

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter evaluates the effects of the Modified Design on visual and aesthetic resources, in comparison to the effects of 2004 FEIS Design. The 2004 FEIS concluded that construction of the Project would result in temporary significant adverse visual impacts related to visually intrusive construction activities. For the completed Project, the 2004 FEIS concluded that visible elements, including station entrances and above-ground ventilation and cooling structures, are all common features of Manhattan streetscapes and would not be incongruous to the visual environment. Moreover, the design of the station entrances was to be sensitive to the surrounding architectural context. The Modified Design of Phase 2 would not change the overall conclusions of the 2004 FEIS. The station entrances and above-ground ancillary buildings would be larger than those described in the 2004 FEIS, but still would be designed to be sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood and would not result in adverse visual effects.

7.2 FEIS FINDINGS

The 2004 FEIS evaluated the Project's effects on visual and aesthetic resources in Chapter 6, "Social and Economic Conditions," since visual resources and urban design are among the components that contribute to the social conditions and character of a neighborhood.

7.2.1 CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

The 2004 FEIS identified temporary impacts on visual and aesthetic resources during construction as a result of construction equipment and vehicles, barriers, and nighttime lighting that would adversely affect the visual environment of the surrounding area. It also noted that street trees would also need to be removed from affected sidewalks, resulting in visual changes to the streetscapes. As described in the 2004 FEIS, construction would introduce visually incongruous activities, which would be temporary but would become part of the streetscape for long periods of time. This would include construction equipment, including nighttime lighting. As a result, the visual character of the nearby areas would be diminished during construction, and the intensity of the impacts would be compounded by the length of construction.

The 2004 FEIS noted that the construction contractor will be required to comply with the noise mitigation requirements outlined in the 2004 FEIS (see FEIS Chapter 12). As stated in the 2004 FEIS, this may include enclosing areas where spoils from tunnel operations would be loaded into trucks, or at station locations where spoils removal would take place for long durations during the daytime or at night; placing some equipment or operations below grade in shielded locations. The FEIS concluded that where barriers would be used to limit views of construction sites and/or block noise from construction activities, these barriers would themselves be visually intrusive. When located near building facades and windows, barriers would block some light for those windows. Therefore, the 2004 FEIS concluded that the use of tall barriers or enclosures in close proximity to windows would result in a significant adverse visual impact. The decision as to whether such

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walls should be used is to be made after considering the advantages and disadvantages of the various types of significant adverse impacts that would occur during construction with and without such barriers.

In addition, significant adverse impacts on visual conditions due to longer term construction activities were identified at Second Avenue north of 125th Street to the Harlem River and 125th Street between Park and Third Avenues.

To mitigate the Project's significant adverse impacts on visual conditions during construction, the 2004 FEIS identified the use of barriers around construction sites when the benefits of such barriers outweigh their negative effects; the use of screens to block nighttime lighting; and the potential use of high-quality design for sidewalk sheds, such as the addition of windows, and better lighting in the sidewalk sheds; and restoration of disturbed conditions upon completion of construction.

7.2.2 PERMANENT IMPACTS

When completed, the Second Avenue Subway would have above-ground features at each station, including new station entrances and ancillary facilities. Specific dimensions for ancillary facilities were not known at the time of the 2004 FEIS, but a general sense of scale and massing was provided. The 2004 FEIS described ancillary facilities as potentially being similar in size to a typical rowhouse, ranging from about 25 to 40 feet wide (depending on if the facility is combined with an entrance), 75 feet deep, and up to about 75 feet tall. It was noted that some facilities might need to be wider. In the 2004 FEIS Design, the ancillary facilities were to include fresh air intake louvers facing the rear yard of structures and exhaust gratings and louvers primarily on the roofs. The 2004 FEIS also indicated that some ancillary facilities would include a cooling tower on the roof, shielded by privacy screens.

The 2004 FEIS Design also did not include specific information on the appearance of the ancillary facilities and the 2004 FEIS stated that ancillary facilities would be designed to be consistent with the neighborhood character. For example, they could appear similar to a neighborhood row house in height, scale, materials, and colors, and in some locations the existing building façade may be preserved while the interior of the building is reconstructed to serve its intended use. The 2004 FEIS also stated that "the design of the station entrances and ancillary facilities would be sensitive to the surrounding architectural context; they would not disturb views in the study area, nor would they change the study area's urban design" (FEIS page S-47).

The 2004 FEIS stated that visible elements, including station entrances and above-ground ventilation and cooling structures, are all common features of Manhattan streetscapes and would not be incongruous to the visual environment. Moreover, the design of the station entrances was to be sensitive to the surrounding architectural context; not disturb views in the study area, nor change the study area's urban design. As such, the 2004 FEIS did not identify any adverse impacts related to visual resources or aesthetics. The 2004 FEIS stated that community input on the design of ventilation facilities would be solicited.

