

# Interborough Express (IBX)

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### I. PROJECT INFORMATION

- **What is the Interborough Express (IBX) and why build it?**

The IBX will provide rapid transit services to currently underserved areas in Brooklyn and Queens, improving their access to major subway lines and providing better transit connections among communities within Brooklyn and Queens.

The project would reduce or eliminate the need for transit users traveling between Brooklyn and Queens to travel through Manhattan, with travel time savings expected up to 30 minutes per trip.

- **Who will benefit from this project?**

The corridor is home to 900,000 residents and 260,000 workers within ½-mile walking distance of the line. These residents and workers will benefit from improved access to jobs and other destinations in Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan.

The project is especially impactful for those who need to travel within the corridor. Over 55% of Brooklyn residents living within the corridor work in Brooklyn, and 40% of Queens residents living within the corridor work within Queens.

The project also advances equity within our transportation network. Approximately 70% of the corridor's residents are people of color, 19% are below the poverty line, and 50% of the households do not own a car.

On top of these direct benefits, the increase in transit access will potentially reduce congestion on roads within the communities.

- **How many people live and work within the corridor? What growth is anticipated?**

Currently, about 900,000 residents and 260,000 workers within ½-mile walking distance of the corridor will benefit. By 2045, we anticipate expected growth of at least 41,000 residents and 15,000 jobs.

These projections were calculated by New York's metropolitan planning organization's socioeconomic forecast New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC).

- **Who owns the line?**

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The southern portion of the line (11 miles) is owned by MTA Long Island Rail Road. The northern portion (3 miles) is owned by CSX. The dividing line between the two is at Fresh Pond Yard in Queens.

- **Why are you advancing this project over others?**

As part of the MTA's planning process, this project was identified as having the potential to support MTA's strategic vision. Along with other planning-level projects, the IBX will be advanced to the environmental review stage to determine its relative costs, benefits and risks.

- **What kind of approvals will be required to construct the project?**

Federal, State and local approvals will be required.

## II. ROUTE, STATIONS AND MODE TYPE

### A. ROUTE

- **What is the proposed route?**

The proposed IBX, would run along a little-known freight line in a semi-circle between southern and eastern Brooklyn and Central Queens, connecting the ethnically and economically diverse neighborhoods of: Sunset Park, Borough Park, Kensington, Midwood, Flatbush, Flatlands, New Lots, Brownsville, East New York, Bushwick, Ridgewood, Middle Village, Maspeth, Elmhurst and Jackson Heights with several new stations in communities not currently served by rail transit. See map below.

- **Why does the project terminate at Jackson Heights, and why are you not continuing to the Bronx?**

To continue north of the proposed Jackson Heights terminus would involve the same right-of-way that will be used for Metro-North Penn Station Access, a top-priority project for the MTA and for the Bronx. Penn Station Access will create four new Metro-North stations in the East Bronx with service to Manhattan and Westchester and Connecticut, using the existing Amtrak Hell Gate Line in the Bronx and Queens. Penn Station Access' construction contract was awarded in late 2021 and service is anticipated to begin in 2027.

With the opening of Penn Station Access, the existing Hell Gate Line that connects to the Bronx will be at capacity, as Amtrak intercity trains and CSX freight trains also use the line. It would not be possible to add another, very frequent service like the

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IBX to the mix within the existing infrastructure. As such, extending the IBX to the Bronx would require construction of an entirely new parallel bridge and line at enormous expense (given property impacts, engineering, and construction costs.)

As a result, the route planning for the IBX will focus initial attention on the segment of the line that can be upgraded without interfering with the Metro-North Penn Station Access Bronx expansion.

- **Why doesn't the Interborough Express go to LaGuardia Airport?**

The IBX project's goals include improving transit service for residents and workers taking trips throughout Brooklyn and Queens, while making use of an existing major rail corridor. As we understand that the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey is currently evaluating options for transit access to LaGuardia Airport, the IBX project will not preclude the ability to provide some manner of airport connection in the future.

- **Why doesn't the project connect to Staten Island?**

There is no existing pathway between the IBX alignment and the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge and the bridge itself was not constructed to accommodate rail options.

