

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Project: 68th Street/Hunter College Station Improvements Project

Applicant: Metropolitan Transportation Authority -New York City Transit

Project Location: Manhattan, New York

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Metropolitan Transportation Authority New York City Transit (MTA NYCT) proposes to rehabilitate the 68th Street/ Hunter College Station in Manhattan, New York. Based on the 68th Street/Hunter College Station Environmental Assessment dated March 2016 (the EA) prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.) and Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) implementing regulations (23 C.F.R. Part 771), the FTA and MTA NYCT conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA), in accordance with 23 CFR 771.119, the 68th Street/Hunter College Station Improvements Project (hereinafter referred to as the Proposed Project or Proposed Action).

The 68th Street/Hunter College Station is located along the eastern edge of the Upper East Side Historic District, on Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street in Manhattan. The station opened in 1918 and serves the IRT Lexington Avenue Line. The station serves the 6 Train at all times and the 4 Train during the late night hours. The station has the 30th highest ridership out of the 420 stations in MTA NYCT's 2013 Subway Ridership ranking. The station has an average weekday usage of 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. 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), Marymount Manhattan College, the proximity of medical facilities located east of the station, cultural attractions (Museum Mile, Central Park) located west of the station, and the dense residential character of the area. The proximity of these land uses to the station results in high peak period usage by passengers in the morning and evening. During a typical weekday morning peak hour, over 7,200 passengers exit the station and over 1,800 enter the station.

Background

According to 49 C.F.R. 37.47, certain commuter authorities (such as the MTA NYCT) are required to make Key Stations on their system readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use wheelchairs. Prior to the 1990 enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), in 1984 the New York State Transportation Law and the Public Buildings Law were amended to require that 54 key stations throughout the five boroughs of New York City be retrofitted by 2010 to make them accessible to persons with disabilities. On July 26, 1990, the ADA was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush; this law required transit properties to designate certain "key" stations to be retrofitted to become accessible to persons with disabilities, with a deadline that was extended to July 26, 2020. The final US DOT rule implementing the ADA (49 C.F.R. 37.53) expressly authorizes the New York City Transit key station plan. In June 1993, the FTA approved the 54 stations as key stations under the ADA. In July 1994, the NYS Governor expanded the key station plan, to require a total of 100 stations (46 more stations) to be made accessible by 2020. The 68th Street/Hunter College Station is on the list of 46 additional Key Stations to be rehabilitated in order to render this transportation facility accessible to the physically handicapped, including persons in 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 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 EA Chapter 5).

Project Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Project is to:

- 1) Provide ADA accessibility to public areas of the 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station, including ADA accessibility between the station platform, the mezzanine, and the street; and
- 2) Improve pedestrian circulation, reduce pedestrian congestion within the station and at street level, and foster efficient passenger access and occupancy to trains.

MTA NYCT established key goals and objectives for this project to measure the ability of alternatives to meet the purpose and need and were based on MTA NYCT best practice principles for the planning and design of station improvements. The goals and objectives of the 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station Improvements Project are the following:

1. Improve pedestrian circulation at all locations with deficiencies, specifically:
 - a. Reduce congestion at platform stairs
 - b. Reduce congestion at street stairs
2. Improve distribution of passenger volumes on the train and along the length of the platform
3. Improve passenger convenience and circulation efficiency: locate capacity that best serves passengers
4. Improve or maintain fare control and mezzanine performance
5. Minimize cost
6. Minimize construction risk
7. Minimize real estate conflicts
8. Minimize impacts during construction, specifically:
 - a. Minimize disruption to passengers using the station
 - b. Minimize disruption to IRT subway operations
 - c. Minimize disruption to the neighborhood surrounding the station
9. Minimize environmental impacts, specifically:
 - a. Minimize impacts to historic resources and Section 4(f) resources
 - b. Maintain or improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation at the street and sidewalk network surrounding the station

Project Description

Under the Proposed Project, the station would be reconfigured, resulting in changes at the street level, mezzanine level and platform level at the Lexington Avenue intersection of East 68th Street. The Proposed Project would also construct new street stairs, new mezzanines and new platform stairs near the north end of the station: a street stair would be installed on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street west of Lexington Avenue and a street stair would be located within a commercial space at 931 Lexington Avenue on the east side of the avenue mid-block between East 68th Street and East 69th Street.

At the time the EA for the Proposed Project was prepared, the owner of the building in which the street stair at

931 Lexington Avenue would be located (identified in the EA as Option E10) could not yet state with certainty that the commercial space at 931 Lexington Avenue would be available. Pending confirmation of availability of the space at 931 Lexington Avenue, MTA NYCT therefore retained the option for a street stair at the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue (identified in the EA as Option E1) as an optional entrance location to the northbound platform. The Proposed Project with Option E1 is identical to the Proposed Project but replaces the 931 Lexington Avenue entrance with a street entrance on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue (Option E1). Potential environmental impacts for both the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1 were analyzed in equal detail. A description of the Proposed Project is provided below, followed by a description of the Proposed Project with Option E1.

