the Parkway has been subject to criticism in the Niagara region. The criticism has been focused upon whether the Parkway is a benefit to the region or a detriment. The benefit is seen in its service as a major high-speed arterial between the City of Niagara Falls and the northern portions of the Niagara region. The detriment is seen in its impact on native habitat, and its effective elimination of access to the scenic Niagara gorge, especially for pedestrian traffic.

Groups claiming that the Parkway has destroyed natural habitat and impeded access to the Niagara gorge have advocated the removal of the section of the Parkway constructed by NYPA and the creation of facilities consistent with Olmsted's plan for a linear park along the gorge from the Falls to the Village of Lewiston. This plan, say its advocates, would provide for the gorge rim to be restored to a more natural state, and for construction of hiking and biking trails along the park's proposed 6.5-mile length. The advocates of this proposal believe that it is consistent with NYSOPRHP plans to restore Goat Island and the Niagara Reservation State Park to a more natural condition. On a regional basis, such a modification would provide the "middle link" between trails to be constructed along the upper Niagara River and the trail from the Village of Lewiston to Youngstown. The natural restoration would also add over 300 acres to the Globally Significant Important Bird Area (IBA) designated by the American Bird Conservancy's IBA Program along the Niagara River shoreline.

2.2.5 Pilot Study

NYSOPRHP, in conjunction with NYSDOT, recently completed a pilot study to assess the feasibility of the permanent closure of a portion of the Parkway. The Robert Moses Parkway Pilot Project Evaluation, conducted by NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT from September 2001 to September 2003, consisted of converting portions of the two southbound lanes of the divided four-lane highway to a multi-use pedestrian and bicycle path, thereby allowing improved pedestrian access to the Niagara gorge. The converted portion extended from the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center (former Schoellkopf Geological Museum) five miles northward to a point just south of the Lewiston Queenston Bridge.

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To encourage pedestrian access along the new “trailway,” five access points were established for crossing the Parkway. The existing northbound lanes were converted to two-way traffic with a single lane each northbound and southbound.

On the basis of this program’s results, NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT determined that no significant adverse impacts were caused to traffic by the modification. The driving time over the five-mile modified section increased by slightly more than two minutes. Accidents were reduced by about 50%, and vehicle emission levels decreased by 16%. Since access points were provided at five points along the study section, access by pedestrians and bicyclists was improved.

NYSOPRHP with NYSDOT determined that the pilot study configuration of the Parkway adequately serves the transportation needs of the community, and the conversion is therefore to remain in place, with aesthetic and safety improvements, until a future design study determines how to further integrate the new multi-use path and two-way roadway to serve the needs of the community. The Pilot Program study and analysis is expected to lead to a number of recommended modifications and improvements (not detailed in the report).

2.2.6 Predicted Effect of Proposed Changes

The Robert Moses Parkway Pilot Project Evaluation Report concludes that enhancements to existing facilities within the Parkway corridor, in conjunction with NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT Pilot Program enhancements and other proposed future enhancements (such as increased access points), would likely result in an increase of recreational/tourist traffic through the area, both motorized and non-motorized. This should not adversely affect the typical peak (rush) hour traffic, since recreational and tourist usage times would not generally coincide with commuter traffic hours. However, if in the future the Parkway speed were reduced to the suggested 30 mph or if the road were realigned to a more winding, park-like configuration, then travel times between Niagara Falls and Lewiston would undoubtedly increase.

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**FIGURE 2.2.3.1-1
ROBERT MOSES PARKWAY WITHIN PROJECT BOUNDARY**

[NIP – General Location Maps]

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3.0 INFORMATION SUMMARY – ROBERT MOSES PARKWAY

3.1 General Plan for the Improvement of the Niagara Reservation, 1887

In 1887, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux prepared the General Plan for the Improvement of the Niagara Reservation for the Board of Commissioners of the State Reservation of Niagara. The principal theme of this report is to “return” the Reservation to its “native state” as much as possible. The Plan states, “about a seventh part has at present an objectionable artificial character, most of it, for example having been heaped up or dug out in connection with road or building operations”. The plan proposes that these disturbed areas be restored to a “permanently agreeable natural state.” While the plan aims to provide for sufficient roads and walks, and seats at important viewing areas, and for restroom facilities, these should be designed in such a manner as to not intrude harshly upon the natural scenery, should protect it from injury, and safeguard its healthy growth.

The plan recommends that a road called the “Riverway” be constructed for the entire length of the Reservation. It is suggested that this Riverway be placed as far from shore as possible in “discontinuous straight outlines with angular changes in direction” and that “at points it is divided in order to avoid injury to a few promising trees.”

3.2 Application of NYPA to the Federal Power Commission for Development of the Niagara River, August 20, 1956

The original license application for construction and operation of the NPP stipulated that the construction of the Parkway be made a condition of the license (in order to comply with a stated object of the 1950 treaty to preserve and enhance the scenic beauty of Niagara Falls and the Niagara River). The initial phase of Parkway construction and parcels of land acquired extended from the North Grand Island Bridge to the Rainbow Bridge near the eastern boundary of the Niagara Reservation State Park. The area to the north of the Reservation is denoted as “Future Niagara Parkway” on maps attached to this agreement.

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3.3 Agreements among NYPA, NYSOPRHP, and NYSDOT

3.3.1 NYPA with Niagara Frontier State Park Commission, November 27, 1961

In November 1961, a resolution was adopted by NYPA transmitting three sections of the Parkway to the jurisdiction and maintenance of the Niagara Frontier State Park Commission (now part of NYSOPRHP). These three sections were: (1) the section from the North Grand Island Bridges to the Rainbow Bridge in the City of Niagara Falls, (2) section from Cleveland Avenue to Bellevue Avenue, in the City of Niagara Falls, and (3) section from Bellevue Avenue to Devils Hole State Park.

3.3.2 Niagara Frontier State Park Commission with NYPA, December 13, 1961

In December 1961, the Commission formally accepted the transfer of the three above-named sections of the Parkway.

3.3.3 NYPA with Niagara Frontier State Park Commission, July 22, 1964

On July 22, 1964, the NYPA Trustees adopted a resolution granting the State of New York and the Commissioners of the Niagara Frontier State Park Commission the right to possess, use, maintain, control, manage, and govern as part of the State Parkway the property owned by or under the jurisdiction of NYPA in the County of Niagara, New York. Included were the portions of the Niagara Parkway and facilities appurtenant thereto constructed by the Authority incidental to its Niagara Power Project, namely, (1) in the City of Niagara Falls, from the Rainbow Bridge to Ferry Avenue, including the interchange with Main Street, (2) in the City of Niagara Falls, from Ferry Avenue to Cleveland Avenue, (3) in the Town of Lewiston, from Devils Hole to the southerly structural face of the Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant, and (4) in the Town of Lewiston, from the structure of the Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant northward to the intersection of Upper Mountain Road and Lewiston Road. A letter agreement memorializing the NYPA action was issued bearing the same date as the resolution.

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3.3.4 NYPA with NYSOPRHP, June 26, 1974

In June 1974, NYPA granted to NYSOPRHP the right and privilege to possess, use, maintain, control, manage, and govern for State Park purposes (only), approximately 193.5 acres of NYPA-owned land in the Town of Lewiston for the development of Lewiston State Park (now Earle W. Brydges Artpark), effective July 1, 1974.

The Occupancy Agreement was superseded by an agreement calling for a 25-year term on January 31, 2001.

3.3.5 NYPA, NYSDOT, and NYSOPRHP, June 15, 1998

This agreement defines and acknowledges operational and maintenance responsibilities of each party in regard to 31 bridges and highway structures, including two that have since been removed. .

3.4 Transportation Plans

3.4.1 Pine Avenue Business District Urban Design Plan, January 23, 2001.

This report was prepared for the Pine Avenue Business Association and the City of Niagara Falls Department of Community Development.

The Scope of this study encompasses the framework for a set of urban design proposals and guidelines for the Little Italy Niagara Development of Pine Avenue in the City of Niagara Falls. The project area for this study includes Pine Avenue from the Hyde Park intersection to the east to the Main Street intersection to the west, including the City Market district bounded by Elmwood, East Market, and West Market Streets. Also included are some side streets close to Market Street, particularly 19th Street from Elmwood Street to the Walnut Street intersection. However, the focus of the study included the project area east of the Portage Avenue intersection.

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The report discusses improvements to Main Street district and completion of the Quay Street extension to provide direct access to Pine Avenue from the Parkway to help create easier vehicular access to “Little Italy Niagara”. The principal goal of the plan is to transform “Little Italy Niagara” into a pedestrian-friendly place with an “old-world” ambience. The plan, which addresses the physical framework of the district, is intended to help the area realize its full economic potential as the region’s premier business corridor. Initial projects have included the renovation of the City Market, the rebuilding of several businesses storefronts, brick pavers, tree surrounds, decorative banners, and gateway columns. The plan has been formalized as the “Little Italy Niagara Initiative”.

This redevelopment plan does not address impediments or opportunities related to the future use and disposition of the Robert Moses Parkway.

3.5 Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs and Comprehensive Plans

3.5.1 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Niagara Falls, 1992

The Comprehensive Plan represents the city’s vision for the future in terms of population growth, economic development, land use, community service and traffic. The report presents several proposals dealing with the Robert Moses Parkway. The following summarizes the key points in this regard.

The report notes that as part of Niagara Gorge Waterfront Redevelopment, the Parkway north of Niagara Street was downgraded and reconfigured to an urban arterial boulevard. The report states that NYPA owns 162 riverfront acres, which includes the Parkway and an undetermined amount of Niagara gorge acreage. The report also states that O&M responsibilities along the Parkway corridor have been delegated primarily to NYSDOT, but that the division of ownership and O&M responsibilities has hindered the transportation and waterfront planning efforts.

The report suggests that the Parkway separates an estimated six million annual tourists and local/region residents from access to the Niagara River and gorge areas and that no progress has been made toward implementation of projects that would allow greater usage of waterfront areas. The report

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notes that as part of the downtown development plan the City is considering future connections with the Parkway at Hyde Park Boulevard and Portage Road, which would provide greater access to the City of Niagara Falls. It is pointed out that the Parkway is not a continuous route through the City of Niagara Falls and that a portion of the Parkway located entirely within the Niagara Reservation State Park has been restricted to park traffic. The report continues:

The restricted segment begins at the Quay Street exit and ends at the Main Street exit/entranceway to the Parkway north of the Rainbow Bridge Plaza. Traffic is now routed through downtown, utilizing Quay Street, Rainbow Boulevard and Main Street. This channels traffic directly into the Rainbow Center – Tourism Business District. The removed section [of the Parkway] is much shorter, permitting less restricted pedestrian movement to the foot of the Falls and Goat Island, within the Reservation’s Prospect Point Park. Closed sections of the Parkway remain intact and have been reprogrammed for other internal Park transportation and parking purposes. Therefore, for discussion purposes, the Parkway is here divided into two sections: Section 1. North Grand Island Bridge/LaSalle Arterial to its downtown terminus at Quay Street, functioning as an east-west arterial expressway. Section 2. Main Street/Rainbow Boulevard to the North City Line and continuing to Youngstown. This section functions as a north-south arterial expressway.

The report asserts that Section 1 functions primarily as a commuter route to and from the City and that this section of the Parkway is underutilized, with traffic volumes below design capacity. It is noted that, in this section of the Parkway, there are six connections with State and City routes, including the LaSalle Arterial, I-190, Buffalo Avenue, Quay Street, Fourth Street, and Prospect Street, which provide travelers with adequate alternatives to reach the entire City of Niagara Falls. The report notes that because of completed or projected downtown development and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program transportation projects, the City is considering a connection with the Parkway at Hyde Park Boulevard and improvements at Quay Street that would increase the utility of the Parkway to the City by linking the Parkway to Hyde Park Boulevard (NY Route 61) an alternate north-south arterial that bisects the City and connects to Lewiston Road just north of the City. The report further notes that tourists traveling along this section of the Parkway have limited views and access to the Niagara River, which has caused this area to be underutilized.

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The report asserts that Section 2 of the Parkway, which parallels the Niagara gorge beginning in the downtown area (Main Street), and running north beyond the northern City Line, also functions primarily as a commuter route to and from the City, although on a smaller scale than Section 1. The report states that this section of the Parkway is also underutilized, primarily because of limited and difficult-to-reach exits and entries, many dead-end residential streets at the Parkway's edge, and lack of awareness of the route by tourists. The report notes that tourists traveling along this section of the Parkway between downtown and the City's north end are unable to view the Niagara River gorge and that the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center (former Schoellkopf Geological Museum) is isolated on the west side of the Parkway and is perceived as being difficult to access. The report continues:

An overlook parking area is also designated on the west side of the Parkway opposite Spruce Avenue, however, the area is only accessible to southbound traffic and since no views into the gorge are attainable it is actually no more than a rest stop. Further north, the Parkway services the Whirlpool State Park and Devil's Hole. Picnicking, restrooms, overlooks, parking, walking and bicycle paths and a stairway to the bottom of the Gorge are all accessible to north and south travelers. Present access to both of these facilities is very restricted.

The report notes that there are a total of three connections with State and City routes in this section, including Main Street, Bellevue Avenue, and Findlay Drive, which provide travelers with alternatives for access to, and egress from, the City of Niagara Falls.

The current Parkway redesign alternative combines sections of the existing Parkway with segments of Whirlpool Street to create a Boulevard with continuous median and a formally landscaped right-of-way. The current southbound lanes of the Parkway are to be eliminated wherever possible, creating accessible open space along the edge of the gorge rim for pedestrian pathways. The Parkway Overpass will be used in conjunction with improvements made to the Whirlpool Bridge and Plaza. Access from the local street network creates direct and understandable linkages not only between the City and the waterfront, but also within the waterfront district itself. (A detailed description of this project can be found in the City's LWRP Gorge Waterfront District Master Plan documents).

Under the Transportation Section of the Comprehensive Plan, the following recommendations are made for the Robert Moses Parkway.

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Gorge Waterfront Improvements. As part of the City's Waterfront Program, that portion of the Parkway north of Main Street, along the Niagara Gorge is suggested for redesign. The westerly portion (southbound leg) of the Parkway along the Gorge is recommended for removal and the easterly portion (northbound leg) is to be combined with Whirlpool Street and converted into an urban arterial (scenic) Boulevard connecting Rainbow Boulevard, north and south, with the north and south lanes of the Parkway throughout the City and eventually to Lewiston. This is based on the desire to create a world class Waterfront Park, returning pedestrian access to the Gorge and River, simultaneously connecting all of the natural features of the Niagara River within a singular park environment.

