

**STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW ACT**  
**DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT**  
Schodack I-90 Corridor Plan  
Town of Schodack  
Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS)

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**Name of Action:** Schodack I-90 Corridor Plan GEIS

**SEQR Status:** Type 1

**Lead Agency:** Rensselaer County Industrial Development Agency (IDA)

**Written Comments May be Submitted To:** Steve Wilson  
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**Written Comments Must be Submitted By:** February 28, 2022

## **Introduction:**

The Route 9 Corridor in the Town of Schodack has become increasingly attractive to development. By example, Amazon opened a one-million square foot fulfillment center on Route 9 in 2020 and recently received approval for a 278,000SF sales distribution center located on Route 150.

Therefore, considering the importance of balancing development potential with land use and environmental considerations, the Rensselaer County IDA (the IDA) is proposing to evaluate potential future development within the Route 9 Corridor. To that end, the IDA has established an approximately 6,000-acre Study Area, which is generally defined by I-90 to the west, Exit 11 to the north, and Exit 12 to the south.

In accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and its implementing regulations (6 NYCRR Part 617), the IDA, acting as Lead Agency, has determined that the evaluation of potential future development within the Study Area is a Type I Action and that a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) shall be prepared to evaluate areas of potential impacts resulting from future development.

A Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) is a broader, more general EIS that analyzes the impacts of a preliminary concept or overall plan rather than those of a specific project plan. The GEIS is useful when the details of a specific impact cannot be accurately identified, as no site-specific project has been proposed, but a broad set of further, future projects has the potential to occur. 6 NYCRR 617.10 provides the following guidance for preparation of Generic Environmental Impact Statements:

*Generic EISs may be broader, and more general than site or project specific EISs and should discuss the logic and rationale for the choices advanced. They may also include an assessment of specific impacts if such details are available. They may be based on conceptual information in some cases. They may identify the important elements of the natural resource base as well as the existing and projected cultural features, patterns and character. They may discuss in general terms the constraints and consequences of any narrowing of future options. They may present and analyze in general terms a few hypothetical scenarios that could and are likely to occur.*

The information prepared in conformance with this Scoping Document for the DGEIS is intended to provide the analysis to support the decision-making process by the IDA, acting as Lead Agency, and any Involved/Interested Agencies in preparing their Findings Statements and issuing decisions.

The purpose of the GEIS will be to evaluate the cumulative impacts of potential future growth within the 6,000-acre Study Area. The impact analysis will establish thresholds or limitations of the future potential development studies and evaluation of a variety of environmental and socioeconomic will be expressed as thresholds for future development. Projects that meet these thresholds will be considered in compliance with the GEIS and associated Statement of Findings. Projects that exceed the thresholds (one or more) must undergo further SEQR review to identify the significance of the impact(s).

## **Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement:**

The DGEIS will discuss relevant and material information and evaluate the reasonable alternatives to potential future development identified in this Scoping Document. The DGEIS will be clearly and concisely written in plain language that can be easily read and understood by the public.

Technical material will be summarized and, if it must be included in its entirety, will be referenced in

the DGEIS, and included as an appendix. All relevant correspondence from the Lead Agency and interested agencies will be included in an appendix to the DGEIS.

As appropriate, narrative discussions will be accompanied by illustrative tables and graphics. Graphics will clearly identify the Study Area. Each potential impact category will be the subject of a separate section describing existing conditions, anticipated impacts, and proposed mitigation.

## **Contents of the DGEIS:**

**Cover Sheet** – The cover sheet will list the title of project, location, Lead Agency (with contact information), preparer, and dates for DGEIS acceptance, public hearing, and final date for comments). A list of preparers will also be provided.

### **I. Executive Summary**

The Executive Summary will include a summary description of the Proposed Action and a listing of all potential significant adverse environmental impacts and proposed mitigation measures. A summary will provide a list of the approvals and permits required, and of the alternatives to the Proposed Action that are evaluated in the DGEIS.

### **II. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT**

The Proposed Action being considered involves the future potential development within the approximately 6,000-acre Study Area. The potential future development will hereinafter be referred to as the Potential Development Scenario.

The Potential Development Scenario will establish development projections for the Study Area over a 10-year planning period, which will serve as the basis for the evaluation of cumulative growth impacts and establish the mitigation necessary to accommodate this growth and avoid significant adverse impacts to the environment and community.

