

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority New York City Transit (MTA NYCT), is proposing to implement improvements to the 68th Street/Hunter College Station in Manhattan to bring the station into compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, (as amended) and add necessary circulation improvements throughout the station. These improvements, hereafter referred to as the 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station Improvement Project or the “Proposed Project,” would include the installation of ADA-compliant elevators, widening existing stairs, constructing additional stairs and additional entrances, among other improvements.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Proposed Project has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (as amended). The EA has been prepared in accordance with regulations for implementing NEPA, as issued by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) (23 C.F.R. § 771) in conformance with the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 C.F.R. § 1500). The purpose of this EA is to provide information regarding the Proposed Project’s potential impacts on the human and natural environments. FTA is a funding agency for the Proposed Project and is the lead federal agency for the NEPA environmental review process.

Appendices to this EA include Appendix A: Preliminary Alternatives Screening, which describes in detail the extensive planning process that was undertaken by MTA NYCT in selecting various options of the project; Appendix B: Correspondence, which provides copies of agency communication and communication with other parties interested in the project; Appendix C: Transportation Analysis Report, which describes and evaluates transportation aspects of the project; Appendix D: Station Congestion Photographs, which provides photographs and photograph keys illustrating congestion within the station; and Appendix E: Environmental Justice Data, which provides study area demographic information from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

## 2 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.

Key goals and objectives were established by MTA NYCT for this project in order 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 include transportation-related criteria, as well as project schedule, budget, safety, quality, customer satisfaction, and best practices pertaining to the natural and the man-made environment.

The goals and objectives of the 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station Improvement Project consist of the following:

- Improve pedestrian circulation at all locations with deficiencies, specifically:
  - Reduce congestion at platform stairs

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

### 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station


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 (Figures S-1 and S-2). 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Accessed at <http://web.mta.info/nyct/facts/ridership/>