Robert Moses Parkway Interchange at Hyde Park Boulevard. Due to increasing traffic demands and future Waterfront development, a new connection with the Robert Moses Parkway at Hyde Park will be necessary. If initiated, these ramps would provide an exit for westbound traffic onto Hyde Park Boulevard and westbound onto the Parkway.

The report further notes that, in March 1981, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee (NFTC), now the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) developed the Niagara Frontier Bicycle Master Plan. This Plan recommends that all 12 miles of the Parkway be designated as a Class I Bikeway.

3.5.2 Town of Lewiston Comprehensive Plan Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement, November 13, 2000

The Scope of this document was to develop a new Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Lewiston to help guide public policy into the new century. The document provides a summary of existing conditions, including the transportation network and a discussion of the implications for planning.

The report notes that the Robert Moses Parkway and I-190 are two limited-access highways located in the western part of the Town of Lewiston that provide for north-south traffic movement with adequate access along the Niagara River region to Western New York and Canada. It also notes that two parallel north-south routes NY 18 (Creek Road) east of the Parkway and NY 18F (Lower River Road), County Road 907 west of the Parkway, and Military Road (NY 265) located in the southwestern part of Lewiston facilitate north-south traffic movements.

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The Plan suggests that the Parkway link should be a major feature of a regional recreation and tourism activity center that links Niagara Falls with Artpark, a revitalized Town and Village of Lewiston, Joseph B. Davis State Park, Youngstown, and Fort Niagara, which should serve to enhance the status of the Historic Niagara Colonial District.

The Plan identifies an Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volume of 5,300 vehicles on the Parkway between the Village of Lewiston and the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge and an AADT of 5,450 between the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge and City of Niagara Falls. The Plan notes that in the long run (5 years), general traffic may be expected to remain relatively constant and that no significant improvements to transportation facilities are envisioned.

3.6 Other Proposals, Plans, and Studies, 1970s and 1980s

3.6.1 Niagara River Environmental Plan Summary Report, June 1972

This environmental study, undertaken by the Erie and Niagara Counties Regional Planning Board (ENCRPB), examined the entire 37-mile length of the Niagara River. The objectives of the study were to:

- survey the Niagara River and its surroundings as an environmental contributor to the economy of the region and the enjoyment of residents and visitors;
- identify existing and incipient environmental problems that limit the potential of the river as an environmental resource;
- define the action plan needed, both short- and long-term, to deal with the problems identified, to protect and enhance the essential qualities of the river and its shores; and,
- outline the methods needed to effectively implement the actions identified.

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The study area was a band along the shoreline of the river from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, approximately one mile wide. Within this corridor, studies were made of geographic features, land use and population concentrations, prominent structures, highways, historical features, concentrations of tourist activity, and pollution sources.

The report suggests that even if it were feasible, efforts should not be made to return the area to its pre-development state, but rather that an effort should be made to recognize industry and commerce as prime contributors to the area and essential features of the shoreline environment by aiming at changes that would better accommodate industrial, commercial and other productive functions in the scenic and recreational environment. Under Item 2 - Preservation and Enhancement of Scenic Beauty, the study suggests the following actions to enhance the scenic beauty of the area:

- Cleaning-up non-productive features of the waterfront that degrade the environment, such as deteriorating piers, sanitary landfills, or cluttered and disorganized waterside industrial storage areas that do not require water frontage but are visually offensive;
- Controlling and abating erosion of the Falls and shoreline;
- Landscaping and screening unsightly features from important scenic locations;
- Relocating power lines and removing unused railroad tracks or sidings and similar facilities that detract from the scenic nature of the area;
- Landscaping highways and improving design of directional signs that indicate points of interest;
- Planning and developing open space and parks;
- Implementing urban renewal in areas where problems are more fundamental than cosmetic;
- Eliminating or improving abandoned borrow pits and similar sites.

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Under Item 5 – Improvement of Access to the River, the study suggests the following actions to expand and improve access to the river and river-oriented recreation:

- Breakthrough to the shoreline where industry, highways, railroads or other barriers preclude public access to the shore. Possible relocation of such barriers;
- Development of walks, drives, turnoffs, parking areas and similar shoreline amenities to facilitate pedestrian access to the bank and to the river level;
- Improvement of transportation to the river, public and private;
- Development of recreational, food, and similar support facilities needed to enhance and permit a more extended experience on the shore.

Under Item 6 – Improvement of Appreciation of Historical Heritage, the study suggests the following actions with respect to the historical features of the area:

- Organization of historical knowledge about the area for purposes of education, advertisement, and personal enjoyment;
- Increasing the enjoyment of significant historical features by restoration, by other improvements, such as historical markings, roads and parking, and by historical programs and tours;
- Exploitation of the heritage of the Erie Canal through historical, recreational, and commercial development near the canal terminus.

The report discusses a Short-Range Environmental Program over a five-year period and a Long-Range Environmental Improvement Program. Several programs are river-wide and described under the section noted as the Total River Concept. The following is recommended:

- Continue water pollution abatement controls, especially in the vicinity of industry in Tonawanda, North Tonawanda, and Niagara Falls. Implementation by NYSDEC.

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- Expand river-wide air pollution monitoring and enforcement activities, and initiate actions to improve Canadian Cyanamide's treatment facilities. Implementation by County Health Departments, USEPA.
- For development along the river, prepare a design guide based on the long-term environmental plan. Implementation by ENCRPB, International Environmental Study Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).
- Prepare design objectives and a design guide that will identify existing design features in the area, establish a framework or structure for design within the area, and illustrate model design solutions for important elements.
- Utilizing the design guide, review all new developments having an impact on the river system's scenic, recreational, and other qualities. Establish a design review committee that would be concerned with such things as sign and billboard control and location and the appearance of new buildings and observation towers, new roads, bridges, and power lines. Implementation by ENCRPB, International Environmental Study TAC.

The study divided the suggested concepts into six (6) areas having special quality and character. Treatment Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, and most of 6, are not within the defined Robert Moses Parkway study area.

Treatment Area 5 encompasses the Parkway study area from the north Grand Island Bridges to the Village of Lewiston. The proposed concept for Area 5 is strong tourism and recreational development. Pertinent Short-Range programs impacting the Robert Moses Parkway or NYPA-owned lands are as follows:

- Initiate feasibility study for the rehabilitation of industries in the vicinity of the NYPA intakes by private or public renewal programs. Implementation by Niagara Falls Urban Renewal Agency, private action, UDC.
- Establish vertical zoning controls within the gorge area by legislation. Implementation by the City of Niagara Falls, International Joint Commission (IJC), Niagara Frontier State Park Commission (NFSPC).

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- Prepare alternative design plans for the Robert Moses Parkway from Lewiston to I-190 to provide improved access to river; parking, and scenic overlook areas, and improved landscaping and aesthetics. Implementation by NYSDOT.
- Revise the road sign system in the metropolitan area for better routing of tourists to the “nation’s playground.” Integrate regional “people mover” plan in the Niagara Falls-Lewiston area. Consider a pedestrian mover system in the immediate vicinity of the Falls. Implementation by IJC, NYSDOT and NYPA, Niagara County Highway Department, City of Niagara Falls, both New York and Ontario.
- Establish and provide points of access to the riverfront from residential areas by providing new pedestrian connections between the Rainbow Bridge and Niagara University. Implementation by NYPA, City of Niagara Falls, and NFSPC,
- Protect vistas and increase vertical movement possibilities into the gorge. Construct elevators to reach level trails and platforms, especially in the vicinity of the Whirlpool, Whirlpool Rapids, and the base of the power facilities. Connect with carefully controlled gorge trails and extended horizontal movement system. Implementation by NFSPC, NFTA, and Niagara Parks Commission.
- Screen industries from sight along the north side of the Parkway by establishing raised landscaped berms, trees, etc. Implementation by NYPA, City of Niagara Falls.
- Provide public information bulletin boards, information centers and displays at important approaches to the “Nation’s Playground.” Implementation by NFSPC, others.

The Long-Range Environmental Improvement Program contains a comprehensive set of action program plans in three types of Action Areas. These programs are presented in chart form in three broad categories. These categories are:

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1. Natural Resources Maintenance and Enhancement;
2. Land Use and Transportation; and
3. Recreation, Tourism, and Historic Programs.

Long -Range Programs affecting the Robert Moses Parkway or NYPA owned lands are as follows:

- Prepare and enforce scenic protection zoning ordinance and regulating proposed structures and signs in designated scenic areas along the riverfront and state parks.
- Tie the open space system to greenbelts and wedges within and around urban areas. Expand existing city, county, and state parks where appropriate.
- Protect or acquire scenic and open spaces by seeking donation of easements along the river, purchase and lease back or sell back with protective covenants of valuable scenic lands, deeding of lands to private conservation land trusts or similar public organizations, rezoning to less intensive use, and direct purchase.
- Establish a shoreline maintenance code enforcement program for the entire riverfront area.
- Support and help strengthen proposed guidelines for underground installation of transmission facilities by NYS Public Service Commission.
- Work with existing transportation plans, and continue to evaluate and coordinate such plans with an overall transportation plan for the river system.
- Provide a comprehensive review of all transportation proposals in the riverside area to ensure that such proposals are not in conflict with the overall goals for the environmental enhancement of the river system.

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- Carry out programs to improve existing roads and highways, particularly in regard to landscaping, scenic turnoffs, speed limits, signs, design of scenic areas, local traffic, and parking.
- Ensure that all new road and bridge proposals will achieve improved aesthetic qualities relating to scenic areas, will direct through-traffic from scenic shoreline points, will improve access to marinas and overlook areas, and will minimize the impact and number of new river crossings.
- Integrate regional plans for mass transit with an overall “People Mover” plan for the Niagara Falls-Lewiston Area.
- In relation to overall park, open space, and tourism plans, designate a system of hiking trails and bridle paths along the length of the river.
- Consider the feasibility of a pedestrian people mover system to move large groups of people in the Falls area.

A number of revisions to this plan have been made in the form of attachments. The most recent revision, which was formally adopted on May 1, 1975, is contained in the ENCRPB Newsletter “Regional Planning Board Adopts Niagara River Plan.”

3.6.2 Preservation and Enhancement of the American Falls at Niagara, July 23, 1975

The International Joint Commission (IJC) prepared this report for purposes of investigation and recommending measures that are feasible and desirable to remove the talus that has collected at the base of the American Falls, and to retard or prevent future erosion. In addition, the Commission was asked to recommend other measures desirable or necessary to preserve or enhance the beauty of the American Falls. The investigation was extended to include aspects of public safety at the American Falls and at the Goat Island portion of the Horseshoe Falls.

This report does not specifically address impediments or opportunities for the future use or disposition of the Robert Moses Parkway.

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3.6.3 Upper Niagara River Recreation Study, December 1976

This study was prepared for the purpose of refining various recommendations outlined in the adopted Niagara River Environmental Plan-Summary Report of June 1972. The study area extended from the City of Buffalo to the City of Niagara Falls, encompassing the Town of Tonawanda, the Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda, and the Town of Wheatfield. The Robert Moses Parkway served as the eastern study area boundary in the City of Niagara Falls. The Upper Niagara River Parks and Recreation Plan emphasizes improved opportunities for boating, fishing and hiking. The study suggests converting undeveloped waterfront sites to parkland, and maintaining developed property in its current use. A linkage concept was employed to create a unified open space system, incorporating a continuous trailway along the riverfront that connects the proposed and existing shoreline parks with all other access improvements. Following are the proposed projects identified in the report that are relevant to the Robert Moses Parkway.

- Proposal 22 – This proposes to develop a commercial district consisting of service-oriented restaurants, motels, and shops west of the North Grand Island Bridge between Buffalo Avenue and the Robert Moses Parkway. Pedestrian access to neighboring parklands would be via an overpass across the Parkway.
- Proposal 23 – This proposes that public lands along the Robert Moses Parkway be used for expanded recreation facilities for fishing, picnicking, bicycling, hiking, and sightseeing, as well as for restrooms.

The report suggests that an east-west expressway north of the Parkway is under consideration. It suggests that if the LaSalle Expressway is constructed, reduction of speed limits and removal of one lane of the Robert Moses Parkway should be considered.

- Proposal 24 – This proposal recommends a water-based recreation area at the Quay Street interchange with the Robert Moses Parkway. It notes that the planned elimination of the Parkway from Quay Street through Prospect Park would significantly increase the amount of land available to build a swimming complex. A bikeway is also suggested for incorporation into the

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design of the site to connect the recreation complex with the Falls area to the west.

The report suggests that a negative feature of the Robert Moses Parkway is that its location along the river limits and restricts public use of the shoreline for recreational usage. It is recommended that the closing of the Parkway west of Quay Street would prompt the preparation of a feasibility report by the former Niagara Frontier Parks and Recreation Commission (Niagara Frontier State Park, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commission). This would provide guidance as to whether the abandoned ROW should be used as a minor roadway or be preserved as open space.

3.6.4 Niagara Reservation: Options for the Future, March 1981

This report was prepared for NYSOPRHP to reexamine the character and quality of the Niagara Reservation State Park and ways in which visitors around the world perceive the Falls. Following are the major goals of this study:

- to identify means of improving access to and from the Niagara Reservation State Park;
- to identify means of improving internal pedestrian and vehicular circulation and accessibility to stop off points designated for public accommodation and viewing of the Niagara River and Falls;
- to establish suitable alternatives for the adaptive re-use of the Robert Moses Parkway and regional OPRHP headquarters;
- to evaluate the adequacy of park visitor program services and physical accommodations;
- to identify means of improving visitor orientation and the educational/interpretive experience;
- to identify means of improving the aesthetic quality and enhancing the image of the Niagara Reservation State Park.

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The report states,

The overall objectives are: 1) to develop three or more alternative plans for the (Niagara) Reservation (State Park), 2) to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages and major impacts of each alternative plan; 3) to obtain public input by presenting these alternatives to interested segments of the community, and, 4) to recommend a preferred plan. The primary thrust of the Recommended option plan (a fourth or hybrid solution) for the future of the Niagara Reservation (State Park) is to reinstate its natural dignity and affect economical but substantive changes in perception, circulation and access to the Falls.

