

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION  
MTA LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD  
EAST SIDE ACCESS PROJECT  
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**Abstract**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), in cooperation with the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR), have completed a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the East Side Access Project. The project is proposed to improve access to Manhattan's East Side for commuters in the Long Island Transportation Corridor (LITC), which consists of Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn in New York City and Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island. The proposed action would bring LIRR trains from Long Island and Queens through the existing 63rd Street Tunnel into a new LIRR terminal at Grand Central Terminal. New tunnel construction in Queens would connect the LIRR Main Line and Port Washington tracks south of Sunnyside Yard to the lower level of the existing 63rd Street Tunnel under 41st Avenue. In Manhattan, the tunnel alignment would curve southward from the existing tunnel at 63rd Street and Second Avenue to Park Avenue, where it would continue beneath existing Metro-North tunnels to Grand Central Terminal. The proposed transportation improvements would expand seating capacity on the LIRR system and reduce the number of standees on LIRR trains during peak hours, relieve train and pedestrian congestion at Penn Station, and balance utilization of Manhattan's railroad terminals. As automobiles would be removed from the highway network and East River crossings, air quality would also be improved.

The alternatives considered in the FEIS include a No Action Alternative, a Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative, and the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative is the locally preferred alternative, recommended after careful consideration of a full range of alternatives in the Major Investment Study (MIS) for the LITC that was completed in April 1998. Two engineering options for the Preferred Alternative's alignment in Manhattan were considered in the DEIS; the deeper alignment, Option 2, has been identified as preferred for implementation. The analyses and impact assessments in the FEIS consider potential effects on rail, freight, and transit service, ridership, accessibility, highway congestion, land use, neighborhoods, visual and aesthetic resources, natural resources, water quality, air quality, noise and vibration, energy, contaminated materials, and cultural resources. Mitigation measures to reduce anticipated localized impacts are detailed in the document. The analyses also consider the financial feasibility and cost-effectiveness of the alternatives.

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