Chapter 5 Socioeconomic Conditions

5.1 INTRODUCTION

A project could affect social conditions if it results in impacts on the local population or causes a change in neighborhood cohesion or character. As such, this chapter examines the potential for the Build Alternative to affect social conditions, including neighborhood character and relevant population characteristics. This chapter also assesses the potential effects on economic conditions. The analysis considers the same study areas as identified in Chapter 3, "Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy."

5.2 METHODOLOGY

The assessment of potential socioeconomic conditions includes:

- Two study areas defined as follows:

    1) The proposed Project area plus a 500-foot buffer on either side of the electrical line routes, new substations, HBLR Headquarters and HBLR alignment. The proposed Project area is defined as the potential construction footprint of the Build Alternative, and includes the:

        - Main Facility and natural gas pipeline connection to the Main Facility (Preferred Alternative Project Components A and B);
        - Railroad right-of-way that would be used for the proposed electrical lines (Preferred Alternative Project Components C, D, E and optional routing for Project Component D);
        - NJ TRANSIT-owned HBLR Headquarters property on Caven Point Avenue (Preferred Alternative Project Component F);
        - HBLR right-of-way (Preferred Alternative Project Component G).

    2) A two-mile study area that includes the area within a two-mile radius of the Main Facility's stacks on the Koppers Koke Site.

- Presentation of 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) data from the U.S. Census Bureau for each census tract in the study areas and comparison to relevant county and state data for population density, elderly population, and disability status. In addition, population projections from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization, are presented to highlight future population trends (NJTPA 2017). While some of the census tracks are only partially within a study area, for the purpose of this analysis, these census tracts were evaluated as if they were fully within the

study areas. The census data for Kearny, NJ (location of the Main Facility) is presented at the census block group level. As stated in FTA's Environmental Justice Circular, "Small area Census data such as blocks and block groups is generally more appropriate for projects and local planning activities. Large scale Census data, such as tracts and counties, may be more appropriate for Statewide and metropolitan planning activities." Given the extent of the project alignment, the proposed Project is qualified as a metropolitan project and therefore census tract level data are appropriate for electrical lines in Jersey City, Hoboken, Bayonne, Weehawken and Union City. However, as the Main Facility could have impacts that are more localized, census block groups were assessed for this portion of the proposed Project.

- Assessment of the potential effect on neighborhood cohesiveness and community character.
- Estimated number of permanent jobs that would be generated by the proposed Project.

Data on race/ethnicity and poverty rates, and the potential for impacts to minorities and low-income populations are included in Chapter 19, "Environmental Justice."

5.3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Socioeconomic conditions in the study areas for Project Components A through G are discussed below.

5.3.1 Population Density

The 80 census tracts and two census block groups used for analysis of demographic data are shown in Figures 5-1 and 5-2, while population density per square mile is presented on Figures 5-3 and 5-4. Since the census block group where the Main Facility is proposed (census tract 127, block group 6) is primarily industrial and open space, no population or demographic data are available for this census block group. It should also be noted that census tract 9801 in Jersey City comprises Liberty State Park, and therefore no demographic information is available for this census tract. Although no residential areas are located in the Kearny, Lyndhurst, or Secaucus portions of the study area, population data for these areas are included in this analysis as there are residential areas within the overall census tracts, but outside of the study area. As mentioned above, to be comprehensive, those portions of the census tracts that are not within the study area were still included as part of this assessment. The 500-foot buffer for Project Component D within Kearny includes census tract 127, block group 5, which has a population of 832 and a population density of 529; however, this number reflects those residing in the Hudson County Correctional Facility that is located near the southern tip of the Kearny peninsula (U.S. Census 2016). The nearest resident to the Main Facility site is located approximately 0.7 miles away in Jersey City.

Hudson County is one of the most populous counties in the state of New Jersey, with 10,687 residents per square mile of total area in 2016. Within Hudson County, the towns of Kearny and Secaucus have the lowest population densities at about 4,109 and 2,753 residents per square mile, respectively while West New York and Union City have among the highest at about 51,888 and 55,172 residents per square mile, respectively (U.S. Census 2016).