### B. STATIONS

- **How many stations will the new service have?**

The number and location of stations along the 14-mile corridor will be determined as part of the forthcoming planning and engineering studies.

### C. MODE TYPE

- **Why aren't you considering regular subway service for the line?**

Due to regulatory separation requirements between freight traffic and heavy rail, using subway train cars on the line would require additional width along the corridor, leading to multiple bridge reconstructions, the potential for significant property acquisition and much higher construction costs.

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However, the conventional rail alternative would feature vehicles resembling those currently used within the subway system, including more doors than a conventional rail car and subway-like seating configurations. We also expect all three modes under consideration to operate at intervals similar to subway service, with up to five-minute frequencies during peak hours.

- **If we go with the conventional rail option, will the Interborough Express allow for one-seat rides between the Interborough Express and points on Long Island?**

No, this would be a stand-alone rapid transit-like service that will run at higher than typical commuter frequencies (as often as every 5-15 minutes). LIRR does not have the track capacity for this added frequency of service.

### III. CONSTRUCTION

#### A. CONSTRUCTION INFORMATION

- **How will the project be constructed, and will there be construction impacts in my neighborhood?**

At this early planning phase of the project, construction methods, details and potential impacts have not been determined. As we proceed with project planning, we will work to minimize construction impacts to surrounding communities to the extent possible, and any such plans will be shared at future meetings to update the public on the project's evolution.

The IBX will be built largely within existing rail right-of-way, which has active freight rail service. Depending on the mode type - conventional rail, light rail or bus rapid transit - the construction of bridges and elevated portions may be necessary in some areas. The project team will meet with elected officials and community groups to devise construction plans that strive to minimize any potential concerns. The goal of the project is to provide a long-term transit option for residents who will benefit from better connectivity between Queens and Brooklyn.

The project team will remain engaged with the community throughout the entire process. There will be numerous public meetings for Brooklyn and Queens during the planning process and future construction phases of this project to communicate details and impacts of the construction and operations of IBX.

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- **Will there be any property acquisition?**

The project is primarily within the existing MTA and CSX right-of-way, and initial studies indicate that the amount of property acquisition is expected to be minimal. Further engineering studies will be conducted to learn more about the potential for property acquisition.

### **B. EXISTING USE AND COORDINATION WITH FREIGHT RAIL**

- **What is the line currently used for, and how would it be affected by the Interborough Express project?**

The line is currently in use as a freight rail corridor, with up to three trains per day on the MTA-owned portion. Freight service on this segment is handled by the New York & Atlantic Railway (NYAR), which interchanges with CSX, the Providence and Worcester (P&W), and the New York New Jersey Railroad (NYNJR) railcar float, which serves multiple rail freight customers directly off the line.

We understand there are quality of life concerns about the existing freight service on the tracks owned by the MTA, and we are committed to addressing these issues. There is funding available and an active procurement underway for new freight locomotives that generate fewer emissions and lower noise levels. Additionally, as part of the Interborough Express project, we are envisioning upgrades to the corridor that would result in less disruptive freight and passenger operations.

- **How would the project relate to CSX owned Right-of-Way (also known as the Freemont Secondary)?**

The northern three miles of the IBX alignment (from roughly Fresh Pond Yard to Jackson Heights, Queens) is located in a portion of the corridor known as the Freemont Secondary, which is owned by CSX railroad. The MTA is committed to working with CSX to reach an agreement that allows us to operate within their corridor in a manner complementary with their current and future freight operations.

- **How does IBX affect the future of expanded freight operations (Cross-Harbor Freight Program Study)?**

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey is pursuing its own project known as the Cross Harbor Freight Program, which is intended to improve the movement of freight across the New York Harbor between the east-of-Hudson and west-of-Hudson regions. Under this Port Authority project, additional freight trains would operate on separate tracks located adjacent to the MTA's IBX project. The IBX is being developed to not preclude the Cross-Harbor Freight project, and the MTA and

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Port Authority are committed to working together to ensure coordination of design and operations for their respective projects.

### IV. OPERATIONS

#### A. SERVICE FREQUENCY

- **How frequent will the proposed service be?**

The proposed service would operate at up to 5-minute frequencies during the peak periods, with off-peak headways of up to 15 minutes at other times of the day.