The Proposed Project includes **street level** changes as follows:

- A. East 68th Street - New ADA-Compliant Elevator and Improvement of Existing Street Stairs:
 - a. Street Stair O2/O4: At street level on East 68th Street, the Proposed Project would increase the width of the stair O2/O4 at the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street.
 - b. Street Level ADA-Compliant Elevator: An ADA-compliant elevator would be provided in the plaza under the northwest corner of the Hunter College East Building, adjacent to stair O2/O4 described above. The plaza is open on the north and west sides adjacent to East 68th Street, and Lexington Avenue, respectively. The plaza contains a street stair for the 68th Street/Hunter College station (O2/O4), a section of seating, and a kiosk that is licensed to a flower vendor. The elevator entrance at sidewalk level would necessitate the removal of the retail space currently located in this area. The existing seating would remain.
 - c. Street Stair S3: Stair S3 at the northwest corner of the intersection would be rehabilitated, but would retain the existing dimensions and location.
 - d. Street Stair S4: Stair S4 at the northeast corner of the intersection would be shifted approximately 30 feet east of its current position. The new stair would be widened and the stair would be turned 180 degrees to face east, instead of west. A street tree located in the area of the new stair would be removed.

- B. East 69th Street:
 - a. Street Stair at East 69th Street: New street stair access to the southbound station platform would be provided on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street west of Lexington Avenue. This stair would face east toward Lexington Avenue. One tree would be removed from the south sidewalk of East 69th Street west of Lexington Avenue.
 - b. The southern sidewalk in the vicinity of the new stair would be extended into the curb lane to provide required space for pedestrian clearance between the street stair structure and the curb (5 feet minimum). This “bulb-out” would eliminate four parking spaces on the south side of East 69th Street west of Lexington Avenue. The East 69th Street crosswalk on the west side of Lexington Avenue would be widened to maintain pedestrian flow and safety. Access to the Thomas Hunter Hall loading dock on the south side of East 69th Street west of Lexington Avenue would be maintained.

- C. Lexington Avenue: Street Stair in the retail space at 931 Lexington Avenue. Under the Proposed Project, the 931 Lexington Avenue stair would provide access to the northbound station platform and exit to the Lexington Avenue sidewalk mid-block between East 68th Street and East 69th Street. No trees or parking spaces would be affected and the roadway and sidewalk geometry at this location would remain unchanged. A portion of the retail space at 931 Lexington Avenue would be reconfigured to accommodate the proposed street stair.

The Proposed Project includes **mezzanine level** changes as follows:

- D. Street-to-Mezzanine Elevator: A street elevator (same as discussed above) would be installed in the southeast corner of the mezzanine to provide ADA-compliant access between the mezzanine and the sidewalk. The existing mezzanine and proposed mezzanine, including the new elevator. ,.
- E. Mezzanine-to-Platform Elevators: Two ADA-compliant elevators leading to the platforms would be constructed at the mezzanine level. One elevator, located at the east side of the mezzanine, would serve the northbound platform, and one elevator located at the west side of the mezzanine would serve the southbound platform. Both elevators would be constructed adjacent to the existing platform stairs at the northbound and southbound platforms.
- F. Mezzanine Improvements: The Proposed Project would enlarge the eastern portion of the mezzanine area by approximately 10 feet to accommodate the platform elevator serving the northbound platform. The existing mezzanine has two floor levels connected via stairs, with floor elevations differing by approximately 2 feet. The Proposed Project would rebuild the mezzanine so that the difference in floor levels would be eliminated and the entire station mezzanine would be at one level.

The Proposed Project includes **platform level** changes as follows:

- G. East 68th Street—ADA-Compliant Mezzanine-to-Platform Elevators: Two new ADA-compliant elevators would be constructed between the platforms and the mezzanine as described above. The elevators would be located adjacent to the existing platform stairs on both platforms, providing ADA access between the platform level and the mezzanine level.
- H. Northern End of Station—Platform Stairs: New stairs would be constructed near the north end of the northbound and southbound platforms. Each platform stair would connect through its own new small mezzanine to the proposed street stair at East 69th Street (on the west side of Lexington Avenue) and to the street stair at 931 Lexington Avenue (on the east side of the avenue), providing ingress/egress at the north end of the station. Each of these new small mezzanines would include unattended turnstiles, MetroCard Vending Machines, and communication systems.
- I. General Platform Improvements: Additional improvements to the existing platforms designed to accommodate the disabled would include a new platform edge on both northbound and southbound platforms, a communications system, and signage improvements.

