

INSTITUTE FOR RATIONAL URBAN MOBILITY, INC.

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Statement at September 9, 2009 NYCDOP on Proposed Rezoning of Hudson Yards– Item No. 36

The Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc. (IRUM) is a NYC-based non-profit concerned with reducing motor vehicular congestion and improving the livability of dense urban places.

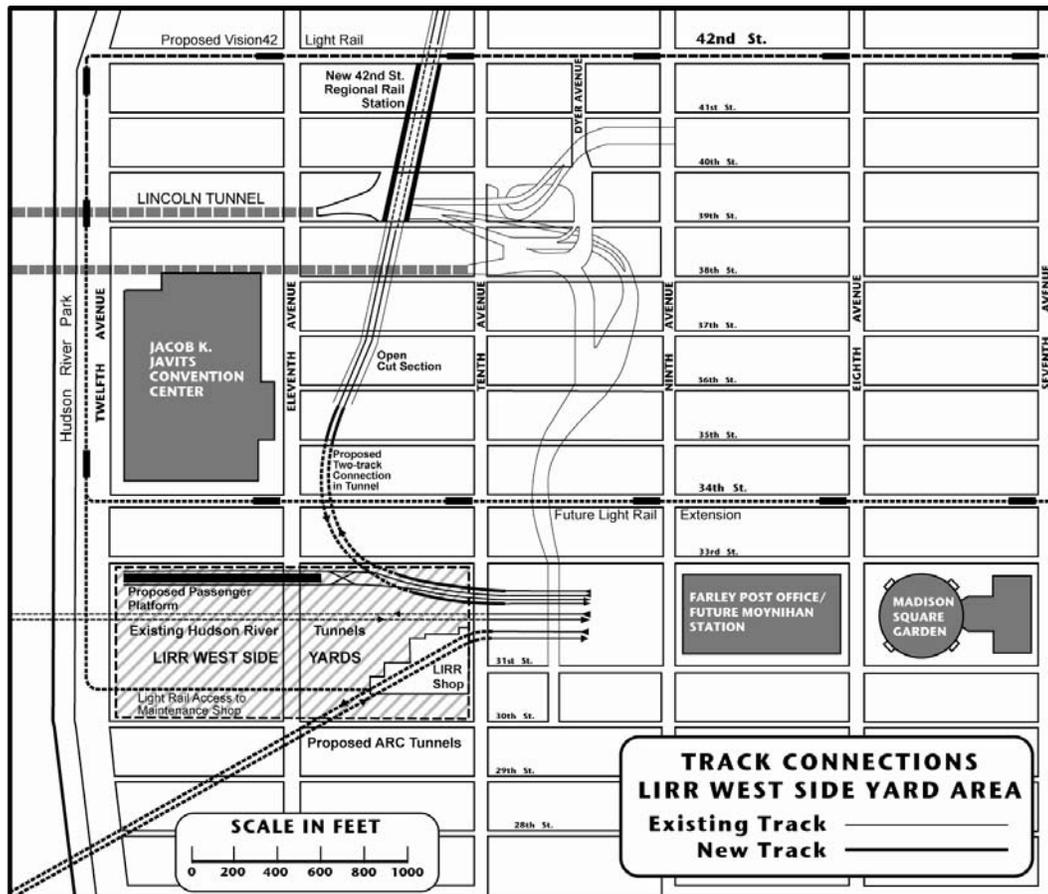
IRUM urges the Commission to postpone its decision on the proposed rezoning until its staff can make a full review of the potential impact of remaking the commuter rail lines serving the NY-NJ-CT metropolitan area into a Regional Rail System, with frequent service, integrated fares and through running at Penn Station. Through-running now seems to be on the verge of becoming a reality. The concept is included in MTA's Twenty Year Capital Needs Assessment for 2010-2029 which will be brought before the MTA Board at its September 23, 2009 meeting. Metro-North Railroad has decided to move forward on its long-stalled Penn Station Access Study by advancing it as a more streamlined Environmental Assessment rather than as a DEIS.