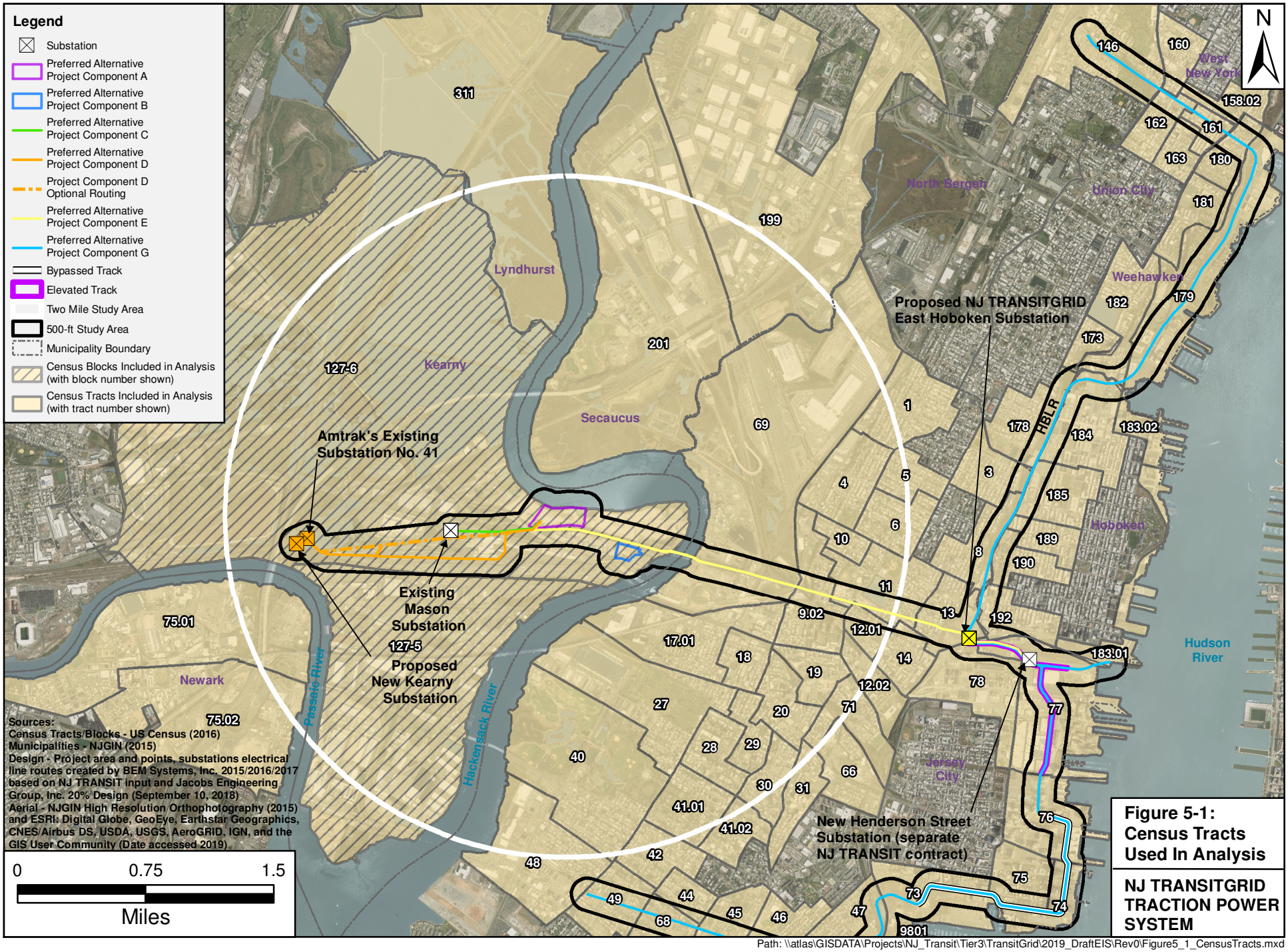

Figure 5-1: Census Tracts Used In Analysis

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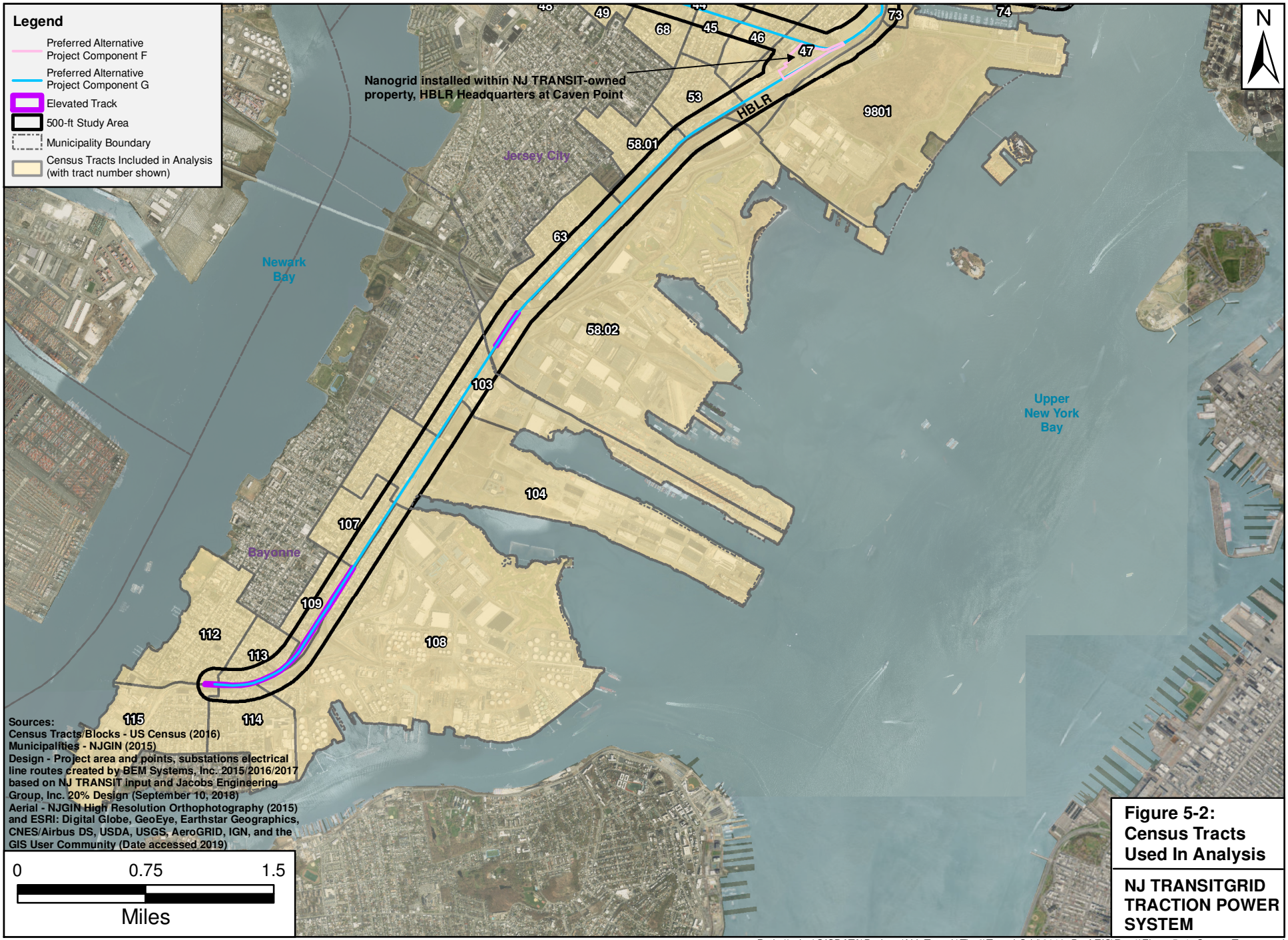