The Proposed Project with Option E1: Should the space at 931 Lexington Avenue not be available for the northbound platform's north entrance, MTA NYCT would retain the option for a street stair at the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue (Option E1) as an alternate entrance location. Under the Proposed Project with Option E1 changes at the street level, the mezzanine level and the platform level would be largely the same as the Proposed Project with the exception of access to the northbound station platform at the north end of the station. The differences between the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1 are described below and summarized in a table at the end of Section 3 of this FONSI.

The Proposed Project with Option E1 includes **street level** changes as follows:

- A. New street stair access to the northbound station platform would be provided on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue. This stair would face east toward Third Avenue. Two trees would be removed from the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue. The southern sidewalk in the vicinity of the new stair would be extended into the curb lane to provide required space for pedestrian clearance between the street stair structure and the Imperial House Apartments building (5 feet minimum). This "bulb-out" would eliminate three parking spaces on the south side of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue. The East 69th Street crosswalk on the east side of Lexington Avenue would be widened to maintain pedestrian flow and safety. Access to the Imperial House Apartments driveway on the south side of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue would be maintained.

The Proposed Project with Option E1 includes **platform level** changes as follows:

- B. A new platform stair and small mezzanine would be installed near the north end of the station under East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue.

2.0 PUBLIC OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

MTA NYCT made the EA publicly available in their website (<http://web.mta.info/mta/news/hearings/>) on April 12, 2016. After the EA was made publicly available, a public meeting was held on April 26, 2016 at MTA headquarters, to solicit comments during the 30-day public comment period. Six people in attendance at the public meeting provided oral comments, and two written comments were submitted at the meeting. Comments were also solicited on the MTA website and seven comments were submitted via the MTA website to MTA NYCT regarding the project. Comments received at the public meeting and on the website involved the following:

1. Section 4(f) issues in the EA:
2. The existing physical condition of the 68th Street/Hunter College Station:
3. The existing congestion in the Station:
4. Traffic impacts due to the increase in pedestrians on East 69th Street near the new entrances/exits:
5. Support for ADA renovations at this station and at other stations in the subway system.

MTA NYCT and the FTA did not receive any other written comments during the 30-day public comment period, which closed on May 12, 2016.

The EA included an analysis of the Proposed Project with respect to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106) and an evaluation pursuant to Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, codified at 49 U.S.C. § 303 (Section 4(f)). Pursuant to Section 106, MTA NYCT will adhere to the stipulations of the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) attached to the SHPO's no adverse effect finding regarding the proposed project (no adverse effect "provided a construction protection plan is put in place for all historic buildings within 90 feet of the proposed construction"). As such, the use of Thomas Hunter Hall and the Imperial House Apartments meets the requirements of "de minimis" under Section 4(f).

3.0 SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF NEPA IMPACT AREAS, MITIGATION MEASURES, AND PERMITS

FTA has reviewed the EA prepared for the 68th Street/Hunter College Station Improvements Project, the analysis and the results of which are incorporated here by reference, and has found that there are no significant impacts to the environment that would result from the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1. The EA, dated March 2016, has adequately addressed the environmental issues and impacts of the Proposed Project, which consists of construction-related impacts to pedestrians, including noise and vibration and obstructed sidewalks, and construction-related impacts to vehicular traffic due to restrictions in travel lanes.

As stated earlier, potential environmental impacts for both the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1 were analyzed in equal detail. The discussion of the impacts below is focused on the Proposed Project. Any impacts peculiar to the Proposed Project with Option E1 (street stair and mezzanine at the southeast corner of East 69th Street and Lexington Avenue) will also be described.

Social Conditions

Temporary Impacts during Construction

Construction of the Proposed Project would involve disruption of the streetbed, sidewalks, and some adjacent areas where construction would occur (including staging areas for the temporary storage of materials and equipment). During construction, MTA NYCT would maintain access to all buildings, businesses, loading docks, and parking facilities at all times, and would provide adequate space for local deliveries during normal hours of

operation, so as to minimize inconvenience to pedestrians and delivery services accessing businesses. Sidewalk access would be maintained during construction with a minimum of five-foot-wide sidewalks.