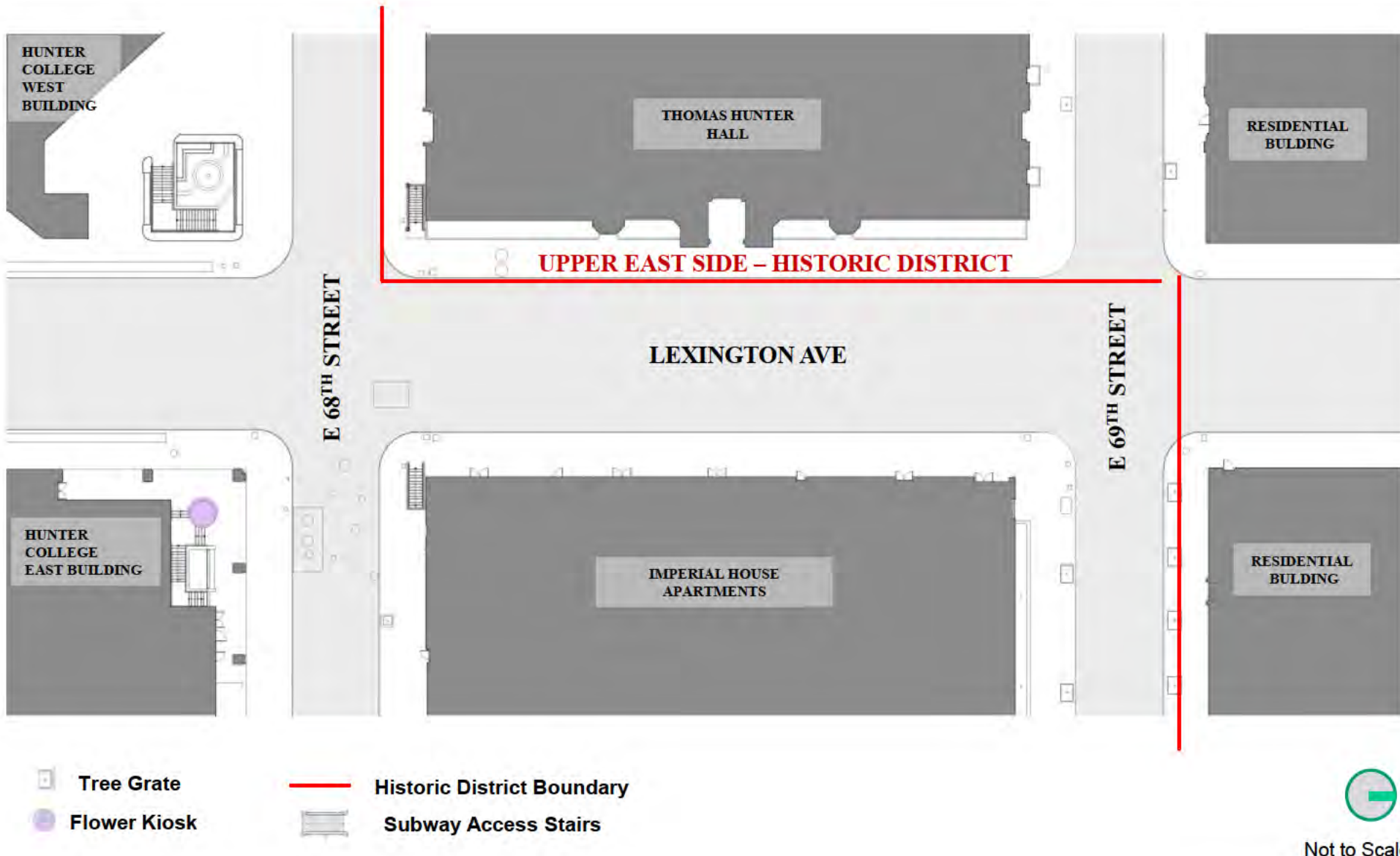


Subway Station **6**

Project Location 



Project Location  
Figure S-1



Existing Street Level Plan  
**Figure S-2**

The station consists of a two-level subway structure below street level. The two levels of the station consist of the mezzanine, and below the mezzanine, the tracks and passenger platforms. The street level entrances to the station are located at the four corners of the intersection of Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street in Manhattan (Figure S-2), and the mezzanine is located directly under this intersection. At the platform level, the station has a two-track configuration with one northbound and one southbound platform. The platform level extends under Lexington Avenue from a point midway between East 67th Street and East 68th Street to a point midway between East 69th Street and East 70th Street. There are two pairs of stairs providing access between the platforms and the mezzanine, one pair for the northbound platform and one pair for the southbound platform. Both pairs of stairs are located near the south end of the platform, under the intersection of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue.

### **Problem Identification**

Although it is one of the busiest stations in the subway system and serves major activity centers, including a dense residential area, institutions of higher education, hospitals and other major health care facilities, the 68th Street/Hunter College Station is not usable by individuals with physical disabilities due to the lack of elevator access between the street, mezzanine, and platform levels of the station.

According to the United States Code of Federal Regulations, (C.F.R.) Title 49 § 37.47, certain commuter authorities (such as the MTA) are required to make Key Stations on their system readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use 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 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.

MTA NYCT must meet ADA requirements for all of its designated Key Stations by the year 2020 to avoid potential financial penalties. The target date for the 68th Street/Hunter College Station to become ADA compliant is 2020.

In addition to the absence of ADA-compliant access, the 68th Street/Hunter College Station exhibits passenger circulation deficiencies. During peak usage, the existing station is characterized by poor performance in terms of stairway clearance times, passenger circulation within the station, and passenger circulation at the street level in the vicinity of the stairs leading into the station.

The circulation deficiencies consist of the following:

- Pedestrian congestion at the platform stairs and at the platform level approaching these stairs
- Pedestrian congestion at the street stairs and at the mezzanine level approaching these stairs
- Pedestrian interference on the sidewalk at the northeast corner of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue
- Inefficient train access and occupancy
- Inefficient and inconvenient pedestrian circulation relative to passenger destinations

### **Analysis Framework, Environmental Process and Required Reviews/Approvals**

Construction of the Proposed Project is expected to take approximately 36 to 39 months. Potential construction impacts were evaluated for the year 2017, the anticipated peak construction year. The Proposed Project is expected to be operational by 2020. To assess environmental impacts during operation, conditions expected after completion of the project (Build condition) were compared with conditions that would be expected without the project (e.g., the No-Build condition) for the year 2020. For year 2020 operational analyses, it is assumed that the Second Avenue Subway is operational. Therefore, the effect of the Second Avenue Subway in shifting a portion of ridership away from the 68th Street Station was included in the analysis.

