

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), in cooperation with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and MTA New York City Transit (NYCT), proposes to implement improvements to the 68th Street/Hunter College Station to bring the station into substantial compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (as amended), and to add necessary passenger circulation improvements throughout the station. Improvements to bring the station into compliance with ADA include the installation of ADA-compliant elevators, ADA Fare-card Access System, communications systems and physical modifications to public and employee areas. These proposed improvements would result in an ADA-compliant subway station for both passengers and MTA NYCT employees. Improvements intended to increase the station's circulation performance include widening of existing stairs, constructing additional stairs and other improvements. These improvements (the Proposed Project) would be implemented at the subway station located at Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street in Manhattan.

This environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended) and in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 C.F.R. §§ 1500 through 1508) and FTA's Environmental Impact and Related Procedures (23 C.F.R. § 771). The purpose of this EA is to provide information of the Proposed Project's potential impacts on the human and natural environments.

This EA is consistent with requirements of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) Article 8 of the NYS Environmental Conservation Law (ECL), and its implementing regulations found at 6 NYCRR Part 617, and, where appropriate, with New York City's CEQR, Executive Order 91 of 1977 as amended, and the technical guidance of the New York CEQR Technical Manual, 2014 Edition, and with relevant New York City codes and regulations.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT

According to the United States Code of Federal Regulation, (C.F.R.) Title 49 § 37.47, certain commuter authorities (such as the MTA) are required to make Key Stations on their system readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use wheelchairs. After consideration of the criteria in 49 C.F.R. § 37.47 for the determination of Key Stations, New York State designated the 68th Street/Hunter College Station as an ADA Key Station and included it in MTA's NYCT system-wide list of 100 ADA Key Stations. As a Key Station, the 68th Street/Hunter College Station would become part of the network of ADA-accessible stations that interconnect with MTA NYCT's accessible bus system, the ADA-accessible stations of Metro-North Railroad and Long Island Rail Road, and other ADA-accessible subway stations.

In 1994, New York State amended Section 51 of the public buildings law requiring, with exceptions, the construction or rehabilitation of public facilities to conform to the requirements of the state building construction code relating to facilities for the physically handicapped. The 68th Street/Hunter College Station is one on the list of 54 Key Stations to be rehabilitated in order to render this transportation facility accessible to the physically handicapped, including persons in wheelchairs. The 68th Street/Hunter College Station was again listed in the revised Key Station Goals of 2000 generated by MTA NYCT, and the Key Stations Report of April 2013.

MTA NYCT must meet ADA requirements for all of its designated Key Stations by the year 2020 to avoid potential financial penalties. The target date for the 68th Street/Hunter College Station to become ADA compliant is 2020.

In addition to its inaccessibility for some passengers with mobility impairment, the 68th Street/Hunter College Station has several circulation deficiencies. Although conditions may improve with operation of the Second Avenue Subway, the station will continue to perform below desired levels (see analyses in Chapter 5).

The purpose of the Proposed Project is to (1) provide ADA accessibility to public areas of the 68th Street/Hunter College Station, and (2) improve pedestrian circulation and reduce congestion within the station and at street level, and to foster efficient train access and occupancy.

Several goals and objectives are described below that are essential to meeting the purpose and need.

1.2.1 MTA NYCT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

All the build alternatives considered in this EA (see Chapter 2) would bring the station substantially into compliance with the ADA, and to some degree, improve circulation and reduce congestion at the station. To identify the best solution, key goals and objectives were established by MTA NYCT for this project in order to measure the ability of alternatives to meet the purpose and need. These goals and objectives were based on MTA NYCT best practice principles for the planning and design of station improvements. The goals and objectives include transportation-related criteria as well as project schedule, budget, safety, quality, customer satisfaction, and best practices pertaining to the natural and the man-made environment.

1.2.2 PROJECT-SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In order for a solution to best address the problems identified in Section 1.2, the following objectives were used to guide the development of the project.

Improve Circulation at all Locations with Deficiencies

- Reduce congestion at platform stairs.
- Reduce congestion at street stairs.
- Improve distribution of passenger volumes on the train and along the length of the platform.
- Improve passenger convenience and circulation efficiency: locate capacity that best serves passengers.
- Improve or maintain fare control and mezzanine performance.

