

1.4 Visual Resources

O-F Component

Table 1.4-1 presents the visual or aesthetic resources within three miles of the proposed Oakdale to Fraser transmission line facility. All state, county, and local parks, trails and recreation facilities; state forest preserve lands; conservation areas; wildlife management areas; and historic resources listed or known to be eligible for inclusion on the National State Register of Historic Places were considered visually-sensitive resources if found within that three-mile area. Additionally, NYSDOS-designated Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance (SASS) within five miles of the facility were considered to be visually-sensitive resources.

The existing visual character around the proposed O-F transmission line is not pristine. This is primarily due to the fact that there are existing transmission line facilities that currently run along the same ROW corridor. Thus, the proposed facility will have some visual impact on the adjacent resources, primarily due to the increased height of the new line structures relative to the immediately adjacent existing line. Nonetheless, due to the significant forested areas outside of and adjacent to the ROW, the visibility of the line will be limited when viewed from the north or south. The visibility east/west along the line will be much greater, in comparison to the north/south view, due to the undulating topography (i.e. a person standing at a point higher than the line to the east or west will have visual access regardless of the forested areas surrounding the corridor). From all views, however, the incremental visual impact of the line will be significantly reduced overall due to the fact that it runs parallel to an existing transmission facility. Moreover, with the exception of north/south travelers along I-81, I-88, and the Susquehanna River, there are relatively few population centers within close proximity to the ROW; therefore the visual impact is also less due to a reduced number of potential viewers.

Visually-sensitive resources located within three miles of the O-F facilities include: 18 National Register sites; 10 state, county, and local parks; one sports complex; one golf course; eight state forests; and one boat launch. There are no known or designated trails located within three miles of the O-F facilities. There are also no NYSDOS-Designated SASS sites within five miles of the project facilities (see Table 1.4-1 below).

ED-PV Component

Table 1.4-1 depicts the visual and aesthetic resources within three miles of the ED-NS/KB-PV component (except NRHP listed and pre-determined eligible properties, which are listed in Tables 1.3-2 and 1.3-3 and Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance (“SASS”) within five miles of the Project). The inventory of visual resources provided in this section is in accordance with the guidance provided in the NYSDEC

Program Policy #DEP-00-2, Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts (NYSDEC Visual Policy). The policy identifies 13 categories of aesthetic resources of statewide significance that are germane to the ED-NS/KB-PV component including:

- NRHP listed or eligible properties;
- State parks;
- Urban cultural parks;
- State forest preserve lands;
- National wildlife refuges, state game refuges and state wildlife management areas;
- National natural landmarks;
- National Parks;
- Designated wild, scenic or recreational rivers;
- Designated scenic areas and highways;
- SASS;
- State or federally designated trails;
- State nature and historic preserve areas; and
- Certain Bond Act Properties.

Local parks were also inventoried as visual resources although they are not listed as an aesthetic resource of statewide significance by NYSDEC.

1.4.1 Facility Locations with Visual Resources within three miles or Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance (SASS) within five miles

In addition to the NRHP listed and eligible properties discussed in Section 1.3, 126 visual and aesthetic resources were identified within three miles of the component facilities between Edic Substation and Pleasant Valley Substation.

Visually sensitive resources located within three miles of the ED-NS segment include: one national park; three scenic byways; five designated trails; and 45 state, county and local parks. There are no NYSDOS-Designated SASS sites within five miles of the ED-NS segment facilities (see Table 1.4-1 below). Within the KB-PV segment visually sensitive resources located within three miles of the segment include: three national parks; five scenic byways; and 28 state, county, and local parks. There are no known or designated trails located within three miles of the KB-PV segment facilities. There are five NYSDOS-Designated SASS sites within five miles of the KB-PV segment facilities (see Table 1.4-1 below).

1.4.1.1 Viewshed analysis assessment of the degree of Project visibility and probable extent of visual contrast change from existing conditions

To evaluate potential component visibility, a viewshed analysis was conducted for the existing and proposed transmission line structures along the O-F and ED-NS/KB-PV component centerline. Information on the location and height of the proposed structures was based on preliminary design. The viewsheds account for the potential screening effects of vegetation by incorporating the areas of forest cover based on the NLCD 2011 data.

O-F Component

As shown in Table 1.4-1, the identified visual and aesthetic resources in the vicinity of the O-F component of the Project will have no change in visibility between the existing transmission facilities and the proposed Project. Of the 72 resources that were evaluated, 46 resources are located outside both the existing and proposed viewsheds (i.e., based on the viewshed analysis, these resources do not have a view of the existing facilities and will not have a view of the proposed ED-NS segment facilities). A total of 26 identified visual resources are located within both the existing and proposed viewsheds (the degree of visibility was not evaluated as part of this assessment).

The mapped viewsheds that were used for this analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.4-1.

ED-NS Segment

As shown in Table 1.4-1, the majority of the identified visual and aesthetic resources in the vicinity of the ED-NS segment will have no change in visibility between the existing transmission facilities and the proposed Project. Of the 76 resources that were evaluated, 26 resources are located outside both the existing and proposed viewsheds (i.e., based on the viewshed analysis, these resources do not have a view of the existing facilities and will not have a view of the proposed ED-NS segment facilities). A total of 49 identified visual resources are located within both the existing and proposed viewsheds (the degree of visibility was not evaluated as part of this assessment). For one of these visual resources, the proposed ED-NS segment facilities will not be visible whereas the existing facilities might be (according to the viewshed analysis).

The mapped viewsheds that were used for this analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.4-2.

KB-PV Segment

As shown in Table 1.4-1, the vast majority of the identified visual and aesthetic resources in the vicinity of the KB-PV segment will have no change in visibility between the existing transmission facilities and

the proposed Project. Of the 49 resources that were evaluated, 25 resources are located outside both the existing and the proposed viewshed (i.e., based on the viewshed analysis, these resources do not have a view of the existing facilities and will not have a view of the KB-PV segment facilities). Only 17 of the identified visual resources are located within both the existing and proposed viewsheds (the degree of visibility was not evaluated as part of this assessment). For three of the visual resources, the proposed KB-PV segment facilities will not be visible whereas the existing facilities might be (according to the viewshed analysis).

The mapped viewsheds that were used for this analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.4-3.