Temporary disruptions to the neighborhood can be expected. During construction, equipment and machinery would create noise and dust. Barriers and construction equipment would cause temporary visual impacts. Sidewalks would be closed for up to one year, and pedestrians would be diverted to temporary walking lanes ordinarily reserved for parking, and normal travel patterns would be disrupted. Access to all buildings, including the retail spaces of the Imperial House Apartments, and the service entrance to Thomas Hunter Hall on East 69th Street would be maintained. Excavation of East 68th Street, including portions of the intersection with Lexington Avenue would be required for the relocation of utility infrastructure. During utility relocation, one half of the street would be closed during the initial stages of excavation. After excavation is sufficient to allow work to progress underground, the street would be decked over and traffic lanes restored. The bus stop located on the south side of East 68th Street east of Lexington Avenue would be temporarily shifted east and out of the construction zone. It may be necessary to close East 68th Street to automobile traffic for a period during utility relocation. If street closure is necessary, traffic would be diverted to other eastbound streets (i.e., East 66th Street and/or East 70th Street) for several periods during the night or on the weekend.

Depending on time of day and season, two street vendors are located east of Lexington Avenue, one is located west of the avenue on the north sidewalk of East 68th Street, and three vendors are located on the south sidewalk west of Lexington Avenue. Depending on the phase of construction, it is expected that these locations would be unavailable for street vendors for temporary periods. Temporary locations for the street vendors would be finalized prior to construction in coordination with the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT), New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR), and the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (NYCDA).

A traffic management plan would be implemented prior to construction in the form of a NYCDOT-approved Maintenance and Protection of Traffic (MPT) plan. This plan would include procedures for advance notification to residents and businesses of partial street/sidewalk closures and other potential construction-related activities. Contract documents would stipulate measures to avoid or minimize noise, vibration and dust associated with construction activities.

Although temporary inconveniences would result from sidewalk changes, subway entrance stair closures, traffic changes, noise and dust, incorporation of required mitigation measures would make the temporary construction impacts of the Proposed Project on social conditions less than significant.

The project would generate economic benefits by providing construction employment and jobs in the production of necessary services and materials. In addition to employment directly attributable to construction of the Proposed Project, construction expenditures would generate indirect employment, including jobs in business establishments providing goods and services to the contractors, as well as in businesses that would provide goods and services to construction workers. The project would not have significant adverse environmental impacts, and there would be no disproportionate impacts to environmental justice communities as a result of the project.

Permanent Impacts during Operation

Operation of the Proposed Project is not expected to result in significant adverse impacts to social conditions. The Proposed Project is located within an existing urban area, characterized by a commercial, institutional and residential streetscape. The existing station is located predominantly below ground, with the only visible above ground components being the four existing stairway entrances, the sidewalk pedestals indicating a subway entrance, and sidewalk grating, all typical of City subway entrances. The above-ground elements of the Proposed Project, such as the elevator head house, new entrance stairs and the modifications to existing stairs would be consistent with the existing land uses in the area. The Proposed Project would be consistent with existing zoning and no significant adverse impacts related to land use and zoning are anticipated. The new subway entrances would be similar to those currently found throughout the City. Therefore no significant adverse impacts to aesthetics are anticipated.

Because the Proposed Project would promote the use of mass transit, it is consistent with PlaNYC and a number of policies comprising the New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act. The Proposed Project is consistent with the Manhattan Community Board 8 Fiscal Year 2016 District Need Statement, and would

advance the goals of the 2014-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Finally, the Proposed Project would advance MTA NYCT's goal of completing ADA development of this Key Station.

No New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR) parks are located in the study area for the Proposed Project. However, street trees, the removal of which is regulated by NYCDPR, are located in tree pits near the curb on the sidewalks in the vicinity of the Proposed Project, including the area along East 68th Street and East 69th Street both east and west of Lexington Avenue. The Proposed Project would require the removal of two street trees. The Proposed Project with Option E1 would require the removal of four street trees. Replacement trees would be planted in locations to be determined in coordination with the NYCDPR.

The Proposed Project would require property acquisition at 931 Lexington Avenue for the street stair, and at Hunter College to install the ADA-compliant street elevator and to widen the stair at the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street. The Proposed Project with Option E1 would not require acquisition of 931 Lexington Avenue. The placement of the elevator would require the displacement of the kiosk that is licensed to a flower vendor. The Proposed Project would also require use of a small area between the northeast corner of the station and the light well between Thomas Hunter Hall and the Lexington Avenue sidewalk for a small ventilation fan. Except for the florist kiosk at the southeast corner of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue, no businesses would be displaced (the current occupant of 931 Lexington Avenue is relocating), and no residences would be displaced. According to transportation analyses conducted for the EA, the new subway access at the north end of the station is not expected to significantly alter pedestrian travel patterns in the neighborhood. No significant impact in terms of displacements or neighborhood character is anticipated from the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1.

