

Foreword

This document is the revised supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed 50th Street facility of the MTA/LIRR East Side Access Project. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), in cooperation with the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR), are proposing to modify the East Side Access Project to allow construction of a support building for the project at 50th Street between Park and Madison Avenues (referred to throughout this document as the “50th Street facility” or “the facility”). The 50th Street facility is proposed for a site on the south side of 50th Street, midway between Park and Madison Avenues in Midtown Manhattan, and includes a through drive from 49th Street as well as underground spaces beneath a portion of 50th Street and the adjacent building at 300 Park Avenue. At this location, five existing low-rise buildings would be acquired and demolished, and the new 50th Street facility would be constructed.

The 50th Street facility is needed to provide ventilation (air intake and exhaust) for a portion of the East Side Access Project’s new terminal at Grand Central and a portion of its new tunnels, and to provide a loading dock for deliveries and waste removal for the new terminal. In order to maximize the property’s use and provide other support functions for the East Side Access Project, other program elements are also included. In addition, the 50th Street facility is proposed for use as a construction access point to facilitate delivery of workers and materials for the construction of the East Side Access Project’s new passenger terminal.

In the preliminary design for the East Side Access Project that was analyzed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), a ventilation facility was included below ground in the vicinity of 50th Street and no above-ground structure for the project was included in the vicinity of 50th Street. In addition, at the time of the FEIS, it was assumed that the new terminal would be supported by an existing loading dock at Depew Place. However, this loading dock is currently operating near capacity and it was determined that it would not support the needs of increased activity resulting from the LIRR service. As a result, a site for an above-ground structure to house the necessary ventilation functions and a new loading dock was identified.

Therefore, an EA was prepared to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the 50th Street facility in light of the analysis presented in the FEIS prepared for the East Side Access Project, dated March 2001, and the Record of Decision issued by FTA in May 2001, to determine if any additional significant adverse impacts not disclosed in those documents would result from the 50th Street facility. The EA was prepared for the FTA as lead agency, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations (23 CFR Parts 771.130(c) and 771.119(g) and (h)).

The EA was completed and distributed in January 2005; that publication marked the beginning of a public review period open through March 8, 2005. The EA was circulated to involved and interested agencies and other parties and posted on the MTA’s website the week of January 12, 2005. Notice of its availability was also posted on MTA’s website at the same time. During the public review period, MTA held a public hearing to receive comments on the document on February 10, 2005. To advertise the public hearing and to provide notice of the availability of

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the EA, MTA published notices in newspapers of general circulation in the project area the weeks of January 10 and January 17. In addition, information on the public hearing was posted on the MTA's website, and a notice of public hearing was mailed on January 11 to public officials and interested parties in the project area. In response to requests from the public, the public comment period, originally scheduled to be open through February 22, 2005, was held open through March 8, 2005.

Since the January 2005 EA was published, the plan for the 50th Street facility has been revised in response to public comments received during the 2005 comment period. Concerns were raised during public review of the project related to the overall size of the 50th Street facility, the proximity of the facility's exhaust louvers and cooling tower to neighboring buildings, and the proposed location of the fuel tank required to operate the facility's emergency generators.

In response to these concerns, additional studies were conducted of potential design modifications for the 50th Street facility. In particular, alternative locations were sought for the project's cooling tower, emergency generators and exhaust, fuel oil storage tank, tunnel ventilation fans, and electrical substations to reduce the overall size of the 50th Street facility and to address concerns raised by the public. As a result, Preferred Alternative D is now proposed. This new alternative incorporates the following modifications:

- It relocates the facility's cooling tower to the rooftop of the Colgate-Palmolive Building at 300 Park Avenue. The 50th Street facility's 3,000-ton cooling tower would be located on the roof of 300 Park Avenue (on the 49th Street side), where an existing 2,700-ton cooling tower is now located. A new, 2,700-ton cooling tower would be provided for the Colgate-Palmolive building elsewhere on that building's roof (on the Park Avenue side of the L-shaped building). Significant cooperation from the owners of the Colgate-Palmolive Building has made it possible to develop this option and an agreement to build and maintain the required MTA infrastructure is under development.
- The emergency generator exhaust would also be relocated to the rooftop of the Colgate-Palmolive Building.
- The tunnel ventilation fans would be relocated partially below ground at the 50th Street facility.
- Station exhaust louvers would be relocated to the front of the building from the west façade of the building.
- The fuel oil storage tank and electrical substations would be relocated to the East Side Access concourse level. These facilities would be located in access-controlled rooms in the service corridor portion of the new East Side Access terminal, which would not be accessible to the public.
- A landscaped public open space would be provided on the site.
- As a result of these modifications, the above-ground structure at 50th Street would be much smaller than proposed in the January 2005 EA.

In addition, a new construction sequencing plan has been developed to reduce the visible construction activity at the project site relative to the construction activity described in the January 2005 EA.

This revised supplemental EA analyzes the new Preferred Alternative as well as the two alternatives presented in the January 2005 EA. The revised supplemental EA identifies the comments received during the 2005 comment period and provides responses in a new chapter, Chapter 20, “Comments and Responses.” In addition, the text of other chapters of the revised supplemental EA has been amended in response to comments received and to reflect the new Preferred Alternative. For clarity, the alternatives analyzed in this revised supplemental EA are referred to as follows:

- Alternative A, which consists of part of the design that was analyzed in the FEIS under the Preferred Alternative. In this revised supplemental EA, Alternative A is the no action alternative.
- Alternative B, the 50th Street facility without through drive, which was a build alternative analyzed in the January 2005 EA as the 50th Street facility alternative.
- Alternative C, the 50th Street facility with through drive, which was analyzed in the January 2005 EA as the preferred alternative for the 50th Street facility.
- Preferred Alternative D, the 50th Street facility with a through drive and public open space. This alternative is a new alternative not analyzed in the January 2005 EA.

Also in response to public comments received on the January 2005 EA, this revised supplemental EA provides technical appendices containing studies and back-up analyses that support the conclusions presented in the EA.

The revised supplemental EA was prepared for the FTA as lead agency, in accordance with the NEPA and its implementing regulations (23 CFR Parts 771.130(c) and 771.119(g) and (h).) This revised supplemental EA is being circulated in the same manner as the January 2005 document. A full printed copy of the main volume, together with a CD of the appendix volume of the revised supplemental EA, is being circulated to involved and interested agencies and other parties. The document is available for review on MTA’s website, www.mta.info (click “Capital Construction” and “East Side Access”). In addition, the document is available for review at the East Side Access Project office, MTA headquarters, and the offices of FTA (specific addresses for these locations are provided in Chapter 19), and the document was distributed to approximately 180 people on the project’s mailing list. Printed copies of the appendix volume are available upon request. The comment period for this document will be open for 30 days. *