These actions by MTA have the potential to dramatically change the function and operation of the commuter rail lines serving the Hudson Yards District. Through running at Penn Station, which could substantially increase peak period train flow, allowing significant rail service improvements through Penn Station without awaiting a decade or more for new passenger rail tunnels to be completed. The service gains coincide with Mayor Michael Bloomberg's recently articulated vision for transit enhancements, championing the extension of the reduced fare CityTicket on commuter lines in the city, from weekends to full use all day on weekdays as well.

With this in minds, now is a critical time to preserve an easement for a two-track connection to Amtrak's Empire Line in the Hudson Yards District. This would permit much higher service levels on this lightly-used line. With frequent service and through running, the need for continued operation of LIRR's West Side Yard can be questioned. The yard could be reduced to a two track station served by LIRR trains, using existing tracks to link to Penn Station.

Transit advocates continue to press the Obama Administration, as it considers a full funding agreement for NJ Transit's new Hudson River Passenger Rail Tunnels, to veto NJ Transit's proposed dead end deep cavern terminal station under 34th Street and advance a more sensible plan to connect the new tunnels into existing tracks and platforms at Penn Station. A subsequent phase would link Penn Station to Grand Central. Remaking Moynihan/Penn Station into an appropriate gateway to NYC is essential. These concepts are shown in the attached materials.

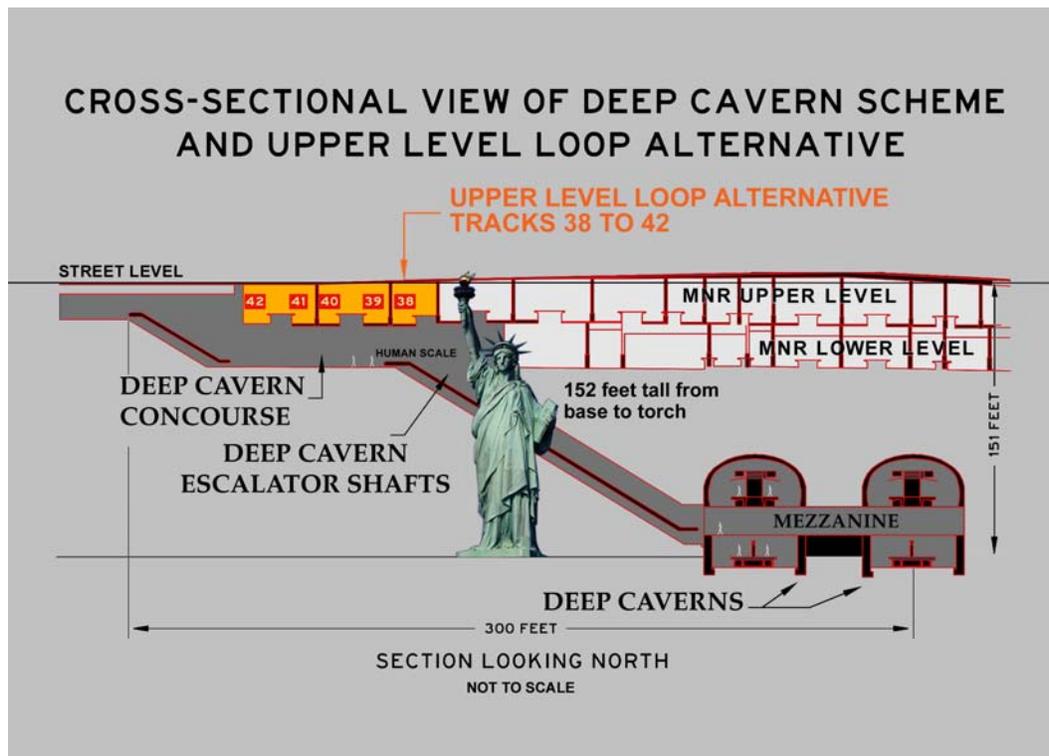
With new leadership at MTA soon to be confirmed, these concepts, many of which have already been put into place in London, can be pursued with new vigor. The opportunity exists for the Commission and its staff to actively participate in plans to reshape the rail lines that serve West Midtown. If New York City is to continue to survive as the world's per-eminent financial center it must adopt more advanced concepts of rail operation and service.