The improvements to the subway station would bring substantial benefits to the neighborhood it serves by relieving overcrowding at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station. Persons with mobility constraints would have access to Hunter College and cultural attractions in the area, such as museums and events at the Park Avenue Armory. Neighborhood residents with mobility constraints would gain access to many destinations via the new connection to MTA NYCT's Key Stations, including transportation options to JFK Airport, Amtrak and New Jersey Transit via New York Penn Station, and others.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The Proposed Project involves ground disturbance within areas thoroughly disturbed by past construction activities. Therefore, the project area is not considered sensitive for archeological resources and no further archeological review is required. The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) concurred with this conclusion in letters dated June 28, 2011, August 29, 2012, and April 2, 2015, as part of the Section 106 (National Historic Preservation Act) consultation process. While no impacts to archaeological resources are anticipated, should any potential artifacts be found MTA NYCT and FTA will initiate the Section 106 process for unanticipated discoveries with OPRHP.

Historic resources in the vicinity of the Proposed Project include the Upper East Side Historic District, Thomas Hunter Hall (a contributing element to the historic district) and the Imperial House Apartments, which is located outside the Upper East Side Historic District. The Proposed Project would require the installation of a louver (approximately 2 feet by 2 feet and flush-mounted with the wall) within the light well of Thomas Hunter Hall. The Proposed Project also involves a new stairway adjacent to Thomas Hunter Hall, within the boundaries of the Upper East Side Historic District. There would be no impact to the integrity or appearance of Thomas Hunter Hall as a result of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project includes a new stairway in a retail space fronting Lexington Avenue in the Imperial House Apartments, but the integrity and appearance of the building would not change. To avoid the potential for damage to historic buildings as a result of construction-related vibration, a construction protection plan would be implemented in accordance with New York City Department of Buildings and New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission guidelines. OPRHP concurred that the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1 would have "no adverse effect" on historic resources with implementation of a construction protection plan (see Appendix B of the EA for OPRHP correspondence). Therefore, no significant adverse impacts on historic resources would occur as a result of the Proposed Project or as a result of the Proposed Project with Option E1. For both Thomas Hunter Hall and Imperial House Apartments,

impacts would occur, but would not be adverse, and mitigation of these impacts to both properties would be incorporated into the Proposed Project.

Transportation

Temporary Impacts during Construction

Maintenance and Protection of Traffic (MPT) plans would be submitted to and approved by New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT). The project would require the relocation of utility lines under Lexington Avenue at East 68th Street. During utility relocation, Lexington Avenue would be reduced to two travel lanes, and East 68th Street would be closed for brief periods with approval from NYCDOT. At other times, three travel lanes would be maintained on Lexington Avenue (as is the current condition), and one travel lane would remain open on both East 68th Street and East 69th Street (as is the current condition). No significant adverse impacts are anticipated during construction.

Within the station, passengers would be diverted from areas of construction activity and some delays can be expected. After the new entrances are open, the entrances/exits at the northeast and southeast corners of East 68th and Lexington Avenue would be closed to expand the mezzanine in this area, replace the street stairs, install the ADA street elevator, and relocate the sewer at the intersection. During this phase of construction, northbound passengers would enter and exit the station via the new stairs and the stairs on the west side of Lexington Avenue at East 68th Street. For the duration of project construction at least two entrance/exits for northbound passengers and two entrance/exits for southbound passengers would remain open at all times.

Permanent Impacts during Operation

Traffic. Surface transportation is not expected to change as a result of the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1. The Proposed Project would not affect lane geometry or introduce additional vehicle trips within the study area. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts to traffic would occur as a result of the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1.

Subway Transit. Circulation within the station would substantially improve as a result of the Proposed Project. The main control area on the mezzanine level at the East 68th Street end of the station would improve with the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1, as some customers would use the new street access towards the northern end of the station at East 69th Street and midblock north of East 68th Street.

Similarly, platform stair clearance times would decrease (improve) as some customers would be diverted and use the new platform stairs towards the northern end of the station.

The operation of existing street stairs at East 68th Street would also improve due to both the proposed rehabilitation of these stairs as well as the reduction in overall volumes as some customers would be diverted to the proposed 69th Street access.

No significant adverse impacts to subway transit would occur as a result of the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1.

Bus Transit. The Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1 would not require the relocation of bus routes or bus stop locations. Therefore, the Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1 would have no significant adverse impacts to bus operations.

Parking. The Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1 includes the installation of a sidewalk bulb-out which would eliminate a limited number of curbside parking spaces. However, there would be sufficient on-street parking capacity to accommodate the future parking demand, even with the projected loss of spaces. Therefore, the Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1 would have no significant adverse impacts on parking conditions.

