

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Federally funded mass transportation projects are required to be developed in accordance with federal legislation, as well as with FTA implementing regulations. Such policies include procedures governing the role of the public in the planning of and decision making for federal transportation projects. This section describes the efforts that have been undertaken and the ongoing efforts with respect to public outreach in the planning of the 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station Improvement Project. This section also describes the ongoing coordination with local, state, regional, and federal agencies involved in the planning of the project.

MTA NYCT has been in contact with Community Board 8 and has established relationships with civic organizations, the management of residential buildings, officials at Hunter College and with businesses within the project area of Lexington Avenue between East 68th and East 69th Streets. The following applies to the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1 unless otherwise indicated

15.2 REGULATORY CONTEXT

This EA has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended) and in accordance with CEQ regulations implementing NEPA (40 C.F.R. §§ 1500 through 1508) and FTA's Environmental Impact and Related Procedures (23 C.F.R. § 771).

This EA has been prepared by FTA and MTA NYCT. FTA is a funding entity for the project and is the Lead Agency for the NEPA environmental review process. NEPA requires that federal agencies evaluate the environmental consequences of proposed actions and their alternatives, identify measures to mitigate any significant adverse impacts, and conduct the entire process in coordination with other agencies and the general public. In order for FTA to approve and fund the construction of the 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station Improvement Project, the project must comply with the public and agency coordination requirements of NEPA.

In addition to NEPA, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 also contains provisions and requirements for public outreach activities. Executive Order 12898 also references effective public outreach as an important component of federal decision-making related to environmental justice. In accordance with federal guidelines, the public outreach program for this project included early, proactive, ongoing, and customized outreach and participation activities.

CEQ regulations require public involvement for Findings of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to include, at a minimum, reasonable public notice of availability of the EA and FONSI. Formal public scoping is not required for EAs as it is for an Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). As the federal local agency, the FTA would issue the FONSI, if deemed appropriate.

15.3 APPROVALS, PERMITS AND COORDINATION

The various permits and approvals that would be required to implement the Proposed Project are identified in Table 15-1.

**Table 15-1:
Approvals, Permits, and Coordination Required**

Approval/Permit/ Coordination	Resource Agency	Description
Parks Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR)	Agreement between NYCDPR and MTA NYCT regarding temporary impacts to street trees and replacement thereof.
Section 4(f) Evaluation	USDOT/FTA	Finding that there is no prudent and feasible alternative to use of Section 4(f) resources and that MTA NYCT has considered all reasonable avoidance alternatives to minimize harm to Section 4(f) resources or a determination of a <i>de minimis</i> impact.
Coordination	New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT)	Agreement necessary for coordination and assumption by MTA NYCT of utilities relocation, and for street work.
Water Discharge (Construction)	New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP)	During construction, this permit would allow Contractor to discharge the water from his activities after appropriate treatment, including dewatering of excavation, wheel washing.
Water Discharge (Operation) modification	NYCDEP	During operation, this permit would allow MTA NYCT to discharge water from the station and tunnel.
Maintenance and Protection of Traffic (MPT) Plans	NYCDOT	Approvals for use of sidewalks and street lanes during construction of the project.
Construction Protection Plan	NYSOPRHP	Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.
Historic Resource Construction Protection Plan	NYCDOB	Protection of historic resources within 90 feet of construction activity.

15.4 AGENCY COORDINATION

Substantial public agency coordination has occurred for the 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station Improvement Project. These efforts will continue as the project is developed in greater detail during final design. The following sections describe the primary components of these coordination efforts.

15.4.1 NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

As indicated above, the 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station Improvement Project would require the approvals for the use of sidewalks and street lanes for the construction of the project. As such, MTA NYCT has been an active participant in several coordination meetings with NYCDOT to ensure the Proposed Project is being developed in accordance with NYCDOT policy. To date, coordination meetings with NYCDOT include those held on:

- May 12, 2011
- June 9, 2011

MTA NYCT will continue to coordinate with NYCDOT in the development of Maintenance and Protection of Traffic Plans to be completed during final design and implemented during construction of the Proposed Project.

15.4.2 NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Development of the Proposed Project will require the replacement and/or rerouting of City utilities, including sanitary sewer lines and domestic water supply lines. MTA NYCT has coordinated with NYCDEP regarding the Proposed Project and will continue such coordination throughout development and construction of the project. The initial coordination meeting was held on July 30, 2012. Additional coordination between MTA NYCT and NYCDEP would be required and conducted in the construction phases of the Proposed Project.

15.4.3 NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Because two trees will need to be relocated prior to the commencement of construction activities, MTA NYCT conducted a meeting with NYCDPR on August 4, 2011. MTA NYCT will continue coordination with NYCDPR regarding the Proposed Project and the replacement of affected street trees.