7.3 UPDATE OF BACKGROUND CONDITIONS

As described in Chapter 4, "Social and Economic Conditions," Section 4.3, East Harlem has seen extensive new development since completion of the 2004 FEIS. Much of the development predicted in the 2004 FEIS has occurred, and there have also been many completed or planned

developments that were not foreseen in the 2004 FEIS. The 125th Street corridor, in particular, has been and continues to be a focus of much of the new development and continues to strengthen its position as a retail and economic hub in Harlem. In addition, along Second Avenue, many of the sites that were vacant or occupied by low-rise or vacant buildings in 2004 have more recently been redeveloped with mid-rise (8- to 10-story) apartment buildings.

In addition, as also described in Chapter 4, an area-wide rezoning and related land use actions for East Harlem were approved in November 2017. As a result of this rezoning, additional redevelopment is likely to occur in the future.

7.4 PHASE 2 MODIFIED DESIGN—CHANGES IN IMPACTS

7.4.1 CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

With the Modified Design, no cut-and-cover construction would occur along Second Avenue north of 125th Street, and substantially less surface construction activity, including cut-and-cover construction, would occur on 125th Street. These changes would reduce the visual effects of construction activities for Phase 2 of the Project. Consistent with the 2004 FEIS Design, in areas where construction activities are occurring, they would disrupt the visual character of the area. This could include the use of tall barriers or enclosures at construction zones, which may be in close proximity to windows. As described in the 2004 FEIS, this would result in a significant adverse visual impact.

7.4.2 PERMANENT IMPACTS

As described in Chapter 2, “Description of Phase 2 Modified Design,” with the Modified Design, some of the above-ground features of the subway (the station entrances and ancillary facilities) would be in different locations and would be larger than was anticipated in the 2004 FEIS. While these locations are different than shown in the 2004 FEIS Design, they would be in the same general locations and continue to be designed to blend in with the surrounding urban context of the neighborhood.

Subsequent to publication of the 2004 FEIS, design of proposed ancillary facilities was advanced for Phase 1 of the Second Avenue Subway and some of those design modifications would be carried forward into Phase 2. Design changes for the ancillary facilities constructed during Phase 1 were evaluated in several Technical Memoranda reviewed by FTA. Some design changes would carry forward into Phase 2, such as intake and exhaust louvers on street-facing facades rather than the rear façade and roofs. In addition, the Modified Design would use dry coolers rather than a chilled water cooling system, which would reduce ongoing maintenance requirements for the cooling system and eliminate the need for equipment on the roof, but would result in a taller building envelope.

As discussed above and detailed in Chapter 2, “Description of Phase 2 Modified Design,” Section 2.3.2.6, updated design and flood protection standards require more electrical and mechanical equipment to be located above ground, therefore requiring larger above-ground ancillary facilities than was presented in the 2004 FEIS. In addition to the larger footprints, ancillary facilities would also be taller than anticipated in the 2004 FEIS Design and taller than those constructed for Phase 1. To make use of the existing tunnel segments that have already been constructed, Phase 2 would have a shallower alignment than the deep tunnel alignment in Phase 1; therefore, the Phase 2 ancillary facilities, while similar in overall height (from lowest level to the roof level), would have more of the ancillary space above grade. In addition, unlike Phase 1, portions of the Phase 2

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alignment are within the floodplain, where important infrastructure must be located above the flood elevation (and therefore cannot be underground). Typical dimensions of the ancillary facilities for Phase 2 would range from about 90 to 100 feet wide, 80 to 110 feet deep, and would vary in height based on location. The ancillary facilities along 125th Street, where the tunnel would be deeper, would range from 45 to 75 feet high (equivalent to 5 to 8 stories). Along Second Avenue, they would be 90 to 140 feet tall (equivalent to 9 to 14 stories).

Specific façade treatments were not known at the time of the 2004 FEIS, but treatments were selected for Phase 1 ancillary facilities that intended to be compatible with the architectural and urban context of the surrounding neighborhood, including the use of granite at the building's base, brick-colored terra-cotta tiles for the façade above the base, translucent glass curtain-wall elements, and silver-colored metal slats to integrate and protect the areas of ventilation louvers that must be included on the façade. Specific façade treatments have not yet been determined for Phase 2, but would similarly be selected to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The design specifications for the new facilities would require the use of massing design and façade materials that visually break up the facades of the ancillary facilities so that they are compatible with the characteristics of smaller buildings nearby, to avoid adverse effects on neighborhood visual character. Additionally, MTA is exploring options to incorporate ground-floor retail in ancillary facilities and entrances to maintain a continuous and active streetscape.

