

## CHAPTER 2 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

This chapter describes the Proposed Action in detail and outlines the alternatives that SEA has considered as part of its environmental review in this proceeding. The alternatives discussed in this chapter include two Build Alternatives (the Proposed Action and the Modified Proposed Action), two No-Build Alternatives (the I-80 Interchange and the Local Road System Upgrade alternative), and the No-Action Alternative. These alternatives are further summarized below.

- **Build Alternative (Proposed Action)** – The Proposed Action is presented in RJCP’s petition for exemption filed with the Board and consists of the originally proposed Eastern Segment and Western Segment. The Proposed Action’s Western Segment would follow the Wallaceton to Munson Route and then continue east to Winburne. If the Proposed Action is authorized by the Board, R.J. Corman Railroad Group’s own construction crew would construct the proposed rail line. If the Proposed Action were to be granted, RJCP estimates that construction of the line would take approximately 12 to 18 months to complete. The line would be constructed on a 66-foot right-of-way owned/controlled or to be owned/controlled by RJCP.
- **Build Alternative (Modified Proposed Action)** – The Modified Proposed Action consists of the same Eastern Segment, but the Modified Proposed Action’s Western Segment would follow the Alternate Route from Philipsburg to Munson and then continue east to Winburne. Construction activities for the Modified Proposed Action would be the same as the Proposed Action, and there would be no change in the width of the right-of-way or ownership. RJCP has now identified this alternative as its preferred alignment.
- **No-Build Alternative (I-80 Interchange)** – The I-80 Interchange involves no physical rail improvements. Under this alternative, the construction of a new interchange on Interstate 80 would be used to provide direct vehicular access to RRLLC’s proposed landfill/development site and to other interested shippers.
- **No-Build Alternative (Local Road System Upgrade)** – Much like the I-80 Interchange, the Local Road System Upgrade alternative involves no physical rail improvements. Rather, under this alternative the existing local road system would be improved to accommodate the anticipated volume of truck traffic generated by RRLLC’s proposed landfill/development site and other interested shippers.
- **No-Action Alternative** – This alternative involves taking no action, rail or otherwise. Under this alternative, RJCP would not provide rail service to RRLLC’s proposed landfill/development site (or to any of the other interested shippers along the line), nor would an acceptable means of vehicular access be provided. In short, this alternative would result in no change in access to RRLLC’s proposed landfill/development site beyond use of the existing local road system in its current physical condition.

## 2.1 ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT

Prior to RJCP filing its petition with the Board, RRLLC spent several years investigating non-rail alternatives as the primary means for accessing its proposed landfill/development site. These non-rail (i.e., motor vehicle-based) alternatives serve as the basis for the two alternatives considered under the No-Build Alternative, including the construction of a new interchange on Interstate 80 (the I-80 Interchange) and the improvement of the existing local road system to accommodate the projected volume of truck traffic (the Local Road System Upgrade alternative).

Both of these motor vehicle-based alternatives were evaluated in detail as part of the Point of Access Study for the I-80/Gorton Road Interchange prepared by Rettew Associates, Inc. between 2004 and 2006. This Point of Access Study was submitted to the Pennsylvania Division of FHWA to obtain conceptual approval of the proposed new I-80 Interchange. However, FHWA did not grant conceptual approval of the new I-80 Interchange, stating that: 1) the document failed to demonstrate that the existing interchanges and/or local roads and streets in the corridor can neither provide the necessary access nor be improved to satisfactorily accommodate the design-year traffic demands while at the same time providing the access intended by the proposal, and 2) the document did not effectively demonstrate that the new interchange proposal is consistent with regional land use and transportation plans.

Following repeated efforts to resolve the consistency issue with the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization, RRLLC approached RJCP to investigate the feasibility of rail service as an alternative means of accessing its proposed landfill/development site. Based on a combination of factors, including the proposed new I-80 Interchange's regional planning consistency issues, increasing diesel fuel prices, and the identification of other interested shippers along the rail line, RJCP's proposed rail line construction, operation, and reactivation has evolved into RRLLC's preferred means for accessing the proposed landfill/development site.

NEPA regulations require federal agencies to consider a reasonable range of feasible alternatives to the Proposed Action. However, NEPA does not mandate consideration of every conceivable variation of an alternative. In this context, SEA decided early on that the analysis of "off-line" or "new location" build alternatives (i.e., totally new rail line in new location) would not be reasonable for this project. Given the scope of RJCP's Proposed Action (i.e., construction within an existing rail right-of-way and reactivation of rail service over an existing graded roadbed), the analysis of more costly, off-line/new location build alternatives would be more environmentally damaging because the existing rail right-of-way would not be used. For comparison purposes, construction of a new 20-mile "off-line" railroad alternative having a 66-foot wide right-of-way would impact a minimum 160 acres of varied land uses. These varied land uses would likely include a diverse and scattered mixture of undeveloped (i.e., forestland, old field/herbaceous upland and wetland) and developed (i.e., residential and commercial) parcels pending the exact location of the alternative. This 160-acre impact estimate does not account for the relatively flat grades (i.e., generally less than 2%) required for new railroad track construction and operation. Achieving this maximum grade in the rolling/mountainous terrain of Clearfield and Centre Counties would likely result in even greater acreage impacts due to new cuts/fills and/or the potential need for switchbacks along the rail line. Any "off-line" alternative would have a greater potential to impact threatened and endangered species, historic properties, and community facilities. Residential relocations and the introduction of multiple new grade crossings of state and local roadways where none existed previously would also

be unavoidable. Thus, this Draft EIS has focused on the Proposed Action, the Modified Proposed Action, two No-Build Alternatives, and the No-Action Alternative.

## **2.2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND CARRIED FORWARD IN THIS DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

This section provides a detailed description of the Proposed Action and each alternative that SEA considered reasonable and feasible. These alternatives were studied in detail as part of SEA's environmental review for this project.