#### B. TRANSFERS

- **How many subway lines will this connect to?**

The Interborough Express could provide potential connections to up to 17 subway lines (N/R/D/B/Q/2/5/L/3/J/Z/A/C/M/7/E/F) serving areas of Brooklyn and Queens.

- **Will it allow for passenger connections with the LIRR at East New York?**

Yes.

- **Would that be a cross-platform connection like at Jamaica? Or would it be stairs, escalators and elevators?**

Transfer to LIRR would be at Atlantic Av./East New York Station. Stairs, elevators, and escalators would connect the two stations because the stations cross each other at different elevations and are not parallel.

- **Will it allow for a new station to connect with the LIRR Main Line at a new station to be built between Woodside and Forest Hills?**

This is not currently in project scope. The main transfer to LIRR would be at Atlantic Av./East New York Station.

#### C. FARES

- **What would the fare be?**

Fares will be the responsibility of the MTA Board at time of implementation. However, we expect that the fare would be equivalent to standard bus and subway fares and that fare payment would be consistent with the MTA's standard bus and subway fare payment system at that time, such as OMNY or other future payment systems.

The exact location of stations and available transfers to other services is still to be determined. You will be able to tap into the Interborough Express using OMNY and

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transfer to connecting bus and subway lines by tapping again with OMNY. We are planning for the IBX to be fully embedded into the existing MTA bus and subway system to allow for free and seamless transfers as you would currently between subway and bus lines.

### D. RIDERSHIP

- **What is the potential ridership for this service?**

Initial studies indicate that up to 88,000 daily weekday ridership with annual ridership of approximately 25 million.

### V. ACCESSIBILITY, PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE ACCESS AND IMPROVEMENTS

- **Will stations and trains/buses on the line be ADA accessible?**

Yes, all stations and vehicles (bus, light rail or conventional rail) will be fully accessible to all riders.

- **What bicycle and pedestrian improvements are you proposing as part of this project?**

The MTA is excited about the multi-modal opportunities associated with this project, and we are committed to making it easier for our customers to access the system by walking or biking.

At this stage of the planning process, specific bicycle and pedestrian improvements related to IBX have not been determined. However, we expect to provide pedestrian connections as well as bicycle access and parking to stations to the extent possible. In addition, all stations and vehicles (bus, light rail or conventional rail) will be constructed to accessibility standards.

### VI. COSTS

- **How much does this project cost and how will you fund this?**

It is expected that this will be a multi-billion-dollar construction project. The total project cost will be determined as part of the forthcoming environmental review and design process.

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We aren't precluding any funding sources at this point, and we will be following federal procedures to ensure we remain eligible for funds provided through the infrastructure bill, including funding programs for multimodal (freight/passenger) projects.

Additionally, the IBX is included in the MTA's ongoing comparative evaluation process for potential inclusion in the MTA's 2025-2029 Capital Program. This process will evaluate the project within a range of metrics such as ridership, cost, travel time, capacity, and network benefits. This process then informs the Twenty-Year Capital Needs Assessment, a final evaluation which analyzes the benefits and costs of potential investments for advancement into the Capital Program. If funding is identified and the MTA decides to proceed with this project, it will be included in the subsequent Capital Programs.

### VII. NEXT STEPS

- **What are the next steps for the project, including timeline?**

We are currently conducting an outreach program to discuss the project and gather input from the community, elected officials and stakeholders. This will help guide us towards the selection of the best mode alternative (between conventional rail, light rail, and bus rapid transit). Following the selection of this "Locally-Preferred Alternative," we will begin the required state and federal environmental review processes. We hope to begin the environmental review process early next year (2023) and expect it to last about two years.

We also expect to begin the formal project design process in 2024, which takes another year or two. If the project is determined to be suitable for construction, the MTA will need to identify funds for construction. Throughout the project, the MTA will engage with the community, elected officials and stakeholders to ensure all comments are heard.

### VIII. PUBLIC MEETINGS AND MORE INFORMATION

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

Visit [new.mta.info/ibx](https://new.mta.info/ibx) for information from past meetings and updates on future meetings. You can also submit questions and comments at any time at: <https://mta-nyc.custhelp.com/app/interborough-express>



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