Figure 5-2: Census Tracts Used In Analysis

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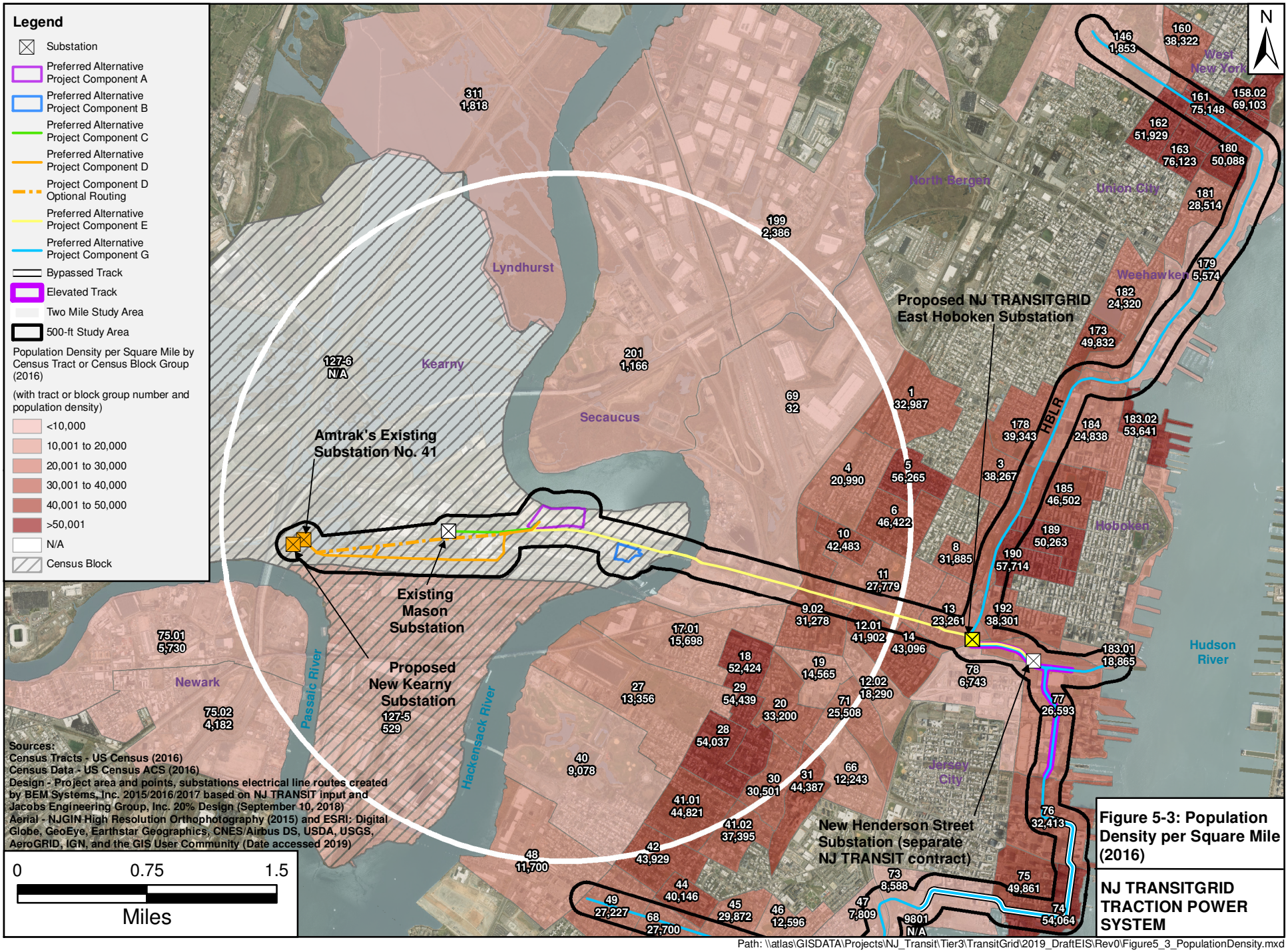

Figure 5-3: Population Density per Square Mile (2016)