Minimize Cost

A key principle in the design of MTA NYCT's facilities is to achieve economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, as much as practicable. Station designs should demonstrate an efficient use of space, material, and structure. The station design should meet the functional requirements of the program in an economical manner, while maximizing functional value for the public, customers, and MTA NYCT. An important strategy to contain costs is an emphasis on maintaining project schedules. Construction schedules are critical to the success of a station project and directly affect the budget. Schedule can be influenced through the use of modular design principles and appropriate materials and methods of construction. For this reason, designs and construction

methods that minimize construction cost and the time required to complete construction, including time to implement construction through property acquisition, relocation of occupants, utility relocation, and site preparation, are generally preferred.

In order to address the problems identified in Section 1.2, project goals and objectives include:

- Avoid or minimize costly construction methods.
- Maintain project schedule.

Minimize Construction Risk

MTA NYCT seeks to meet the functional requirements of a station improvement program in accordance with good engineering practice and in an economical manner. This translates into designs and methods of construction that minimize construction risk. To address the problems identified in Section 1.2 and minimize construction risk, the project was designed to:

- Avoid or minimize costly construction, for example, extensive excavation.
- Avoid or minimize interference with utility infrastructure and ECS duct banks.
- Avoid or minimize interference with sensitive structures, including historic or fragile buildings.

Minimize Real Estate Conflicts

It is a practice of MTA NYCT to minimize the displacement of occupied residential units or active commercial space, when other alternatives are available. Acquisition and relocation of buildings containing residential occupants should only be considered after all other possibilities have been exhausted. It is also MTA NYCT practice to avoid or minimize real estate acquisition where doing so could significantly affect project schedule and cost.

In order for a solution to address the problems identified in Section 1.2, goals and objectives include:

- Avoid locating subway infrastructure in occupied residences or occupied commercial space.

Minimize Impacts during Construction

Rehabilitation and improvement of transit facilities often requires periods during which transit service is interrupted in order to complete certain construction activities that cannot be undertaken while the station or parts of it are in active service. Additionally, rehabilitation or construction of underground facilities in the City often requires excavation of streets and sidewalks. As such, goals of the project are to:

- Minimize disruption to station and subway operations and minimize passenger disruptions during construction.
- Minimize disruption to the neighborhood during construction.

Improve and Maintain Environmental Conditions and Minimize Environmental Impacts

The 68th Street/Hunter College Station is located adjacent to a historic district and historic buildings. Avoidance and/or minimization of impacts to historic resources is therefore a key objective, consistent with the requirements of NEPA, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966.

Therefore, a goal of the project is to:

- Minimize impacts to historic resources and Section 4(f) resources.

1.3 PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

1.3.1 STATION CONDITIONS

The 68th Street/Hunter College Station is located along Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street in Manhattan (Figure S-1). It opened in 1918 and is almost one hundred years old.

The station serves the IRT Lexington Avenue Line. It serves the 6 Train at all times, and the 4 Train during the late night hours, with 23 peak hour, peak direction trains. It is ranked 30th highest of the 420 stations in MTA NYCT's 2013 Subway Ridership ranking. The station has an average weekday usage of approximately 36,562 daily passenger trips, and in terms of average weekday ridership, the station's one control area is the fifth busiest control area in the entire subway system.² Although the station is not an express station or transfer station, it is a major origin/destination station because of the presence of City University of New York's Hunter College (located at East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue), the proximity of medical facilities located east of the station, cultural attractions (Museum Mile, Central Park) located west of the station, and dense residential uses in the area. The proximity of these land uses to the station results in very large peak usage by passengers in the morning and evening at this station. During a typical weekday AM peak hour, over 7,200 passengers exit the station and over 1,800 enter the station. During the peak 15-minute period in the AM peak hour, for example, 2,254 passengers exit the platform stairs.³ During the peak 15-minute period in the PM peak hour, 1,392 enter via the platform stairs.

By 2020 a segment of the Second Avenue Subway would be operational and would influence ridership volumes at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station, as some users would shift to the Second Avenue Subway. However, even with the diversion of riders to the Second Avenue Subway, there would still be 2,035 passengers exiting the station's platform stairs during the peak 15-minute period in the AM peak hour, and 1,306 entering the station's platform stairs during the peak 15-minute period in the PM peak hour. The station would thus continue to exhibit the deficiencies (identified below) that necessitate the Proposed Project.