MTA NYCT has determined that, in accordance with New York State Public Authorities Law §1266-c(11), the Proposed Action is exempt from the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) as codified in Article 8 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law (ECL Sections 8-0101 et seq.) and its implementing regulations in Title 6 of the New York Codes, Rules and Regulations (6 NYCRR Part 617). That is because, as specified in Public Authorities Law §1266-c(11), the Proposed Action is: “a NYCT project to be constructed upon real property theretofore used for a transit or transportation purpose, or on an insubstantial addition to such property contiguous thereto, which will not change in a material respect the general character of such prior transit or transportation use.” Nevertheless, this EA is consistent with requirements of the SEQRA, and, where appropriate, with New York City’s City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR), Executive Order 91 of 1977 as amended, and the technical guidance of the New York CEQR Technical Manual, 2014 Edition, and with relevant New York City codes and regulations.

Additionally, this project will be analyzed according to certain criteria to ensure that it is consistent with the New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act.

The Proposed Project will comply with all applicable federal regulations and standards, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, Executive Order 13274 on environmental streamlining and stewardship, and Executive Order 13514 on federal sustainability.

Section 4(f) of the United States Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 U.S.C., § 303 (c)), as implemented by regulations codified at 23 C.F.R. § 774, prohibits federal approval or funding of a transportation project if the project requires use of a significant publicly owned park, recreation area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge area, or any significant historic site, unless there is no prudent and feasible alternative to such use and all possible planning to minimize harm to the resource has occurred, or if a determination of a *de minimis* impact has been made. Several historic resources are located in the vicinity, and MTA NYCT has prepared an evaluation of Section 4(f) resources potentially affected by the Proposed Project.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

MTA NYCT undertook a conceptual design effort to provide ADA accessibility to the station (ADA accessibility necessarily involves vertical circulation between the platform level, the mezzanine, and the street level for those who cannot use stairs) and to address the circulation deficiencies at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station. This initial effort resulted in the development of the Mezzanine Expansion Alternative (Alternative 1). Further study of this preliminary alternative revealed unforeseen construction and engineering challenges and risks associated with the plan, which called for expanding the mezzanine north over the tracks and constructing additional platform stairs to the expanded mezzanine at East 68th Street. In addition to numerous disruptions in subway service (due to work at the track level), the plan would have required costly

relocation of communication infrastructure enclosed in Empire City Subway (ECS) duct banks, as well as the underpinning of adjacent historic structures (Thomas Hunter Hall and the Imperial House Apartments).

A second alternative (Alternative 2 – Northern Access) was therefore developed by MTA NYCT to address these concerns. Alternative 2 would provide new platform stairs and street stairs at East 69th Street, near the north end of the station, thereby avoiding the need to construct new platform stairs and an expanded mezzanine at East 68th Street. By eliminating the need to construct additional platform stairs feeding into the mezzanine and the need to substantially enlarge the mezzanine at East 68th Street, Alternative 2 would avoid or minimize the risks associated with relocating the ECS duct banks that contain communication/data infrastructure and would not require the underpinning of Thomas Hunter Hall. It would reduce construction impacts and require far fewer subway service outages when compared with Alternative 1. MTA NYCT subsequently studied the transportation performance of the two alternatives in greater detail and determined that Alternative 2 – Northern Access would perform better than Alternative 1 – Mezzanine Expansion. As a result, MTA NYCT decided to advance Alternative 2.