Pedestrian Circulation. Overall, pedestrian elements (sidewalk, corner, and crosswalk) at East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue would operate at the same or better Level of Service (LOS) due to the diversion of some customers to the new street stairs north of the existing street stairs at East 68th Street: a new street stair connecting to southbound service at East 69th Street (southbound service) and a new street stair connecting to northbound service located midblock along the east side of Lexington Avenue north of East 68th Street or in the case of the

Proposed Project with Option E1 at East 69th Street. Diverting pedestrians to East 69th Street and Lexington Avenue would increase pedestrian volumes at that intersection and cause some pedestrian elements to operate at a slightly lower LOS; however, all of these elements would still operate at LOS D or better, and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1.

Air Quality

Temporary Impacts during Construction

Exhaust from non-road construction equipment would result in emission of air pollutants. During the peak construction year in 2017, which would include site preparation (breaking of the pavement, loading it on a truck and hauling it away), excavation and construction, on-site equipment may include a hydraulic crane, a backhoe or loader, a compressor, a concrete pump and a small welding machine. During the remaining phases of construction, on-site equipment may include a hydraulic crane, a concrete pump, and welding machines. Because of the temporary nature of construction activities using non-road equipment, and the limited number of such pieces of equipment, the operation of the construction equipment would be unlikely to result in concentrations that would exceed ambient air quality standards.

Construction activities such as excavation, grading, soil handling, and vehicles traveling on dirty road surfaces have the potential to create fugitive dust emissions. Fugitive dust can also be generated by and from wind erosion of stockpiled materials. Contractors would be required to implement fugitive dust control measures such as watering of exposed areas, installation of dust covers on trucks, and use of tracking mats to reduce dust emissions from truck tires. Dust generated by street excavation typically consists mostly of relatively large particles that would settle within a short distance from the construction activities. Based on the above, no significant adverse air quality impacts are anticipated during the construction period.

Contractors at the project site would comply with the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act of 2006 (see EA Chapter 10). In addition, MTA NYCT would incorporate control measures into construction contract documents to minimize potential construction-related air quality effects (see Chapter 13: Construction). The measures would include:

- Use ultra-low sulfur diesel (ULSD) fuel in off-road construction equipment with engine horsepower (HP) rating of 60 HP and above.
- Limit unnecessary idling times on diesel powered engines to three minutes.
- Locate diesel powered exhausts away from fresh air intakes.
- Control dust related to construction site activities through a Soil Erosion Sediment Control Plan that includes, among other things:
 - Spraying of a suppressing agent on dust pile (non-hazardous, biodegradable);
 - Containment of fugitive dust; and,
 - Adjustment for meteorological conditions as appropriate.

Furthermore, during demolition activities (sidewalk removal and limited excavation), dust control, erosion control, and vapor control (if necessary) measures would be implemented as practicable. Truck loading practices would be implemented to limit loss of materials, and prior to leaving the area, each truck would be inspected for residual materials and cleanliness. A cover would be placed over each load of debris prior to the truck leaving the site.

Permanent Impacts during Operation

The Proposed Project would not create new sources of air pollutants and would not introduce new uses near existing or planned future sources. The Proposed Project would not affect current dispersion patterns of existing stationary (or mobile) sources. Therefore no air quality impacts related to stationary sources are expected and no further analysis is warranted.

The Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1 would not generate new or additional traffic in the study area or cause the redistribution of traffic in the area, nor would it create other mobile sources of pollutants or add new uses near existing mobile pollution sources. Therefore no air quality impacts related to mobile sources are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1.

Noise and Vibration

Temporary Impacts during Construction

During construction of the Proposed Project, noise and vibration levels would be expected to increase during working hours because of the use of construction equipment on-site and construction-related traffic off-site. Construction equipment would generate varying levels of noise depending on the specific activity and the location of the activity, as well as the equipment being used. Construction noise would be intermittent and temporary.

Construction noise levels are expected to be greatest during the early phases of construction, when activities would include pavement breaking using jackhammers, and the concurrent use of rubber tire loaders and dump trucks to remove the resultant debris. Construction activity would be audible in portions of the adjacent Hunter College and at some businesses and residences in the immediate vicinity of construction.

Construction would be conducted in accordance with the New York City Construction Noise Code, which mandates that all construction be conducted in accordance with noise mitigation plans that address the specific location, type of work, and timing of a project. The Construction Noise Code also sets standards for noise levels created by handling containers and construction material on public streets, and identifies ways to lessen the noise from each type of construction equipment. In order to maintain noise levels below the thresholds mandated by the Noise Code, jackhammers would likely be outfitted with noise-reducing mufflers and/or have portable street barriers to reduce the sound impact on the area.