1.3.1.1 Station Structure

The station consists of a two-level subway structure below street level. The two levels of the station include the mezzanine, situated one level below the intersection of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue, and the tracks and platforms extending under Lexington Avenue, below the mezzanine level. A description of the station, including the station's elements at street level follows.

Street Level

The street level entrances to the station are located at Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street in Manhattan (Figures 1-1 through 1-3). There are four publicly accessible, street level stairway entry points that provide access between the sidewalk and the mezzanine. These street stairs are

² MTA, New York City Transit, Memorandum, Draft Scope of Work – ADA Accessibility at 68 St / Hunter College (LEX), May, 2007. (Document available upon request.)

³ NYCT Operations Planning observations and Automatic Fare Collections (MetroCard) data, April 2007, March 2010, April 2010, and May 2010. (Document available upon request.)

located at each corner of the intersection of Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street. Both of the street stairs on the south side of East 68th Street are located on property owned by the City University of New York's Hunter College, and both of the street stairs on the north side of the street are located on New York City (NYC) sidewalks.

Mezzanine Level

The mezzanine is located directly under the intersection of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue, and is confined to the area under the NYC-owned streets, except for small portions that extend under Hunter College property at the southeast and southwest corners of the intersection. The mezzanine includes one double-agent, full-time control booth (control area R-246), turnstiles, seating, MTA program space (bathrooms, janitor closets, etc.) and MetroCard Vending Machines (MVMs). From the mezzanine, two stairs connect to the northbound platform below and two stairs connect to the southbound platform below.

Platform Level

At the platform level, the station has a two-track configuration with one northbound and one southbound platform. The platform level, also confined to the area under NYC-owned streets, extends from a point midway between East 67th Street and East 68th Street to a point midway between East 69th Street and East 70th Street. There are two pairs of stairs providing access between the platforms and the mezzanine, one pair for the northbound platform and one pair for the southbound platform. Both pairs of platform stairs are located near the south end of the platform, under the intersection of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue (Figure S-4).

1.3.2 STATION DEFICIENCIES

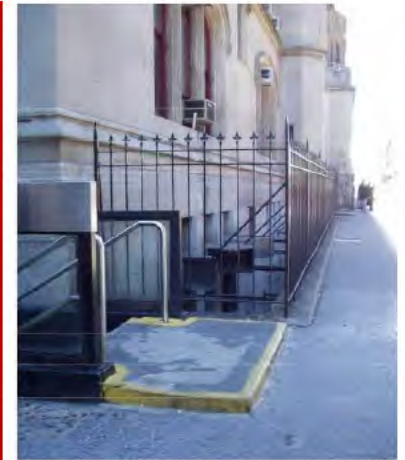
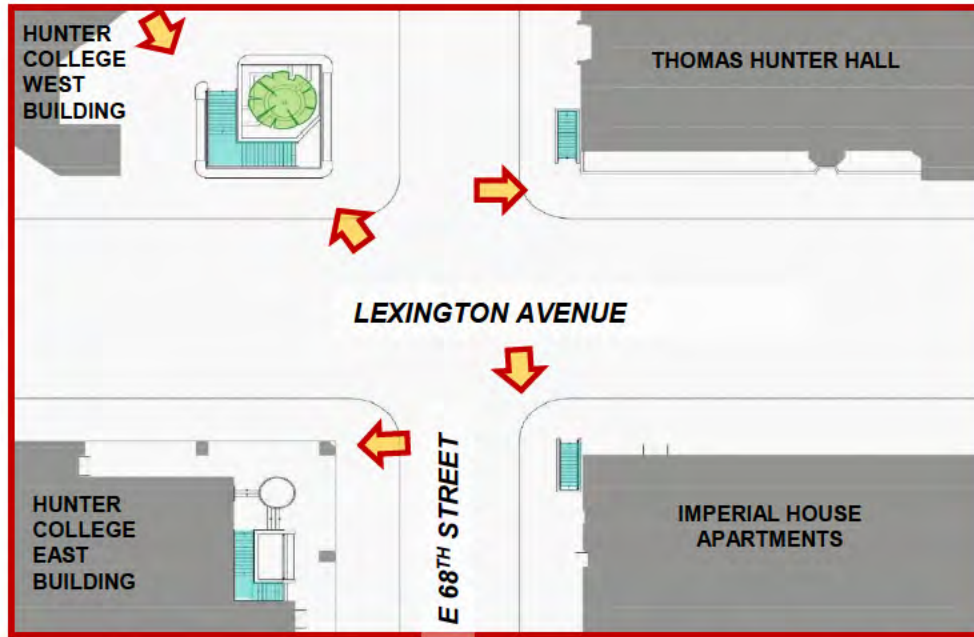
The 68th Street/Hunter College Station has the following deficiencies:

- Absence of ADA compliant access
- Passenger circulation problems including:
 - Pedestrian congestion at the platform stairs and at the platform level approaching these stairs
 - Pedestrian congestion at the street stairs and at the mezzanine level approaching these stairs
 - Pedestrian interference at the northeast corner of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue

These deficiencies are further described below. Additional detail regarding the circulation deficiencies is provided in Chapter 5: Transportation and Pedestrian Circulation.

1.3.2.1 Deficiency: Absence of ADA Compliant Access

Although it is one of the busiest stations in the subway system and serves major activity centers, including institutions of higher education, hospitals and other major health care facilities, the 68th Street/Hunter College Station is not readily accessible to, and usable by, some individuals with disabilities. For some mobility-impaired passengers, absence of ADA-compliant access results in their inability to use the 68th Street/Hunter College Station, and increases travel times to reach the area via public transportation, for example, taking a bus to/from the nearest ADA-accessible stations at either 51st Street or 125th Street.



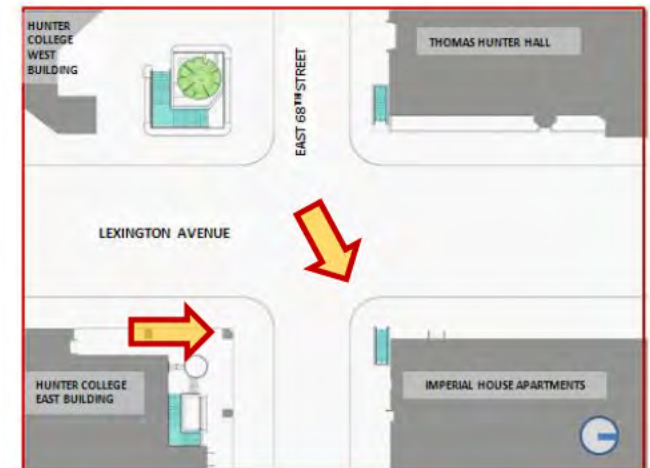
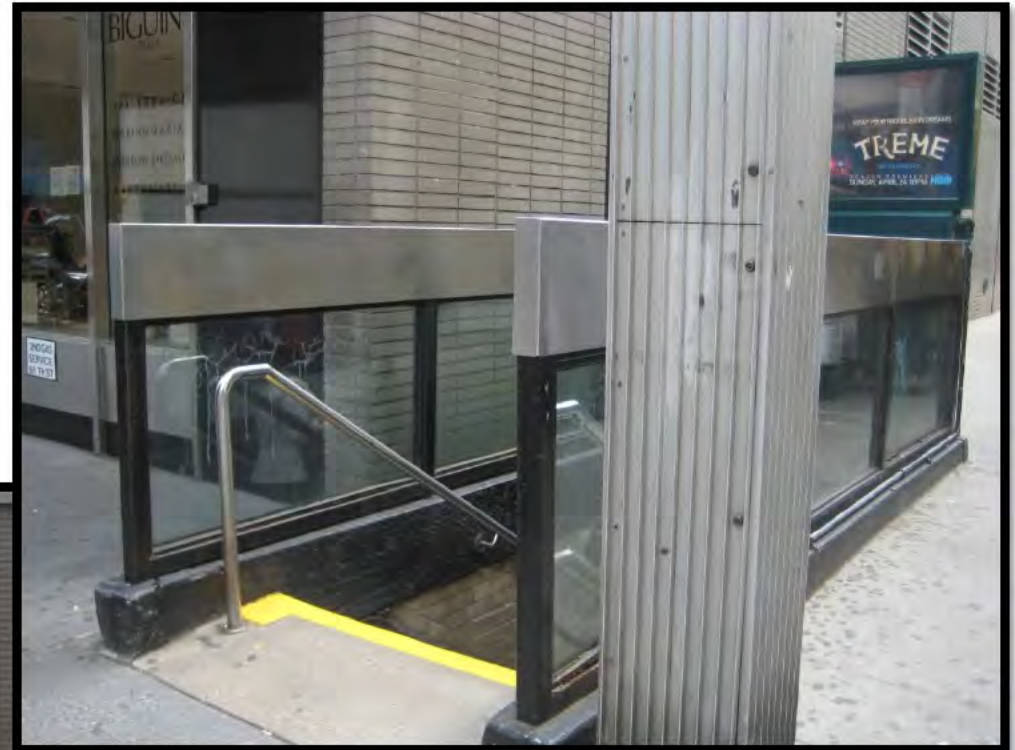
East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue


-  Existing Street Stairs
-  Camera Location

Existing 68th Street Level Views
Figure 1-1

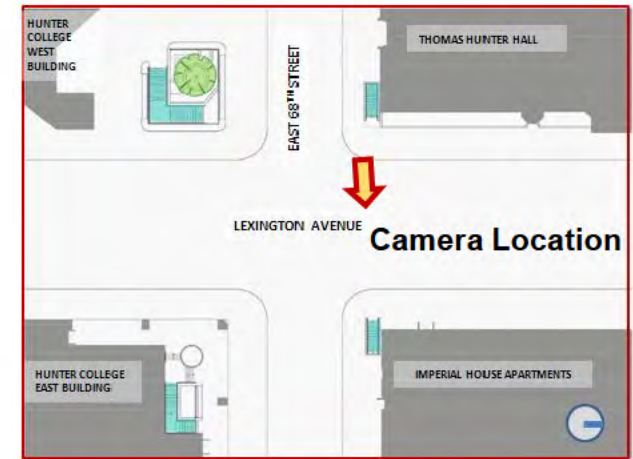
Head of Street Stair Extends into Lexington Avenue Sidewalk

Street Stair, Subway Sign, Light Pole, Trash Bags & Receptacle, & Other Obstacles Restrict Flow on Lexington Avenue Sidewalk



 Camera Location

NE Corner – 68th Street & Lexington Avenue
Figure 1-2



**Sidewalk Conditions – NE Corner
Lexington Avenue & East 68th St.**



**NE Corner – 68th Street & Lexington Avenue
Figure 1-3**

According to 49 C.F.R. § 37.47, certain commuter authorities (such as the MTA) are required to make Key Stations on their system readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use wheelchairs, and those with hearing and vision impairment. The regulations stipulate that each commuter authority should determine which stations on its system are Key Stations, taking into consideration the following criteria:

1. Stations where passenger boardings exceed average station passenger boardings on the rail system by at least 15 percent, unless such a station is close to another accessible station;
2. Transfer stations on a rail line or between rail lines;
3. Major interchange points with other transportation modes, including stations connecting with major parking facilities, bus terminals, intercity or commuter rail stations, passenger vessel terminals, or airports;
4. End stations, unless an end station is close to another accessible station; and
5. Stations serving major activity centers, such as employment or government centers, institutions of higher education, hospitals or other major health care facilities, or other facilities that are major trip generators for individuals with disabilities.

Considering the above criteria, in 1994 New York State designated the 68th Street/Hunter College Station as an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Key Station and included it in MTA's system-wide list of 100 ADA Key Stations. As a Key Station, the 68th Street/Hunter College Station would become part of the network of ADA-accessible stations that interconnects with MTA NYCT's accessible bus system, the ADA-accessible stations of Metro-North Railroad and Long Island Rail Road, and other ADA-accessible subway stations. As of March 2015, out of 100 Key Stations identified, 85 have been completed; 2 are in construction, 6 are in design, and 7 are in planning. In addition, 24 non-Key Stations are fully or partially wheelchair accessible.

MTA must meet ADA requirements for all of its designated Key Stations by the year 2020 to avoid being referred to the Department of Justice for the assessment of financial penalties, including suspension or termination of federal financial assistance. MTA initiated the development of a Master Plan to meet ADA requirements at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station in 2007. In order for MTA to meet its schedule to have all 100 Key Stations ADA compliant by 2020, the target date for the 68th Street/Hunter College Station to become ADA compliant is 2020.