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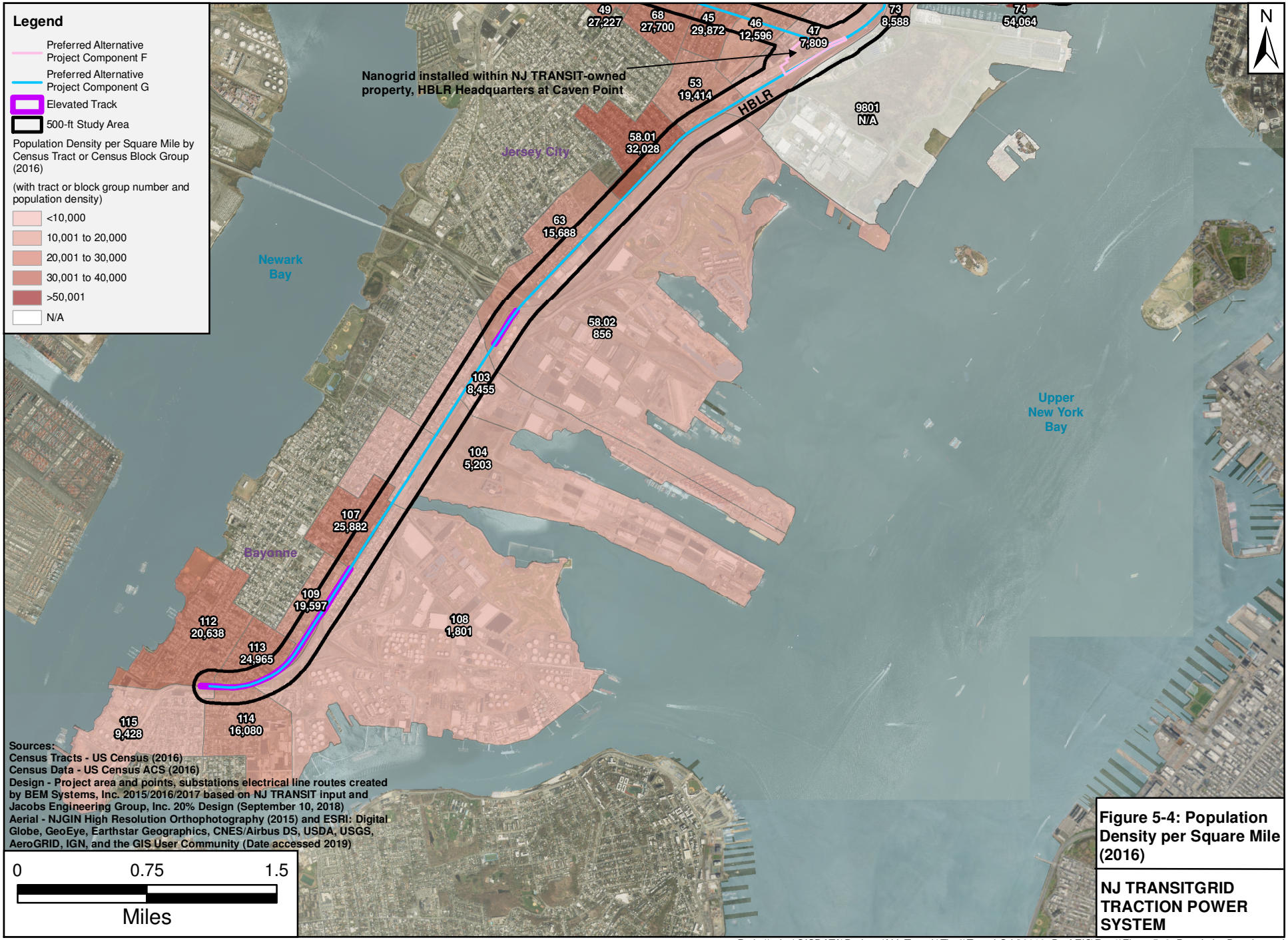

Figure 5-4: Population Density per Square Mile (2016)

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The population density per square mile in the two-mile study area ranges from 32 in census tract 69 in Jersey City to 56,265 in census tract 5, also within Jersey City. The census block groups in Kearny and census tracts in Jersey City and Secaucus, closest to Project Components A and B, have very low population densities and are primarily industrial in nature. The population density increases along Project Component E through Jersey City and into Hoboken. The census tracts closest to HBLR Headquarters (Project Component F) are also lower in population density (U.S. Census 2016).

The population density per square mile by census tract (census block group in Kearny, NJ) was compared to that of the State of New Jersey and New Jersey counties and municipalities within the study area, see Table 5-1.

Table 5-1 Population Density per Square Mile by Municipality, County, State

Area	Population Density per Square Mile
Town of Kearny	4,109
Jersey City	12,317
Hoboken City	26,083
Township of Lyndhurst	4,360
City of Newark	10,716
Township of Weehawken	16,878
Township of West New York	51,888
Township of North Bergen	9,925
City of Bayonne	11,301
Union City	55,172
Town of Secaucus	2,753
Hudson County	10,687
Essex County	6,108
Bergen County	3,755
New Jersey	1,020

Source: *U.S. Census 2016*

5.3.2 Population Projections

Population projections from NJTPA indicate relatively low growth rates for the towns and counties in the study area (see Table 5-2). However, Jersey City is reportedly the fastest growing metropolitan area in New Jersey and currently has 7,000 housing units under construction and another 19,000 units planned (Fulop 2017). Development would continue to be focused in the areas near the Grove Street and Journal Square PATH stations in Jersey City, which offer short commutes to Manhattan. These areas are greater than one mile from the Main Facility (Preferred Alternative Project Component A).

Table 5-2 NJTPA Population Projections

Area	2015 Population	2045 Population	Annualized % Population Change 2015-2016
Town of Kearny	41,693	44,757	0.2%
Jersey City	260,335	369,381	1.2%
Hoboken City	52,899	55,899	0.5%
Township of Lyndhurst	21,039	23,989	0.4%
City of Newark	282,102	328,809	0.7%
Township of Weehawken	13,706	14,868	0.3%
Township of West New York	52,236	55,219	0.2%
Township of North Bergen	62,374	67,599	0.3%
City of Bayonne	65,606	70,939	0.3%
Union City	68,390	71,954	0.2%
Town of Secaucus	18,147	19,910	1.1%
Hudson County	664,767	815,684	0.8%
Essex County	790,342	909,021	0.5%
Bergen County	928,735	1,030,503	0.4%

Source: *NJTPA 2017*

5.3.3 Percentage Elderly and Disabled

The percentage of elderly citizens (above age 65 years) in 2015 ranged from 0 percent (census tract 127, block group 5 and census tract 69) to 23.3 percent (census tract 78) within the 80 census tracts with documented population within the two study areas. The percentage of elderly citizens and disabled persons within the study areas are presented in Table 5-3 and Table 5-4 and on Figures 5-5 through 5-6 and 5-7 through 5-8, respectively. The percentage of elderly citizens per census tract was compared to that of the state of New Jersey (14.7 percent), the Town of Kearny (11.6 percent), Jersey City (9.7 percent), Hoboken City (6.1 percent), City of Newark (9.1 percent), City of Secaucus (16.2 percent), Town of Lyndhurst (16.1 percent), Township of Weehawken (11.0 percent), Township of West New York (11.9 percent), Township of North Bergen (13.1 percent), City of Bayonne (13.4 percent), Union City (10.4 percent), Hudson County (10.7 percent), Essex County (12.5 percent), and Bergen County (16.0 percent) (U.S. Census 2016). Although the Township of Lyndhurst has a higher elderly population than the state of New Jersey, the percentage is similar to the percentage in Bergen County, where Lyndhurst is located.