Based on initial analysis of market conditions and the Study Area, the Potential Development Scenario could include the following:

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Advanced Electronics/Semi-Conductors                                | 2 Million Square Feet (MSF) |
| Life Sciences/Biotechnology   | 2 MSF                       |
| Climate Change Solutions/Sustainable Technology                     | 1 MSF                       |
| Advanced Specialty Materials  | 1 MSF                       |
| Logistics:  | 1 MSF                       |
| Commercial & Distribution Centers/Advanced Technology Supply Chain: | 1 MSF                       |
| Food Processing & Value-Added Production:                           | 500,000 Square Feet (SF)    |
| Creative, Gaming, Film Production & Sound Studios:                  | 500,000 SF                  |
| Energy Generation/Battery Storage/Micro-Grid                        | 500,000 SF                  |
| Data Centers/Computing Capacity                                     | 500,000 SF                  |

## **I. POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION**

A Full Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) was prepared to determine the potential significance of the project impacts. Based on this initial analysis, the following scope is provided for consideration.

### **A. Land Use and Zoning**

Existing Conditions: Existing land use will be identified by county tax parcel mapping and will be refined through discussions with Town officials, visual inspection, and review of aerial mapping. This information will be compared to the current land use recommendations contained with the Town of Schodack Comprehensive Master Plan (2011), Town of Schodack Zoning Ordinance zoning and the Potential Development Scenario.

Potential Impact:

This section of the GEIS will evaluate the impact of land use changes resulting from the Potential Development Scenario. The magnitude of development will be evaluated to identify the cumulative impacts of growth on the community in general and on the existing, well-established land uses, such as the residential neighborhoods, with the intent of preventing unavoidable adverse impacts.

Anticipated Information Necessary to Address the Impact: Development projections for the Study Area based on the Preferred Redevelopment Scenario that identifies proposed land use, zoning, and density.

Initial Identification of Mitigation Measures: Mitigation for land use conflicts can often be addressed through site design. The GEIS process will result in a detailed Statement of Findings that will serve as environmental/SEQR guidelines for future site-specific development. Modifications to the Town of Schodack Zoning Ordinance may also be warranted as a mitigation measure.

### **B. Utilities**

Existing Conditions: The availability and location of water, sewer, electric and gas services will be identified.

Potential Impact: The extent to which water, sewer, electric and gas services are provided within the Study Area can have a significant impact on growth potential. Existing water, sewer electric and gas infrastructure may be concentrated in existing developed areas within the Study Area. Further, existing utilities may provide little or no excess capacity which would further hamper potential growth. The implications of growth on existing utility infrastructure and the need for potential utility upgrades and expansion will be evaluated.

Anticipated Information Necessary to Address the Impact: Data on the location of existing service areas, distribution/collection infrastructure, and capacities will be collected from the Town of Schodack, Town of East Greenbush, Rensselaer County and National Grid. Demand projections and recommended infrastructure upgrades will be provided.

Initial Identification of Mitigation Measures: None have been identified at this time.



## C. **Transportation**

Existing Conditions: The existing conditions of the transportation system will be documented to provide a context for the evaluation of future conditions. The characteristics and functional classification of the roadway network, daily and peak hour traffic volumes, and multimodal travel demand characteristics will also be described. Existing traffic operations and traffic safety conditions will be described using available data and modeling from the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC).

Potential Impact: The Potential Development Scenario can be expected to contribute to increased traffic volumes on the transportation system. This increase can result in reduction in Level of Service (LOS) and increase delays.

Anticipated Information Necessary to Assess the Impact: The GEIS will require the preparation of a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) that will include data collection and compilation; analysis of existing conditions for traffic, safety, and pedestrian, bicycle, and transit operations; future transportation needs assessment (impacts of growth); and development of alternative transportation strategies.

The documentation of existing conditions will include a review and verification of information and data to be compiled from relevant documents, plans and agency-provided data. Sources of this data are expected to include the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), the CDTC, Rensselaer County, and Town of Schodack.

Intersections expected to be analyzed as part of the TIS include:

- US Route 9 / CR 32
- US Route 9 / I-90 Interchange 12 eastbound ramps
- US Route 9 / I-90 Interchange 12 westbound ramps
- US Route 9 / Kingman Rd
- US Route 9 / CR 6
- US Route 9 / US Route 20
- US Route 20 / SR 150

The list of study intersections will be finalized as part of the TIS.

