

## **CHAPTER 5: PUBLIC OUTREACH**

### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes public outreach activities undertaken to date by MTA NYCT in the planning of an emergency ventilation plant for the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Subway Line and, to the extent feasible, the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Subway Line in the vicinity of Greenwich Avenue and Seventh Avenue South. The regulatory context for public participation is discussed in Section 5.2. Details of the public outreach program that was initiated during the scoping phase of the project are included herein (Sections 5.3 and 5.4) and an explanation of the ongoing coordination with local, State, and regional agencies involved in the planning of the project is also presented.

### **5.2. REGULATORY CONTEXT**

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has been prepared in accordance with the regulations for implementing the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), Part 617 6NYCRR, in conformance with the New York Environmental Conservation Law (ECL). SEQRA requires that State 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 MTA NYCT to approve and fund the construction of the proposed emergency ventilation plant, the project must comply with the public and agency coordination requirements of SEQRA, and evidence of this compliance must be documented in the DEIS.

### **5.3. PROJECT SCOPING PROCESS**

The environmental process for the proposed emergency ventilation plant for the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Subway Line and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Subway Line was officially initiated on June 13, 2007, when MTA NYCT submitted a Positive Declaration and a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) for publication in the *Environmental Notice Bulletin* (ENB). The NOI was also published on the MTA NYCT's web site.

The NOI invited the public to participate in the Project Scoping Process, including attendance at a Project Scoping Meeting. "Scoping" refers to the process by which the issues to be addressed in the DEIS are identified (Part 617.8, SEQRA). In addition, the NOI indicated the availability of a Draft Scoping Document on the MTA NYCT's web site.

The Draft Scoping Document provided an overview of the proposed emergency ventilation plant project and the Scoping Process, including: the background of the Proposed Action; the Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action; a discussion of alternatives; a general analysis approach for assessing the impacts; and a summary of public and agency participation efforts to be implemented during the course of the project. The Draft Scoping Document was published on June 13, 2007, and a formal Scoping Meeting was held on July 11, 2007 at MTA NYCT's 2 Broadway Office Building, during which a presentation on the proposed alternatives under consideration and the scope of the DEIS analyses was given and comments from the public were heard. State and local agencies were invited by letter to participate in the Scoping Process; each letter included a copy of the complete Draft Scoping Document for review in advance of the Scoping Meeting. The agencies as well as the general public had an opportunity to review the materials presented, including the Draft Scoping Document, and provide written comments through July 26, 2007.

A total of 51 written comment letters were received during that period. Many of the comments expressed concern about the potential disruption to the community as a result of constructing the proposed project. Others identified: the significant importance of the property-line fence surrounding MTA NYCT's property at 61 Greenwich Avenue as an informal memorial in remembrance of September 11, 2001; public concerns for pedestrian safety; and the general lack of open space in the community. Several comments raised concerns that an above-ground structure would be out of character for the historic West Village neighborhood. Overall, concerns were expressed over the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project on historic resources, open space, and traffic and pedestrians, as well as the cumulative effect of the proposed project with other planned projects nearby (i.e., the proposed construction of St. Vincent's Hospital and the Rudin Development). Those comments were addressed and incorporated as appropriate into the Final Scoping Document that was published in early January 2008.

## 5.4. ONGOING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

### 5.4.1. GENERAL

Public involvement has been sought via attendance at public meetings in order to solicit input from the community on the proposed emergency ventilation plant project. These meetings, which began before the Scoping Meeting discussed in Section 5.3, provided a way for citizens to receive information about the project, provide their opinions, and contribute to the ongoing decision-making process (see Table 5-1). Attendance at public meetings has been, and will continue to be, encouraged through advertising and press releases.

**TABLE 5-1: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Organization/Meeting</b>
June 12, 2007	Public Meeting with Community Board #2 – Traffic & Transportation Committee
July 11, 2007	Public Scoping Meeting
September 24, 2007	Public Meeting with Community Board #2
November 13, 2007	Public Meeting with Community Board #2 – Traffic & Transportation Committee

MTA NYCT has also met on several occasions with representatives of St. Vincent's Hospital and Rudin Development to discuss the potential for cumulative effects between their proposed projects and the MTA NYCT emergency ventilation plant.

### 5.4.2. AGENCY COORDINATION

Throughout the environmental review process, MTA NYCT has and will continue, as appropriate, to interface with, and/or account for, the usual and customary requirements of several agencies for feedback, insight, and participation. These agencies include: New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR); New York State Historic Preservation Office (NYSHPO); New York City Landmark Preservation Commission (NYCLPC); New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT); and, NYSDEC.

### 5.4.3. COMMUNITY BOARD COORDINATION

Manhattan is divided into 12 Community Boards (CBs), each of which represents the interests and concerns of the local community and acts as a coordinator for the residents and employees located within

its jurisdictional boundaries. Each CB serves to ensure that its community's needs are taken into account as part of the City's budget process, and provides input regarding actions requiring City approval. Each CB also forms committees to study special issues such as transportation, land use, and/or historic resources.

The alternative sites for the proposed emergency ventilation plant are located within the boundaries of Manhattan CB2, which encompasses the neighborhoods of Greenwich Village, NoHo, SoHo, Hudson Square, and Little Italy.

In addition to the Public Scoping Meeting on July 11, 2007, MTA NYCT participated in three public meetings with Manhattan CB2: one on September 24, 2007 and two with CB2's Traffic and Transportation Committee on June 12, 2007 and November 13, 2007. These meetings enabled CB2 to obtain information on the Proposed Action and provide input into the environmental review process.

#### **5.4.4. PUBLIC HEARING ON THE DEIS AND FEIS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

Upon completion of this DEIS, a Notice of Availability (NOA) will be published in the *Environmental Notice Bulletin* (ENB). The DEIS will be circulated to agencies with jurisdiction by law, parties that have expressed an interest either through the Scoping process or in response to the NOA, and other entities potentially affected by the proposed project. Copies of the DEIS will be made available for public review on the MTA web site and at designated locations (CB2 office, local libraries, and the offices of local elected officials) throughout the study area.

A Public Hearing on the DEIS will be held on February 28, 2008 to provide an opportunity for additional public input. The Public Hearing record will remain open to receive public comments until the close of business on March 11, 2008, 41 days after the NOA. The Public Hearing will provide a formal, additional opportunity for public and agency review of the proposed emergency ventilation plant project and will include a presentation on the DEIS and allow for receipt of public comments. Notifications of the Public Hearing will be published in the ENB and placed in local newspapers, including: *The New York Post*, *The Villager*, *the Village Voice*, and *Downtown Express*.