This study notes that the greatest number of motorists that visit the Niagara Reservation State Park would come from the south using the Parkway to arrive at Quay Street. The report states, “In order to accommodate these visitors, the existing northbound roadway will serve as the main scenic access drive to the new Interpretive/Concession Center.” Removing the existing unused pavement and converting it to a single 16-foot curb-to-curb lane would narrow the northbound Parkway. Scenic overlooks and pull-offs would be provided and the speed limit would be limited to 15-20 mph by installing “speed control bumps.” The access drive would continue along the existing ramp to join Prospect Street at the East/West Pedestrian Mall. Through-traffic would continue to bypass the Niagara Reservation State Park via Rainbow Boulevard.

The report recommends that traffic from the north be separated at the Niagara Reservation State Park with through traffic at the Parkway’s terminus near the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center. A direct-access ramp is proposed from the Parkway to the Discovery Center and a separate direct connection from the Parkway and local city arterial streets.

The report states that

The direct connection from the American Rapids Bridge to the extension of Buffalo Avenue would be eliminated. The adjacent underpass from the southbound Parkway to the bridge could be used as an emergency/maintenance road with access to Prospect Point, but would primarily function as a pedestrian pathway from the Buffalo Avenue/First Street Intersection.

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The study recommends that for the reconstruction of the Quay Street Interchange a second lane be constructed for the northbound Parkway off-ramp to Quay Street and that the southbound on-ramp be modified to accommodate two lanes.

The report notes,

The Main Street/(former) Schoellkopf Museum (Niagara Gorge Discovery Center) Interchange will require a new ramp to accommodate direct access from Rainbow Boulevard North for thru traffic to the continuation of the Robert Moses Parkway northbound and Fort Niagara. Thus, the present jog, which thru traffic must negotiate, would be eliminated. The existing northbound on-ramp from Main Street will be aligned to provide a smooth merge for local traffic movements with the new direct access ramp. Likewise, southbound Parkway traffic which now conflicts with local (Niagara) Reservation (State Park) traffic patterns at the (former) Schoellkopf (Niagara Gorge Discovery Center) parking lot entrance would be realigned to parallel the recommended northbound direct access ramp, thus utilizing the lightly traveled portion of Main Street between Rainbow Boulevard North to access Rainbow Boulevard South and the Rainbow Bridge to Canada. The existing off-ramp to the Schoellkopf Museum (Niagara Gorge Discovery Center) will be reconstructed to provide a simplified “T” intersection at its confluence with the local access drive from Main Street, which will be retained.

Under Existing Conditions, an assessment was made regarding the status and impact of closing the Robert Moses Parkway. The study notes,

According to the New York State Department of Transportation, the closing of the Parkway to through traffic between the Quay St. Interchange and the Main Street Interchange north of the Rainbow Bridge does not appear to have an adverse effect on existing or planned State Highway Improvements for the Niagara Falls region. In fact, the Parkway is not considered a vital link in the continuity of the regional highway network master plan. Moreover, sufficient capacity is available on the improved parallel arterials in the City of Niagara Falls to handle traffic in the foreseeable future. Therefore, until such a time as funds are made available for roadway removal, or until an adaptive re-use can be found, this section of the Parkway will remain closed.

Under Project Constraints, it is stated that

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The Robert Moses State Parkway, particularly where it lies between the Goat Island Bridge and Prospect Point is a significant constraint to a fully park-oriented use of the (Niagara) Reservation (State Park). The Roadway separates the Park from the Administration Building and the Prospect Plaza Parking Lot, and makes access to Prospect Point confusing and indirect.

3.6.5 Plan for the Integration of the Niagara Reservation and the Rainbow Center Project, September 1981

This report represents the City of Niagara Falls' response to the recently announced plans for the Niagara Reservation State Park, entitled Niagara Reservation: Options for the Future (Options Plan), prepared in March 1981 for NYSOPRHP ([Section 3.6.4](#)). This report presents the City's perspective on the relationship between future development within the Niagara Reservation State Park and the City of Niagara Falls. It states that the two key issues to be addressed are: (1) the perception of the relationship between the Niagara Reservation State Park and the City, and (2) the nature of the natural environment within the Niagara Reservation State Park. The following are the major goals of the NYSOPRHP Options Plan:

- to identify means of improving access to and from the Niagara Reservation State Park;
- to identify means of improving internal pedestrian and vehicular circulation and accessibility to stop-off points designated for public accommodation and viewing of the Niagara River and Falls;
- to establish suitable alternatives for the adaptive reuse of the Robert Moses Parkway and regional NYSOPRHP headquarters;
- to evaluate the adequacy of park visitor program services and physical accommodations;
- to identify means of improving visitor orientation and education/interpretive experiences; and
- to identify means of improving the aesthetic quality and enhancing the image of the Niagara Reservation State Park.

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This report states that these study goals relate only to the Niagara Reservation State Park, and the position of the City of Niagara Falls is that these goals are too narrowly drawn. The stated goals exclude from consideration impacts that any modifications within the Niagara Reservation State Park might have on the City's economic well being. The report states that any plan that does not consider the advantages of the fullest possible correlation between the Niagara Reservation State Park and the City of Niagara Falls downtown area neglects an important dimension of the Niagara Reservation State Park and is not acceptable to the City.

The following are the broad objectives the City has undertaken to achieve:

- Develop a plan that results in the highest level of aesthetics and environmental improvement within the Niagara Reservation State Park, and which also builds upon and relates to the adjoining aesthetic and economic environment of the City of Niagara Falls;
- Develop a plan that offers maximum potential for the visitor to enjoy and use the existing and planned facilities within the City;
- Develop a plan that, to the greatest extent possible, utilizes the significant infrastructure in place, with a minimal need for additional public expenditures;
- Develop a plan that can be implemented in stages in conjunction with anticipated private investment in the City of Niagara Falls;
- Develop a plan that allows maximum access by residents of the City of Niagara Falls to the Niagara River and gorge;
- Develop a plan that retains, insofar as possible, the natural environment of the Niagara Reservation State Park.

Based on information contained in the Options Plan document and as a result of a meeting between NYSOPRHP and City of Niagara Falls officials on August 14, 1982, it was concluded that the major features are: (1) Goat Island; (2) Prospect Point; (3) parking; and, (4) access. Aspects of the report pertaining to the disposition of the Robert Moses Parkway are as follows.

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The Robert Moses Parkway – Roads on Goat Island: Portions of the Robert Moses Parkway between Quay Street and Prospect Street, as well as the Goat Island ring roads, should remain open. Thus, the Parkway and the ring roads will continue to form a physical barrier between the City and the Niagara River.

The City's alternative calls for the Parkway to be closed from the Quay Street exit to the Rainbow Bridge and suggests that this would permit re-landscaping and a more intimate relationship between the City, Niagara Reservation State Park, American Rapids, and Niagara River. Traffic from the south and east would be routed in from the Quay Street exit via Buffalo Avenue, which would be made one-way westbound. Buffalo Avenue would connect with the present ramp (which would be widened) leading to Prospect Street. The report notes that a new boulevard would be constructed between Prospect Street and Rainbow Boulevard south.

3.6.6 Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team Report: Niagara Falls, New York, April 1984

The Urban Planning and Design Committee (R/UDAT) of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) conducted this study for the City of Niagara Falls. The report makes note of the fact that the R/UDAT program is a voluntary, interdisciplinary program that provides organized teams to cities that request assistance.

The report addresses tourism, quality of life, focusing on the functional and physical issues of movement, open space, and downtown.

This report does not address impediments or opportunities for the future use and disposition of the Robert Moses Parkway. In the introduction, addressed to the people of Niagara Falls, there is only the mention that the City of Niagara Falls “permits expressways to cut you off from the world’s most dramatic vistas.”

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3.6.7 Robert Moses Parkway Conceptual Redesign and Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) – Inventory of Existing and Potential Land Uses, City of Niagara Falls, New York, June 1984

This report focuses on tabulating an inventory list of Existing and Proposed Land Uses Within the Waterfront Revitalization Area (WRA) bounded by the Rainbow Bridge, the Niagara River, the North City Line and the Eastern Boundary of the WRA. References to the Robert Moses Parkway include the following:

Robert Moses Parkway and Adjacent Lands: The study notes that a detailed analysis of traffic volumes on the Robert Moses Parkway indicates that the present Parkway constitutes an ineffective use of the major part of the WRA.

The report states that from the Rainbow Bridge to the northern City Line the Robert Moses Parkway occupies most of the land along the top of the gorge, allowing limited opportunities for either enjoyment of the unique vistas of the gorge or for active recreation. The Parkway is perceived as being an obstacle that prevents residents of adjacent streets, visitors, and tourists from crossing over to the areas along the top of the gorge. Exceptions to the previously noted generalizations are: the Niagara Reservation State Park, the present Niagara Gorge Discovery Center, the Aquarium of Niagara Falls, the overlook at Pierce Avenue, the Customs and Immigration Complex at the Conrail Bridge, and Whirlpool State Park.

The report states that for the study area between Third Street and the northern City Line, the Robert Moses Parkway is used mostly as a highway. The Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) is 3,450 vehicles from Main Street to Findlay Drive, and 6,450 vehicles from Findlay Drive to the northern City Line (source: NYSDOT). The study suggests that the Robert Moses Parkway should be capable of handling 1,500 passenger cars per hour per lane (pcphpl) or 6,000 passenger cars per hour on this four-lane facility. The report analyzes existing traffic capacity (1984) and projected capacity (year 2000) for the Parkway and suggests that the Parkway is significantly underutilized.

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The following alternatives are identified in the study.

1. Leave northbound Parkway in place (Alternative 1):
 - Improve Whirlpool Street (Main Street to Findlay Drive);
 - Remove southbound Parkway lanes (Main Street to Findlay Drive);
 - Convert northbound Parkway lanes for use by Viewmobile-type vehicles and bicycles (Rainbow Bridge to Devils Hole State Park);
 - Remove Parkway bridge over the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge;
 - Maintain northbound Parkway lanes for two-way traffic from Findlay Drive to north City Line (at reduced speeds of 35 mph);
 - Construct intersections for the (reduced width and reduced speed) Parkway, at four City streets north of College Avenue;
 - Provide vehicular and pedestrian access to existing and proposed overlook areas from Whirlpool Street.

2. Leave northbound Parkway in place (Alternative 2):
 - Improve Whirlpool Street (Main Street to Findlay Drive);
 - Convert the southbound lanes for use by Viewmobile-type vehicles and bicycles (Main Street to Devils Hole State Park);
 - Remove the Parkway Bridge over the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge;
 - Maintain northbound Parkway lanes for two-way traffic from Main Street to Cleveland Avenue, and from Findlay Drive to the north City Line (at reduced speeds of 35 mph).

3. Leave northbound Parkway and the Parkway bridge over the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge in place:

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- Improve Whirlpool Street (Main Street to Findlay Drive);
 - Provide bikeways and a Viewmobile corridor as in Alternative 2, except that the corridor would be carried over the Parkway bridge;
 - Maintain northbound Parkway lanes for two-way traffic from Main Street to northern City Line (at reduced 35 mph speeds).
4. No connections to city streets north of College Avenue:
- Improve Whirlpool Street (Main Street to Findlay Drive);
 - Remove southbound Parkway lanes (Main Street to Findlay Drive);
 - Convert northbound Parkway lanes for use by Viewmobile-type vehicles and bicycles (Rainbow Bridge to Devils Hole State Park);
 - Remove Parkway bridge over the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge;
 - Maintain northbound Parkway lanes for two-way traffic from Findlay Drive to northern City Line (at reduced speeds of 35 mph);
 - Provide vehicular and pedestrian access to existing and proposed overlook areas from Whirlpool Street.
5. Traffic considerations pertaining to the various alternatives:

The study suggests that the mostly highway use of the land between Second Street, Whirlpool Street and the Niagara River necessitated by the limited access nature of the Robert Moses Parkway is not the best use. The report suggests that the following would make the area more accessible for both local residents and tourists.

- Robert Moses Parkway: Under Alternative 1 the Parkway would be eliminated between Main Street and Findlay Drive. Second Street and Whirlpool Street with some improvements could handle Parkway traffic as well as present street traffic. An improved Whirlpool Street would serve

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both the Parkway and Whirlpool Street traffic up to Findlay Drive. This location would be the exit for southbound Parkway traffic and the entrance for northbound Parkway traffic. The report recommends that the intersection be redesigned as a “T” intersection with Whirlpool Street as the stem, and that a traffic signal be placed there. The reconstructed two-way two-lane roadway would meet the existing divided Parkway just south of Devils Hole State Park. North of this point (outside the study area) the Parkway would remain and function as it does at present.

Under Alternative 2 the Parkway would remain, however, as a two-way two-lane road, beginning at the south with an entrance and exit to Main Street. It would then continue as a scenic-road and form an intersection with Whirlpool Street opposite Cleveland Avenue. Pedestrian access would be provided at four locations, including Cedar Street, Chilton Street, Linwood Avenue and Cleveland Avenue. No vehicle connections would be made on the proposed urban arterial between Main Street and Niagara Street. The two-lane two-way roadway would serve as vehicular access to the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center (former Schoellkopf Geological Museum) and various other scenic areas. The report suggests that the nature of the roadway would be such that vehicles could pull off almost anywhere and that the roadway would be posted for a low speed limit.

Both recommendations eliminate the present limited access highway, including the large overpass over the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge. Both open up the present Parkway and adjoining area for more recreational and scenic use.

A number of the alternatives also recommend that between Findlay Drive and the northern City Line, the revised highway be provided with connecting roadways to certain existing streets to the east of the present Parkway. The suggested locations include Vanderbilt Avenue, James Avenue, Rankine Road, and Lafayette Avenue, which would be constructed to form “T” type intersections and to permit pedestrian access.

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3.6.8 Niagara RiverView Park and Trail for the City of Niagara Falls, April 20, 1988

This report, the purpose of which was to prepare a conceptual design for the upper Niagara River bicycle and hiking trail, was prepared under the sponsorship of the New York State Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources and Waterfront Revitalization. It identifies the trail as a key component in the City of Niagara Falls Waterfront Revitalization program. It states that because of the adjacency of the Robert Moses Parkway, the trail and ancillary development provides the opportunity to enhance the southern “gateway” to the community. The proposed trail would be a Class III bicycle trail, which provides for shared use with pedestrians or motor vehicle traffic.