1.3.2.2 Passenger Circulation Deficiencies at the Station

The existing station configuration, which cannot properly accommodate the high volume of passengers using the station, is characterized by passenger circulation problems. This is reflected by the station's poor performance in terms of metrics used to assess pedestrian circulation of the various elements of transportation facilities, including subway stations. Such metrics include level of service (LOS)⁴ ratings and "clearance time." In addition to congested conditions reflected in

⁴ Level of Service (LOS) refers to a letter designation that describes a range of operating conditions of a particular type of transportation facility (e.g., highway, intersection, sidewalk or stairway), and is defined as a qualitative measure that characterizes operating conditions. Several key measures are used to describe service quality in these terms, including speed and travel time, density, and delay. LOS ratings, typically from A (best) to F (worst), are widely used in transport planning to evaluate problems and potential solutions. As described in the CEQR Technical Manual, the analysis of conditions within subway stations is based on a comparison of the capacities of circulation and fare control elements against the volume of passengers expected to use them. This ratio of passenger volume and element capacity (v/c ratio) equates to a LOS rating for each station element (CEQR Technical Manual, 2014).

these metrics, other conditions have been observed at this station on multiple occasions that indicate problems with pedestrian circulation resulting from the combination of station configuration and high passenger volumes at certain times.

An overview of the passenger circulation problems of the 68th Street/Hunter College Station for each station element (platforms, platform stairs, mezzanine, street stairs) and associated LOS ratings or clearance times for different station elements is provided below. A qualitative discussion is provided for those problems observed, but not expressed in metrics. The qualitative discussion is augmented with reference to relevant practices, policies and guidelines where applicable. The following circulation problems are discussed:

- Pedestrian congestion at the platform stairs and at the platform level approaching these stairs
- Pedestrian congestion at the street stairs and at the mezzanine level approaching these stairs
- Pedestrian interference associated with the subway entrance at the northeast corner of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue
- Inefficient train access and occupancy
- Inefficient and inconvenient pedestrian circulation relative to passenger destinations

A more detailed description of the station's circulation problems is provided in Chapter 5, including a more extensive discussion of LOS ratings and clearance times.

Pedestrian Congestion at the Platforms and Platform Stairs

Existing access between the mezzanine and the platforms is limited to one pair of platform stairs for each of the northbound (P2/P4) and southbound (P1/P3) platforms (Figure S-4). As all of the platform stairs are concentrated at the southern end of the station's two platforms, all passengers exiting the train at the north end of each platform must use these stairs as well. The main reason for the congestion on the platform and on the stairs from the platform to the mezzanine is that a large number of people get off of any given train in a very short time, resulting in high volume exit surges. This is especially acute on the northbound platform. The large number of people present on the platform at any given time



Image 1: Passengers Ascending Stair P4

overwhelms the existing platform stairs, and the capacity of the stairs is often exceeded. This causes congestion at both the platform stairs and at the platform level approaching the stairs, consequently increasing the time it takes passengers to exit the station. Image 1 illustrates crowding on stair P4, leading from the northbound platform to the mezzanine (see Figure S-5 for

stair locations). Image 2 illustrates crowding on stair P2, also leading from the northbound platform to the mezzanine. Image 3, below, illustrates crowding on stair P3, leading from the southbound platform to the mezzanine. These three images were taken on Wednesday, October 14 at approximately 9:00 am. For more photographs depicting congestion at the station, as well as a photograph location key, see Appendix D: Station Congestion Photographs.

Level of Service and Clearance Times

The poor pedestrian circulation described above is reflected in the station's performance metrics. Observations and analyses⁵ of conditions at the station during peak periods revealed that during the morning rush (the "AM Peak")⁶, the northbound platform stairs experience heavy crowding,



Image 2: Passengers exiting via Platform Stair P 2



Image 3: Passengers Ascending Platform Stair P3

because pedestrians must queue up to ascend one of two stairs leading to the mezzanine level. Almost every train observed during the AM peak disembarked passengers in sufficient numbers to cause a queue to form approaching platform stair P4, leading to the station's mezzanine area. In addition, during the AM peak, 11 of the 20 train arrivals resulted in passengers waiting in line to ascend both stair P2 and stair P4. In technical terms, stair P4 operates at LOS D/E during the AM peak period and stair P2 at LOS B.

The LOS ratings above are usually used in a different context, where the stream of pedestrians is constant. Therefore, this standard transportation planning measure understates congestion on circulation elements, such as the platform stairs at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station that are subjected to surged⁷ passenger flow. This is because the

⁵ NYCT Operations Planning data, and visual observation by transportation consultant on April 2007, March 2010, April 2010, and May 2010.