### **2.2.1 Proposed Action & Modified Proposed Action**

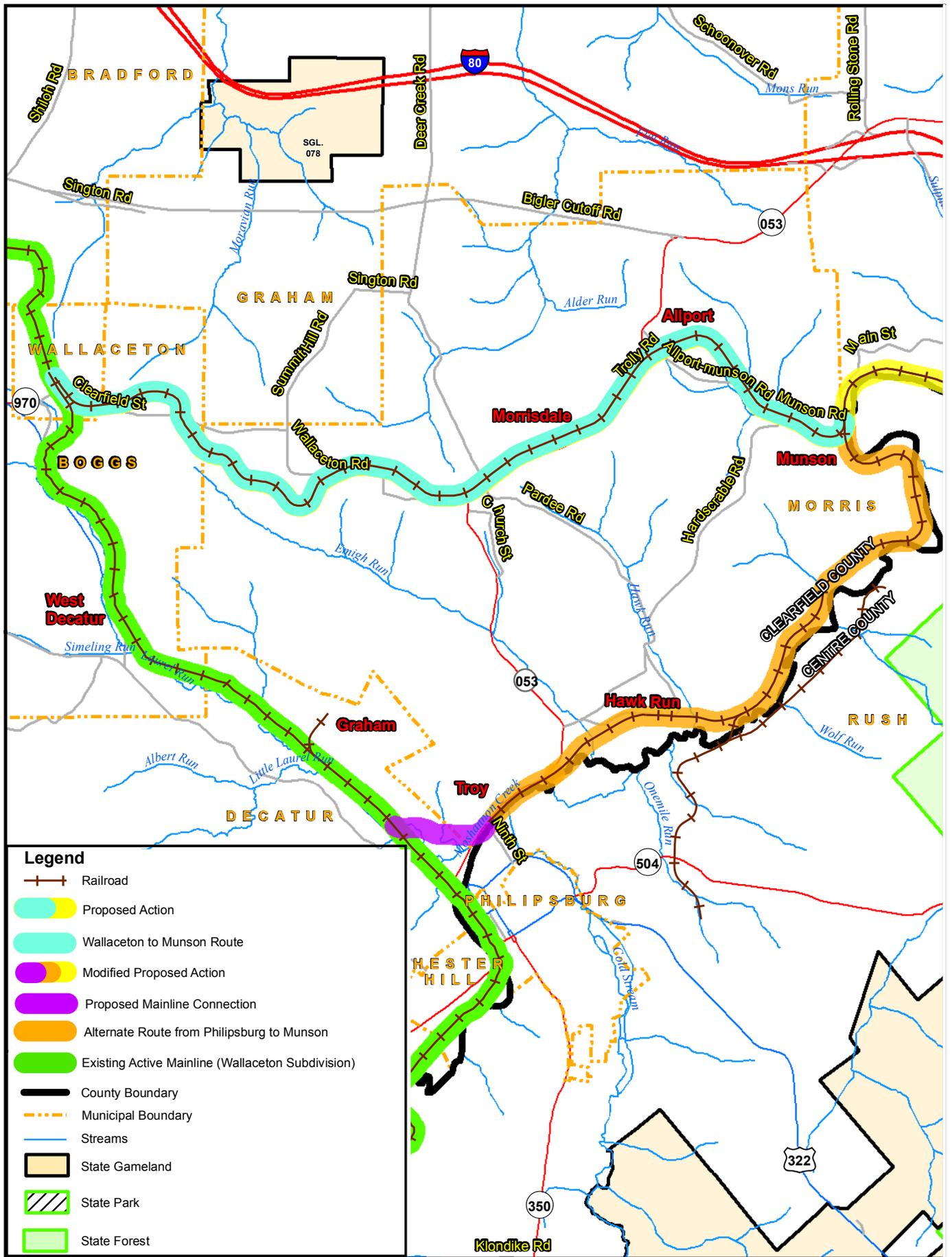
The Proposed Action would involve construction and operation over the abandoned Western Segment and reactivation of service over the Eastern Segment. Because a member of the public identified an alternate route for a portion of the Western Segment, SEA has considered an alternative to the Proposed Action (known as the Modified Proposed Action), as described above. Both the Proposed Action and the Modified Proposed Action would provide common carrier rail service to RLLC's proposed landfill/development site located near Gorton as well as to several other interested shippers along the line. Figure 2-1 shows the locations of the Proposed Action and the Modified Proposed Action.

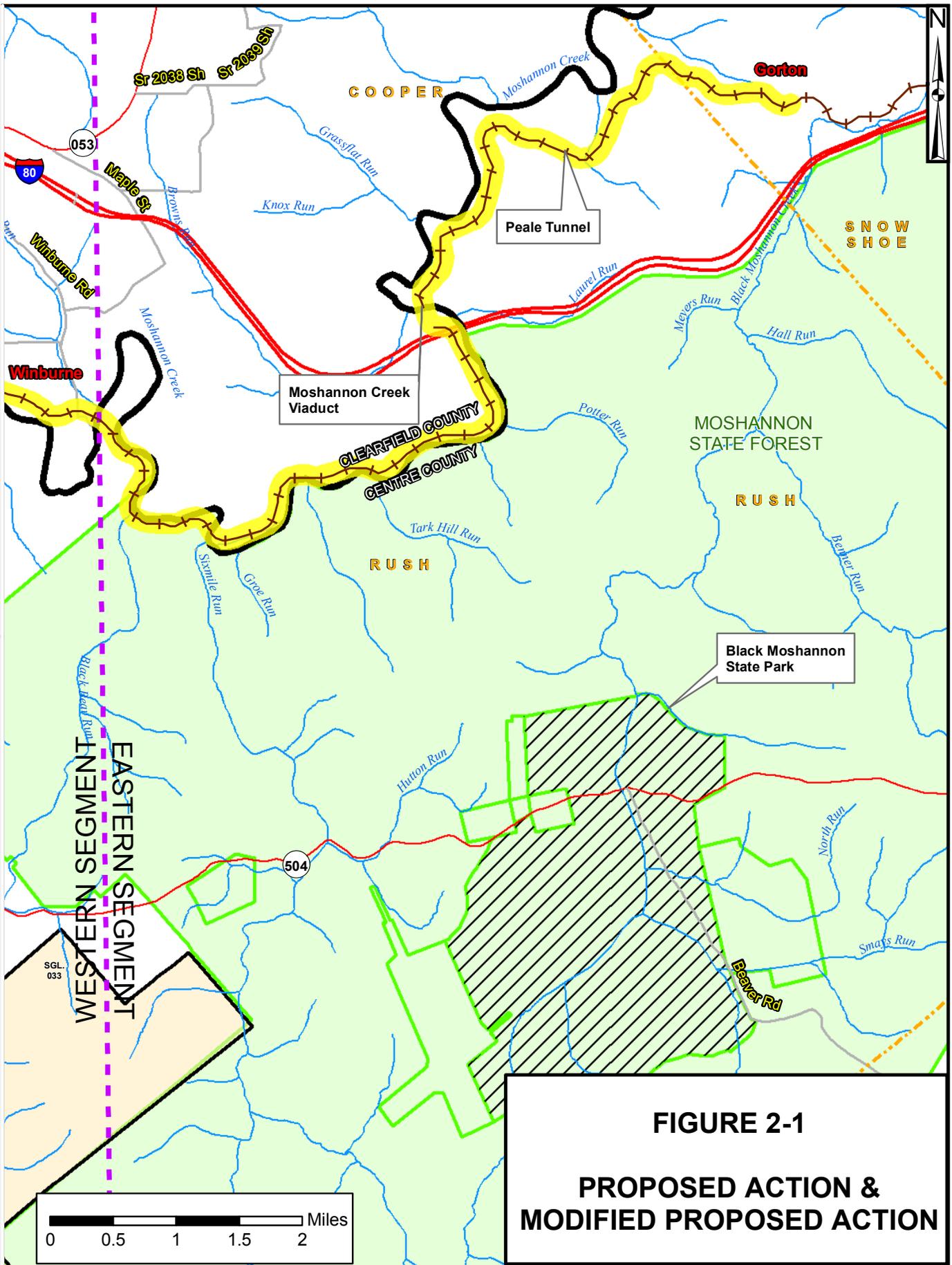
The Proposed Action's Western Segment would follow the Wallaceton to Munson Route (see Photograph 2-1) and would connect to the existing Wallaceton Subdivision Line at Milepost 11.7 (i.e., Beech Creek Branch Line Milepost 75.32)<sup>1</sup> in Wallaceton Borough, Clearfield County. It would then proceed in a generally eastward direction passing through part of Boggs and Morris Townships to the small village of Munson. Along the way, this route would roughly parallel and cross State Route (S.R.) 2034 (Wallaceton Road), S.R. 0053 (Kylertown-Drifting Highway), S.R. 2032 (Old Turnpike/Allport-Munson Road), and S.R. 2035 (Main Street). In addition to passing through the residentially developed area of Wallaceton Borough, the Wallaceton to Munson Route would also pass through the small residential villages of Morrisdale and Allport before arriving at Munson. From Munson, the remaining portion of the Western Segment would parallel the Moshannon Creek and Sawmill Road (T-707) as it winds north and east through Cooper Township to Winburne, where it then would cross the Moshannon Creek and enter Rush Township, Centre County (i.e., the approximate beginning of the Eastern Segment). In total, the Proposed Action's Western Segment would involve nineteen public road crossings, including nine crossings of numbered state routes, and thirteen private driveway crossings. Of these nineteen public road crossings, only two would be grade-separated. The remaining seventeen public road crossings would consist of at-grade intersections. Of the thirteen private driveway crossings, only one would be grade-separated. The remaining twelve would be at-grade.