The trail, as proposed, would be in between the Robert Moses Parkway and Niagara River embankment, beginning at the North Grand Island Bridges and extending about four miles westerly to the Niagara Reservation State Park. NYPA owns the identified project corridor. The report suggests that the Parkway provides convenient automobile access, noting that it also forms a physical and partial visual barrier to the adjacent industrial uses. It further refers to the Parkway as a “Chinese Wall,” which visually and physically separates the city from the river. The report proposes five access/egress points to overcome this limitation, and discusses the trail concept by each of these segments. Impacts are identified as follows:

- The Century House Restaurant near 66th Street – Class III bicycle and hiking trail located within NYPA property east of the North Grand Island Bridge.
- Existing Dock Facility – Reopening of the closed access road would be required.
- NYPA Water Intake Area – Modification of the Parkway U-turns would be required to permit access from both east and west. Further development and enhancements are recommended at this location.
- NYPA Spoils Area – A mixed-use recreational park (RiverView Park) is proposed at this point. Access to the park would be by car or via the trail system. Modifications would be required to the Parkway, including crossovers to allow access to and egress from the site.

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- Trail Connection with the Niagara Reservation State Park – A diagonal pattern of pavement striping is proposed across the Robert Moses Parkway on-ramp.

The report discusses the physical obstacle of Gill Creek located north of the NYPA intakes. Two options are proposed at this location. One option is to span Gill Creek with a pedestrian bridge and the other is to route the trail adjacent to the Parkway ROW.

The project as proposed is to be built in two phases. Phase I would include the development of the basic functional pedestrian/bicycle trail and Phase II the ancillary items. The 1988 estimated construction cost for the complete build-out of the trail way and ancillary development was approximately \$1.5 million. Funding mechanisms identified private/public match, including NYPA, NYSDOT, Century Club sponsors, New York State economic development advocates and others. Legal issues to be resolved include landowner approvals as well as resolutions on ownership, maintenance and liability issues.

3.6.9 Excerpts from Ontario's Niagara Parks Planning the Second Century, Niagara Parks Commission, Ontario, Canada, October 1988

Moriyama & Teshima Planners Limited prepared this report for the Niagara Parks Commission. The report states that the City of Niagara Falls and Regional Municipality of Niagara, Ontario, does not receive economic benefits commensurate with the volume of estimated annual tourists (11 million). The report notes that 70% of visitors stay for one day or less. The report discusses the individual market segments already coming to the Niagara region of Canada and states that meeting their needs by providing the kind of varied, unique vacation destination they desire will cause tourists to respond with lengthier stays and generate greater benefits for the Niagara Parks Commission, the region, the province and Canada.

The Plan sets forth a broad 100-Year Vision and develops a 20-Year Plan with cohesive themes that create images of the Niagara region as a destination for visitors from all market segments.

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This planning study does not address impediments or opportunities for the future use and disposition of the Robert Moses Parkway. It does make mention of extending tourist attractions along the Niagara Parkway and the Niagara region of Canada. It notes that dispersing visitors to alleviate overcrowding and developing untapped resources will expand the range of experiences and adventures for diverse market segments

3.6.10 Master Plan Study of the Niagara Gorge Hiking Trail, February 1989

This study discusses the Niagara Gorge Trail system, which is intended to provide public access to the Niagara gorge and its many scenic attractions. This trail system, wholly within the City of Niagara Falls, would extend approximately 3.5 miles northbound from the vicinity of the Rainbow Bridge to Whirlpool State Park. It would ultimately extend from Niagara Reservation State Park to Devils Hole State Park, Village of Lewiston, and Artpark. The purpose of this study was to provide a master conceptual plan for the portion of the Niagara gorge trail system extending from the Prospect Point Observation Tower near the American Falls to the existing Ongiara Trail in Whirlpool State Park. The report notes that in the past the Niagara gorge was an intensely used tourist attraction visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year. An estimated 13 million people have ridden the Great Gorge Railway during its forty years of existence. It notes that today the Niagara gorge is isolated, inaccessible, and underutilized. Vistas from the rim of the gorge are also inaccessible, separated from the City of Niagara Falls by the Robert Moses Parkway.

The proposed location for this trail system is in, and adjacent to, the Niagara River gorge. NYSOPRHP and NYPA currently own the property. NYPA owns the area from about a point 300 feet north of the Rainbow Bridge northward to a point about 250 feet north of the Whirlpool Bridge. NYSOPRHP owns the remaining areas. The study identifies two primary corridors for the location of the trails. One is the abandoned railroad bed of the Niagara Gorge Railway, which extends from Prospect Point north to Whirlpool State Park, and the second is the level green space at the top of the gorge between the gorge rim and the Robert Moses Parkway.

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The study identifies that the major land use between the Rainbow and Whirlpool Rapids Bridges is the Robert Moses Parkway, which impedes access to the gorge from the surrounding residential areas.

The report states that the allocation of responsibility for the operation and maintenance (O&M) of the proposed trail system would require a series of major policy decisions. The report identifies the primary organizations that might take an active role in the O&M of the proposed trail system as NYSOPRHP, NYPA, the City of Niagara Falls, and private trail groups. NYSOPRHP is identified as the agency to undertake the majority of the O&M responsibilities for the proposed trail system. The report claims that NYPA is best suited for an administrative role, and perhaps for limited grounds keeping.

3.7 Other Proposals, Plans, and Studies, 1990s

3.7.1 Alternatives to Development and a Transportation Overview, Niagara Falls, New York, December 1990

This report was prepared for the City Niagara Falls by Foit-Albert Associates to address traffic generated by tourists and local residents. The plan discusses all modes of tourist traffic including arrivals by plane, bus, and train, as well as private automobile. The synopsis was provided as a stimulus to examine alternatives with respect to a transportation network to serve the Niagara Frontier and an alternative development plan as discussed below.

The ultimate goal of the plan is to eliminate the need for an automobile, reducing vehicular traffic and simultaneously opening vistas for tourists, providing easy access between Niagara Reservation State Park area and commercial points of interest and the Niagara Falls Airport and other transportation nodes.

One plan related to the Robert Moses Parkway is to develop a strategic parking plaza in the Love Canal area. The report notes that this proposed location is close to the North Grand Island Bridges, Robert Moses Parkway, and LaSalle Expressway. The report suggests that from there a core terminal for light-rail or monorail system could be built to serve various points of interest. The report also notes that the ROW for the Parkway and LaSalle Expressway is wide enough to accommodate a light rail or similar

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system and that some of the land along the corridor could be converted to park use, increasing access to the waterfront for both tourists and residents. The synopsis states that these two transportation corridors must be analyzed from a practical and economics perspective, including potential impact on aesthetics.

The report makes mention of a separate proposal to eliminate Whirlpool Street and use the Robert Moses Parkway as an interior route along the gorge.

3.7.2 Niagara Waterfront Master Plan, City of Niagara Falls, September 25, 1992

This report, written for the City of Niagara Falls and NYSOPRHP, develops a Master Plan for the Niagara Waterfront from the Niagara Reservation State Park northward to Earle W. Brydges Artpark. The primary focus is the land from the water's edge eastward, up to and including the Robert Moses Parkway. As the context for the waterfront, the city blocks adjacent to the gorge rim and the Parkway are also considered in this Master Plan. The total length of the project is approximately six miles.

The stated goals of this study are:

- to develop the Niagara River Gorge as a great park of international significance;
- to increase recreational opportunities for tourists and citizens along the waterfront;
- to preserve the natural environment of the gorge as a dominant feature of the Park;
- to develop attractive and understandable modes of access along the entire waterfront that establish clear links between attractions (private vehicles, people movers, pedestrians and bicycles being potential modes), and to work to ensure that project solutions are not in conflict with goals and objectives of NYSDOT;

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- to establish strong visual, pedestrian and vehicular links between the community and the Niagara River gorge;
- to create an exciting and interesting place that will entice visitors to remain at the American Falls and in the Niagara Frontier area for longer periods of time;
- to improve economic opportunities for tourism development within the City of Niagara Falls; and
- to increase awareness of the Niagara Frontier for visitors and citizens.

The first aspect of the study was improving access to and among points of interest within the Waterfront District. The report suggests that the current configuration of the Robert Moses Parkway and its interchanges makes circulation difficult and confusing. The Parkway is perceived as serving more as a barrier than a connector, separating the City's residential and commercial districts from the Niagara gorge.

The study developed three different designs for the Waterfront District. Each featured a revised Parkway that had a city street character with slower speeds and improved access to the city. The three alternatives vary in terms of layout, landscape character, additional land area, and cost. The following summarizes the three alternatives.

- Alternative A: "The Revised Parkway" – This alternative proposes to change the Robert Moses Parkway in the project area from a limited-access roadway to a local street using the existing road bed. Local streets would be reconnected to the Parkway. More direct and understandable linkages at the Rainbow Bridge, Whirlpool Bridge, and Quay Street will greatly reduce confusion and congestion. Redundant sections of Whirlpool Street will be eliminated to create more available land for parkland or private development.
- Alternative B: "The Boulevard" – This alternative combines sections of the Parkway with segments of Whirlpool Street and Lewiston Road to create a Parkway along the gorge rim. The current southbound lanes of the Parkway

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are eliminated in these locations, increasing the amount of land area for open space at the gorge rim. As in Alternative A, there is improved access from the entry points to the city and local street network.

- Alternative C: “Parkway without Median” – This option creates the most additional land for parks and private development. This road follows the same alignment as in Alternative B, but occupies less land because the median has been eliminated. The southbound lanes of the Parkway have been retained to provide a separate roadbed for a rubber-tire people-mover and bicycles. As in the other alternatives, access to the Parkway from the City entry points and local street network has been greatly enhanced.

The study lists ten elements for each of the above noted alternatives. Then a “Preferred Alternative” is developed from the three alternatives and corresponding ten elements. The highlights of the Preferred Alternative are:

- Access - Improved access to the waterfront for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians from local streets.
- Linkages – Direct linkages to waterfront attractions from city entry points.
- Roadway Alignment – Utilization of Whirlpool Street roadbed as much as possible. The Whirlpool Bridge viaduct remains in place for the near term, but will be removed when the bridge is replaced. The I-190 overpasses remain.
- Additional Land Area – The use of Whirlpool Street for the new Parkway creates more than 10 acres of land available for park space.
- Traffic Capacity – Improved safety at intersections; some signalization required; speed limit 30 mph in the city.
- Parking – 269 parking spaces are added at strategic locations throughout the waterfront at points of interest.
- Costs – Moderate. Demolition is minimized. Existing pavement is reused.

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- Design Concept – Median planting is created wherever possible; informal naturalistic landscape is added to enhance the existing natural landscape.
- Rim Trail – New trails are created at strategic locations to maximize views of the river and gorge area. The existing southbound Robert Moses Parkway pavement crosses the Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant. An additional trail utilizes the abandoned railroad ROW from the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge to Devils Hole State Park.
- People Mover – A trackless-trolley-type people mover connects key points of interest in the near term.

The following is a more detailed narrative description of the preferred plan. Parkway revisions as presented in the report are broken down by various sections. The various proposed Features, Trail Systems, Landscape Concepts, and People Movers of each particular area are not herein addressed.

Area 1 – This area, consisting of the section from just south of the Adams intake to Second Street, is the southern terminus for the work proposed under this master plan. It includes the park entrance as well as the Niagara Reservation State Park.

Parkway through-traffic is diverted off of the Parkway alignment at the Quay Street ramps, which connect to Rainbow Boulevard. Rainbow Boulevard is proposed to go through the city as a Parkway link.

Vehicles continuing north along the Parkway alignment would enter Niagara Reservation State Park. The two existing 12-foot travel lanes would continue to carry northbound traffic through this section. Northbound access would be available to and from Quay and Fourth Streets.

The two former southbound lanes of the Parkway would be revised to a single lane on the waterside, with adjacent parallel parking in the section between the American Rapids Bridge and a turn-around loop located about 400-feet north of the northbound on-ramp from Quay Street. The loop would reconnect with the Parkway northbound lanes. The speed limit would be reduced to 30 mph in both directions along this section of the Parkway.

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Area 2 – This area includes downtown Niagara Falls, Goat Island, and the American Rapids and Falls. This area contains the improved U.S. Customs Plaza at the Rainbow Bridge. The Parkway bypasses the downtown area on the riverside. It is proposed that Rainbow Boulevard North and Rainbow Boulevard South be converted to a new Parkway to channel traffic through the city. An improved customs area would be larger with traffic circulation more coherent and more accommodating.

The report recommends that

The northbound lanes of the former Robert Moses Parkway (would) continue northbound, pass under the American Rapids Bridge and lead to the main visitors' entrance to the Niagara Reservation (State Park) at Prospect Street. Southbound lanes would be limited to Viewmobile use and parking for fishermen and sightseers. The geometric configuration of the Main Street/Buffalo Avenue intersection has been simplified and ties into the northbound Parkway using an alignment, which emphasizes entry to the (Niagara) Reservation (State Park) and creates additional green space.

Continuing northward, the Rainbow Boulevard through-town Parkway link divides into Rainbow Boulevard northbound and Rainbow Boulevard southbound at First Street, forming the boundaries of the Niagara Falls Wintergarden. East of Main Street, northbound Rainbow Boulevard makes a smooth, direct transition onto the Robert Moses Parkway northbound alignment. A smooth connection is also made between the southbound Parkway and the Rainbow Boulevard South.

This proposal also suggests the elimination of the complex interchange that is currently found immediately north of the Rainbow Bridge.

Area 3 – The report notes that this area of the project includes about 6,000 feet of Parkway from the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center to the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge. Located within this area are the City of Niagara Falls pump station, the aquarium, and an existing overlook park as well as two switchbacks, which provide access to the bottom of the gorge, where a continuous trail is proposed.

The report states,

The Parkway alignment transitions inland and reuses the Whirlpool Street right-of-way between the (former) Schoellkopf (Geological)

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Museum (Niagara Gorge Discovery Center) and Linwood Avenue. North of this point the alignment transitions back to meet the existing Parkway roadbed at Lincoln Place. Between Lincoln Place and Findlay Drive, the Parkway and Whirlpool Street will follow their existing alignment. The proposed Parkway speed limit is 30 m.p.h.