To comply with the Noise Code, contractors must develop a noise mitigation plan prior to the start of work. If noise complaints are received, a New York City Department of Buildings (NYCDOB) inspector would ensure the contractor has posted the plan and that it is being followed. This will determine whether or not the plan needs modification. When construction activity is planned near locations such as schools, hospitals and houses of worship, as is the case for the Proposed Project, the noise mitigation plan would be sensitive to these receptors.

Noise that exceeds the ambient sound levels by more than 10 dB, as measured 15 feet from the source or from inside any property or on a public street, is prohibited, and sounds that occur abruptly and for a short duration, called impulsive sounds (e.g., blasting or pile driving), are restricted.

Construction hours under the Construction Noise Code are from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM on weekdays. However, in order to reduce the overall construction duration, and with the expressed authorization from the NYCDOB and the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT), work could be conducted in two shifts per day, between 7:00 AM and 10:00 PM, and on weekends. A noise mitigation plan must be in place before any authorization is granted.

Construction activity within the station would be carried out at various times during a twenty-four hour period/seven days per week. The hours of work would be dictated by the programmed periods of diversion of subway services, which would only occur weekday nights and on weekends.

Noise from construction activities would be minimized by using properly maintained equipment with sound baffling where necessary, and by adhering to the permitted hours of construction specified in the New York City Construction Noise Code. Design considerations and project layout approaches may also be included, such as construction of temporary noise barriers, placing construction equipment farther from noise-sensitive receptors, constructing walled enclosures/sheds around especially noisy activities such as pavement breaking, and sequencing operations to combine especially noisy operations to occur in the same time period. Potential construction noise impacts would be mitigated by implementation and adherence to the New York City Construction Noise Code.

To avoid the potential for damage to historic buildings as a result of construction-related vibration, a construction protection plan would be implemented in accordance with NYCDOB and New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission guidelines. OPRHP has concurred that the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1 would have “no adverse effect” on historic resources with implementation of a construction protection plan.

Permanent Impacts during Operation

The Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1 include a louvered ventilation fan to provide ventilation for the station’s Elevator Machine Room. The louvered fan would ventilate to the light well located

between the sidewalk and Thomas Hunter Hall. The adjacent basement room in Thomas Hunter Hall is a battery backup system for the Main Telephone Switch Room for Hunter College. Although noise specifications for the ventilation fan would be determined as the design details are completed, no impacts from the fan are anticipated.

The Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1 do not include the introduction of new noise sources, such as tunnel ventilation facilities, at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station and would not increase the frequency of train traffic through the station. Future operational noise levels are expected to remain as they are today. The new stairs would not provide a line-of-sight path for train noise to surface receptors, and any noise emanating from the new stairs is not expected to increase current ambient levels. No significant adverse impacts to ambient noise levels from the operation of the Proposed Project are anticipated.

The Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1 do not include the introduction of new vibration sources at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station, such as tunnel ventilation facilities, and would not increase the frequency of train traffic through the station. Future operational vibration levels are expected to remain as they are today.

Contaminated Materials

Operation of the Proposed Project would not introduce new sources of contaminated materials to the 68th Street/Hunter College Station and would not open new pathways for any existing contamination to reach the public or the environment. If hydraulic fluid is used to operate the new elevators, such fluid would be contained in the mechanical apparatus. Secondary containment would be used to capture fluid in the event of a rupture or other equipment failure. During excavation and construction, any contaminated soils encountered would be disposed of according to applicable regulations.

For the Proposed Project, building materials at 931 Lexington Avenue would be characterized to determine if asbestos or lead-based paint are present. If encountered, these materials would be handled and disposed of according to all applicable regulations. The Proposed Project with Option E1 does not require modification at 931 Lexington Avenue and therefore no building materials would be disturbed. Therefore, no adverse impacts from contaminated materials are anticipated for the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1.

Natural Resources

The project area is outside the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year floodplain and landward of the New York State Department of State coastal zone boundary. The project area is entirely urbanized and no sensitive habitats or threatened and endangered species are expected in the areas that would be modified by the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1. The project area does not contain any floodplains or wetlands. Two street trees would require removal under the Proposed Project. Four street trees would require removal under the Proposed Project with Option E1. Street trees requiring removal would be replaced in coordination with NYCDPR. No significant adverse impacts to natural resources would occur during construction or operation of the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1.

Utilities

Temporary Impacts during Construction

There may be brief periods of utility service interruptions when relocated utility transmission lines are reconnected. MTA NYCT would coordinate with utility providers and the community to minimize utility disruptions.

Permanent Impacts during Operation

Although some transmission lines would be relocated to provide the necessary room for elements of the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project with Option E1, after completing construction of the Proposed Project, all utility transmission would be functioning as it was prior to construction of the project.

Environmental Justice/Title VI

The EA includes an Environmental Justice analysis, and FTA finds that there will be no disproportionate adverse effects in EJ communities.