The Modified Proposed Action's Western Segment would follow the Alternate Route from Philipsburg to Munson and would entail use of the existing Wallaceton Subdivision Line south of Wallaceton Borough to a point near Philipsburg in Decatur Township where a new 4,000-foot

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<sup>1</sup> The milepost numbering system for the Proposed Action used throughout this EIS refers to the original milepost numbering established for the former Beech Creek Railroad when it stretched 112 miles from Jersey Shore (Milepost 0) in Lycoming County to Mahaffey Junction (Milepost 112) in Clearfield County. The 20-mile section of rail line that this EIS addresses is roughly situated between Milepost 75 in Wallaceton and Milepost 55 in Gorton.





**FIGURE 2-1**  
**PROPOSED ACTION & MODIFIED PROPOSED ACTION**



**Photograph 2-1:** Proposed Action Western Segment (Wallaceton to Munson Route)



**Photograph 2-2:** Modified Proposed Action Western Segment (Alternate Route from Philipsburg to Munson)

connection<sup>2</sup> would be built to tie into another 5.8-mile abandoned rail line (see Photograph 2-2) leading northeast to Munson. Located entirely within Morris Township, Clearfield County, this 5.8-mile section of Conrail's former Philipsburg Industrial Track would parallel the Moshannon Creek as it wound its way northeast to Munson. This route would pass adjacent to the small residential villages of Troy and Hawk Run. From Hawk Run, the remaining portion of this route would pass adjacent to undeveloped former coal mining areas up to Munson. From Munson east to the Moshannon Creek Bridge Crossing at Winburne, the Modified Proposed Action's Western Segment would be the same as the Proposed Action's Western Segment described above. For comparison purposes, the Modified Proposed Action's Western Segment would be approximately one mile shorter than the Proposed Action's Western Segment and would involve only five public road crossings (four at-grade and one grade-separated) and two private driveway crossings (one at-grade and one grade-separated). Of these five public road crossings, three would occur at numbered state routes, while the remaining two would occur at local township roads.

From the Moshannon Creek Bridge Crossing at Milepost 65.21 for both the Proposed Action and the Modified Proposed Action (i.e., the approximate beginning of the rail banked Eastern Segment), the rail line would pass through undeveloped forestland and un-reclaimed strip mine areas (see Photograph 2-3). There are no public road or private driveway crossings, nor are there any residential, commercial, or industrial buildings on this part of the proposed right-of-way. There are, however, three bridge crossings and a tunneled section within the Eastern Segment. In addition to the Moshannon Creek Bridge Crossing at Milepost 65.21 (see Photograph 2-4), these bridge crossings include Black Bear Run at Milepost 64.24, Six-mile Run over Moshannon Creek at Milepost 63.53, and the Moshannon Creek Viaduct at Milepost 59.72 (see Photograph 2-5). The Peale Tunnel, a 1,277-foot tunnel, is located at Milepost 57.35 (see Photograph 2-6). Continuing east from the Peale Tunnel, the proposed rail line would cross into Showshoe Township before terminating at Gorton Road (T-355) in the general vicinity of Milepost 55. Two other notable features of the Eastern Segment include the presence of the Moshannon State Forest and I-80. An approximate 4,400-foot section of the Eastern Segment from just west of the Black Bear Run Bridge to the Six-mile Run Bridge passes through the northwestern corner of Moshannon State Forest. The Eastern Segment also passes under a large bridge carrying I-80 over the Moshannon Creek from Rush Township, Centre County to Cooper Township, Clearfield County.

### **2.2.1.1 Proposed Action & Modified Proposed Action Construction**

If either the Proposed Action or the Modified Proposed Action is authorized by the Board, R.J. Corman Railroad Group's own construction crew would construct the proposed rail line. RJCP estimates that construction of the line would take approximately 12 to 18 months to complete. The line would be constructed on a 66-foot right-of-way owned/controlled or to be owned/controlled by RJCP. Figure 2-2 shows the typical section of the single-track line proposed to be constructed.

RJCP estimates that approximately 57,000 to 60,000 ties and 3,800 to 4,000 tons of rail would be required to construct the proposed rail line, depending on which route to Munson is selected. The

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<sup>2</sup> This new 4,000-foot connection was reported in the Final Scope as being only 2,500 feet in length. The length here is different because approximately 1,500 feet of this connection would be constructed upon the roadbed of yet another abandoned rail line separate from the Conrail-abandoned Philipsburg Industrial Track. This other abandoned rail line was once part of the New York Central Railroad System. For purposes of analysis in this EIS, the proposed new connection will be approximately 4,000 feet in length with the understanding that approximately 1,500 feet will utilize the former roadbed of this other abandoned line.



**Photograph 2-3:** Proposed Action Eastern Segment



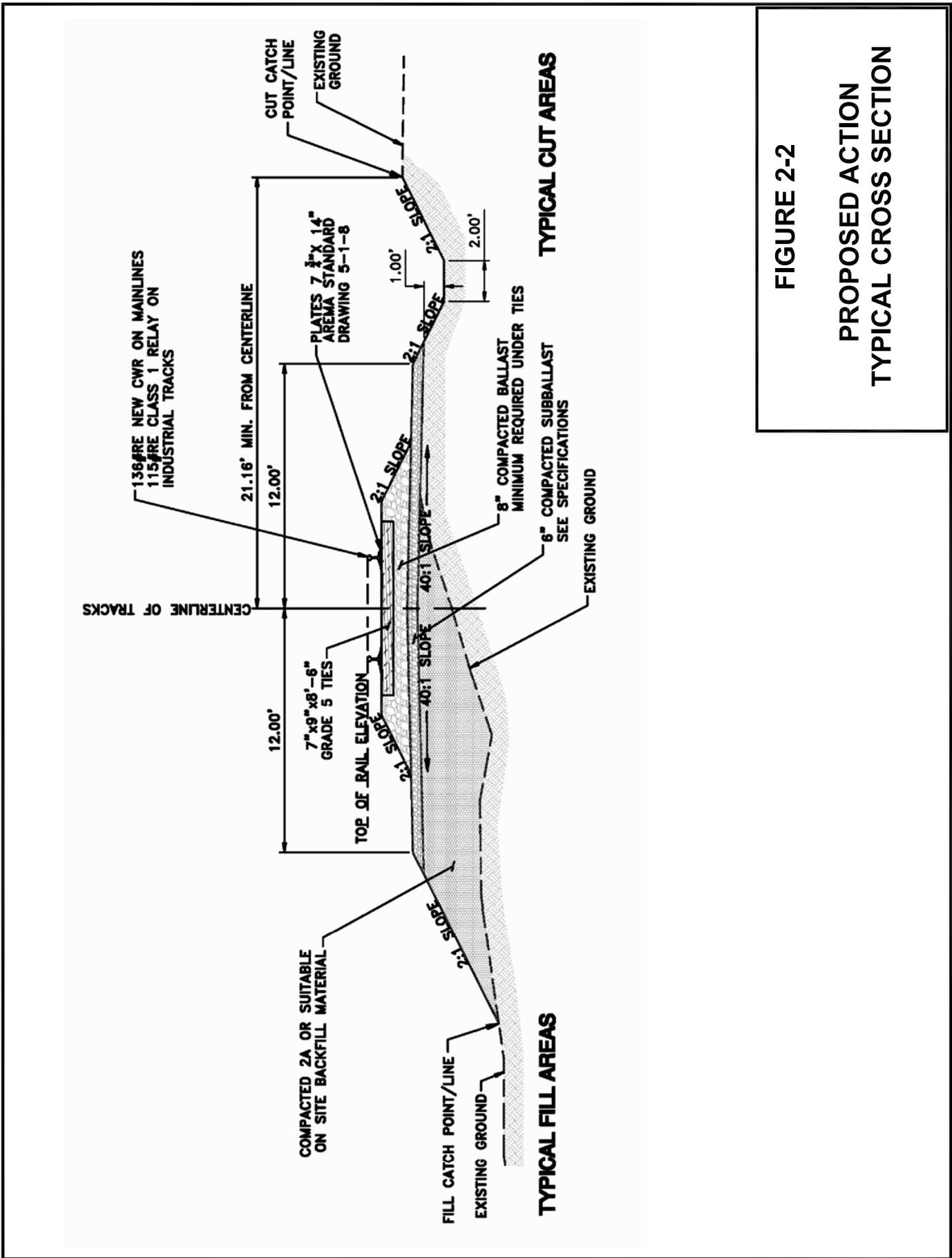
**Photograph 2-4:** Moshannon Creek Bridge Crossing at Milepost 65.21