Initial Identification of Mitigation Measures: The type and location of mitigation will depend on the magnitude and anticipated location of development under the Potential Development Scenario. The mitigation may include identification of specific improvements to the transportation infrastructure as well as providing guidelines for revised roadway standards and access management to reinforce roadway function and character. These may include considerations for complete streets accommodations, ped/bike facility expansion, transit services, enhanced roadway capacity, and/or other transportation management systems.

## C. **Water Quality**

Existing Conditions: The Study Area includes several tributaries of the Moordener and Vlockie Kill. Class 3, NYS Regulated wetlands are also present within the Study Area.

Potential Impact: Future development may lead to increased runoff, erosion and sedimentation, and water quality impacts. Current stormwater management practices have increased the emphasis on water quality and may adequately mitigate future projects. Groundwater is an important source of potable water to the Town of Schodack with the Schodack Terrace Aquifer located within a portion of the Study Area. Aquifer protection will be an important consideration.

Anticipated Information Necessary to Address the Impact: Guidelines for the current State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) General Construction Permit are available and will be utilized to establish guidelines for future development. Mapped streams, lakes, and ponds and their associated floodplains will be identified on USGS topographic mapping and Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). State water quality classifications will be identified from 6 NYCRR Part 863. Groundwater resources will be identified from available US Geological Survey aquifer mapping.

Initial Identification of Mitigation Measures: Stormwater management policies based on current SPDES regulations will be developed to mitigate impacts associated with runoff.

#### **D. Ecology**

Existing Conditions: The project area will be investigated for the presence of threatened, endangered, rare, and special concern species through contact with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Natural Heritage Program. Other common species and their habitat (vegetative communities) will be generally identified by association with the general ecological communities within the Study Area. The potential presence of State and federal wetlands within the project area will be identified based on available wetland mapping.

Potential Impact: Build-out and to a lesser extent the Potential Development Scenario may reduce wildlife habitat and may result in wetland impacts.

Anticipated Information Necessary to Address the Impact: Ecological communities will be described generally using online and publicly available mapping. Field analysis will be limited to a drive-through evaluation; no site-specific field investigations will be conducted. Parameters for such investigation will be identified as part of the mitigation measures. The Study Area does not contain any Critical Environmental Areas. The potential presence of threatened and endangered species will be addressed through consultation with NYSDEC Natural Heritage Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Initial Identification of Mitigation Measures: Mitigation for future development will include protocol for future site-specific investigations to address site ecology, wetlands, and threatened and endangered species. Additionally, opportunities for open space preservation will be considered.

#### **E. Visual Resources**

Existing Conditions: Route 9 is a five-lane state highway that is home to a variety of residential, commercial, and light industrial land uses interspersed among tracts of undeveloped land. Overall, the visual character of the corridor can be described as highway commercial.

Potential Impact: Visual resources are an important component of the rural character of the area. Development can change views within the corridor as undeveloped land is developed. Additionally, new lighting can impact surroundings as well as the night sky.

Anticipated Information Necessary to Address the Impact: Visual impacts will be addressed as a component of the Town's vision for the Study Area. Exemplary views may be presented to emphasize the need for development guidelines. Some field work may be necessary and would be incorporated into the field analysis for land use. A viewshed analysis will not be conducted.

Initial Identification of Mitigation Measures: Recommendations will be made to address procedures for the future evaluation of views on a site-specific basis. Lighting recommendations will be provided to minimize potential impacts. Recommendations will be made to address ways in which site design can preserve or mitigate impacts on important views.

#### **D. Cultural Resources**

Existing Conditions: The Study Area includes several Archaeological Sensitive Areas according to the NYS Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS). The areas around the Route 9 & Route 20 intersection, Route 9 & Graw Road are just two of the Archaeological Sensitive Areas.

Potential Impact: Development projects may have the potential for disturbing and eliminating sites containing cultural resources. Such activity is inconsistent with the NYS Historic Preservation Law.

Anticipated Information Necessary to Address the Impact: A cultural resources investigation will be conducted for the Study Area. The analysis will include file searches, map review, and limited field analysis. The purpose of the analysis will be to identify known historic and pre-historic sites and to address the sensitivity for the discovery of cultural resources. Due to the size of the project area and the anticipated duration of build-out, the analysis will not serve as a complete Phase 1A. It will, however, provide a base for future site-specific Phase 1A surveys.

Initial Identification of Mitigation Measures: The GEIS will establish procedures for evaluating the potential future impact of development on a site-specific basis.

#### **E. Agricultural Resources & Open Space**

Existing Conditions: Existing agricultural and open space data and GIS mapping documenting agricultural and open space will be incorporated into the GEIS.