MTA NYCT then conducted a series of public meetings to inform residents and businesses surrounding the 68th Street/Hunter College Station of the planned improvements to the station (see Chapter 14). During these meetings, members of the community proposed other alternatives that did not include street entrances on East 69th Street. These alternatives, suggested by public comments, included new street entrances at East 67th Street (Alternative 3), new entrances at East 70th street (Alternative 4), a temporary stair at the southwest corner of East 68th Street to be used during widening of the other street stairs at the intersection and would add an emergency egress hatch in the west sidewalk of Lexington Avenue between East 68th Street and East 69th Street (Alternative 5) and improvements to certain stairs leading to the street at 68th Street and adjustments to the construction phasing for the mezzanine and platform levels, but no additional platform stair capacity (Alternative 6).

MTA NYCT identified a set of criteria to evaluate the ability of each alternative and each street stair option to satisfy the project purpose and need and the project goals and objectives. Criteria focused on ADA compliance for the station; improving circulation on the platform stairs and street stairs; improving the distribution of passenger load on the train and along the platform length; passenger convenience and circulation efficiency; and fare control area and mezzanine performance. The criteria include construction phase issues such as minimizing cost and construction risk, construction duration, disruption to station and subway operations and passengers, and construction impacts to the surrounding neighborhood. Other criteria included impacts to historic resources and use of Section 4(f) resources.

Using the above criteria, Alternatives 3 and 4 were evaluated for their ability to satisfy the project goals and objectives and were eliminated from further consideration (Appendix A). A summary of the evaluation of alternatives is presented in Table S-1. Alternative 5 would not meet the project purpose and need because it would not provide adequate circulation improvement, and Alternative 6 would not meet the project purpose and need because it would not include additional platform stair capacity. Alternatives 5 and 6 were eliminated from further consideration.

As part of the development of Alternative 2 – Northern Access, MTA NYCT explored different options for the location of street entrances at the north end of the station. Options included stair locations on the north and south sidewalks of East 69th Street both east and west of Lexington Avenue, and on the east and west sidewalks of Lexington Avenue both north and south of East 69th Street.

Through the evaluation of these options (Appendix A), a configuration of new entrances – one for each platform – was initially identified that best met the goals and objectives of the Proposed

Project (illustrations of these entrance configurations are presented in Chapter 2 of this EA). For the southbound platform, this configuration would consist of a new, small mezzanine under East 69th Street (identified as Option W1 in Appendix A). This mezzanine would connect to the street via a new street stair on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street west of Lexington Avenue; a new platform stair would connect the mezzanine to the platform. For the northbound platform, this configuration would consist of a new platform stair connecting to a new, small mezzanine under East 69th Street and a connecting street stair on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue (identified as Option E1 in Appendix A).

This set of street stair options was presented by MTA NYCT to the community and other interested parties during several meetings conducted to solicit feedback. Some members of the community requested that MTA NYCT explore locating a street-level entrance within one of the retail spaces on the ground floor of the Imperial House Apartments, a building that occupies the entire block encompassed by Third Avenue, Lexington Avenue, East 68th Street, and East 69th Street, with ground-floor retail fronting Lexington Avenue between the two streets. In an effort to be responsive to community concerns, MTA NYCT entered into discussions with representatives of the Imperial House Apartments building. During these discussions, MTA NYCT was presented with the possible opportunity for locating a street stair in a retail space in the building. This space, located at 931 Lexington Avenue approximately midway between East 68th Street and East 69th Street, was incorporated as a viable stair option, and MTA NYCT subsequently included this possible location as Option E10 into the mix of Alternative 2 – Northern Access stair options.

In consideration of community concerns, the project purpose and need, as well as the project goals and objectives, MTA NYCT then re-evaluated the various Alternative 2 – Northern Access street stair options, including Option E10 (see Appendix A). As a result, MTA NYCT identified the retail space at 931 Lexington Avenue (Option E10) as the preferred location for street access to the *northbound* platform, and maintained Option W1 on at the southwest corner of East 69th Street at Lexington Avenue as the preferred location for street access to the *southbound* platform. These street stair locations are preferred because they would result in fewer environmental impacts and have fewer conflicts with surrounding land uses, are more responsive to community concerns, and/or would be less expensive to construct. Therefore, Alternative 2, now comprising these preferred stair locations (Option E10 and Option W1), is being advanced as the Proposed Project. A summary of the evaluation is presented in Table S-1, with additional detail provided in Appendix A.