**Photograph 2-5:** Moshannon Creek Viaduct at Milepost 59.72



**Photograph 2-6:** Peale Tunnel at Milepost 57.35



**FIGURE 2-2**  
**PROPOSED ACTION**  
**TYPICAL CROSS SECTION**

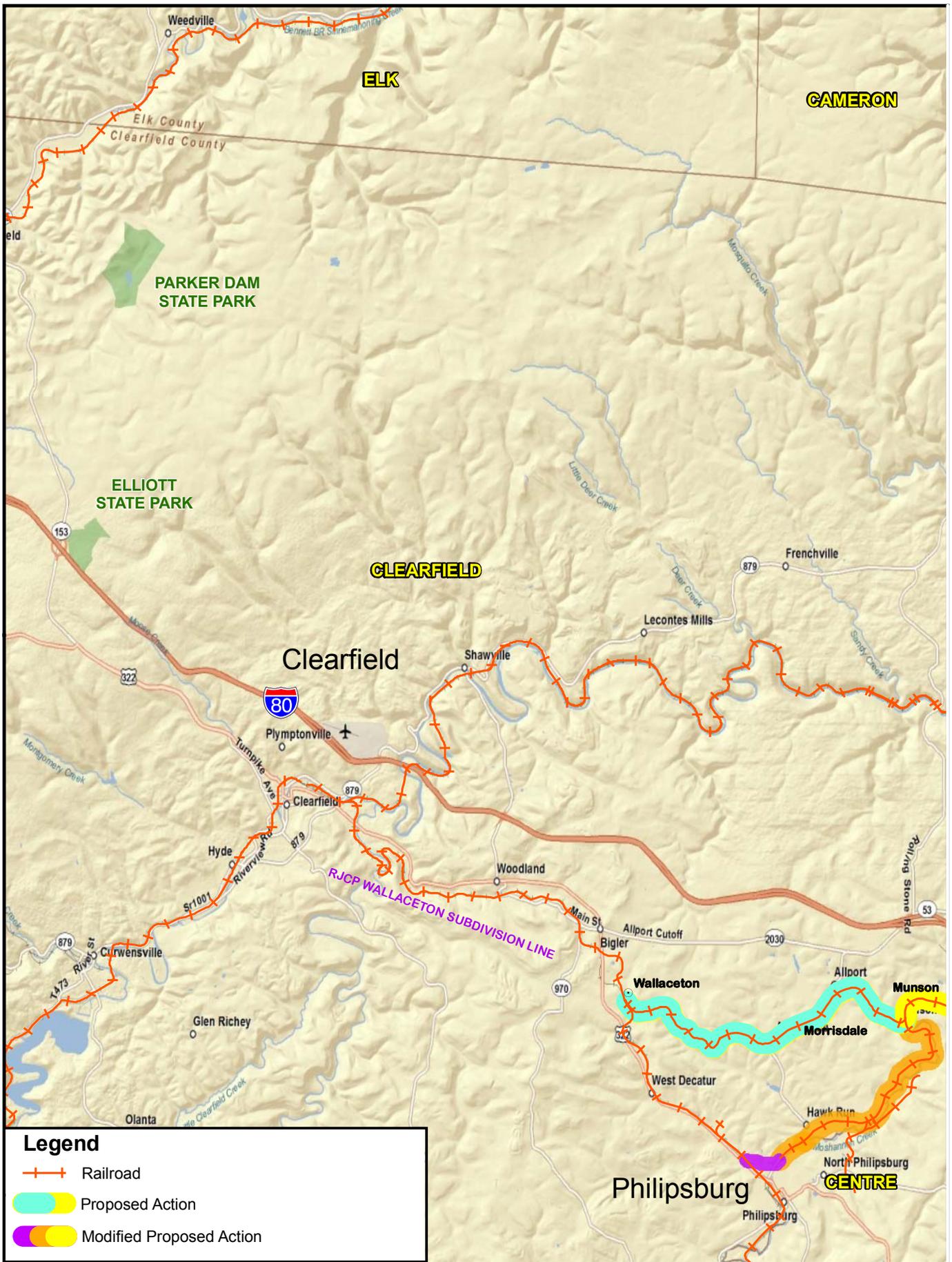
rails and ties would be shipped to the construction site by combination of both railroad and truck and staged along the line as construction proceeds. The roadbed itself would require only a minimal amount of grading, sub-grade, and sub-ballast as much of the abandoned/rail banked roadbed is still intact. RJCP anticipates that the ballast would be brought in by train and spread as the track is installed. The proposed construction activities would include the following:

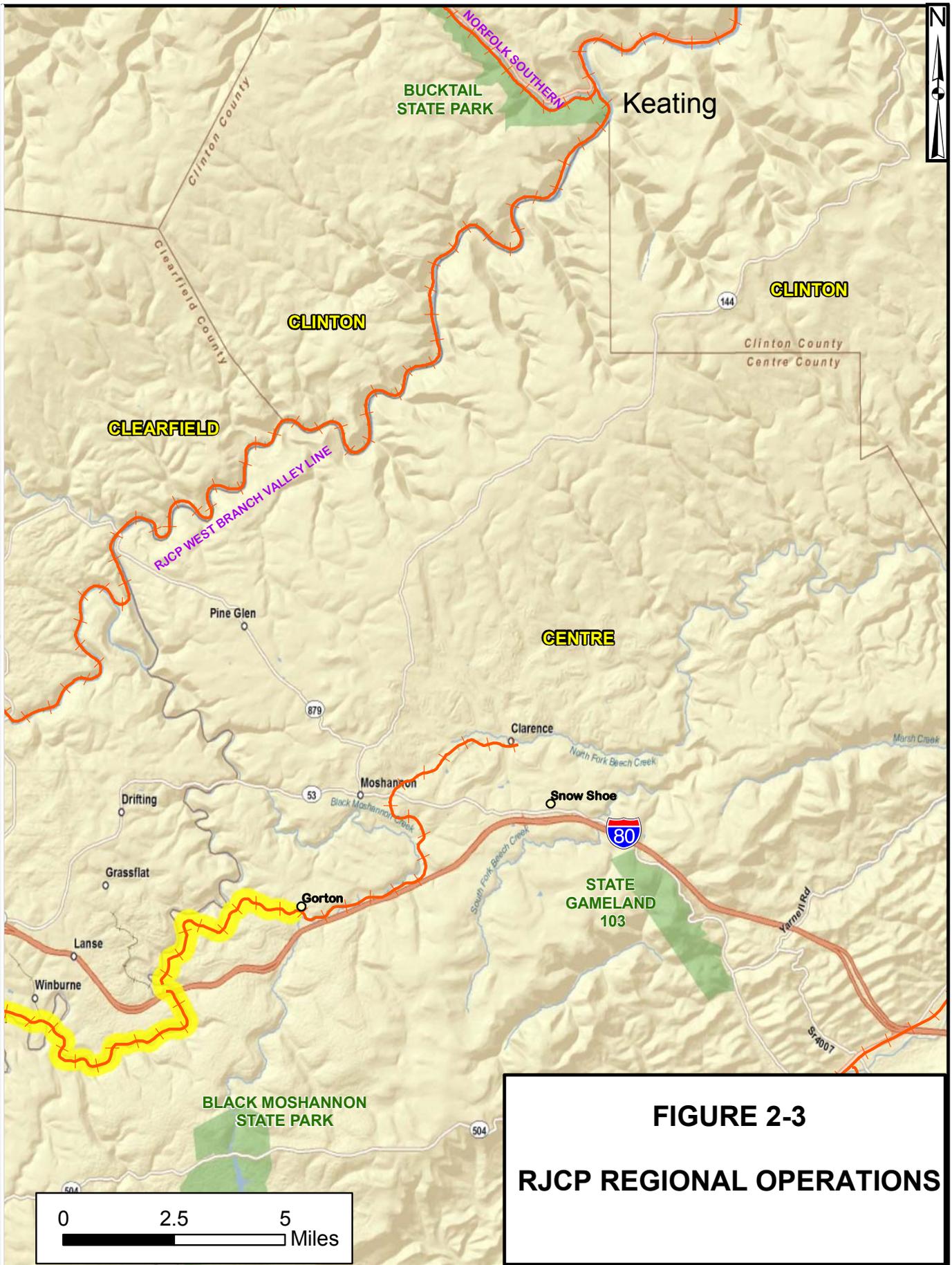
1. Brush cutting and clearing the roadbed/right-of-way, as necessary, to provide access for the construction activities.
2. Grading of the roadbed, as necessary, to prepare it for the installation of new tracks. This would include removal of former ties and rails in certain locations. New sub-grade and sub-ballast would be installed as needed. Erosion and sediment control would be established as grading proceeds.
3. All culverts would be cleaned out or replaced, as needed.
4. All existing bridges would be repaired, as needed.
5. Two new bridges would be constructed as specified.
6. All road crossings would be brush cut, be cleared out, have tracks reinstalled, and have lights and/or cross bucks and advance warning signs installed. Roadways would be temporarily closed and detoured, as necessary, to construct the crossings.
7. Relocation of utilities as needed.
8. Installation of new tracks consisting of crossties, ballast, and either relay or new rail and components.