It is proposed that all local streets along this Parkway segment between Walnut Avenue and Lincoln Place be connected with the Parkway. The revised Parkway would match the existing grade of Whirlpool Street. The final selection of which side streets would connect to the Parkway and what type of traffic control treatment, (stop sign or traffic signals) would be determined during the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. These decisions would be based principally on traffic and safety concerns, as well as on community participation. The plan also suggests that several pedestrian crossings be provided.

This plan states that

Full Parkway access, including a median break with turning lanes which will allow left turn lanes onto and off of the Parkway will be provided at a four-way intersection which will connect to the (former) Schoellkopf (Geological) Museum (Niagara Gorge Discovery Center) access drive west of the Parkway, and to Walnut Avenue to the east of the Parkway. Full access will also be provided at the intersection of the Parkway and Third Street. Third Street north of Pine Avenue will be realigned to form a right angle "T" intersection approximately mid-way between Walnut Street and Spruce Avenue. Spruce, Chilton, Pierce and Linwood Avenues will also have full access to and from the Parkway.

Each of these intersections would have traffic signals installed while all other intersections would provide only for right turns off of, or onto, the Parkway northbound.

The report states,

Access to the Parkway from northbound and southbound Whirlpool Street will be provided via an on-ramp, which will begin approximately 200 feet north of Lincoln Place. This ramp should facilitate the movement of traffic from the Whirlpool Bridge and from Whirlpool Street onto the Parkway southbound. Access from the northbound Parkway to Whirlpool Street will be provided at Lincoln Place. The first phase of the proposed Whirlpool Bridge improvement program provides

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a direct ramp connection from Whirlpool Street northbound onto the upper deck of the Whirlpool Bridge. This will eliminate the conflict between northbound left-turns and southbound through traffic on Whirlpool Street.

The existing Whirlpool Bridge viaduct begins immediately north of Lincoln Place. It will remain in-place for the near future. The proposed second phase of the Whirlpool Bridge improvement program could allow the removal of the overpass after the completion of the final phase of the Whirlpool Bridge improvements proposed by Hardesty and Hanover Engineers in their Thirty-Year Plan report adopted by the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, dated September 1990.

The removal of the viaduct would likely not occur within the next 20 years. In the interim, it is expected that NYSDOT would reconstruct the viaduct in place. The viaduct would be removed if and when the new Whirlpool Rapids Bridge is built.

Area 4 – The report notes that this section of the proposed project is made up of about 7,500 feet of Parkway and Niagara gorge from the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge to Morley Street. This area contains Whirlpool State Park while maintaining the existing alignment of Robert Moses Parkway.

The report notes,

This section of the Parkway utilizes the existing Parkway roadbed. A new access ramp from Whirlpool Street onto the Parkway southbound will be located in the vicinity of Lincoln Place. The existing southbound Parkway exit ramp to Whirlpool Street, located north of the Whirlpool Bridge, will be eliminated. This area will eventually accommodate visitor services including mechanical gorge access, an overlook park, and commercial development including concessions and souvenir shops. The park maintenance facility could remain in place for the near term. If the visitor services and commercial uses are successful, then it will be necessary that the park maintenance facility should be moved to create space for additional development.

The report proposes that Findlay Drive be reconstructed to form a new “T” intersection at the Parkway and at Whirlpool Street. Full access would be provided at Findlay Drive and at a new Parkway connection at the proposed extension of Vanderbilt Avenue. These intersections would be signalized. Access to a proposed overlook park and commercial area north of the Whirlpool Bridge would be

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available off Whirlpool Street via Bath and Bellevue Avenues, and off the Parkway northbound. The report notes,

Access to Whirlpool Park will be available to and from the Parkway northbound and southbound. A pedestrian connection to the DeVeaux campus would be located directly across from the Whirlpool Park access drive. This intersection would be signalized.

Areas 5, 6, & 7 – This portion of the proposed project contains the Parkway from Morley Street, northward to the Earle W. Brydges Artpark entrance at Portage Road. This area includes Devils Hole State Park, the RMNPP, the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge, and the Earle W. Brydges Artpark.

The report notes,

Throughout this section, the revised Parkway continues to utilize the existing Parkway roadbed. Two through-travel lanes are provided along most of the Parkway alignment. The only area of exception is created in order for the bicycle path to cross the power dam. The right lane (closer to the river) of the southbound Parkway will serve as the bicycle path between Artpark and Devil’s Hole State Park. The left lane will carry (one-lane only) southbound vehicular traffic. The speed limit for this southbound Parkway traffic area would be reduced from 55 m.p.h. to 30 m.p.h. immediately adjacent to the bicycle lane. The traffic analysis conducted at the time this report was prepared indicated that the Parkway could be reduced to one lane of traffic southbound and maintain an excellent Level of Service (LOS) A and that for the two-lane northbound traffic a LOS B.

The report further states,

Lewiston Road will be realigned in the vicinity of Devil’s Hole State Park. A new intersection will be created which provides for full vehicular access between the Parkway and Lewiston Road at a signalized intersection. The access drive to Devil’s Hole State Park will also be incorporated into the intersection. Lewiston Road will continue to carry both northbound and southbound traffic. Pedestrian crosswalks will also be provided. The existing pedestrian bridge that carries people between the park and the parking area on the east side of the Parkway will no longer be needed. It is proposed to be removed and replaced with a crosswalk.

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The northbound Parkway provides two through-lanes throughout this section as under existing conditions. A T-intersection will be provided at the intersection of the northbound Parkway at James Avenue. A median break is not provided at this location. Only right hand turns off of and onto the Parkway northbound will be permitted. Pedestrian-activated traffic signals may be provided to encourage connections to the waterfront from the neighborhood east of the Parkway. These are proposed at James Avenue, Harrison Avenue, Rankine Road and at Lafayette Avenue."

The parking lot at Devils Hole State Park would be improved and includes a turnaround area. The parking area presently located east of the Parkway would be removed and replaced with a larger facility west of the Parkway. A scenic overlook area with parking is proposed east of the Parkway southeast of Artpark with access to and from the Parkway northbound.

The study further suggests that the conversion of the Robert Moses Parkway from a limited-access highway to an attractive Parkway will make the surrounding residential areas more desirable places to live and that a rise in property values can be expected. Additional benefits and spinoffs of the Parkway conversion are also addressed.

The report states that NYPA had proposed safe shoreline access for fishing between Artpark and the power plant. This access would be facilitated through the river trail that is a consistent design feature throughout the waterfront. Because of limited space at the base of the gorge, parking would be provided at the top of the gorge, and the plant access road would be used as the pedestrian route. A series of walks, steps, and ramps that would be constructed near the existing guard station would provide access to the river's edge. At the shoreline, a walk and protective railing would be installed to allow fishing access. The report asserts that NYPA should maintain the facility. In addition to improved fishing at the power plant, NYPA reportedly proposes that a southern access point be provided from Artpark to the north abutment. At Artpark, an improved parking area for 20 cars would be provided. The former haul road should be upgraded to provide a hiking trail that would link the north abutment with Artpark.

The Niagara Waterfront Master Plan concludes with Cost Estimate (in 1992 dollars)/Phasing Plan and Market and Economic Issues.

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3.7.3 NYSOPRHP Master Plans

NYSOPRHP plans are discussed above in [Section 3.6.4](#) Niagara Reservation: Options for the Future, March 1981, and [Section 3.7.2](#) Niagara Waterfront Master Plan, City of Niagara Falls, New York, September 25, 1992. The latter report was prepared for the City of Niagara Falls and NYSOPRHP to assist them in developing a Master Plan for the Niagara Waterfront from the Niagara Reservation State Park to Earle W. Brydges Artpark. The Robert Moses Parkway, Pilot Project Evaluation Report, December 12, 2003, was prepared for NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT, is discussed in [Section 3.8.10](#) of this report. No other NYSOPRHP Master Plans are known.

3.7.4 Niagara’s Future: A Citizens’ Vision for Niagara Falls and Region, November 24, 1997

This study was prepared in consultation with citizens, community groups, local businesses, elected leaders, professionals and corporations who offered ideas and suggestions based on the notion of Niagara Falls USA and Niagara Falls Canada as “one city in two countries,” and existing regional and local assets and opportunities. It was developed to help set priorities, develop partnerships, guide investment, and to improve quality of life for the people who live, work, and visit the area.

An improved transportation network and traffic circulation along the river and throughout the region to make places more accessible and usable are identified as key elements for the future of Niagara Falls and its region. The report suggests that one element toward achieving this goal would be by improving, redesigning, or removing the Robert Moses Parkway.

3.7.5 Flexibility in Highway Design, USDOT–FHWA, 1997

This USDOT-FHWA guideline publication is a resource developed by the U.S. Department of Transportation – Federal Highway Administration (US DOT – FHWA) for engineers and project managers with the intended use as a guide for highway design. The Guide notes the following:

This Guide is about designing highways that incorporate community values and are safe, efficient, effective mechanisms for the movement of

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people and goods. It is written for highway engineers and project managers who want to learn more about flexibility available to them when designing roads and illustrates successful approaches used in other highway projects. It can also be used by citizens who want to gain a better understanding of the highway design process.

Through passage of the legislation for the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and the National Highway System Designation (NHS) Act of 1995, the U.S. Congress established a strong national commitment to safety and mobility. The U.S. Congress at the same time committed to preserving and protecting the environment and cultural values affected by transportation facilities. The Guide notes that the primary challenge to highway designers is to offer design solutions and operational options that fully consider these sometimes-conflicting objectives. The Guide states:

To help meet that challenge this Guide has been prepared for the purpose of provoking innovative thinking for fully considering the scenic, historic, aesthetic, and cultural values, along with the safety and mobility needs of our highway transportation system. This guide does not establish any new or different geometric design standards or criteria for highways and streets in scenic, historic, or otherwise environmentally or culturally sensitive areas, nor does it imply that safety and mobility are less important design considerations.

In addition to safety, Congress emphasized the importance of good design that is sensitive to its surrounding environment, particularly in scenic and historic areas. Section 1016 (a) of the 1991 ISTEA states:

If a proposed project ...involves a historic or scenic value, the Secretary may approve such project...if such project is designed to standards that allow for the preservation of such historic or scenic value and such project is designed with mitigation measures to allow preservation of such value and ensure safe use of the facility.

Subsequently, Congress reemphasized and strengthened this resolve through Section 304 of the 1995 NHS Act, which states:

A design for a new construction, reconstruction, resurfacing... restoration, or rehabilitation of a highway on the National Highway System (other than a highway also on the Interstates System) may take into account ...[in addition to safety, durability, and economy of maintenance]...

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- (A) the constructed and natural environment of the area;
- (B) the environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, community, and preservation impacts of the activity; and
- (C) access for other modes of transportation.

In summary, context-sensitive design should not be overlooked for any highway/road construction or reconstruction project. Furthermore, this Guide is extensively correlated to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, commonly referred to as the *AASHTO Green Book*. This FHWA Guide suggests application of the Green Book criteria by encouraging highway engineers to expand their consideration of alternative options. The Guide further states:

The decision to use and apply the concepts illustrated and discussed in the Guide for any specific project remains solely with the appropriate State and/or local highway agencies. In addition, while many of the concepts discussed will clearly aid the decision process, it must be recognized that changes in the design or design criteria will not always resolve every issue to a mutual level of satisfaction.

Being responsive to this national initiative NYSDOT undertook proactive steps to incorporate environmental and community concerns into their project development process. In 2001, recognizing the reach of context-sensitive principles beyond the realm of design, NYSDOT adopted “Context-Sensitive Solutions” (CSS).

The application of this Guide would be appropriate for any planned changes affecting the Parkway’s future use, including its removal.

3.7.6 The Nature of Possibility - City of Niagara Falls, NY Design Workshop, International Brownfield Exchange Design Workshop, November 2, 1999

This report notes that the International Brownfield Exchange brought together a team of planners and architects from Germany and the Netherlands in association with local architects, residents, students, and City of Niagara Falls officials and business leaders to test ideas for transforming the industrial image

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of the City of Niagara Falls and to consider the best options for revitalization. The following makes reference the disposition of the Robert Moses Parkway.

Buffalo Avenue Industrial Shoreline. This district includes the Robert Moses Parkway ROW. All design proposals provided for the consolidation of the Robert Moses Parkway into a two-lane transit route within the current westbound lanes. The vacated shoreline area would be transformed into the “Niagara River Waterfront Trail” with improved public access and restored natural areas connecting to the water’s edge and Niagara gorge rim. To the north of the relocated Parkway a denser tree canopy would be created along with a vegetated berm buffer.

3.8 Recent Proposals, Plans, and Studies

3.8.1 Resolutions

3.8.1.1 Sierra Club Niagara Group Resolution, March 28, 2000

This resolution advocates the removal of the Robert Moses Parkway from Niagara Falls to Lewiston, New York, and the restoration of the land as a natural area as described in the Niagara Heritage Partnership (NHP) resolution. The Sierra Group also opposes the recommendations of the 1992 Niagara Waterfront Master Plan. No justification is provided for this position.

3.8.1.2 Resolution Adopted Advocating Removal of Robert Moses Parkway, Niagara Heritage Partnership, as Amended, June 7, 2000

This NHP resolution advocates the removal of 5.5 miles of the Parkway between Niagara Falls and Lewiston, with the land being restored with trees and long-grass wildflower meadows in accordance with Olmsted and Vaux’s philosophy of natural parks, complemented by gorge-top hiking and biking trails

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3.8.1.3 Town of Newfane Proclamation, undated

This proclamation resolves that the Town of Newfane opposes the closure of the Robert Moses Parkway. The proclamation cites that the Parkway provides direct access between Niagara Falls and the Villages and Townships to the north and northeast, and serves as a link to Niagara County attractions.

3.8.1.4 Resolution of the Niagara County Supervisors' Association, Inc., Approved May 16, 2002

This resolution, unanimously approved by the Niagara County Supervisors' Association, opposes the closure of the Robert Moses Parkway. This resolution also cites that the Parkway provides direct access between Niagara Falls and the Villages and Townships to the north and northeast, and serves as a link to Niagara County attractions.

3.8.1.5 Memorandum from the Greater Lewiston Business & Professional Association to Mayor Soluri, dated May 9, 2002

This memorandum cites several organizations in Lewiston that oppose the closing of the Parkway, including: Greater Lewiston Business and Professional Association, the American Legion Post 1083, The Friends of the Lewiston Public Library, The Lewiston Beautification Commission, and the Lewiston Garden Club.