At the time this document was prepared, the owner of the building identified for locating 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 (Option E1) as an optional entrance location to the northbound platform.

In addition to the Proposed Project (which includes Option E10 at 931 Lexington Avenue) this EA therefore also evaluates the Proposed Project with Option E1. 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). A description of the No-Build Alternative, the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project *with Option E1* is provided below.



**Table S-1:  
Comparison of Planning Alternatives Considered**

Relative Scoring Range 0-#	5	5	2	3	2	20	15	10	5	5	5	5	5	3		
Combined Scoring Range 0-#	17					45			15			13			90	100%
Average Scoring Range 0-#	3.4					15			5			4.3			27.73	
PLANNING ALTERNATIVE	IMPROVE CIRCULATION (0-17)					MINIMIZE IMPLEMENTATION/FEASIBILITY PROBLEMS (0-45)			MINIMIZE IMPACTS DURING CONSTRUCTION (0-15)			MINIMIZE PERMANENT IMPACTS (0-13)			Score	
	Reduce congestion at platform stairs	Reduce congestion at street stairs	Improve uneven distribution of passenger load on train and along platform length	Passenger convenience and circulation efficiency	Improve or maintain fare control and mezzanine performance	Minimize Cost	Minimize Construction Risk	Minimize Real Estate Issues	Construction Duration	Minimize disruption to station, subway operations and passengers	Minimize disruption to neighborhood	Minimize impact to historic resources and use of Section 4(f) resources	Maintain or improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation and parking	Minimize Impact to Neighborhood Character		
<b>No Build Alternative* (68th St Access)</b>	Marginal improvement; all existing congestion problems remain	Marginal improvement; all existing congestion problems remain	No improvement	No improvement	Marginal improvement; all existing congestion remains	No capital costs	No risks	No real estate purchase	No construction	No disruption	No disruption	No impacts or use	No improvement	None	NA	NA
	3	4	0	1	0	10	5	9	4	2	2	2	5	3	50	56%
<b>Alternative 1 68th St Mezzanine Expansion</b>	Overall congestion measurably reduced but some congestion is transferred to new platform stairs	Substantial improvement to street stairs	No improvement: same as No Build	- All passengers still concentrated at 68th St. - No direct access from platform to destinations north - Slightly improved sidewalk circulation at NE corner of Lex and 68th	More pressure on turnstiles due to increased feed from street and off platform	\$97 Million. \$27 Million above lowest cost	Substantial risk to communication infrastructure.	Easement purchase for louver in Hunter College common wall	48 to 62 months	- Substantial platform level disruptions due structural modifications and proximity of additional platform stair construction - Many service outages.	- Major Lexington Ave. excavation causes disruptions to pedestrian and traffic circulation, - Inconvenient business access.	Impact and use due to: -Underpinning of Thomas Hunter Hall -Underpinning of Imperial House Apartments -Louver in Hunter Hall common wall	-Vehicular circulation maintained. - Improved sidewalk circulation at northeast corner of 68th/Lex - No parking spaces lost	Loss of 1 tree		