### **2.2.1.2 Proposed Action & Modified Proposed Action Operations**

RJCP is a Class III short line railroad operating out of Clearfield, PA. RJCP operates over a former Conrail light density line extending from an interchange with NS at Keating, Clinton County, to its central yard in Clearfield (referred to by RJCP as the West Branch Valley Line). From its central yard in Clearfield, RJCP operates over its Wallaceton Subdivision Line through Wallaceton to Osceola Mills, PA. Figure 2-3 shows RJCP's current regional operations.

For both the Proposed Action and the Modified Proposed Action, RJCP would use its existing yard in Clearfield to receive the daily inbound train(s) and to stage the daily outbound train(s). If any additional facilities were needed to accommodate the increased train traffic associated with the proposed rail line, RJCP would expand the Clearfield yard. It is anticipated that RJCP would haul unit trains of municipal solid waste and/or construction and demolition debris inbound from the Keating interchange to RRLLC's proposed landfill, and backhaul empty gondola cars filled with sand and gravel outbound from the proposed quarry to Keating. Other carload traffic associated with the proposed industrial park and the other interested shippers (i.e., Rex Energy, Robindale Energy, A.W. Long Coal Co.) would move as needed.





**FIGURE 2-3**  
**RJCP REGIONAL OPERATIONS**

Regarding waste traffic, RJCP would not engage in any transloading (the transfer of material to or from truck to rail) or unloading activity. RJCP would only deliver trains to RRLLC, the permitted operator of the landfill, and RRLLC would unload and process such materials pursuant to its permitted authorization. RJCP's anticipated operating speed over the proposed rail line would be 25 mph in undeveloped areas and 10 mph in developed areas. All operations and maintenance practices would be in compliance with FRA and RJCP standards.

### 2.2.2 No-Build Alternative (Local Road System Upgrade)

The Local Road System Upgrade alternative would involve improving the existing local road system to accommodate the anticipated volume of truck traffic generated by RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site and interested shippers who would use the rail line if it were available. Figure 2-4 and Table 2-1 illustrate the general location and summarize the extent of roadway improvements associated with the Local Road System Upgrade alternative. Under this alternative, RRLLC would acquire improved access to its proposed landfill/development site, but that access would be provided by way of motor vehicle via improvements to the existing local road system and not by way of rail. This alternative would require no rail involvement whatsoever. From SEA's perspective, the Local Road System Upgrade alternative is part of the No-Build Alternative because it does not involve building, constructing, reactivating, or operating any rail line.

**TABLE 2-1  
LOCAL ROAD SYSTEM UPGRADE**

<b>ROAD/INTERSECTION</b>	<b>PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT</b>
S.R. 0053/S.R. 0144/ Gorton Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pavement widening to accommodate turning trucks</li> <li>• Building demolition (two residential structures) in southwest and southeast quadrants</li> </ul>
S.R. 0144/S.R. 4005 (Cherry Run Road)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signalization (warranted for peak hour volumes)</li> <li>• Widen intersection approaches to provide eastbound right-turn and northbound left-turn lanes</li> </ul>
S.R. 0053	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widen to 40 feet and resurface (two 12-foot lanes and two 8-foot shoulders) from the intersection with S.R. 2037 (Winburne Road) in Kylertown east to the intersection with S.R. 0144 in Moshannon</li> </ul>
S.R. 0144	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widen to 40 feet and resurface (two 12-foot lanes and two 8-foot shoulders) from the S.R. 0053 intersection in Moshannon east to the Cherry Run Road intersection</li> </ul>
I-80 Kylertown Interchange Westbound Exit Ramp (Exit 133)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lengthen diverge area of ramp (weaving section) by 50 feet</li> </ul>
I-80 Snow Shoe Interchange Westbound Exit Ramp (Exit 147)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lengthen diverge area of ramp (weaving section) by 150 feet</li> </ul>
Gorton Road (Snow Shoe Township)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widen to 40 feet (two 12-foot lanes and two 8-foot shoulders)</li> <li>• Full-depth pavement reconstruction or overlay</li> <li>• Widen 90 degree bend to accommodate turning trucks</li> <li>• Replace bridge over Black Moshannon Creek to accommodate heavy vehicles and two-way traffic</li> <li>• Roadway realignment at Snow Shoe Multi-Use Rail Trail crossing</li> </ul>
Gorton Road (Rush Township)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocation from the Rush Township/Snow Shoe Township Line to RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site</li> </ul>