⁶ Based on review of passenger data, including pedestrian counts, the peak periods for analysis of transit elements (stairs) were determined to be 8:45 AM–9:00 AM (morning), 1:45 PM–2:00 PM (midday) and 5:15 PM–5:30 PM (evening)

⁷ Surged flow entails the arrival of a large and heavily concentrated group of passengers whose arrival is a result of a particular occurrence, such as an arriving train.

LOS formula *averages* the number of passengers on circulation elements over a 15-minute time period, and does not identify peak flows within the 15-minute period. The LOS formula therefore does not account for the surged use of the circulation element (e.g. platform stair): during the 15-minute period the element may be heavily used when passengers disembark from an arriving train, but the element may see little or no use between arriving trains. The congestion effect of a surge, such as that occurring at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station, is more accurately reflected in the “clearance time” metric used to measure stair performance. For platform stairs like those at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station, the MTA NYCT clearance time guideline⁸ states that it should take 30 seconds or less to process the 80th percentile detraining surge—the surge volume that will meet or exceed 80 percent of all surges during the peak hour—off each platform.

Existing AM clearance times for northbound platform stairs P2 and P4 are 59 seconds and 134 seconds, respectively (Table 1-1). These times are 2 to 4.5 times the 30-second guideline, and as the number of detraining surges that were observed to result in queuing at the bottom of both stairs illustrates, these stairs are being used at rates well above their capacities.

**Table 1-1:
Existing/Future (2020) No-Build
Platform Stair Clearance Time (Seconds)**

Location	Stair ID [†]	AM Peak (Existing/2020)	PM Peak (Existing/2020)
Southbound Platform	P1	18/15	6/4
	P3	<u>88/82</u>	15/9
Northbound Platform	P2	<u>59/53</u>	<u>43/20</u>
	P4	<u>134/121</u>	<u>78/34</u>

*Clearance times exceeding the 30-second guideline are underlined and red

[†]Stair IDs are indicated on Figure S-4.

On the southbound platform during the morning peak, the existing clearance time is 18 seconds for P1 and 88 seconds for stair P3. Stair P3 is overcrowded as indicated by the fact that clearance time on the stair significantly exceeds the 30-second guideline.

During the evening rush (“PM Peak”), the existing clearance time is 43 seconds for stair P2 and 78 seconds for P4. Each of these stairs, therefore, exceeds the 30-second guideline for clearance times.

Although LOS and clearance times would improve somewhat in 2020 with the diversion of some passengers to the Second Avenue Subway, platform stairs and street stairs will remain congested and deficient. For example, in 2020 the AM peak clearance time for stair P2 is projected to be 53 seconds, for stair P3, 82 seconds, and for P4, 121 seconds.

Pedestrian Congestion at the Mezzanine Level due to Street Stair Congestion

At the base of the street stairs at the mezzanine level, heavy crowding has been observed⁹ as pedestrians line up to ascend stair S4 (northeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street) and Stair O2/O4 (southeast corner of the intersection). Counter flow (pedestrians entering) at these stairs further restricts exiting passengers.

⁸ *Methodology for Surged Flow Analysis*, NYCT Division of Operations Planning/Station Planning, December 2012.

⁹ Visual observations by transportation consultant – March 2010, April 2010, and May 2010.

Pedestrian Congestion at the Street Stairs

The street stairs on the north side of East 68th Street are too narrow to accommodate the large numbers of pedestrians who wish to go either up or down these stairs at the same time, causing pedestrian congestion and delays on these street stairs at certain times during the day (see Table 1-2 for LOS ratings of the station's street stairs). Images 4 and 5, illustrate the lines that form as passengers wait to ascend stairs leading from the mezzanine to the street. Image 4 shows crowding at the bottom of stair S4 and Image 5 shows crowding at stair O2/O4.



Image 4: Passenger Line Ascending Stair S4



Image 5: Passenger Line Ascending Stair O2/O4

**Table 1-2:
Existing/Future (2020) No-Build
LOS at East 68th Street Stairs***

Stair ID†	Location	AM Peak Existing/Future	Midday Peak Existing/Future	PM Peak Existing/Future
S4	Northeast Corner	<u>E/E</u>	B/A	D/D
S3	Northwest Corner	D/C	A/A	B/A
O2/O4	Southeast Corner	<u>E/E</u>	C/B	<u>E/D</u>
O1/O3	Southwest Corner	C/B	A/A	B/A

*LOS E and worse are underlined and in red

†Stair IDs are indicated on Figure S-4.