At the 106th Street, 116th Street, and 125th Street Stations, the ancillary facilities would be located at or near the intersections of these streets with Second Avenue. The presence of buildings of a larger footprint and/or height would be consistent with the urban design of much of the area around Second Avenue, where taller buildings are located along the avenue rather than on the narrower cross streets.

At the 106th Street Station, the planned ancillary facility on Second Avenue and East 109th Street would be located diagonally across Second Avenue from the Tito Puento Educational Complex, a building of a contemporary design that has a very large footprint and with brick and metal cladding, and with immediately surrounding buildings of seven and eight stories, including those with modern facades. The second ancillary facility at East 106th Street would be located in an urban context that includes the 20-story Franklin Plaza Apartments complex across East 106th Street and Second Avenue.

At the 116th Street Station, the ancillary facility at Second Avenue and 120th Street would be in proximity to the Wagner Houses north of 120th Street, with much taller towers on 122nd Street also located in the surrounding area. The second ancillary facility for the 116th Street Station, anticipated to be located at Second Avenue and 115th Street, would be located across the street from the multiple buildings of the 14-story NYCHA Thomas Jefferson Houses complex occupying several blocks on the south side of 115th Street between First and Third Avenues.

At the 125th Street Station, the ancillary facilities would be located on 124th Street west of Park Avenue and east of Lexington Avenue, in the vicinity of the New York College of Podiatric Medicine which has a very large footprint, the 12-story masonry building at 1825 Park Avenue, the nine-story Northern Manhattan Rehabilitation & Nursing Center which also has a large footprint and extends through the block to East 124th Street (at 116 East 125th Street), the recently completed 12-story apartment building at 69 East 125th Street, commercial and office buildings with contemporary façade treatments along Lexington Avenue and 125th Street, and with other much taller residential towers visible to the south and east.

For the tail tracks along 125th Street, an ancillary facility would be located on the south side of the street either east or west of Lenox Avenue. This ancillary facility would be smaller in size than the station ancillary facilities and would similarly be compatible with the urban design of 125th Street and the immediately surrounding area, which is developed with a mix of older and shorter masonry structures and larger and taller buildings of a contemporary design (including the 14-story office building at 55 West 125th Street) that vary in terms of massing, façade articulation including location, size, and type of fenestration, and façade materials including brick and glass and metal curtain walls. The ancillary facility to be located at the tunnel curve between Second Avenue and 125th Street would also be smaller than the station ancillary facilities and be within an urban context that includes the approach to the RFK Bridge and the 16-story NYCHA Wagner Houses complex south of East 124th Street.

Overall, the surrounding areas of the proposed ancillary facilities and entrances typically include dense development of mid- to high-rise structures. While the ancillary facilities and entrances would replace existing structures in most cases, they would not remove any visual resources and would not substantially alter views from the surrounding areas. As discussed in Chapter 8, “Historic and Archaeological Resources,” the design specifications for the new facilities would require the use of massing design and façade materials that visually break up the facades of the ancillary facilities so that they are compatible with the historic and architectural characteristics of nearby architectural resources, so as to avoid or minimize significant contextual effects to nearby resources. As such, the conclusions of the 2004 FEIS remain valid and no new or different adverse impacts related to visual resources and aesthetics would result from the Modified Design.

7.5 CONCLUSIONS

The Phase 2 Modified Design would not change the conclusions of the 2004 FEIS with respect to visual and aesthetic resources. Consistent with the 2004 FEIS Design, construction activities for the new subway in East Harlem would be disruptive and result in temporary adverse impacts to visual character. These impacts would be reduced with the Modified Design because it would reduce the amount of cut-and-cover construction that would occur.

The completed project with the Modified Design would have similar effects on visual character. Like the 2004 FEIS Design, it would introduce new station entrances and ancillary facilities along the Project corridor. Some of these would be in different locations than were anticipated in the 2004 FEIS, but the general visual character of their setting would be similar. In addition, the ancillary facilities and entrances would have larger footprints and would be taller than shown in the 2004 FEIS. While specific designs have not yet been finalized for the ancillary facilities, they would include the use of materials and design elements that would make them compatible with the urban design of the surrounding areas, as was described in the 2004 FEIS. Ground-level retail space was not included in the 2004 FEIS for the ancillary facilities and entrances, but has been added as a consideration to the Modified Design, which would contribute to maintaining an active streetscape.

As a result of the Phase 2 Modified Design, there will not be any new or different significant adverse impacts on visual and aesthetic resources not previously identified in the 2004 FEIS and ROD. *