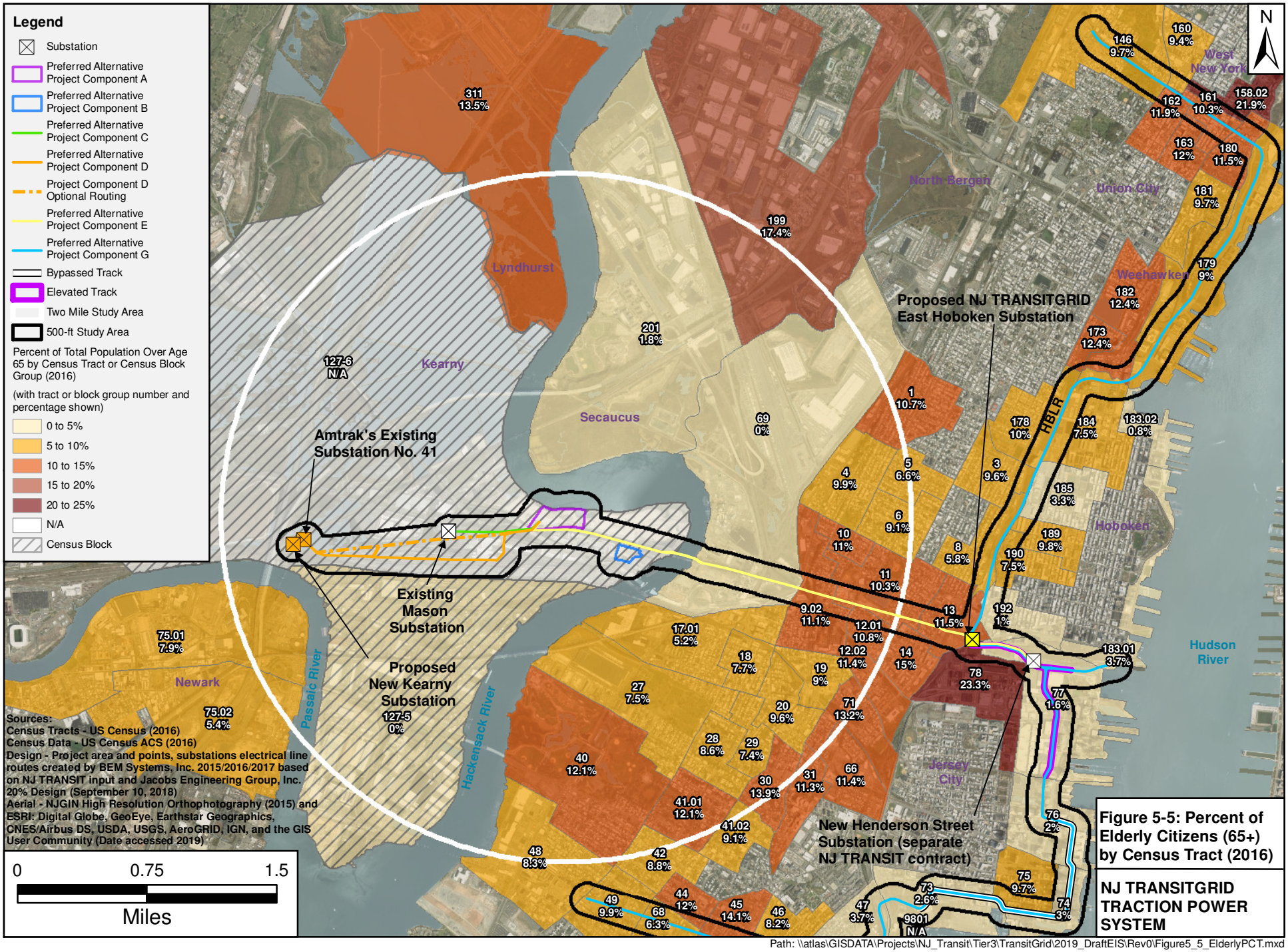

Figure 5-5: Percent of Elderly Citizens (65+) by Census Tract (2016)