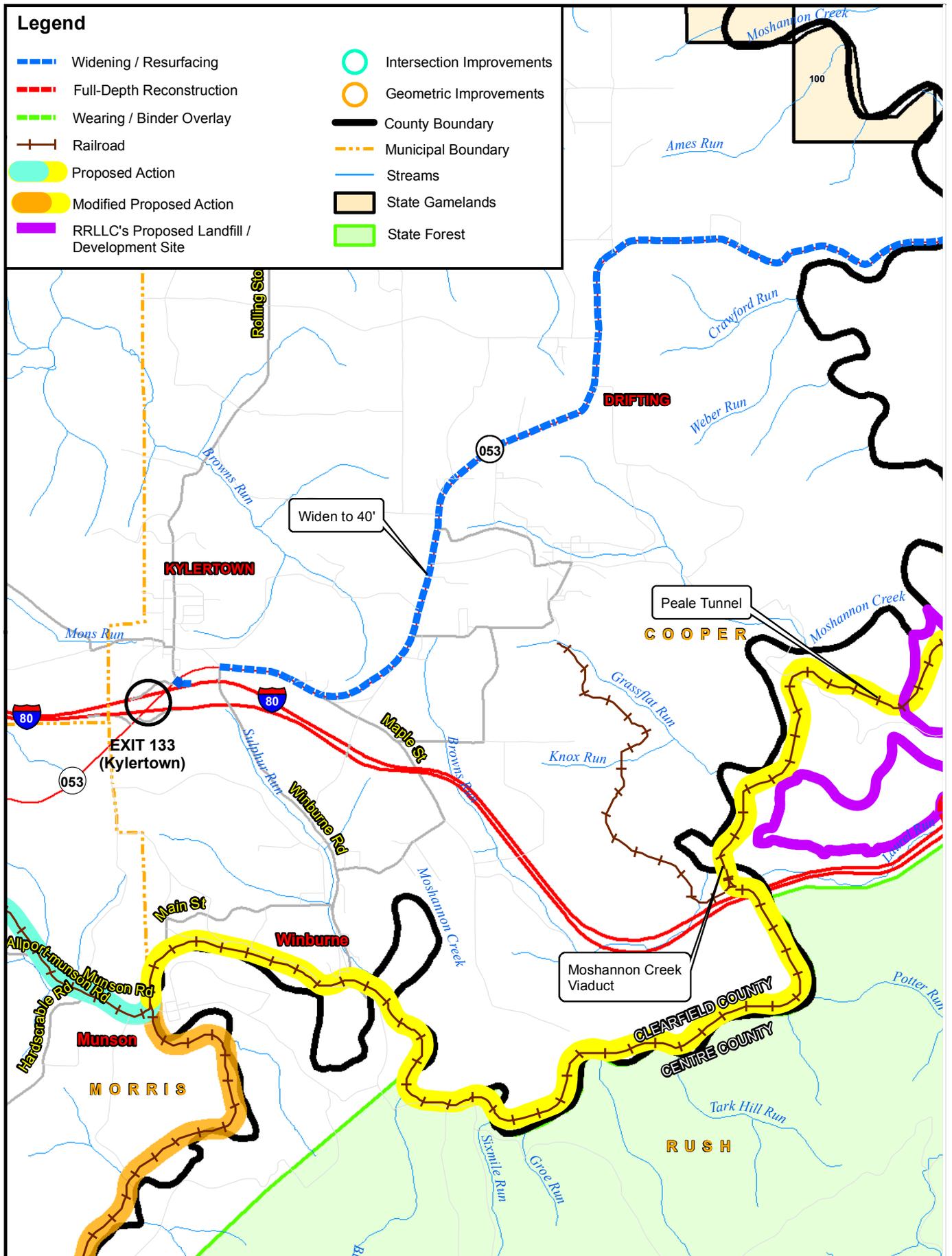
As previously noted, the Local Road System Upgrade alternative was evaluated in detail as part of the Point of Access Study prepared for the I-80 Interchange. That study evaluated improving the local road system as an alternative to the proposed new I-80 Interchange. Thus, much of the information reported here on the Local Road System Upgrade alternative (i.e. cost, operational effectiveness and potential environmental impacts) was taken from the latest version (November 14, 2006) of the Point of Access Study.

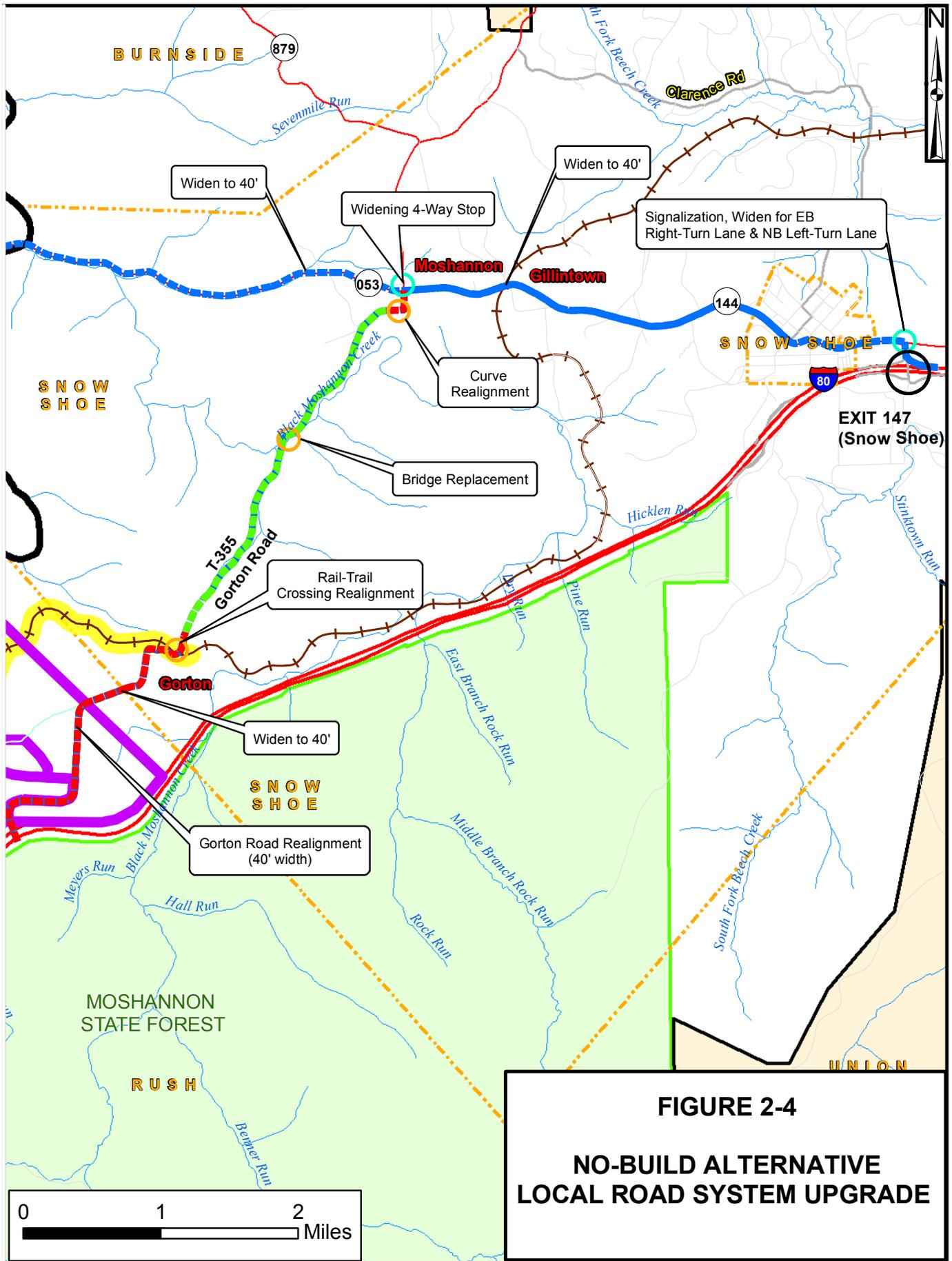
Under the Local Road System Upgrade alternative, improvements would be made to the existing local road system to allow the roads to accommodate the anticipated volume of truck traffic generated by RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site and interested shippers who would use the rail line if it were available. This would include the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of S.R. 0144 and S.R. 4005 (Cherry Run Road) as well as widening the intersection approaches to include an eastbound right-turn lane and a northbound left-turn lane. In both Clearfield and Centre Counties, S.R. 0053 would be resurfaced and widened to 40 feet from the intersection with S.R. 2037 (Winburne Road) in Kylertown east to the intersection with S.R. 0144 in Moshannon. Within Centre County, S.R. 0144 would be resurfaced and widened to 40 feet from the S.R. 0053 intersection in Moshannon east to the Cherry Run Road intersection. Diverge areas of ramps would be lengthened on the westbound exit ramps of the Kylertown (Exit 133) and Snow Shoe (Exit 147) Interchanges of I-80. Pavement widening and the associated demolition of two residential buildings in the southwest and southeast quadrants of the intersection of Gorton Road with S.R. 0053 and S.R. 0144 in Moshannon would be necessary to accommodate turning trucks. The remaining length of Gorton Road in Snow Shoe Township would be widened to 40 feet with either full-depth construction or pavement overlay. The 90-degree bend on Gorton Road in Moshannon would also be widened in order to accommodate turning trucks. Similarly, the bridge carrying Gorton Road over Black Moshannon Creek would be replaced with one that could accommodate heavy vehicles and two-way traffic. Further south, a small realignment of Gorton Road would be necessary at the intersection with the Snow Shoe Multi-Use Rail Trail. Finally, given Rush Township's abandonment of the western portion of Gorton Road (i.e., it is no longer maintained as a public roadway), the Local Road System Upgrade alternative would include the relocation of Gorton Road from the Rush Township/Snow Shoe Township line to RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site. The reconstructed and relocated Gorton Road would serve as the sole access to RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site.