3.8.1.6 Resolution of the Youngstown Business and Professional Association, Passed February 13, 2002

This resolution expresses strong opposition to the complete removal of the Robert Moses Parkway. This resolution cites that the Parkway is the primary transportation artery connecting Old Fort Niagara and the Village of Youngstown with Niagara Falls and the Niagara River corridor. Complete removal of the Parkway would impede access to attractions and result in a serious loss of business to the village merchants and the surrounding community.

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3.8.1.7 Artpark & Company Board Resolution Concerning Robert Moses Parkway, Adopted May 28, 2002

This resolution supports the NYSOPRHP program that keeps two lanes of the Robert Moses Parkway open to vehicular traffic between Niagara Falls and Artpark, citing that the Parkway provides the most efficient and timely access to Artpark from Niagara Falls State Park.

3.8.1.8 Letter from Niagara USA Chamber to Bernadette Castro, NYSOPRHP, October 20, 2003

This letter, on behalf of the membership of the Niagara USA Chamber, asks that the Parkway be kept open in its current two-lane highway configuration. The letter further recommends that additional improvements be made including the addition of lookout areas, additional pedestrian crossings, informative signage, and additional beautification with the planting of gardens and trees.

3.8.2 The Ontario-Niagara-Erie BikeWay - A Shoreline Trail Proposal for the Buffalo-Niagara Region, 2001

A University of Buffalo Planning graduate student in association with the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) prepared this study. The goal of the project was to develop a regional waterfront bicycle trail running the length of Erie and Niagara Counties. The proposed trailway is named the "ONE Way" with limits extending from Fort Niagara in Youngstown, Niagara County southward to the Chautauqua County Line. The following relate to the Robert Moses Parkway.

The Robert Moses Southbound Alignment - Beginning at Fort Niagara, one alignment option is to convert the southbound lanes of the Robert Moses Parkway to bicycle/pedestrian usage and shift all traffic to the northbound lanes. The study notes that although this option provides no views of the Niagara River, it is more easily accomplished than an alternative that follows River Road (N.Y. Route 18F) through Youngstown.

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Niagara Falls – North Side – This proposed alignment suggests converting the southbound lanes of the Robert Moses Parkway from the vicinity of the Niagara escarpment to the Rainbow Bridge in downtown Niagara Falls to bicycle/pedestrian usage. The study notes that this would provide good views of the Niagara River and gorge, as well as providing a number of parks and parking areas for rest and recreation.

Niagara Falls – Downtown – The study recommends that, as the Bikeway enters downtown Niagara Falls, the Parkway become a local street and the trail would move “off-road”. The report makes note of a NYSOPRHP plan to run the trail into the Niagara Reservation State Park and merge it with existing trails. The alignment would run under the Rainbow Bridge, along the Niagara River gorge, and past the Falls. The trail might also branch off the Parkway at the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center near the aquarium and merge with existing trails.

Niagara Falls – East Side – The report makes note of the fact that a bicycle/pedestrian trail is nearing construction along the Niagara River on the south and east sides of the City of Niagara Falls between the Niagara Reservation State Park and the North Grand Island Bridges (I-190). It notes that the trail will run parallel to the Robert Moses Parkway along the river but will not use the travel lanes. (This project has since been completed.)

3.8.3 Main Street Business District Revitalization Study for the Department of Community Development, City of Niagara Falls, New York, October 2001

This report addresses a conceptual Master Plan and Revitalization Study for the Main Street Business District. The report recommends traffic-calming measures along Main Street to slow the north-south traffic flow and enhance shopping and office uses by decreasing through-traffic via bypassing Main Street. The emphasis of this report in relationship to the Robert Moses Parkway is based on the planned capacity reduction and eventual reconfiguration of the Parkway. The report proposes that traffic be shifted to a rebuilt Whirlpool Street as a primary arterial and that Main Street become a secondary route. The report offers 31 initiatives or proposed improvements of which the following nine are relevant to the disposition of the Robert Moses Parkway. The number assignments are as provided in the report.

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- (1) Traffic-calming roundabout along Parkway. A traffic-calming roundabout is recommended along the Parkway at its intersection with Findlay Drive. The report notes that NYSOPRHP has begun the process of reconfiguring and downgrading the Parkway north of Findlay Drive from a high speed, limited access expressway. This initiative notes that the downgraded Parkway would provide for a new tree-lined boulevard-style roadway along the Niagara gorge at the present location of Whirlpool Street.
- (7) Historic Suspension Bridge interpretive park and gorge overlook. A new “heritage bridge” and historic interpretive area is proposed at the site of the original Suspension Bridge crossing the Niagara Gorge. The proposal recommends an interim measure (immediate phase), which includes the Robert Moses Parkway overpass remaining in place and a later phase with total park completion.
- (9) Reconfigure Robert Moses Parkway/Whirlpool Street into a divided and landscaped Parkway. This initiative recommends removal of the existing Parkway as a limited-access expressway along the gorge and the upgrade of the existing Whirlpool Street into a divided, landscaped boulevard. The report suggests that the full removal of the Parkway (Expressway) establishes major new green infrastructure for the City of Niagara Falls and the State parks.
- (11) New community park. This initiative is suggested in order to “pull” together the Niagara Gorge State Park and the proposed recreational trails into the heart of the Main Street community. This initiative is to be bounded by Linwood Avenue on the north, Willow Avenue on the south, Eighth Street on the east and the “new” Parkway on the west. The report suggests that this would restore the “green” linkage that was lost with the construction of the Robert Moses Parkway.
- (12). Traffic-calming roundabout. This initiative recommends a roundabout located at Willow Avenue’s juncture with the new Parkway. The report suggests that this will signify a gateway connection/linkage between the

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Niagara Gorge State Park and the Main Street Business District. It notes that current Parkway traffic cannot access Main Street.

- (16) Parking/overlook area along rim of the Niagara gorge. This initiative suggests that the removal of the Parkway and the upgrade of Whirlpool Street offer numerous opportunities, including improved public access to the rim of the Niagara gorge.
- (23) Expanded (former) Schoellkopf Geological Museum (Niagara Gorge Discovery Center) into a major visitor attraction. This initiative suggests the expansion of the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center into a world-class museum. The report notes that the removal of the Parkway through this area would open up that land for other support uses and functions including “green” park properties and expanded “shared” parking for the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center, Aquarium, and a “Park and Bike” location.
- (25) Proposed major “high-end” hotel development. This concept plan suggests a “high-end” (luxury) hotel overlooking the “Gorge View Heritage Park”. This park frontage would be made possible by the removal of the Robert Moses Parkway access roads.
- (28) Southern Gateway to Main Street. This initiative recommends a “gateway” roundabout at the southern end of Main Street. This would be located where Main Street intersects with First Street and the (current) Robert Moses Parkway southbound connector road.

3.8.4 Achieving Niagara Falls’ Future: An Assessment of Niagara Falls’ Waterfront Planning, April 2002

This study notes that it has taken the best ideas from nearly a dozen plans, reports, studies, and proposals related to the Niagara Falls waterfront. It states that two major projects already have both public and private support. One is the completion of the waterfront trail from City Line to City Line and the other is the mitigation of the negative impact of the Robert Moses Parkway on waterfront access, urban environment, and city image. The report states that both these projects are moving ahead.

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This report considers the following plans:

- Niagara RiverView Park and Trail (1988)
- Niagara Gorge Hiking Trail (1989)
- Niagara Waterfront Master Plan (1992)
- Citizens Vision for Niagara Falls (1997)
- A Developer Master Plan for Downtown Niagara Falls, New York (1998)
- Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (no date)
- Quality Communities Demonstration Program (1999-2000)
- Robert Moses Parkway Removal (current)

The following summarizes all projects relevant to the disposition of the Robert Moses Parkway as discussed in this strategy report.

3.8.4.1 Upper River – Recommended Short-Term Projects

3.8.4.1.1 Bike and Pedestrian Trail System

The report suggests the construction of a bikeway and pedestrian trail along the upper Niagara River from the East City Line (North Grand Island Bridges) to the Niagara Reservation State Park. The report states that this trailway would “connect with the proposed RiverView Park, the Intake Promenade, the 53rd Street Docks, Griffon Park, other City neighborhood parks, Niagara Discovery Center, and beyond to Erie Canal and Erie County pedestrian facilities.” The implementation of this plan involves a continuous pedestrian and bikeway the entire length of the waterfront with provisions for easy local access to adjacent neighborhoods.

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3.8.4.1.2 Naturalize Niagara River Shoreline and Gorge

This strategy recommends that areas adjacent to the Niagara River and Niagara gorge rim be naturalized by the removal of paved surfaces as much as practicable, and calls for replacement of these areas with new plantings of trees and native plants.

3.8.4.2 Upper River - Recommended Long-Term Projects

3.8.4.2.1 Reconfigure Parkway to “Boulevard”

The study suggests that mitigating the impact of the Parkway has been identified as the most important planning effort of the last two decades. It has been discussed in the Niagara Falls Waterfront Master Plan by Sasaki Associates (1992), the Citizens Map of Niagara Falls by the Waterfront Regeneration Corp. (1997), the Jerde Partnership Development Plan for Niagara Falls Redevelopment Corp. (1998), and the Main Street Plan by the City of Niagara Falls (2001). The report recommends the reconfiguration of the Parkway as a boulevard-style roadway between the North Grand Island Bridges and John Daly Boulevard. Reconfiguration options might include either two or four lanes separated by a median, a reduction in speed limit, new intersections to provide easy local access, and optional roadside parking.

3.8.4.2.2 Preserve Century Club Trailhead

The study suggests construction of a “gateway” at the North Grand Island Bridges to announce and encourage use of the waterfront pedestrian and bike trail. This strategy also suggests replacing the Parkway overpass across Buffalo Avenue with a city-style at-grade intersection.

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3.8.4.2.3 Connect City to Trail and Parkway at 53rd Street

This proposed project would connect 53rd Street to the Parkway at a city-style at-grade intersection.

3.8.4.2.4 Connect City to Trail and Parkway at Hyde Park Boulevard

This proposed project would extend Hyde Park Boulevard to connect with the Parkway at a city-style at-grade intersection.

3.8.4.2.5 Connect City to Trail and Parkway at Portage Road

This proposed project would extend (and turn) Portage Road to connect with the Parkway at a city-style at-grade intersection.

3.8.4.2.6 RiverView Park - Birding Area and Overlook

This proposed project would provide for the redevelopment of the “spoils pile.” Suggested strategy includes the provision for The Bird Conservatory, historic interpretation of the Adams intake canal, and “Old Stone Chimney,” and interpretation of NYPA’s working boat docks. Facilities for picnicking and visitors orientation would also be provided while encouraging and maintaining the “spoils pile” as a natural area. The report treats this project as high priority and suggests that negotiations with NYPA be opened as soon as possible.

3.8.4.2.7 Remove Parkway from Daly Boulevard to Main Street

This proposal suggests that with the reconfigured through-connections from the Robert Moses Parkway to Daly and Rainbow Boulevards, consideration should be given to the removal of the Parkway from Daly Boulevard to Main Street. Conversion of the flyover interchange to an at-grade intersection

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would allow for additional lands available for recreation, public access, green space, and waterfront development.

3.8.4.3 State Park/City Interface - Recommended Short-Term Projects

The proposed project suggests the removal of “the short section of Parkway that runs from the south end of the fragment of Main Street to the bus loop near the State Park parking area.” As a short-term measure to test the impact on traffic patterns, the Parkway could be altered to stop traffic and narrow the road to accommodate pedestrians.

3.8.4.4 Niagara River Gorge - Recommended Projects

This strategy suggests the elimination of the Parkway as a barrier between the City of Niagara Falls and the Niagara gorge.

3.8.4.4.1 Gorge Trail System and Trailhead Improvements (“Low-Bank”)

This proposed project recommends that gorge trails be rebuilt or replaced.

3.8.4.4.2 “GorgeView” Hike and Bike Trail (“High-Bank”)

This proposed strategy recommends the completion of a continuous system of hiking and biking trails along the Niagara gorge. This proposed plan recommends overlook facilities along with continuous open space from the City into and along the gorge.

3.8.4.4.3 Reconfigure Parkway.

The report states, “The Robert Moses Parkway presents an especially difficult barrier between the gorge and the neighborhoods adjacent to it. The recent closure of the Parkway is an important step

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toward satisfying the public's expressed aspiration to be reconnected with its waterfront." The report suggests that a variety of alternatives are possible for a longer-term solution to this issue. It suggests that the most promising alternative is to combine Whirlpool Street and the existing Parkway north of the Rainbow Bridge into a single boulevard configuration. It also suggests that considerations regarding the Parkway north of the City Line should include an evaluation of redesign of the Parkway connection to Upper Mountain Road.

3.8.4.4 Devils Hole State Park Naturalization and Interpretation

This proposed project recommends significant modifications and improvements to Devils Hole State Park and roadway infrastructure. This includes reduction in pavement, reconfiguration of entrance conditions, and increase in natural areas. It is also proposed to create an at-grade intersection at the Parkway/Lewiston Road crossing, remove the pedestrian walkover and replace it with an at-grade crosswalk, and consolidate parking areas.

3.8.5 USA Niagara Development Strategy: A Blueprint for Revitalization of Downtown Niagara Falls, September 24, 2002

This strategy was developed to assist the USA Niagara Development Corporation in preparing a revitalization strategy for downtown Niagara Falls, specifically the area designated as the Downtown Development District. This strategy takes a three-phase approach. Phase 1 targets key buildings and sites for reactivation. Phase 2 suggests that USA Niagara attempt to attract significant private investment and new development projects, and Phase 3 is designed to capitalize on the wave of new tourism generated by the completion of major attractions.

Strategic Link 17 (Southern Gateway Project) is the only identified strategy discussed in the report that has a bearing on the Robert Moses Parkway. This conceptual project envisions a stone pedestrian bridge linking two areas of the Niagara Reservation State Park, currently divided by the Robert Moses Parkway.

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Section VIII of the report (Transportation Analysis) summarizes potential strategic transportation projects to facilitate access and redevelopment priorities being advanced by USA Niagara Corporation in downtown Niagara Falls.