Section 4(f) Resources

Section 4(f) applies to any federally funded transportation project if the project proposes to use property from a significant publicly owned park, recreation area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge area, or any significant historic site. No parkland resources would be affected by the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project with Option E1.

As discussed above under “cultural resources,” the Upper East Side Historic District, Thomas Hunter Hall (a contributing element to the historic district) and the Imperial House Apartments, which is located outside the Upper East Side Historic District, are potentially used by the Proposed Project. In a letter dated October 27, 2015, FTA informed OPRHP that based on the June 28, 2011, the August 29, 2012, and April 2, 2015, no-effect findings by OPRHP (included as Attachment A) it proposed to make a de minimis use finding under Section 4(f) for the Thomas Hunter Hall and the Imperial House Apartments (see EA Appendix B). For each of these resources, neither the Proposed Project, nor the Proposed Project with Option E1, would adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities qualifying the resources for protection under Section 4(f). The public and other agencies (including SHPO) were afforded an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed de minimis impact findings during the NEPA public comment period for this EA.

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

Indirect effects are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density, or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems.

CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA define a cumulative impact as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertaking such other actions”. 40 C.F.R. 1508.7.

The EA includes the analysis of potential indirect impacts and analysis of potential cumulative impacts. Due to the nature of the Proposed Project, the nature of past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects in the area, and the characteristics of the neighborhood in which the project is situated, no significant adverse indirect and cumulative impacts are anticipated.

Impact Summary of the Proposed Project vs the Proposed Project with Option E1

Impact	Proposed Project	Proposed Project with Option E1
Street Trees	Two trees removed and replaced	Four trees removed and replaced
Parking Spaces	Four parking spaces eliminated	Seven parking spaces eliminated

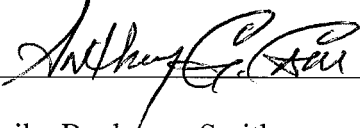
Approvals, Permits, and Coordination Required

Approval/Permit/Coordination	Resource Agency	Description
Parks Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR)	Agreement between NYCDPR and MTA NYCT regarding temporary impacts to street trees and replacement thereof.
Section 4(f) Evaluation	USDOT/FTA	Finding that there is no prudent and feasible alternative to use of Section 4(f) resources and that MTA NYCT has considered all reasonable avoidance alternatives to minimize harm to Section 4(f) resources or a determination of a <i>de minimis</i> use.
Coordination	New York City Department of Transportation	Agreement necessary for coordination and assumption by MTA NYCT of utilities relocation, and for street work.

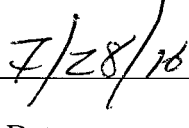
Approval/Permit/ Coordination	Resource Agency	Description
Water Discharge (Construction)	(NYCDOT) New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP)	During construction, this permit would allow Contractor to discharge the water from his activities after appropriate treatment, including dewatering of excavation, wheel washing.
Water Discharge (Operation) modification	NYCDEP	During operation, this permit would allow MTA NYCT to discharge water from the station and tunnel.
Maintenance and Protection of Traffic (MPT) Plans	NYCDOT	Approvals for use of sidewalks and street lanes during construction of the project.
Construction Protection Plan	NYSOPRHP	Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.
Historic Resource Construction Protection Plan	NYCDOB	Protection of historic resources within 90 feet of construction activity.

4.0 FTA NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT FINDING

FTA has reviewed the EA for the 68th Street/Hunter College Station Improvements project dated February 2016, and finds that pursuant to 23 C.F.R. 771.121 that the Proposed Project' the mitigation measures committed to by MTA NYCT and specified in the EA and summarized in this FONSI will have no significant impact on the environment.



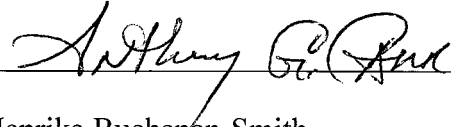
 Henrika Buchanan-Smith
 Acting Regional Administrator, Region II
 Federal Transit Administration



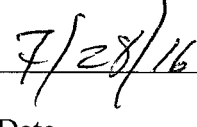
 Date

5.0 FTA SECTION 4(F) OF THE DOT ACT OF 1966 EVALUATION AND FINDING

Based upon FTA's review of the project description and supporting documentation on the Proposed Action as described in the EA, it is FTA's determination that the project's use of the Thomas Hunter Hall and the Imperial House Apartments qualifies as de minimis as set forth in 23 C.F.R. 774. 3(b) and that the coordination required in 23 C.F.R. 774.5(b) is complete.



 Henrika Buchanan-Smith
 Acting Regional Administrator, Region II
 Federal Transit Administration



 Date

