

125th Street Subway Tunnel Proposed Project

Frequently Asked Questions

Proposed Project Information

What is the 125th Street Subway Tunnel Proposed Project?

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) proposes to construct a new east–west subway tunnel beneath 125th Street in Harlem (the 125th Street Subway Tunnel or the Proposed Project). The subway tunnel would extend from the western end of the planned Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 tunnel at approximately Lenox Avenue / Malcolm X Boulevard to Twelfth Avenue.

The Proposed Project would consist of a new tunnel, access shafts for egress to and from the tunnel, and ventilation equipment. No other infrastructure or components required for train operation or passenger service, such as tracks, stations, power, and other elements, would be included as part of the proposed 125th Street Subway Tunnel project.

While the tunnel itself would not deliver subway service – stations and other infrastructure would be constructed at a later time – expediting tunnel construction could save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and allow the 125th Street subway to be completed years sooner than if the tunnel was built separately

What Proposed Project components are included in the 125th Street Subway Tunnel?

The proposed 125th Street Tunnel Project would include:

- Two separate, parallel tubes beneath 125th Street, one for each future track
- Ventilation shafts with permanent, above-ground ancillary structures for required ventilation and access at both the eastern and western ends of the tunnel. The specific location and dimensions of these shafts and above-ground structures are currently being developed.
- Smaller shafts with permanent, above-ground kiosk-type structures for emergency access at two intermediate points along the tunnel alignment. The specific location and dimensions of these shafts and above-ground structures are also currently being developed.

What are the purpose and goals for the 125th Street Subway Tunnel Proposed Project?

The purpose of the Proposed Project is to facilitate improved east–west transit service across Harlem by creating the potential for future subway service that would ultimately improve crosstown mobility for residents, workers, and visitors and provide connections to existing north–south transit services. The Proposed Project would achieve this purpose by using the tunneling equipment already in use for Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 to construct a tunnel across 125th Street without the need to obtain new tunneling equipment. This tunnel can be made ready for subway service in the future. Constructing the tunnel shortly after the completion of Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 would reduce the costs of tunnel construction and save time compared to building the same tunnel later.

The overarching goals for the 125th Street Subway Tunnel are as follows:

- Take advantage of the Tunnel Boring Machines already in use for Second Avenue Subway Phase 2.
- Minimize environmental and community impacts associated with the Proposed Project as much as possible.
- Conduct construction for the Proposed Project in a manner that avoids or minimizes impacts to Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 as much as possible.

How did the MTA decide to advance this Proposed Project?

In 2023, MTA prepared its *20-Year Needs Assessment* for 2025–2044, which evaluated needs across the transit network, including potential system expansion projects. Through that evaluation process, an extension of subway service along 125th Street received a higher score than most other expansion projects considered. Building on those findings, MTA conducted a feasibility study in 2025 to evaluate the 125th Street Subway in greater detail. The study found that constructing the tunnel and three potential stations at Broadway, St. Nicholas Avenue, and Lenox Avenue for the full subway project is feasible.

The potentially lengthy design and environmental review process for the full subway project would not align with the timing of Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 construction, and MTA identified a cost-saving opportunity to advance construction of a tunnel-only project at this time to take advantage of Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 tunneling equipment that will already be in place and preserve the option for future 125th Street subway service. Synchronizing the two projects could save hundreds of millions of dollars and more than two years by allowing the MTA to repurpose existing tunnel boring machines and other equipment rather than remobilizing from scratch. This coordinated approach would also

reduce mobilization costs by retaining an experienced crew and leveraging resources already in place.

What is the Proposed Project status?

The MTA is now finalizing conceptual engineering, which will be followed by preliminary engineering to refine the design for the Proposed Project.

Construction

When would construction for the Proposed Project begin?

Construction activities would begin before the arrival of the Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 tunnel boring machines at the end of the Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 tunnel near Malcolm X Boulevard and Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard. The exact construction schedule is currently being developed.

How would the Proposed Project be constructed?

Two new tunnel tubes would be constructed using tunnel boring machines repurposed from the Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 project when tunneling for SAS Phase 2 is complete. Tunneling would begin at Malcolm X Boulevard, where Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 would terminate, and proceed west beneath 125th Street toward the Henry Hudson Parkway (New York State Route 9A), then turning north and ending between approximately 131st and 138th Streets.

At both ends of the tunnel, construction staging / shaft sites would be established:

- At the east end of the tunnel, a construction staging / shaft site would be used for worker access, deliveries and storage of materials, and removal of excavated rock and soil. The site would have a shaft for access during construction and permanent ventilation. A slurry treatment plant at this site would process excavated materials (soil and rock) removed during tunneling and recirculate some of the water for reuse in the tunneling operation. At this site, a permanent shaft and access/ventilation facility would be constructed to remain in place when construction is complete. The specific location and dimensions of the permanent shaft and above-ground structure are currently being developed.
- At the west end of the tunnel, a construction staging / shaft site would be used to remove the tunnel boring machines from the ground. At this site, a permanent shaft and access/ventilation facility would be constructed to remain in place when construction is

complete. The specific location and dimensions of the permanent shaft and above-ground structure are currently being developed.

In addition, two vertical shafts would be constructed at intermediate points along the tunnel alignment for permanent access to the tunnel. They would each have a small, kiosk-sized structure at street level to provide egress for the shaft. The specific location and dimensions of the shafts and above-ground structures are currently being developed.

Finally, construction would also require some “ground improvements” to some of the soil through which the tunnel boring machines will be digging the tunnels. These improvements ensure the tunnels can be safely constructed and are typically done through injecting material to stabilize the soil from ground-level. The specific method for conducting these improvements and locations for improvement are being developed.

Environmental Review and Public Involvement

What is the environmental review process and what is scoping?

The MTA will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Proposed Project in accordance with the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). SEQRA is a New York State law that requires the MTA to study the environmental, social, and economic impacts of a project before they approve, fund, or build it.

The MTA is currently conducting agency and public scoping to determine the content and issues to be addressed in the EIS. The primary goals of scoping are to focus the EIS on potentially significant adverse impacts and to eliminate consideration of those impacts that are irrelevant or not significant.

After reviewing public and agency input provided on the Draft Scoping Document, the MTA will prepare a Final Scoping Document that reflects comments received, as appropriate, and will complete a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in accordance with the Final Scoping Document.

What are the next steps and when can the public participate?

The MTA will continue public outreach and the environmental review process over the coming months.

In October 2026, MTA will publish the Draft Scoping Document and hold both in-person and virtual Public Scoping Information Sessions. The public will have an opportunity to

provide comments on the scope of the environmental review during a public comment period from October 7 through November 13, 2026.

There will be three public scoping sessions for the public to participate in. Please visit the project website at <http://mta.info/project/125-street-subway> for more information on how to register for the meetings and provide comments on the Draft Scoping Document.

Virtual Sessions via Zoom – Thursday, October 22, 2026

Time: 12 noon to 2 p.m.

Zoom +1 646 828 7666

Webinar ID: 165 350 9093

Time: 6 to 8 p.m.

Zoom +1 646 828 7666

Webinar ID: 165 740 5876

In-Person Session – Tuesday, October 27, 2026

Adam Clayton Powell Jr.

State Office Building*

163 W. 125th Street

Community Room, Second Floor

New York, NY

Time: 6 to 8 p.m.

Following the scoping process, MTA anticipates publishing the Draft EIS in early 2027. The public will have an opportunity to provide comments on the Draft EIS during a public comment period beginning in early 2027.

Where can I find more information on past and future meetings?

More information can be found on the project website: <http://mta.info/project/125-street-subway>.