The report states that the Robert Moses Parkway separates the downtown area from the Niagara River visually and in terms of local vehicular traffic and pedestrian access. Identified transportation action items are summarized below, with specific projects impacting the Robert Moses Parkway following:

- Advancing projects to the funding stage and moving toward a logical program of phased implementation;
- Reintroducing elements and characteristics of the street pattern to facilitate more user-friendly multi-modal (vehicular, transit, pedestrian) access;
- Identification and advancement of opportunities to better relate Niagara Reservation State Park areas to downtown Niagara Falls;
- Simplification and calming of traffic flows on routes serving downtown sites, and
- Creation of multi-purpose facilities to address off-peak conditions.

Phase 1 – USA Niagara Transportation Strategy

Strategic Transportation Project T-1B: Facilitate the advancement of the reconfiguration of the upper river section of the Robert Moses Parkway. The report identifies (and references) the recent planning efforts in Niagara Falls toward developing a consensus regarding a reconfiguration of the Robert Moses Parkway that would connect Niagara Reservation State Park and the Niagara River to the City. The report reiterates the recognition that the Parkway's current configuration, as a limited access expressway, significantly impedes both visual and local circulation access between downtown and the river's edge or rim of the gorge. It further notes that past proposals for the reconfiguration of the Parkway have ranged from downgrading to a

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two-way local street with convenient intersections to complete elimination of the Parkway, which would allow for expansion of parkland along the water's edge.

The report references the pilot program conducted by NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT in a portion of the lower river section and as discussed elsewhere in this report. The upper river portion of the Parkway (between the North Grand Island Bridges and Niagara Falls) directly affects access to and from the downtown area and to the Niagara Reservation State Park. This report recommends that USA Niagara take a proactive effort to secure funding for preliminary engineering to reconfigure this portion of the Parkway.

Phase 2 – USA Niagara Transportation Strategy

Strategic Transportation Project T-5: Downtown terminus of lower river portion of Robert Moses Parkway. The report suggests that the present terminus of the lower river portion of the Robert Moses Parkway impedes access for pedestrians and bicyclists between downtown and the Niagara Reservation State Park north of the Rainbow Bridge. Even with the pilot program for calming traffic in this portion of the Parkway, at this terminus the alignment splits into two one-way segments, southbound traffic feeding into an off-ramp alignment to a two-way portion of Rainbow Boulevard South (between Niagara and Main Streets), then into the one-way portion of Rainbow Boulevard South (south of Niagara Street). This arrangement encourages higher speeds, reducing safe access for pedestrians/bicyclists to the gorge rim. While redesign of this portion of the Parkway would be part of a larger design for reconfiguration of the entire Parkway, the report suggests that a logical first phase would include creating a slower, two-way access street leading to the lower river portion of the Parkway. Conceptually, this is shown as a two-way street feeding into Rainbow Boulevard. Other plans have called for a similar change to occur farther north along the Parkway, with a two-way termination feeding into Third Street to downtown. According to the report, regardless of the ultimate alignment, the objective is the same—to slow traffic transitioning from the lower river portion of the Parkway to the State Park/downtown and to improve the pedestrian/bicyclist connections between the State Park/downtown and the Niagara gorge north of the Rainbow Bridge.

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Phase 3 – USA Niagara Transportation Strategy

Strategic Transportation Projects T-6 through T-10: Reconstruction of Robert Moses Parkway in Niagara Reservation State Park. The report states that next to the lower river Parkway's termination at downtown Niagara Falls, the reconfiguration of the Parkway in the Park itself is perceived as being critical to establishing access between downtown and the river or gorge. This portion of the Parkway is recommended for substantial downsizing and essentially complete removal in its current form. It is recommended that the Parkway be reconfigured to become a low-speed (15-20 mph) internal park access road to accommodate limited vehicular, trolley, pedestrian, and bicycle use, which is currently not permitted in the park. This route would provide a logical location for riverfront bicycle access to more pedestrian-intensive areas of the park near the Falls. The report notes that the elements of this effort could include:

- removal of grade separation at Daly Boulevard in lieu of a conventional intersection;
- removal of the land embankment blocking views of the river from properties along Buffalo Avenue and related streets;
- use of varied and curving alignments to maintain very slow speeds for limited vehicular access;
- creation of conventional at-grade intersections at Fourth Street and Main Street, and
- creation of new pedestrian connections to north-south streets and Buffalo Avenue

3.8.6 The Future of the Robert Moses Parkway, Forum hosted by Niagara University, March 26, 2003

Participants included: (1) Bob Baxter, NHP; (2) Tom DeSantis, Sr. Planner, City of Niagara Falls; (3) Councilman Paul Dyster, Niagara Falls City Council; (4) Trustee William Geiben, Village of Lewiston; and, (5) Supervisor Merton Weipert, Town of Porter. Pros and cons of the Robert Moses

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Parkway Pilot Program, were discussed, as well as of other proposed alternative Parkway initiatives and projects, including Parkway removal.

3.8.7 Draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) – Niagara County, New York, June 2003

This report was prepared for the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration by the Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism. The report notes that the City of Niagara Falls Long-Range Transportation Strategy recognizes tourism as that sector of the economy with the greatest potential to spur development and growth.

The Strategy focuses on creating greater access to the City versus mobility within it by developing new gateways for international and regional travelers and altering the existing transportation system, primarily, the reconfiguration of the Robert Moses Parkway. The report suggests that reconfiguration of the Parkway will mitigate the negative impacts on waterfront access, urban environment, and city image. It notes that reconfiguring the Robert Moses Parkway between downtown Niagara Falls and the Village of Lewiston is recommended in the City's Waterfront Master Plan.

Appendix A of the report, Summary of County-Wide Municipal Projects Niagara County, New York, identifies various proposed projects for the municipalities. The following projects identified for the City of Niagara Falls would impact the Robert Moses Parkway.

- Hyde Park Intersection with Parkway – Complete at-grade street connection with the Parkway. Completion timeframe is 2006, estimated cost, \$2,000,000, with potential funding through State/Federal (TEA-21) and local sources.
- Portage Road Intersection with Parkway – Complete at-grade street connection with the Parkway. Completion target is 2006, estimated cost, \$500,000, and potential funding through State/Federal (TEA-21) and local sources.

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- Waterfront Master Plan Implementation – Gorge Trails, Robert Moses Parkway/Whirlpool St Reconfiguration from Rainbow Bridge to North City Line. Completion target is 2006+, estimated cost, \$40,000,000, and potential funding through State/Federal (TEA-21) and local sources.
- RiverView Park – Riverview (Phase II); Develop “spoils pile area” as trailhead and interpretation, landscape. The completion target is 2007, estimated project cost, \$1,000,000, and potential funding through State/NYPA sources and Niagara County Environmental Fund.
- Robert Moses Parkway Reconfiguration – Redesign the Parkway as a Boulevard, parkland enhancement, and shoreline restoration. The completion timeframe is classified as “unknown”, estimated project cost, \$40,000,000, and potential funding through State/Federal/NYPA and local sources.

For the Town of Lewiston a project listed for the Parks is the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan – Develop a LWRP for the Town Corridor between the Niagara River and the Parkway. The completion timeframe is within one-year (2004) at an estimated cost of \$10,000. No potential funding is identified.

3.8.8 Articles, Petitions, Data on Parkway Operations

3.8.8.1 Niagara Gazette Article of September 28, 2003

The position of the Niagara Heritage Partnership is summarized in a Niagara Gazette Article as follows: “the Niagara Heritage Partnership seeks total removal of the Parkway from the Aquarium to Route 104 in Lewiston without compromise.”

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3.8.8.2 Niagara Gazette Article of November 13, 2003

This article in the Niagara Gazette notes that the Niagara County Legislature decided not to take an official position on the status of the Robert Moses Parkway, and to wait until the State's Pilot Program has concluded.

3.8.8.3 Niagara Gazette Article of November 4, 2003

An article in the Niagara Gazette quotes Associate Park Engineer Rolfe Steck as follows:

We are in the evaluation phase, primarily collecting comments from the State Department of Transportation, park patrons, park rangers, police, our interpretive staff and the engineering staff in order to put this into a comprehensive reporting. All the information is in our hands. We are going to come out with our report, hopefully, by the end of the year.

The article notes that the Pilot Program has upset environmentalists, who said that closing down a stretch of roadway and letting people walk on it wouldn't accurately portray potential use by hikers. At the same time, people who want all four lanes to remain open are quick to point out that they haven't seen many hikers on the closed lanes.

3.8.8.4 Press Release by NYSOPRHP, December 19, 2003

In this press release, a number of public figures were quoted on the meaning of the Pilot Program results. State Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro is quoted as follows:

The Robert Moses Parkway pilot conversion has proven to be both safe and effective. Converting the Parkway into a multi-use roadway was a cornerstone of the plan to adapt existing assets found here in the city and our parklands to open up access to the gorge, and an important part of the multi-million dollar improvements that were undertaken at Niagara Reservation State Park. These upgrades reflected the unprecedented investment by Governor Pataki to help revitalize downtown, reconnect the park with local neighborhoods and businesses, and encourage longer stays in the region.

Commissioner Castro continued,

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For too long, access to the breathtaking views of the gorge was limited to vehicles along the Parkway. In modifying the roadway's configuration, we opened up this scenic waterfront for the public, providing additional recreational opportunities along the Niagara gorge and creating an exciting destination for residents and visitors alike. Now, with a more permanent multi-use byway assured, the community and visitors can expect to see significant landscaping improvements, interpretive signage and other more trail-like features to be enjoyed by hikers, cyclists, families with strollers, runners and outdoor enthusiasts.

NYS DOT's Commissioner Joseph H. Boardman is quoted as follows:

The Robert Moses Parkway pilot program in Niagara Falls has resulted in a more safe, reliable and environmentally friendly roadway for the City and its surroundings. The new roadway configuration has contributed to a significant reduction in vehicle emissions and crashes, while also greatly improving access to the region's wonderful parks and attractions for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians alike.

According to New York State Senator George Maziarz:

The people most immediately impacted by the Robert Moses Parkway – the residents of Niagara Falls, Lewiston and Porter – have clearly expressed their views on the future of this important transportation link. We have been able to learn what their vision is for the future of the Parkway, and now we can incorporate that vision into our overall development strategy for the region.”

USA Niagara Chairman Charles A. Gargano said,

The modifications to the Robert Moses Parkway maintain the existing scenic roadway while developing convenient access to the river gorge from the city. This balanced approach meets the needs of tourists and local residents and will contribute to the renewal of Niagara Falls' downtown core.

Village of Lewiston Mayor Richard F. Soluri said,

The Parkway conversion expands opportunities for neighborhoods and communities along the scenic Niagara gorge while maintaining safe and direct vehicle access. We look forward to the planned enhancements that will further improve both the trail and roadway for residents and visitors alike.

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Finally, William P. McKeever, Executive Director of the Buffalo Audubon Society, said:

We're pleased to see Parks taking this positive step towards Niagara River gorge restoration. Connecting people with nature will enhance visitors' and area residents' appreciation of the natural heritage of Niagara.

3.8.8.5 Response to Pilot Project Evaluation Report, Niagara Heritage Partnership, February 12, 2004

This article, published on the NHP website, states that NHP's request to consider the option for complete removal of the Parkway has not received serious consideration by NYSOPRHP.

The article notes the following:

A final decision about the gorge Parkway would be in conflict with the ongoing relicensing discussions with the NYS Power Authority, where the Parkway is an issue for the environmental stakeholders coalition. The decision by NYSOPRHP compromises the Power Authority's ability to engage in good faith discussion in consideration of alternate visions for the gorge rim and the protection of the watershed, which are being put forward by a sizable constituency. **THIS DISREGARD FOR THE RELICENSING PROCESS IS UNACCEPTABLE** [emphasis in original].

The article concludes by stating that NYSOPRHP has behaved in a manner inconsistent with good stewardship on the Niagara Frontier. Alternative routes within Niagara County would adequately provide for motoring needs, says NHP, which then suggests the following: (1) establishment of a 12-member independent council to investigate and evaluate the facts and arguments of the Parkway issue; and, (2) institution of a "real" Pilot Project with all four lanes closed between Niagara Falls and Lewiston.

3.8.9 Robert Moses Parkway Pilot Project Evaluation Report, December 12, 2003

This report was prepared for NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT. It summarizes the findings of a two-year Pilot Project Evaluation Program to study the impacts of modifying the existing divided Parkway configuration and to improve access between the City of Niagara Falls and the Niagara gorge for both

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local and regional residents and tourists. Portions of the existing configuration of two lanes northbound and two lanes southbound were converted by setting aside the southbound lanes for recreational uses and modifying the northbound lanes for two-way traffic.

The report states,

The Pilot Project was an outgrowth of, and reflected the direction recommended by a myriad of previous studies initiated by (New York) State and City (of Niagara Falls) including but not limited to the 1985 Report on the Conceptual Redesign of the Robert Moses Parkway for the Proposed Local Waterfront Revitalization Program by Nussbaumer and Clarke, and the 1992 Niagara Waterfront Master Plan prepared by Sasaki Associates. In fact, the need for a continuous automobile route along the brink of the gorge from the Niagara Reservation (State Park) to Lewiston, that would also ensure a protective border along the gorge while providing convenient public access can be found in the 1926 Olmsted Brothers Plan (Historic Plan) submitted to the then Board of Commissioners at the Niagara Reservation by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

The report notes that the Robert Moses Parkway Pilot Project, coupled with the completion of other gorge improvement projects, is consistent with the fundamental goals of a series of previous planning studies.

The study suggests that decades of study without action, as regional tourism dwindled, have been replaced by positive action, resulting in the ongoing revitalization of the City of Niagara Falls. This has been made possible through the investment in Niagara Reservation State Park, the creation of the USA Niagara Development Corporation, the ongoing funding efforts and relicensing program of NYPA, and the financial resources generated and now available to the City with the opening of the Seneca Niagara Casino. All these elements have come together to provide the impetus that has returned this region to a world-class tourist destination.

The two-year Pilot Project (September 2001 to September 2003), found that there was expanded use of pedestrian access to the Niagara gorge and a reduction in vehicular accidents and vehicle emissions along the remaining two lanes. The pilot program was conducted over a five-mile segment of the

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Parkway from the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center to the northern end of the Power Vista (near the interchange at the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge). The modification consisted of converting portions of the two southbound lanes of the divided four-lane (two-way two-lane) Parkway to a multi-use pedestrian and bicycle path to allow improved access to the gorge. Five access points were established for crossing the Parkway to encourage pedestrian access along the converted “trailway”. The two northbound lanes were converted to two-way traffic (single lanes northbound and southbound).