Potential Impact: The Potential Development Scenario has the potential to reduce the amount of open space and agricultural land within the Study Area.

Anticipated Information Necessary to Address the Impact: The Town's Comprehensive Plan will be incorporated into the GEIS and further refined to implement its recommendations. Additional information may be collected through one or more meetings with large land holders to identify possible methods for land preservation.

Initial Identification of Mitigation Measures: Mitigation will focus on opportunities to conserve open space through easements and will identify those methods (e.g., incentive zoning, purchase of development rights) that are likely to work.

#### **F. Municipal Services**

Existing Conditions: Community services the Town of Schodack provides include emergency medical, fire, police, and schools. Services that may be impacted by Potential Development Scenario within the Study Area will be identified along with their existing capacity to provide service.

Potential Impact: While the intent of the Potential Development Scenario is not to increase the population in the Town of Schodack, the potential does exist. Secondary or spinoff development resulting from commercial and industrial development can include new residential units. New development generally requires some level of service from the community. The primary community services that may be impacted by development in the Study Area include police protection, fire protection, emergency services, and schools.

Anticipated Information Necessary to Address the Impact: Contact with the various service leaders will be necessary to identify the magnitude and significance of any potential impacts. The information provided by the service providers will be relied upon to draw conclusions relative to the significance of future impacts and the appropriate measures to mitigate the impacts.

Initial Identification of Mitigation Measures: The GEIS will attempt to identify current levels of service and anticipated impacts based on the Potential Development Scenario. Control of both the magnitude and timing of growth may be an important tool to maintain current levels of service. The potential to identify service thresholds will allow the projection of major investments.

## **II. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

This section will summarize all the impacts for which mitigation is either not available/feasible or not sufficient to completely mitigate the impact. The potential significance of these impacts will also be discussed.

## **III. REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO BE CONSIDERED**

The following project alternatives will be discussed:

- A. Alternative Growth Scenarios – The various development scenarios evaluated in this GEIS/planning process to arrive at a Potential Development Scenario will be discussed in this section.
- B. No-Action Alternative – The No-Action Alternative will address the potential impact of development resulting from future growth under current zoning, current land use patterns, and without the benefit of specific growth management tools.

#### **IV. GROWTH INDUCING IMPACTS**

The entire GEIS will evaluate the potential future cumulative growth impacts within the Study Area under a Potential Development Scenario. This section will focus on factors that could induce further growth beyond the projected growth.

#### **V. FUTURE SEQR ACTIONS**

An important feature of a GEIS is the ability to approve future development actions without further SEQR action. To that end, thresholds, and other parameters relative to the use, extent and impact of development must be clearly explained within the GEIS.

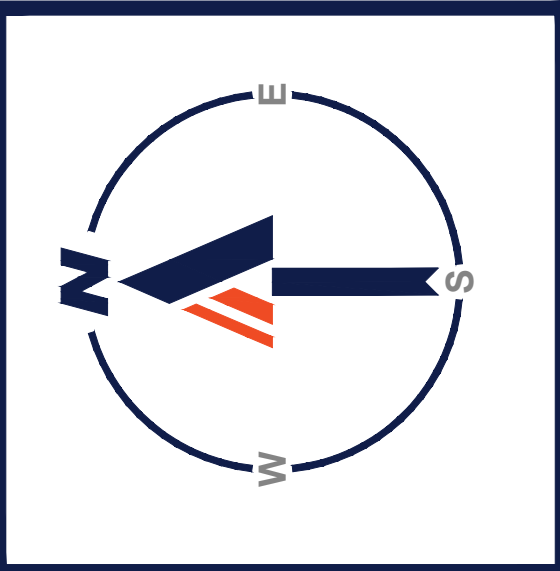
These thresholds will be revised as necessary as a result of public comment and will be finalized within the SEQR Findings Statement. Projects that exceed the parameters and thresholds for future actions, as ultimately defined in the Findings Statement, would require further SEQR review. This section of the GEIS will outline the procedures for addressing the SEQR process for site-specific activities, as well as future modifications that may be necessary to the GEIS itself.

#### **REFERENCES**

##### **PRELIMINARY LIST OF APPENDICES FOR Draft GEIS**

- Correspondence
- SEQR Documentation
- Utility Plans/Data
- Cultural Resources Assessment
- Traffic Impact Study
- Market Analysis





# SCHODACK I-90 GEIS

TOWN OF SCHODACK, NY

STUDY AREA  
MARCH 11, 2021