Regional Rail: A New Vision for West Midtown

Recasting the commuter lines that serve the NY-NJ-CT metropolitan area into a unified *Regional Rail System* with frequent service, integrated fares and thru-running at Moynihan/Penn Station opens the door for a whole new vision for development of Manhattan's West Midtown. Regional Rail avoids the need to store rail cars midday in the LIRR West Side Yard permitting its abandonment. Two tracks would be retained for a new station permitting a connecting rail service to Penn Station. This link would allow consideration of rebuilding the historic Farley Post Office building into conference center, providing much-needed meeting space to augment a renovated Javits Convention Center.

Two new subsurface Regional Rail easements through the yard area (shown above) must be preserved to allow full development of Regional Rail connections to existing platforms and tracks at Moynihan/Penn Station. The ARC connection from the new Hudson River tunnels would follow the route described in the February 2007 DEIS. A new two-track connection to Amtrak's West Side Line would eliminate the single track bottleneck that now prevents full use of this valuable rail link. A new Regional Rail station at 42nd Street would serve the northern half of the Hudson Yards Development District and would provide a convenient connection to the proposed 42nd Street crosstown surface light rail transit line. Selling the yard as raw real estate, but with a connection to Moynihan/Penn Station greatly increases the cash flow to MTA. Completing access to West Midtown would be the connection between Moynihan/Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal studied in the ARC planning process. Linking the nation's busiest train stations greatly facilitates regional and intercity rail travel. To remake Moynihan/Penn Station into a truly welcoming gateway new stairways and concourses must be added.



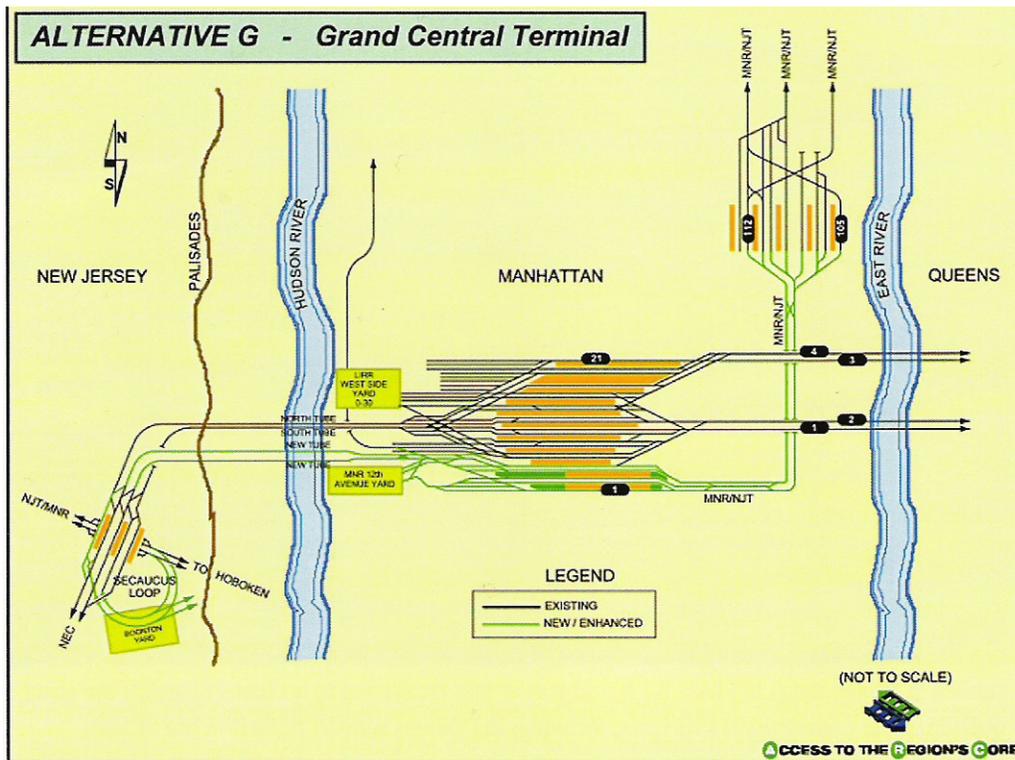
Depths of Folly!