All roadway improvements associated with the Local Road System Upgrade alternative would be designed and constructed in accordance with PennDOT's Design Manual Part 2 Highway Design (Publication 13M). Guidelines in the Centre County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance would also be used in establishing required geometric improvements on locally owned roadways, as necessary. Under the Local Road System Upgrade alternative, all intersections and intersection movements within the designated roadway network would operate at Level of Service (LOS) C or better.<sup>3</sup> Maintenance and protection of traffic during construction of the Local Road System Upgrade alternative would consist of temporary, off-peak lane restrictions, as necessary. The estimated construction cost for the Local Road System Upgrade alternative would be \$33,600,000 (2008).

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<sup>3</sup> Level of service refers to a degree of peak congestion experienced by roadway vehicle traffic stream using procedures that consider factors such as vehicle delay, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort and convenience, and safety. Traffic analysts express level of service as letter grades, ranging from LOS A (free-flowing) to LOS F (severely congested); they measure level of service by the average for all vehicles using the particular system.





**FIGURE 2-4**  
**NO-BUILD ALTERNATIVE**  
**LOCAL ROAD SYSTEM UPGRADE**

Because this alternative would be feasible from an engineering perspective, and because RJCP views it as the default access alternative should the Proposed Action be denied, SEA has carried this alternative forward for detailed consideration and comparison with the potential rail alternatives.

### **2.2.3 No-Action Alternative**

In accordance with NEPA regulations, SEA analyzed a No-Action Alternative to serve as a basis for the comparison of impacts to RJCP's Proposed Action. This alternative would involve taking no action, rail or otherwise, but maintaining the status quo. Under the No-Action Alternative, RJCP would not provide rail service to RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site (or to any of the other interested shippers along the line), nor would an acceptable means of vehicular access be provided. In short, this alternative would result in no change in access to RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site beyond use of the existing local road system in its current physical condition.

## **2.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ADVANCED FOR DETAILED ANALYSIS**

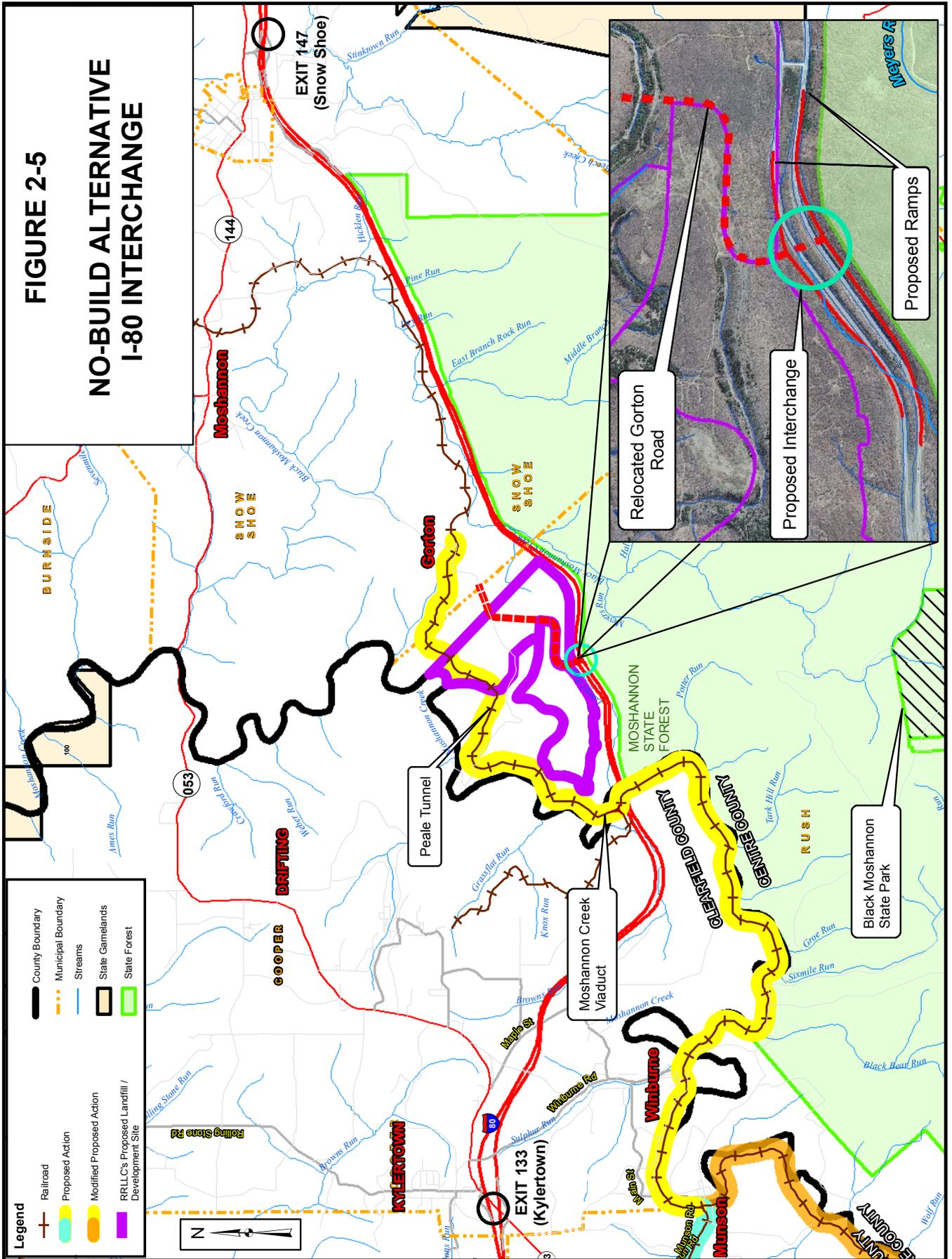
In accordance with NEPA regulations, 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14(a), this section explains SEA's elimination of certain other alternatives from further consideration and detailed environmental review.

### **2.3.1 No-Build Alternative (I-80 Interchange)**

The I-80 Interchange would involve the construction of a new interchange on Interstate 80 to provide direct vehicular access to RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site. Figure 2-5 shows the approximate location along Interstate 80 at which this new interchange would be constructed in relation to RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site. Under this alternative, RRLLC would acquire improved access to its proposed landfill/development site, but that access would be provided by way of motor vehicle via new interchange/roadway construction and not by way of rail. This alternative would result in no rail service whatsoever. From SEA's perspective, the I-80 Interchange is considered part of the No-Build Alternative because it does not involve building, reconstructing, reactivating or operating any rail line.

As previously mentioned, this new I-80 Interchange concept was evaluated in detail as part of a Point of Access Study. Much of the information reported here relative to the I-80 Interchange was taken from the latest version (November 14, 2006) of the Point of Access Study.

Located along Interstate 80 in Rush Township, Centre County, roughly midway between the existing Kylertown (Exit 133) and Snow Shoe (Exit 147) Interchanges, the I-80 Interchange would provide direct vehicular access from Interstate 80 to RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site while minimizing the need for site-generated truck traffic entering the existing local road system. Several different interchange designs were evaluated, with the typical diamond interchange design being selected due to its cost-effectiveness, driver familiarity, and overall system continuity. The location for the interchange was selected to most suitably fit the site topography along Interstate 80 and to minimize impacts to the Black Moshannon Creek watershed, a designated high-quality cold water fishery. The interchange was designed in accordance with PennDOT's Publication 13 M. The interchange design includes the relocation of Gorton Road as shown in Figure 2-5. The relocated



Gorton Road and its direct connection to the new I-80 interchange would serve as the primary means for accessing RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site under this alternative. Additionally, by relocating Gorton Road in this manner, the new I-80 interchange would also provide an alternate means of access to Moshannon located approximately 5.7 miles to the north of Interstate 80. The total estimated construction cost for the I-80 Interchange, including the relocation of Gorton Road, would be \$33,200,000 (2008).