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Table S-1: Continued

Relative Scoring Range 0-#	5	5	2	3	2	20	15	10	5	5	5	5	5	3		
PLANNING ALTERNATIVE	IMPROVE CIRCULATION (0-17)					MINIMIZE IMPLEMENTATION/FEASIBILITY PROBLEMS (0-45)			MINIMIZE IMPACTS DURING CONSTRUCTION (0-15)			MINIMIZE PERMANENT IMPACTS (0-13)			Score	
	Reduce congestion at platform stairs	Reduce congestion at street stairs	Improve uneven distribution of passenger load on train and along platform length	Passenger convenience and circulation efficiency	Improve or maintain fare control and mezzanine performance	Minimize Cost	Minimize Construction Risk	Minimize Real Estate Issues	Construction Duration	Minimize disruption to station, subway operations and passengers	Minimize disruption to neighborhood	Minimize impact to historic resources and use of Section 4(f) resources	Maintain or improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation and parking	Minimize Impact to Neighborhood Character		
	5	5	2	3	2	20	15	7	5	5	4	4	4	3	84	93%
<b>Alternative 2 Proposed Project: 69th Street and Midblock Entrance (W1 and E10)</b>	Substantial relief of platform stair congestion	Substantial improvement is further benefitted from diversion of passengers to new stairs	Substantial improvement	- Direct access from platform to destinations north. - Improved sidewalk circulation at NE corner of Lex and 68th	Substantial improvement due to diversion of passengers north of 68th	\$70 Million lowest cost	Little or no risk to communication infrastructure	Easement purchase for louver in Hunter College common wall. Purchase of 931 Lexington Avenue.	36 to 39 months - shortest duration	- Some platform level disruptions - Few service outages.	-Limited Lexington Ave. excavation causes minor disruptions to traffic and pedestrian circulation.	De minimis impact due to: -Louver in Hunter Hall common wall and use of Imperial House	- Vehicular circulation maintained. - Improved sidewalk circulation at NE of 68th/Lex. - 4 parking spaces lost.	Loss of 2 trees; 1 new street element		
	5	5	2	3	2	20	15	9	5	5	4	4	3	1	83	92%
<b>Alternative 2 Proposed Project with Option E1: two 69th Street Entrances (W1 and E1)</b>	Substantial relief of platform stair congestion	Substantial improvement is further benefitted from diversion of passengers to new stairs	Substantial improvement	- Direct access from platform to destinations north. - Improved sidewalk circulation at NE corner of Lex and 68th	Substantial improvement due to diversion of passengers north of 68th	\$70 Million lowest cost	Little or no risk to communication infrastructure	Easement purchase for louver in Hunter College common wall.	36 to 39 months - shortest duration	- Some platform level disruptions - Few service outages.	-Limited Lexington Ave. excavation causes minor disruptions to traffic and pedestrian circulation.	De minimis impact due to: -Louver in Hunter Hall common wall	- Vehicular circulation maintained. - Improved sidewalk circulation at NE of 68th/Lex. - 7 parking spaces lost.	Loss of 4 trees; 2 new street elements		

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Table S-1: Continued

Relative Scoring Range 0-#	5	5	2	3	2	20	15	10	5	5	5	5	5	3		
PLANNING ALTERNATIVE	IMPROVE CIRCULATION (0-17)					MINIMIZE IMPLEMENTATION/FEASIBILITY PROBLEMS (0-45)			MINIMIZE IMPACTS DURING CONSTRUCTION (0-15)			MINIMIZE PERMANENT IMPACTS (0-13)				
	Reduce congestion at platform stairs	Reduce congestion at street stairs	Improve uneven distribution of passenger load on train and along platform length	Passenger convenience and circulation efficiency	Improve or maintain fare control and mezzanine performance	Minimize Cost	Minimize Construction Risk	Minimize Real Estate Issues	Construction Duration	Minimize disruption to station, subway operations and passengers	Minimize disruption to neighborhood	Minimize impact to historic resources and use of Section 4(f) resources	Maintain or improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation and parking	Minimize Impact to Neighborhood Character		
<b>Alternative 3 67th Street Access</b>	3	5	1	1	1	7	5	9	0	0	1	4	1	1	39	43%
	Measurable reduction of congestion	Measurable improvement is further benefitted from diversion of passengers to 67th St Stairs	Would still result in concentration of passengers at south ends of platforms	- Less demand for south than for north; 67th St is beyond stopping point of trains and thus requires platform extension or long passageway - Improved sidewalk circulation at northeast corner of 68th/Lex	Measurable improvement with diversion of passengers from 68th to 67th Street	\$108 Million. \$38 Million above lowest cost	Moderate construction risk due to station cavern expansion	Easement purchase for louver in Hunter College common wall	60 to 72 months	- Substantial platform level disruptions due to cavern disruption. - Many service outages.	- Major Lexington Ave. excavation causes disruptions to pedestrian and traffic circulation. - Inconvenient business access.	De minimis impact due to: - Louver in Hunter Hall common wall	- Vehicular circulation maintained. - Improved sidewalk circulation at NE of 68th/Lex. - 9 parking spaces lost. - School bus parking conflict - Relocate NYCT bus stop	Loss of 4 trees; 2 new street elements		
<b>Alternative 4 70th Street Access</b>	5	5	2	1	2	0	5	9	0	0	1	4	2	0	36	40%
	Substantial relief of platform stair congestion	Substantial improvement is further benefitted from diversion of passengers to 70th St Stairs	Substantial improvement.	- Better subway access to northerly destination, but 70th St. is beyond stopping point of trains and thus requires platform extension or long passageway; - Improved sidewalk circulation at northeast corner of 68th/Lex	Substantial improvement due to diversion of passengers from 68th to 70th Street	\$136 Million. \$66 Million above lowest cost	Moderate construction risk due to station cavern expansion	Easement purchase for louver in Hunter College common wall	60 to 72 months	- Substantial platform level disruption due to cavern extension. - Many service outages.	- Major Lexington Ave. excavation causes disruptions to pedestrian and traffic circulation. - Inconvenient business access.	De minimis impact due to: - Louver in Hunter Hall common wall	- Vehicular circulation maintained. - Improved sidewalk circulation at NE of 68th/Lex. - 9 parking spaces lost.	Loss of 5 trees; 2 new street elements		