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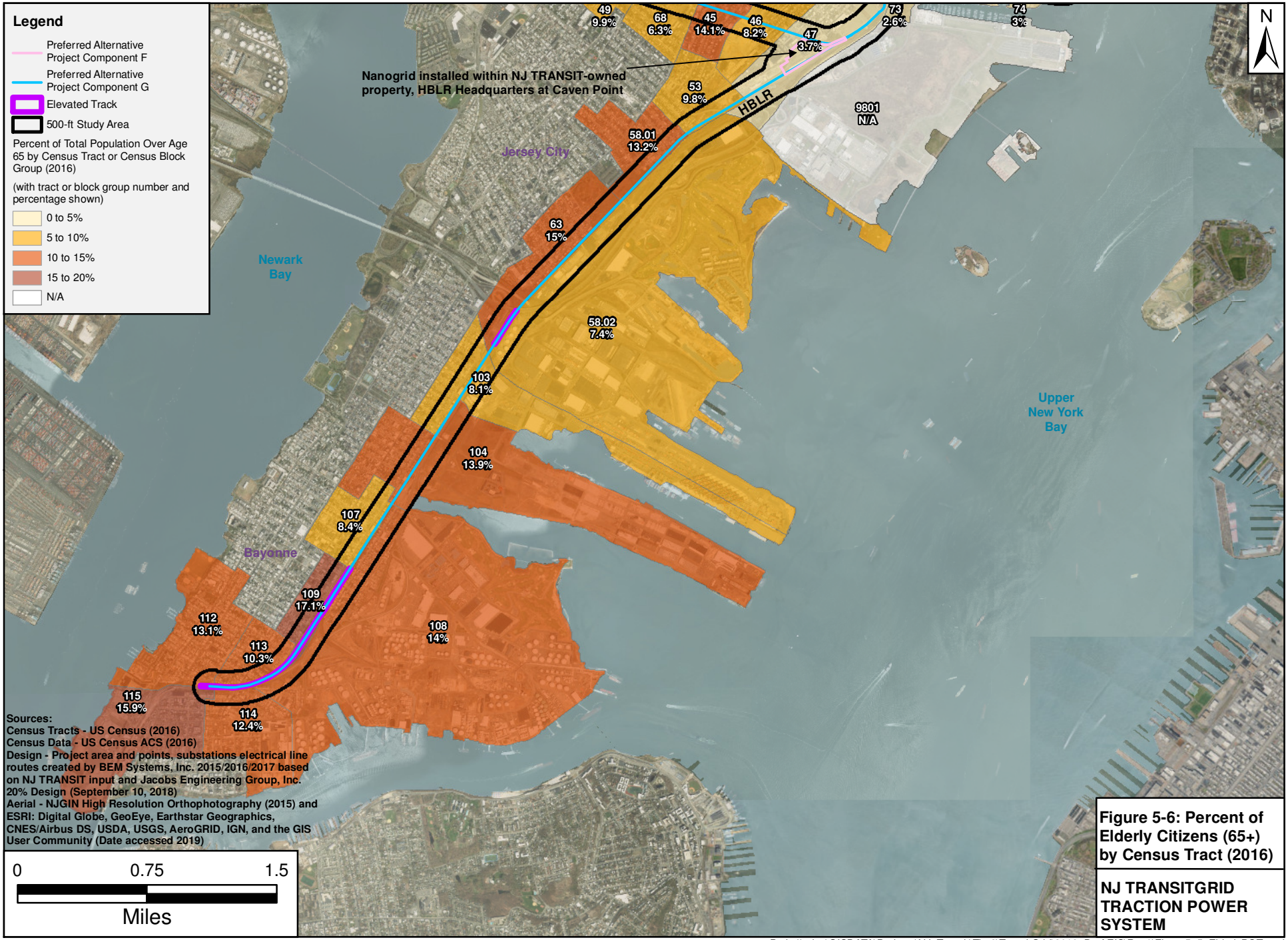

Figure 5-6: Percent of Elderly Citizens (65+) by Census Tract (2016)

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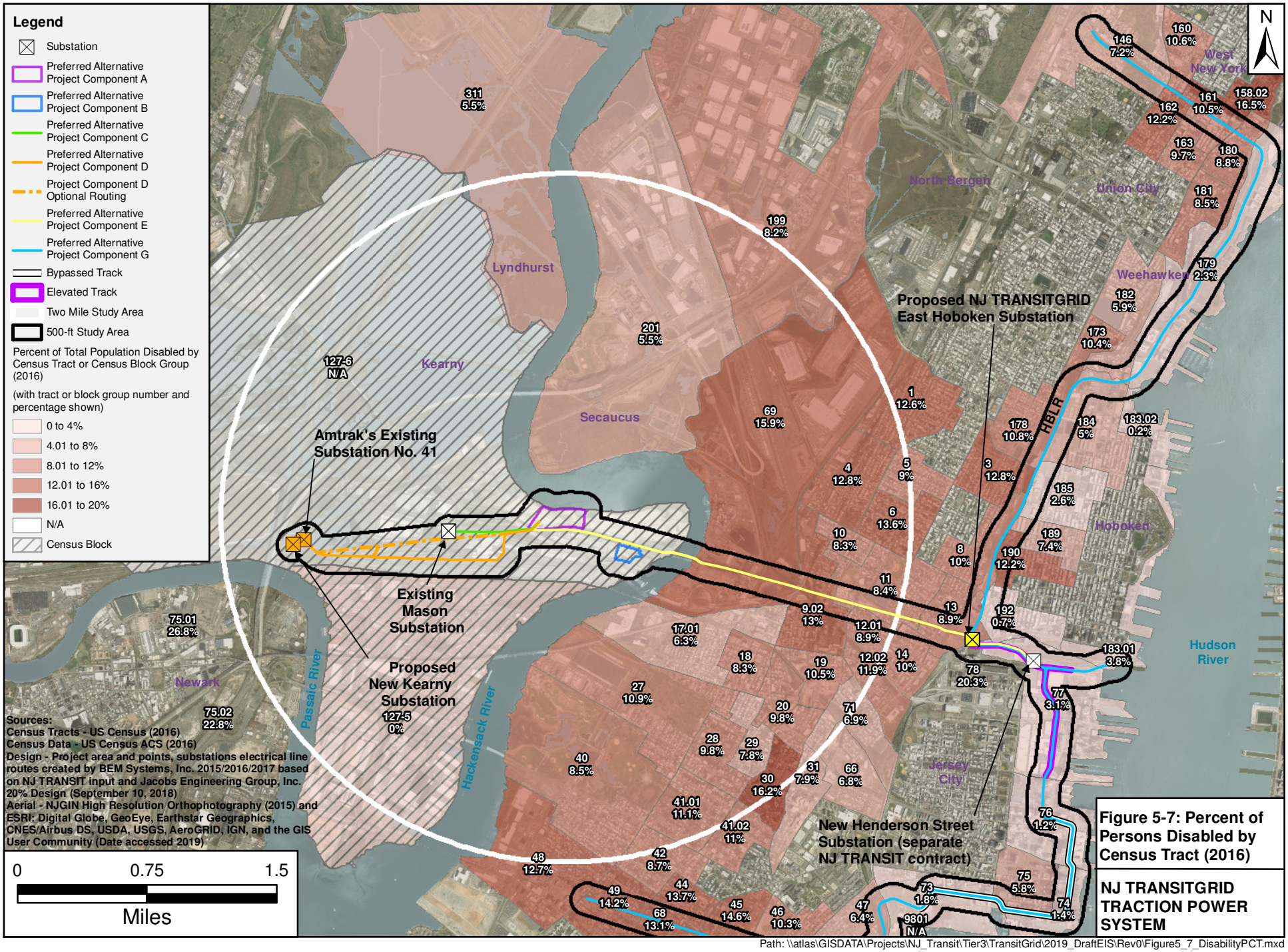