Traffic, safety, and LOS analyses of the I-80 Interchange documented in the Point of Access Study indicate that the new interchange and the associated Gorton Road relocation, accompanied by several other minor local road improvements, would provide a safe and operationally feasible means of access to RRLLC's proposed landfill/development site. However, as previously mentioned, FHWA did not approve the new interchange, finding that: 1) the Point of Access Study failed to demonstrate that the existing interchanges and/or local roads and streets in the corridor can neither provide the necessary access nor be improved to satisfactorily accommodate the design-year traffic demands while at the same time providing the access intended by the proposal, and 2) the Point of Access Study did not effectively demonstrate that the new interchange proposal is consistent with regional land use and transportation plans. Specifically, FHWA stated that the I-80 Interchange proposal appears to be inconsistent with both the Centre County Comprehensive Plan and the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plan. As a result of this regional land use and transportation planning inconsistency, the Centre County MPO declined to include the I-80 Interchange proposal as part of the Centre County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Since the I-80 Interchange was not included as part of the Centre County TIP, PennDOT subsequently did not include it as part of the larger statewide TIP. Therefore, the I-80 Interchange proposal is not considered to be part of Pennsylvania's current transportation program. Given FHWA's denial of conceptual approval, and RRLLC's inability to resolve this alternative's regional land use and transportation planning consistency issue with the Centre County MPO, SEA does not consider the I-80 Interchange to be a feasible and reasonable alternative and, thus, has not advanced it for more detailed analysis in this Draft EIS.

### **2.3.2 No-Build Alternative - Local Road System Upgrade (Black Bear Road)**

SEA also considered a modified version of the Local Road System Upgrade alternative involving the construction of a new access road (i.e., Black Bear Road) from S.R. 0053 to Gorton Road. Under this alternative, all of the proposed roadway improvements described above for the Local Road System Upgrade alternative would still apply except for the improvements to Gorton Road. Instead of those improvements, a new access road would be constructed from S.R. 0053 west of Moshannon across Black Moshannon Creek to a new intersection with Gorton Road. This new access road was proposed by RRLLC in June 2009 as part of a larger property subdivision plan. However, SEA did not advance this particular version of the Local Road System Upgrade alternative for further consideration because RRLLC's subdivision plan was not approved by the Centre County Planning and Community Development Office.

## **2.4 COMPARISON OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/IDENTIFICATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE**

NEPA regulations require a comparison of the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and its alternatives in order to sharply define the issues and provide a clear basis for the selection of

the Preferred Alternative. This section summarizes the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and the other alternatives studied in detail, including the No-Action Alternative, based on the information and analysis presented in Chapter 3, Affected Environment, and Chapter 4, Environmental Impacts. Table 2-2 provides an overview of the comparison.

Analysis of Table 2-2 indicates that the Local Road System Upgrade alternative would be the least environmentally preferable alternative of those studied in detail. In addition to the transportation, operational, and economic inefficiencies of this alternative when compared to the rail alternatives, this alternative would result in substantially greater air quality, noise, and energy resource impacts. Under this alternative, a substantially greater number of adjacent residential properties would be affected (there would be a minimum of three unavoidable residential displacements). Given the presence of a National Register-listed resource and a potential National Register-eligible historic district, this alternative would also likely result in a finding of adverse effect pursuant to the Section 106 regulations implementing the National Historic Preservation Act. Finally, this alternative would involve a greater number of potential hazardous/residual waste sites (i.e., existing and former gas stations/automotive repair garages). One benefit of this alternative is that it would avoid the Snow Shoe Multi-Use Rail Trail. However, it would also result in a greater volume of truck traffic on local roadways, thereby introducing conflicts with portions of the PA Wilds Elk Scenic Drive and PA Bicycle Route V.

Regarding the rail alternatives, SEA concludes, based on the information available to date, that the Modified Proposed Action would be the environmentally preferable route. This determination is based on a number of factors, not least of which is that the Modified Proposed Action's Alternate Route from Philipsburg to Munson would involve substantially fewer public road and private driveway crossings. For comparison purposes, the Proposed Action (via the Wallaceton to Munson Route) would involve 19 public road crossings and 13 private driveway crossings, whereas the Modified Proposed Action (via the Alternate Route from Philipsburg to Munson) would involve only 5 public road crossings and 2 private driveway crossings. The Modified Proposed Action also would affect fewer adjacent residential properties (155 versus 28) and less noise-impacted sensitive land uses (178 versus 32). Fewer residences would be potentially affected by vibration (6 versus 0). Additionally, because the Modified Proposed Action is approximately one mile shorter than the Proposed Action; this alternative would result in less air quality and energy impacts because trains operating over the line would travel shorter distance.

Due to topographic differences in the two routes to Munson, one disadvantage of the Modified Proposed Action is that it would impact approximately 3.36 acres of wetlands, whereas the Proposed Action would impact only 1.34 acres of wetlands. However, the Proposed Action would have a higher watercourse impact (1,570 linear feet versus 980 linear feet). Therefore, despite the greater wetland impacts, SEA preliminarily concludes that the Modified Proposed Action would be environmentally preferable to the Proposed Action and would also be the environmentally preferable alternative for this project. SEA specifically requests comments on this issue from all interested parties and the general public.

**TABLE 2-2  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT SUMMARY TABLE**

RESOURCE/IMPACT CATEGORY	BUILD ALTERNATIVE (PROPOSED ACTION via the WALLACE TON TO MUNSON ROUTE)	BUILD ALTERNATIVE (MODIFIED PROPOSED ACTION via the ALTERNATE ROUTE FROM PHILIPSBURG TO MUNSON)	NO-BUILD ALTERNATIVE (LOCAL ROAD SYSTEM UPGRADE)	NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE
At-Grade Public Road Crossings (#)	17	4	N/A	N/A
Grade-Separated Public Road Crossings (#)	2	1	N/A	N/A
At-Grade Private Driveway Crossings (#)	12	1	N/A	N/A
Grade-Separated Private Driveway Crossings (#)	1	1	N/A	N/A
Adjacent Residential Properties (#)	155	28	228	0
Estimated Annual Fuel Consumption (Gallons/Year)	105,431	94,349	492,492	0
Estimated Annual Mobile Source Air Emissions				
NOX (Tons/Year)	21.0	18.6	52.0	0
CO (Tons/Year)	3.1	2.8	24.7	0
HC (Tons/Year)	1.2	1.0	2.4	0
PM (Tons/Year)	0.8	0.7	1.3	0
Noise-Impacted Sensitive Land Uses (#)	178	32	204	0
Potential Vibration-Affected Residences (#)	6	0	N/A	0
Vegetative Community/Wildlife Habitat Impacts				
Old Field/Herbaceous (Acres)	3.9	3.5	5.8	0
Shrub (Acres)	0.7	1.6	7.6	0
Forest (Acres)	36.0	40.5	35.5	0
Threatened & Endangered Species Impacts (Potential Species)	Branching Bur-reed	Branching Bur-reed	Alleghany Plum	None
Wetland Impacts (Acres)	1.34	3.36	1.79	0
Watercourse Impacts (Linear Feet)	1,570	980	960	0
Floodplain Encroachment (Linear Feet)	7,480	24,330	0	0
Displaced Residential Structures (#)	0	0	3	0
Parks and Recreation Facilities (Facilities Impacted)	Snow Shoe Rail Trail Moshannon State Forest	Snow Shoe Rail Trail Moshannon State Forest	PA Bicycle Route V PA Wilds Elk Drive	0
Potential Hazardous/Residual Waste Sites (# of Adjacent Sites)	7	2	17	0
Cultural Resources (Effect)	No Effect	No Effect	Adverse Effect	No Effect