15.4.4 NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Proposed Project will be constructed adjacent to the Upper East Side Historic District and adjacent to a contributing element of that historic district – Thomas Hunter Hall on the Hunter College campus. As such, coordination with NYSOPRHP has been conducted to determine if impacts to historic resources would occur because of the Proposed Project. OPRHP determined that the Proposed Project would have “no adverse effect” to the historic resource, provided a construction protection plan is put in place for all historic buildings within 90 feet of the proposed construction activities. This coordination was taken into consideration by FTA in its Section 4(f) determination (in accordance with 36 C.F.R. § 800) that either no historic property is affected by the Proposed Project or that the Proposed Project will have "no adverse effect" on the historic properties. Correspondence between MTA NYCT and OPRHP is provided in Appendix B.

15.4.5 NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (Landmarks) was consulted regarding preliminary subsurface testing in the area of the Proposed Project and will continue to be engaged throughout the environmental review process. Copies of communications between MTA NYCT and Landmarks are provided in Appendix B.

15.5 PUBLIC OUTREACH

MTA NYCT has conducted outreach to the general public and held stakeholder meetings with specific interest groups to provide information to them about the 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station Improvement Project, including the environmental review process, the existing congestion at the station, the scope of the Proposed Project, the construction duration and the cost, and the street stair options identified in this EA. A list of these meetings is provided below.

- March 10, 2011, Con Edison of New York
- June 30, 2011, Hunter College
- October 7, 2011, Community Board 8
- October 12, 2011, Hunter College Community Advisory briefing
- January 4, 2012, Community Board 8 Transportation Committee meeting
- April 16, 2012, Con Edison of New York

In addition, between November 2012 and November 2013 (see below for dates), MTA NYCT met with the 69th Street Tenants Corporation to describe the environmental review process, existing congestion at the station, the scope of the Proposed Project, anticipated construction duration and the cost, and the street stair options identified in this EA. At some of these meetings, the 69th Street Tenants Corporation suggested options for a street stair to serve the northbound platform at the north end of the station; options that would not involve a street stair on south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue. For each suggested option, MTA NYCT analyzed the alternative presented, and with respect to the initial alternatives presented, determined that they were either not feasible or did not meet the project goals and objectives, or purpose and need.

The 69th Street Tenants Corporation subsequently proposed the possibility of placing the street entrance for the northbound platform in a commercial space at 931 Lexington Avenue, approximately mid-block between East 68th Street and East 69th Street. MTA NYCT analyses found that option to be viable, and proceeded to pursue this possibility, which ultimately became Alternative E10 (the Proposed Project). At the time of preparation of this document, the owner of the building identified for locating Option E10 could not yet state with certainty that the commercial space at 931 Lexington Avenue (Option E10) would be available. Pending confirmation of availability of the space at 931 Lexington Avenue, MTA NYCT therefore retained the option for a street stair at the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue (Option E1) as an optional entrance location to the northbound platform.

An overview of the proposals submitted by the 69th Street Tenants Corporation and the meetings with MTA NYCT to discuss the proposals is presented below.

- November 2012: The 69th Street Tenants Corporation submitted to MTA NYCT a report that outlined an alternative to MTA NYCT's plans for street stairs on East 69th Street.
- December 6, 2012: MTA NYCT's project team met with representatives of the 69th Street Tenants Corporation and informed them that the plan did not propose a feasible alternative to MTA NYCT's preferred plan because, although the submission included two additional "emergency egress" hatches, the proposal did not alleviate station platform congestion.
- March 2013: The 69th Street Tenants Corporation submitted a second report to MTA NYCT outlining a new proposed alternative to MTA NYCT's preferred plan involving street stairs on either East 67th Street or East 70th Street.
- April 16, 2013: MTA NYCT's project team met with the 69th Street Tenants Corporation to discuss MTA NYCT's response to the new proposal submitted in March 2013. At that meeting, MTA NYCT's team explained that the new proposal did not represent an acceptable alternative to MTA NYCT's preferred plan because the proposal did not meet the project goals and objectives, specifically, passenger circulation deficiencies during construction, construction phasing problems, and construction schedule and cost impacts.
- August 2013: The 69th Street Tenants Corporation submitted another alternative proposal. This third iteration involved MTA NYCT acquiring commercial retail space from the Imperial House, (931 Lexington Avenue) located mid-block along between East 68th and East 69th Streets.
- November 22, 2013: MTA NYCT and the 69th Street Tenants Corporation met to discuss the general framework for MTA NYCT acquisition of the retail space at 931 Lexington Avenue owned by the Imperial House.