Scoring Key:

Higher values reflect better performance and/or fewer impacts

\*The No Build Alternative is included as a frame of reference and is not assigned a score. It does not meet the Purpose and Need and is therefore not considered a feasible alternative

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### **No-Build Alternative**

Under the No-Build Alternative, the proposed improvements to the platform stairs and street stairs, installation of ADA elevators and other improvements throughout the station would not be implemented. Without the ADA elevators, the station would remain inaccessible to some persons with disabilities, including those who require the use of a wheelchair. By 2020, some of the passengers using the 68th Street/Hunter College Station would be diverted from the 6 Lexington Avenue Line to the Second Avenue Subway, which is expected to be operational by that time, and is factored into the No-Build analysis. The results of this analysis are provided in Chapter 5 and in Appendix C of this EA. The analysis shows that although the station's performance would improve after 2020 (due to the diversion of some passengers to the Second Avenue Subway), existing performance deficiencies would remain, especially in the AM peak hour. Under the No-Build Alternative, the existing congestion would therefore not be alleviated. The existing curb parking lane and sidewalk configuration on East 69th Street would remain unchanged.

### **Proposed Project**

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. The proposed improvements can be summarized as follows:

- Installation of three ADA-compliant elevators and related improvements to bring this Key Station into compliance with ADA.
- Reconstruction and/or relocation of three of the four existing street stairs—at the southeast, northeast, and northwest corners of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue.
- Installation of a new street stair on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street west of Lexington Avenue. This street stair would connect to a new subway mezzanine and platform stair serving the southbound platform.
- Installation of a new street stair in a retail space at 931 Lexington Avenue, within the Imperial House Apartment building (Option E10). This street stair would connect to a new subway mezzanine and platform stair serving the northbound platform.