The Northeast needs an Interconnected Rail System not NJ Transit's Dead-End Deep Cavern

The Northeast needs a sensible and practical plan to expand rail capacity across the Hudson River. Instead of constructing a costly and passenger unfriendly deep cavern station some 175 feet under 34th Street (even deeper than MTA's flawed LIRR East Side Access plan shown above), NJ Transit should connect its new ARC rail tunnels directly into tracks and platforms at the existing Moynihan/Penn Station.

The *ARC Penn Station First* plan, favored by NY, NJ and national rail advocates, will cost \$3 billion less to construct, can be completed more quickly and will have fewer adverse environmental impacts. It will provide much needed flexibility for NJ Transit and Amtrak to use new or existing tunnels, assuring a high-quality, redundant, interconnected rail system that will benefit the entire Northeast. Passengers walking to nearby destinations would save four to five minutes of travel time per trip in each direction and those transferring between trains would save even more time. In a subsequent step, studied in the ARC planning effort, tracks can be extended to Grand Central Terminal, creating an even more significant Northeast rail connection.

To make the best use of Moynihan/Penn Station, and to remake it into a welcoming gateway, NJ Transit, MTA and Amtrak must work together to implement a plan for through-running, taking advantage of the station's unique design, and add stairways and expand concourses. The Federal government is in an excellent position to encourage this interstate cooperation, making it a condition for funding the ARC tunnels. Narrow transit agency prerogatives must be set aside, and a project of truly national significance advanced.



Moynihhan/Penn Station – Grand Central Connection

Connecting the new Hudson River rail tunnels with existing platforms and tracks in Penn Station and then linking them to existing platforms and tracks in the Lower Level of Grand Central would produce a truly world-class railway system for the NY-NJ-CT metropolitan area. This plan (shown above) evolved from a cooperative planning study for new Trans-Hudson rail capacity – “Access to the Region’s Core” – a collaboration of NJ Transit, MTA and the Port Authority of NY & NJ. With this connection West of Hudson rail passengers could more easily reach Manhattan’s East Side with its extraordinary concentration of office space. Likewise, Bronx, Westchester, Mid-Hudson and Connecticut passengers could gain better access to the growing developments in West Midtown. The Boston-Washington Northeast Corridor would be routed through Manhattan’s two major activity centers, greatly improving its attractiveness, especially when competing for air shuttle travelers. New York’s Empire Corridor trains could be routed through both stations continuing to points further south.

This plan is superior to the “deep cavern” plan currently being advanced by NJ Transit. Travelers would save time and avoid the risk associated with a *terminal* station, some 175 feet below 34th Street. Furthermore, extending the Deep Cavern station to East Midtown is costly and challenging, and is not a real option. Linking the new Hudson River tunnels directly to existing tracks and platforms at Penn Station reduces capital and operating cost and permits all trains to connect directly to the new Moynihhan Station and then continue on to Grand Central. The key to this plan’s success is for MTA and NJ Transit to closely cooperate. This means that to fully use new Trans-Hudson tunnel capacity, interoperability is essential and all trains using the connection must be thru-routed. MTA rejected this plan in the past, but new leadership in Albany can call for regional cooperation to overcome narrow agency prerogatives.