Figure 5-7: Percent of Persons Disabled by Census Tract (2016)

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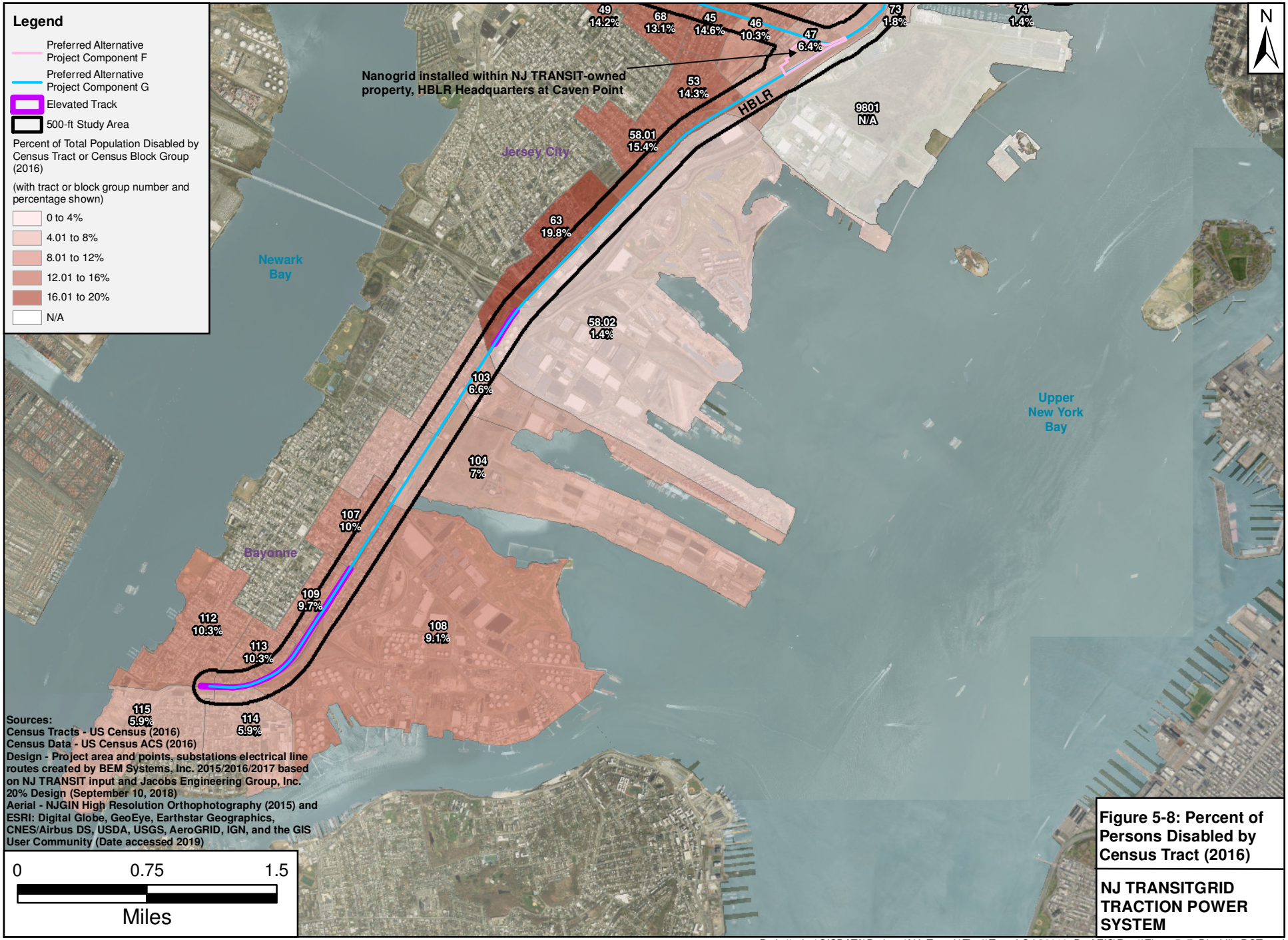

Figure 5-8: Percent of Persons Disabled by Census Tract (2016)

NJ TRANSITGRID TRACTION POWER SYSTEM

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Table 5-3 Percentage of Elderly Citizens by Municipality, County, State

Area	Percentage of Elderly Citizens
Town of Kearny	11.6
Jersey City	9.7
Hoboken City	6.1
Township of Lyndhurst	16.1
City of Newark	9.1
Township of Weehawken	11.0
Township of West New York	11.9
Township of North Bergen	13.1
City of Bayonne	13.4
Union City	10.4
Town of Secaucus	16.2
Hudson County	10.7
Essex County	12.5
Bergen County	16.0
New Jersey	14.7

Source: *U.S. Census 2016*

The percentage of disabled persons in the 80 census tracts and two census block groups within the two study areas in 2016 ranged from 0.2 percent (census tract 183.02) to 26.8 percent (census tract 75.01). Census tract 75.01 in Bayonne contains the highest percent (26.8 percent) of disabled persons in the study area. The median of the range is comparable to the percentage of disabled persons living in the state of New Jersey (10.5 percent), Town of Kearny (9.4 percent), Jersey City (9.9 percent), Hoboken City (5.7 percent), Township of Lyndhurst (11.5 percent), City of Newark (13.7 percent), City of Weehawken (6.7 percent), Township of West New York (10.1 percent), Township of North Bergen (9.6 percent), City of Bayonne (8.9 percent), Union City 10.0 percent), Town of Secaucus (10.3 percent), Hudson County (9.4 percent), Bergen County (7.6 percent), and Essex County (11.2 percent) (U.S. Census 2016).