The findings of the two-year program indicate a negligible impact upon driving times and local traffic patterns. Driving time for the five-mile length of the pilot program has been increased by slightly over two minutes, while accidents have been reduced by fifty-percent (50%). In addition, lower speeds (40 mph) resulted in a 16% drop in vehicle emissions, decreasing emitted carbon by 37,083 tons per year. The pilot program has also provided an additional non-motorized link for the five state parks along the Niagara River gorge.

After review of all available past studies, traffic data, safety reports, recreational user surveys, and community input, combined with the potential of eco-tourism and increased regional tourism, NYSOPRHP, together with NYSDOT concluded that the pilot study configuration of the northbound and southbound lanes successfully serves the motorized transportation needs of the community. The conversion will remain in place with aesthetic and safety improvements until a future design study determines how best to further integrate the new multi-use path and two-way roadway to serve the needs of the community. The report notes that the Evaluation Program studies, and alternatives analysis, coupled with field observations, have led to a number of recommended modifications and improvements for future implementation.

The study notes that the Parkway conversion pilot was part of the \$44 million comprehensive capital improvement plan for Niagara Reservation State Park and surrounding properties. The overhaul was highlighted by a \$24 million rehabilitation of the Observation Tower and included the opening of the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center, restoration of the Gorge Trail system, rehabilitation of the American Rapids Bridge, addition of vintage-looking clean fuel Scenic Park Trolleys to transport visitors, a newly refurbished visitor center, new gift shops and dining facilities at Top of the Falls, a restoration of the historic Hay Barn on Goat Island, and removal of pavement to restore the Olmsted landscape.

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3.8.10 Information on Access, Traffic Volume, and Traffic Patterns from NYSDOT and Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council

The GBNRTC stated that they are currently conducting an area-wide traffic study in Niagara Falls. If this information becomes available and is relevant it will be incorporated into the final release of this report. The GBNRTC stated that the Seneca Niagara Casino has drastically changed traffic patterns (distribution) in the City and that the Parkway has itself experienced about a 15% increase in traffic volume. The last recorded traffic volume counts are currently on the GBNRTC website. GBNRTC will update this information with the 2004 data.

In its 2003–2004 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), April 1, 2003 – March 31, 2004, GBNRTC describes its planning activities in Erie and Niagara Counties. GBNRTC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Region. This program is developed annually in cooperation with federal, state, and local agencies. The UPWP provides a comprehensive view of short and long-range transportation planning activities.

This report does not address any impediments or opportunities for the future use and disposition of the Robert Moses Parkway. In Section II.A.5, Pedestrian/Bicycle Systems Subtask 5.b. - Shoreline Corridor Planning the report speaks of continued implementation of the plan for integration of existing projects and development of new links to complete a linear bike/pedestrian corridor along the Erie/Niagara shoreline from Lake Niagara [sic] to the south Erie County Line. Activities include execution of a Memorandum of Understanding among communities in the corridor, development of consistent signage and standards, and identification of the corridor as operational.

3.8.11 Regulatory and Statutory Limitations of Proposed Changes

With respect to the entire Investigation Area, any significant change in the Parkway's configuration, management, or usage would need to be reviewed and approved by NYSDOT. In addition, approximately 5.85 miles of the Parkway is within the Boundary established pursuant to the Project license granted by FERC, which means that any significant change with respect to those portions of the

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Parkway so included would be subject to approval by FERC. It should be noted that FERC approval would pre-empt any competing state jurisdiction.

Approximately 3.5 miles of that portion of the Parkway administered by NYSOPRHP, of which approximately 0.75 miles (aggregated fragments) are owned by NYPA, are not contained within the Boundary. It is possible that, by virtue of NYSOPRHP's administration of the Parkway and/or the actions taken in 1961 and 1964, New York's common law would impose a requirement that the state legislative approve any departure from "parkland" uses with respect to some or all of the areas associated with this 3.5-mile stretch. It should be noted in this context that it is unclear whether this "parkland" doctrine applies to "parkways" and that OPRHP and other state entities have expressed doubt as to whether the enabling statutes pursuant to which the People of the State acquire, manage, and dispose of real property leave any room for the application of this common law doctrine. The approximately 1.6-mile stretch of the Parkway within the Investigation Area not administered by NYSOPRHP (between Upper Mountain Road and Ridge Road), is free from this constraint, although changes affecting the portion located on NYPA property (approximately eight-tenths of a mile) would need NYPA approval as well as DOT approval. The same would be true, of course, with respect to the NYPA-owned areas within the 3.5-mile stretch.

3.8.12 Identification of Lands Acquired using Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Monies

No LWCF funds were used by NYPA to acquire Parkway lands, and NYSOPRHP has used no LWCF funds to acquire lands from NYPA. Nevertheless, it appears that, in 1967, NYSOPRHP did identify portions of the Parkway under its administration as areas dedicated to public outdoor recreation uses. NYSOPRHP itself has expressed doubt as to the scope of the action taken in 1967, but it seems reasonably clear that at least three areas crossed by the Parkway were involved: the area running alongside Devil's Hole State Park, an area (within the Project Boundary) just north of the Niagara State Park Reservation, and the Reservation itself. In the event that any change to the Parkway rises to the level of a "conversion" of any area so identified to a use other than public outdoor recreation, the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service would need to approve the substitution of other areas to compensate for the loss.

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4.0 SUMMARY

4.1 The Nature of the Parkway and Associated Lands

The Robert Moses Parkway is a four-lane divided highway with limited access. It provides two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction divided over most of its length by a grass median. The southern portion of the Parkway runs east-west, linking the I-190 at the North Grand Island Bridges to the City of Niagara Falls at Buffalo Avenue/Quay Street. The Parkway is closed northbound to through-traffic at Quay Street within the Niagara Reservation State Park. At this location, Parkway traffic continues northbound through the City with connections via Rainbow Boulevard North where, north of Main Street, it continues as a two-lane, two-way divided highway. Southbound traffic through this area continues from the Parkway via Rainbow Boulevard South to Quay Street, where an entrance ramp is provided for re-entry onto the four-lane divided section of the Parkway. The Parkway is posted as a non-commercial route, with a posted speed limit along the divided sections of 55 mph.

A five-mile section of the Parkway from a point north of the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center to the Lewiston-Queenston bridge interchange has been modified under a Pilot Program sponsored by NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT. Both northbound and southbound traffic is now maintained on the former two-lane northbound section, with a posted speed limit of 40 mph.

4.2 NYPA Land Rights, Responsibilities, and Restrictions for those Portions of the Parkway within the NPP Boundary

The entire waterfront (defined as the area between the inland boundary of the Parkway and the shoreline) in the Investigation Area is owned by the State of New York, either in the name of the People of the State of New York or in the name of particular state entities. NYPA and NYSOPRHP exercise control and jurisdiction over most of the waterfront. The Niagara Falls Bridge Commission owns the property adjacent to the Rainbow Bridge, Whirlpool Bridge and Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. See [Figure 2.2.3.1-1](#) depicting land owned by NYPA along the Parkway corridor.

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NYPA owns the waterfront from the North Grand Island Bridges to the Niagara Reservation State Park, from the northern boundary of the Niagara Reservation State Park to the remnant of Bath Avenue just north of the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge, and from the northern boundary of Devils Hole State Park to the east-west northern boundary of Artpark, approximately coincident with Tuscarora Street in the Village of Lewiston (with two minor exceptions in this area). It should also be noted that ownership in the “gap” between the second and third areas so listed is complicated; NYPA owns certain incidental fragments of property under and adjacent to the Parkway proper, and it also owns two non-connecting sections of the right of way for the Great Gorge Railroad, which ran along the base of the Gorge.

The Parkway, a restricted highway, is posted as a non-commercial route, both to preserve its character as a scenic drive, and because of clearance restrictions at the North Grand Island Bridges.

4.3 Relationship between NYSOPRHP, NYSDOT, and NYPA regarding the Parkway

As described above, NYPA and NYSOPRHP own most of the waterfront ROW in the study area. The Parkway is administered by NYSOPRHP, with maintenance responsibilities coordinated with NYSDOT. Portions of the roadway are in the National Highway System (NHS) and are therefore subject to USDOT-FHWA requirements.

4.4 Proposals, Plans, and Studies Related to the Parkway

Modification of the Parkway has been discussed almost since the Parkway’s inception, and studies of the issue began in the early 1970s. In 2002, a two-year Pilot Program was conducted by NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT. The program consisted of converting portions of the two southbound lanes of the divided four-lane highway to a multi-use pedestrian and bicycle path. The study section was a five-mile segment of the Parkway from the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center to the interchange at the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. To encourage pedestrian access along the converted section, five points were established for crossing the Parkway. The existing northbound lanes were converted to two-way traffic with a single lane northbound and southbound. The Pilot Program was conducted from September 2001 to September 2003.

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NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT have determined that the Pilot Program study configuration serves the transportation needs of the community. Specifically, NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT found there are no significant adverse impacts to traffic and that air emissions were reduced during the test period. The conversion will therefore remain in place with aesthetic and safety improvements until a future design study determines how best to further integrate the new multi-use path and two-way roadway to serve the needs of the community. The Pilot Program study and analysis is expected to lead to a number of recommended modifications and improvements for future implementation.

Enhancements to the facilities within the Parkway corridor in conjunction with the NYSOPRHP and NYSDOT Pilot Program enhancements and proposed future enhancements (e.g., increased access points) along the corridor would likely result in an increase of recreational/tourist traffic through the area. This should not adversely affect the typical peak (rush) hour traffic, as recreational and tourist usage times would not generally coincide with commuter traffic hours. However, if in the future the Parkway speed is further reduced (to the suggested 30 mph) or if the road is realigned to a more winding/curving configuration, travel times between Niagara Falls and Lewiston would increase.

4.5 Regulations and Statutes regarding Parkway Lands within the NPP Boundary and Governing Potential Changes to Existing Uses or Ownership

With respect to the entire Investigation Area, any significant change in the Parkway's configuration, management, or usage would need to be reviewed and approved by NYSDOT. In addition, approximately 5.85 miles of the Parkway is within the Boundary established pursuant to the Project license granted by FERC, which means that any significant change with respect to those portions of the Parkway so included would be subject to approval by FERC. It should be noted that FERC approval would pre-empt any competing state jurisdiction.

Approximately 3.5 miles of that portion of the Parkway administered by NYSOPRHP, of which approximately 0.75 miles (aggregated fragments) are owned by NYPA, are not contained within the Boundary. It is possible that, by virtue of NYSOPRHP's administration of the Parkway and/or the actions taken in 1961 and 1964, New York's common law would impose a requirement that the state

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legislative approve any departure from “parkland” uses with respect to some or all of the areas associated with this 3.5-mile stretch. It should be noted in this context that it is unclear whether this “parkland” doctrine applies to “parkways” and that OPRHP and other state entities have expressed doubt as to whether the enabling statutes pursuant to which the People of the State acquire, manage, and dispose of real property leave any room for the application of this common law doctrine. The approximately 1.6-mile stretch of the Parkway within the Investigation Area not administered by NYSOPRHP (between Upper Mountain Road and Ridge Road), is free from this constraint, although changes affecting the portion located on NYPA property (approximately eight-tenths of a mile) would need NYPA approval as well as DOT approval. The same would be true, of course, with respect to the NYPA-owned areas within the 3.5-mile stretch.

It appears that, in 1967, NYSOPRHP did identify portions of the Parkway under its administration as areas dedicated to public outdoor recreation uses. NYSOPRHP itself has expressed doubt as to the scope of the action taken in 1967, but it seems reasonably clear that at least three areas crossed by the Parkway were involved: the area running alongside Devil’s Hole State Park, an area (within the Project Boundary) just north of the Niagara State Park Reservation, and the Reservation itself. In the event that any change to the Parkway rises to the level of a “conversion” of any area so identified to a use other than public outdoor recreation, the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service would need to approve the substitution of other areas to compensate for the loss.

4.6 Summary of Parkway-Related Redevelopment Proposals

The Robert Moses Parkway has been the subject of many proposals, plans, and studies since the early 1970s. Presented below is a summary of the major themes that have been advanced regarding the Parkway over the years and as discussed in [Section 3.0](#) of this report.

- The existing Parkway configuration is perceived as an impediment to waterfront access.
- The need for increased access points to the Niagara gorge from the City of Niagara Falls.

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- The provision of more user friendly and open access points to the Niagara Gorge, Overlook Points and state parks.
- The provision of additional trailways for pedestrian and bicycle usage.
- Varied opinions for and against the return to a more “natural state” along the Niagara gorge.
- Varied opinions for and against the retention and/or the removal of the Parkway.

4.7 Impediments and Opportunities for Future Use of and Options for the Parkway and its Associated Lands

4.7.1 Identified Impediments

- Public acceptance of any changes to use and configuration of the Parkway
- Anticipated costs of reconfiguring the Parkway
- Acceptance of Parkway modifications by regional residents, especially by those north of the City of Niagara Falls, who use the Parkway as a commuter route
- Resistance by those advocating removal of the entire Parkway
- Current Parkway configuration is perceived as an impediment to access of Waterfront (Upper and Lower River and Gorge Rim)
- Possible need for legislative approval
- Need for approvals of DOI, NPS, FERC, NYPA, NYSDOT, and/or NYSOPRHP with respect to particular portions of the Parkway within the Investigation Area.

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4.7.2 Identified Opportunities

- To provide increased and improved access to the Upper and Lower Niagara River and gorge areas for local and regional residents, as well as tourists, via trails, and better access points to vistas and views
- To provide easier access to the Parkway from the City of Niagara Falls and remove the perceived barrier created by the Parkway
- To provide opportunities to restore waterfront access areas to a more natural environment, consistent with native habitat
- Enhance safety on the RMP with lower speed limits and enhance air quality with reduced air emissions (pollution)
- To provide additional recreational opportunities for local/regional residents and tourists alike
- To spur additional business investment and downtown redevelopment, and to increase opportunities for economic growth
- To preserve the Parkway as a transportation link to recreational areas and as a dependable route for commuter traffic.