



## MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) ▼

Press Release

April 12, 2007

[MTA Headquarters](#)

IMMEDIATE

### Second Avenue Subway History

Proposals to build a north-south subway line along Second Avenue date back to 1929, preceding the demolition of the elevated trains. Several detailed plans were proposed in the following decades.

#### Early History

**1920** Daniel L. Turner of the Public Service Commission published the "Proposed Comprehensive Rapid Transit System", which included six new north-south lines and eight new crosstown lines in Manhattan. Scaled-down proposals from this report subsequently appeared in plans for a new City-owned Independent (IND) subway system, where the Second Avenue Subway was first mentioned. The IND plan called for a two phase system: Phase I would be the Sixth and Eighth Ave lines, while Phase II would include the Second Ave Trunk line.

**1929** The NYC Board of Transportation proposed a 2nd Avenue line from Houston Street to the Harlem River for a cost of \$86M. Contracts were expected to be let between 1930 and 1935, with the lines to go into service 1938-1941. In October, the Wall Street stock market crashed.

**1931** While NYC suffered the effects of the Great Depression, the cost estimates for the IND Phase I were determined to be too low (by as much as 100%). Plans for the 2nd Ave. line were postponed. The new proposed opening date was 1948.

**1939** The cost of the Second Ave Subway was now estimated to be \$249M. New subway construction was suspended for the duration of World War II.

**1942** Service ended on the Second Avenue El, and the line was demolished

**1944** The Second Ave Subway was back in the planning stage, with some revisions. From Canal Street to 57th Street the line was to be four tracks, with six tracks north of 57th Street. South of Canal Street there would be two tracks. Connections were planned for the lines from the Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges. The planned opening date was 1951.

**1949** The Second Avenue Subway was now estimated to cost \$504M. Queens residents promised not to approve the bond issue until promises were made for subway service improvements in Queens borough. The new R11 "million dollar train" was unveiled as the prototype train for the 2nd Avenue Subway.

**1950** The 2nd Avenue plan was revised again to include a two-track turnoff at 7th Street, to 34th Avenue in Queens. A new subway under Northern Boulevard would connect to the LIRR line to the Rockaways. This plan cost \$118M, of which \$63M would come from deferring construction of the other part of the Second Avenue trunk line. The Korean War starts, driving up material costs.

**1951** A bond issue for \$500M was approved in November. 1957 or 1958 was planned for the start of operation.

**1955** Service ended on the Third Ave El in Manhattan. The line was demolished the following year. There was now only one rapid transit line (the Lexington Ave subway) on the East Side of Manhattan.

**1957** Transit Authority Chairman Charles L. Patterson used most of the \$500M bond issue for improvements to the current system, leaving only \$112M for the Second Ave Subway. The New York Times reported on Jan 17, 1957 (page 1): "It is highly improbable that the Second Ave Subway will ever materialize."

#### The "First" SAS Construction

**1964** The Urban Mass Transit Act was passed making Federal funding available for transit projects.

**1965** The Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Authority (which became the MTA) was founded.

**1967** A \$2.5B bond issue for Transportation was passed. \$1B was for urban transit in the state and \$600M was for construction in New York City.

**1968** The Second Ave subway cost was estimated at \$220 million for a two track line from 34th Street to the Bronx (Phase One) that would connect with the planned 63rd Street Tunnel and Central Park line. Phase Two would bring the line down to Water Street near the Battery. On Sept. 20, the NYC Board of Estimate approved a two track line from the Bronx to Water Street, including the 63rd St. connection. To finance the first construction work--from 34th Street to 126th Street--the city applied for \$254 million in Federal funds, and an initial grant of \$25 million was approved by the Urban

Mass Transportation Administration. This marked the first time Federal money was ever made available for major new subway construction in New York City's history.

**1972** Groundbreaking was held at East 103rd St and Second Ave., 68 years to the day after the opening of the IRT.

**1975** Construction of the Second Ave subway was halted due to City's financial condition. Only three non-contiguous sections of tunnel had been completed: between Chatham Sq and Canal Street, 99th and 105th, and 110th and 120th Streets.

#### **The Current SAS Project**

**1995**, MTA New York City Transit began the Manhattan East Side Alternatives (MESA) Study. This project was carried out as a federal Major Investment Study/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (MIS/DEIS). The MESA Study goal was to recommend a course of action(s) to reduce overcrowding and delays on the Lexington Avenue Line, and to improve mass transit accessibility for residents on the far East Side of Manhattan

In **August 1999**, the MESA Study issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) proposing a subway under Second Avenue from 96th Street to the 63rd St / Lexington Ave subway station. At Public Hearings for the DEIS, strong support was expressed for evaluation of a "full length" Second Avenue subway

On **March 22, 2001**, the SAS Study published a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register to undertake a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) to evaluate a full-length Second Avenue Subway.

On **April 19, 2001**, a public meeting was held to describe and discuss the new subway alignment, the project schedule, and next steps.

In **October 2001**, NYCT published a Summary Report describing the full-length alternative and outlining the process by which the full-length alternative was selected.

In **April 2003**, the Second Avenue Subway Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) was published. Public hearings on the SDEIS were held on May 12 and 13, 2003.

In **April 2004**, the Second Avenue Subway Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was published.

In **July 2004**, the FTA issued a Record of Decision (ROD), which stated that the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act have been satisfied for the Second Avenue Subway Project.

In **July 2004**, Preliminary Engineering for Phase One was completed. In December 2004, Preliminary Engineering for Phases Two, Three and Four was completed.

In **April 2006**, Extended and Final Preliminary Engineering was completed. In April 2006, The Federal Transit Administration authorized the MTA to begin Final Design of Phase One of the project and the Final Design contract was awarded.