Table 5-4 Percentage of Disabled Citizens by Municipality, County, State

Area	Percentage of Disabled Citizens
Town of Kearny	9.4
Jersey City	9.9
Hoboken City	5.7
Township of Lyndhurst	11.5
City of Newark	13.7
Township of Weehawken	6.7
Township of West New York	10.1
Township of North Bergen	9.6
City of Bayonne	8.9
Union City	10.0
Town of Secaucus	10.3
Hudson County	9.4
Essex County	11.2
Bergen County	7.6
New Jersey	10.5

***Source: U.S**. Census 2016*

5.4 PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

5.4.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Project would not be constructed and NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak would continue to be served by the existing commercial grid. Without the microgrid, commuter and intercity rail service in Amtrak's and NJ TRANSIT's core service territory would remain vulnerable to power outages. Under the No Action Alternative, other planned and programmed transportation improvements for which commitment and financing have been identified would take place by 2021. These include projects in NJ TRANSIT's Resilience Program, Amtrak initiatives that will affect operations on the Northeast Corridor, and HCIA plans for warehousing development on portions of the Koppers Koke Site.

In the absence of the proposed Project, Amtrak plans to completely replace and rebuild Substation No. 41. The existing lattice towers in Cedar Creek Marsh South will be replaced with a monopole. Amtrak is currently proceeding with reconstruction of certain elements of Substation No. 42, located east of the project area at the entrance to the North River Tunnels in Weehawken, NJ, including the installation of a new Control House. Under the No Action Alternative, NJ TRANSIT intends to acquire the 20-acre parcel (Preferred Alternative Project Component A) on the Koppers Koke property as well as the six-acre parcel (Preferred Alternative Project Component B) located south of the Morris & Essex Line (due to a property

settlement, as described in Chapter 2). Since NJ TRANSIT-owned property is exempt from property tax obligations, any land acquired by NJ TRANSIT would not generate tax revenue for the municipalities in the Meadowlands District. In addition, the Koppers Koke Site is in a redevelopment zone that is tax exempt and therefore any development in this area would not generate revenue for the municipalities in the Meadowlands District. As such, under the No Action Alternative, properties will be taken off the tax rolls as part of NJ TRANSIT's property tax exemptions. No changes to social conditions would be expected under the No Action Alternative and no new employment opportunities would be realized.

5.4.2 Build Alternative

The Build Alternative would not increase commuter rail service, and would not affect population or otherwise induce population growth or development. There would be no direct or indirect displacement of businesses or residences in the study areas. Electrical lines would be installed within existing, active railroad corridors that are prevalent with utility lines. As discussed in Chapter 16, "Safety and Security," there would be no impact to the public from electromagnetic fields (EMFs). As a result, no impact to population density, population projections, or the percentage of elderly/disabled populations is expected.

As the proposed Project is located within an existing industrial area and railroad right-of-way, components of the proposed Project would not affect neighborhood cohesiveness or demographics. Construction of the proposed Project, including installation of new monopoles, would be consistent with the existing railroad infrastructure and the general characteristics of the study areas. Therefore, the Build Alternative would not adversely affect attributes that contribute to community character, such as air quality, visual considerations, and public safety.

Similar to the No Action Alternative, since NJ TRANSIT-owned property is exempt from property tax obligations, the 26 acres that would be acquired for Project Components A and B would not generate tax revenue for the municipalities in the Meadowlands District[8]. As with the No Action Alternative, the Koppers Koke Site is in a redevelopment zone that is tax exempt and therefore any development in this area would not generate revenue for the municipalities in the Meadowlands District. Some temporary jobs would be created during construction, which is expected to last no more than 48 months. A small number of permanent jobs would be created to operate the Main Facility (approximately 30 full-time positions), which would not be expected to meaningfully affect employment statistics or the economic base of the study area, but nonetheless is a positive impact.

The proposed Project would benefit the regional economy during power outages of the commercial grid by providing a reliable electric power source to maintain regional mobility in the NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak core service territory. During an evacuation, commuters would have access to designated central meeting points, such as schools, hospitals, and safe shelters. Employees using public transportation can access important community facilities to direct public safety. Under normal conditions, the microgrid would generate "behind the meter" loads, which refers to a self-generating energy system that does not require energy from the commercial electric utility. Thus, the Build Alternative would provide for a more reliable

[8] There is a tax sharing program among the 14 municipalities that extends into the Meadowlands District.

electric system resulting in economic benefits related to improved resiliency and potentially improved ridership for commuters based on increased confidence during emergency situations.

5.5 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The Build Alternative would not result in adverse impacts on socioeconomic conditions; therefore, no mitigation is required. Under normal operations, there would be a positive impact with the creation of approximately 30 full-time positions. Under emergency operations, there would be a positive effect in that commuters, including elderly and disabled citizens, would have reliable transportation during commercial power grid outages. There would be no negative socioeconomic effects resulting from the proposed Project under normal or emergency operations.