Pedestrian Interference at the Northeast Corner of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue.

The existing street stair at this location faces Lexington Avenue and extends into the eastern sidewalk of Lexington Avenue (Figure 1-2). Because the stair extends into the pedestrian flow on the sidewalk, the flow of passengers using this stair (both entering and exiting the station) conflicts with pedestrian flow on the sidewalk and adjacent crosswalks. This congestion is shown on Figure 1-3.

Inefficient Train Access and Occupancy

Because access to the platform is located exclusively near the southern end of the platform, passengers are not distributed evenly along the length of the platform. This condition leads to uneven loading of the train and platform, and heightened conflict in movement between those leaving the train and those entering.

Inefficient and Inconvenient Pedestrian Circulation Relative to Passenger Destinations.

Many passengers have origins/destinations north of East 68th Street (including hospitals and medical facilities). As East 68th Street is the station's only access and exit point, passengers with destinations or origins north of the station must walk the length of the platform (either at platform level or street level) when using the station.

1.4 ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK, ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS, AND REQUIRED REVIEWS/APPROVALS

1.4.1 ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

To assess the potential environmental impacts that could result from the Proposed Project, it is necessary to evaluate future conditions with and without the project. In accordance with NEPA, this EA evaluates potential environmental impacts of the No-Action (or No-Build) Alternative and the Action Alternative (the Proposed Project).

To prepare the technical analyses for an EA, it is necessary to determine the year or years during which potential environmental impacts are anticipated to be greatest. These may occur during construction, operation, or both.

For the Proposed Project, construction is expected to begin in 2016 and continue for approximately 36 to 39 months, until late 2019. Potential construction impacts were evaluated for the year 2017, the anticipated peak construction year.

The Proposed Project is expected to be operational by 2020. To assess environmental impacts during operation, conditions expected after completion of the project (Build) were compared with conditions that would be expected without the project (No-Build) for the year 2020.

1.4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS AND REQUIRED REVIEWS/APPROVALS

As indicated in Section 1.1, this EA has been prepared by FTA and MTA NYCT. FTA is a funding entity for the Proposed Project and is the Lead Agency for the NEPA environmental review process. The EA has been prepared in accordance with regulations for implementing NEPA as issued by the FTA (23 C.F.R. § 771) in conformance with the regulations of the CEQ (40 C.F.R. §§ 1500–1508). MTA NYCT has determined that, in accordance with New York State Public Authorities Law §1266-c (11), the Proposed Action is exempt from the New York SEQRA as codified in Article 8 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law (ECL Sections 8-0101 et seq.) and its implementing regulations in Title 6 of the New York Codes, Rules and Regulations (6 NYCRR Part 617). That is because, as specified in Public Authorities Law §1266-c (11), the

Proposed Action is: “a NYCT project to be constructed upon real property theretofore used for a transit or transportation purpose, or on an insubstantial addition to such property contiguous thereto, which will not change in a material respect the general character of such prior transit or transportation use.” Nevertheless, the EA has been conducted to be consistent with the requirements of SEQRA, and, where appropriate, with New York City’s City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR), Executive Order 91 of 1977 as amended, and the technical guidance of the New York CEQR Technical Manual, 2014 Edition, and with relevant New York City codes and regulations.

The Proposed Project would comply with all applicable federal regulations and standards, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act, Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, Executive Order 13274 on environmental streamlining and stewardship, and Executive Order 13514 on federal sustainability. A table of applicable approvals, permits and coordination required for the project is included in Chapter 14.

Section 4(f) of the United States Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 U.S.C. § 303 (c)), as implemented by regulations codified at 23 C.F.R. § 774, prohibits federal approval or funding of a transportation project if the project requires use of a significant publicly owned park, recreation area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge area, or any significant historic site, unless there is no prudent and feasible alternative to such use and all possible planning to minimize harm to the resource has occurred or a determination of a *de minimis* impact has been made. MTA NYCT has prepared an evaluation of Section 4(f) resources for the project; it is included in Chapter 12.