### **Proposed Project *with Option E1***

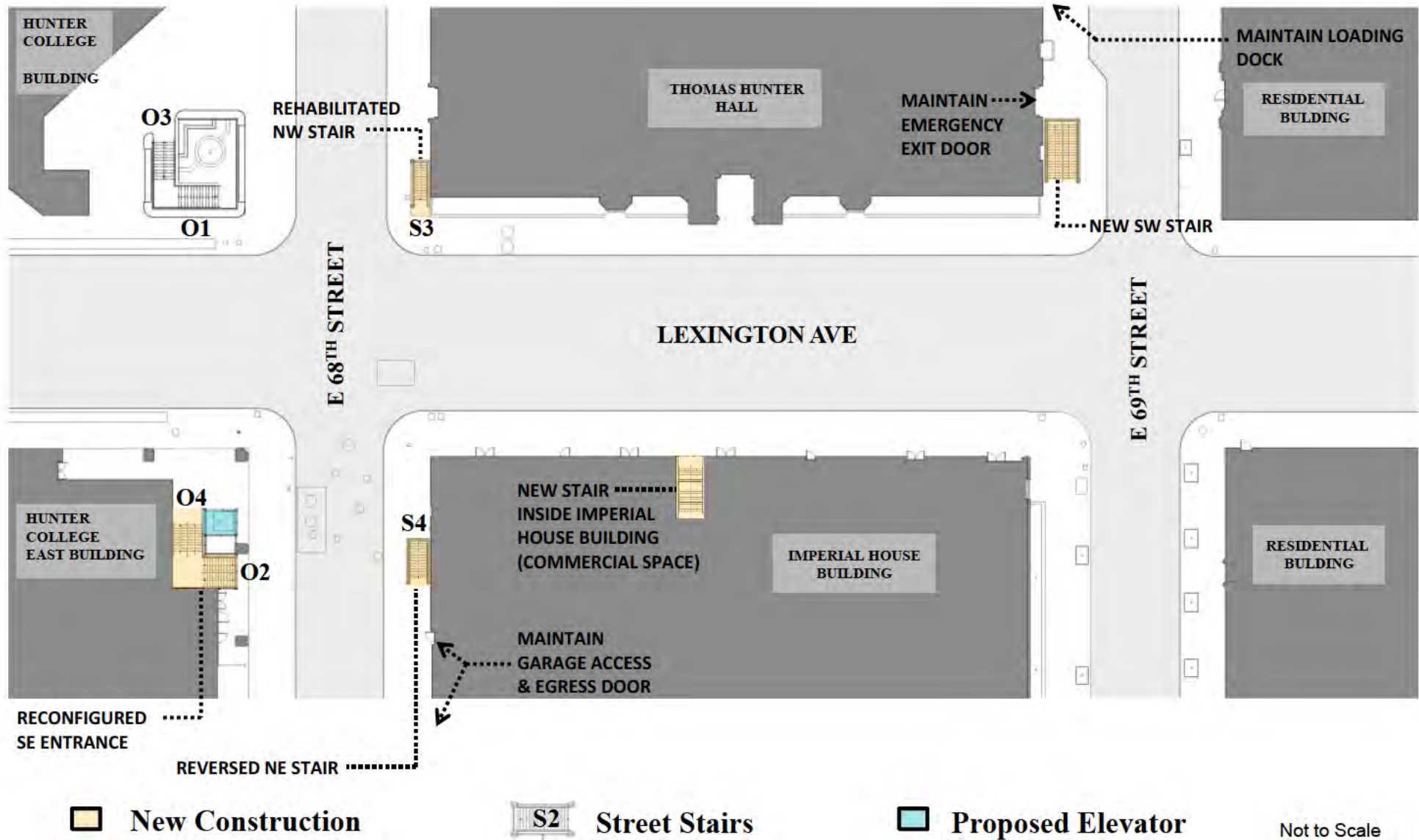
- The description of the Proposed Project with Option E1 is the same as above with the exception of the new subway entrance on the east side of Lexington Avenue. Instead of a new street stair at 931 Lexington Avenue, the project would include the installation of a new street stair on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue (Option E1). This street stair would connect to a new subway mezzanine and platform stair serving the northbound platform.

### *Street Level Improvements – Proposed Project*

Figure S-3 illustrates the changes at street level that would result from the Proposed Project, which includes changes at:

- East 68th Street - New ADA-Compliant Elevator and Improvement of Existing Street Stairs:
  - 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.
  - 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, 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.
  - Street Stair S3: Stair S3 at the northwest corner of the intersection would be rehabilitated, but would retain the existing dimensions and location.
  - Street Stair S4: Stair S4 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.
- East 69th Street:
  - Street Stair at East 69th Street: New street stair access to the station 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.
  - 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.
- Lexington Avenue:
  - Street Stair in the retail space at 931 Lexington Avenue. Under the Proposed Project, the 931 Lexington Avenue stair would exit to the Lexington Avenue sidewalk. No trees or parking spaces would be affected and the roadway 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.





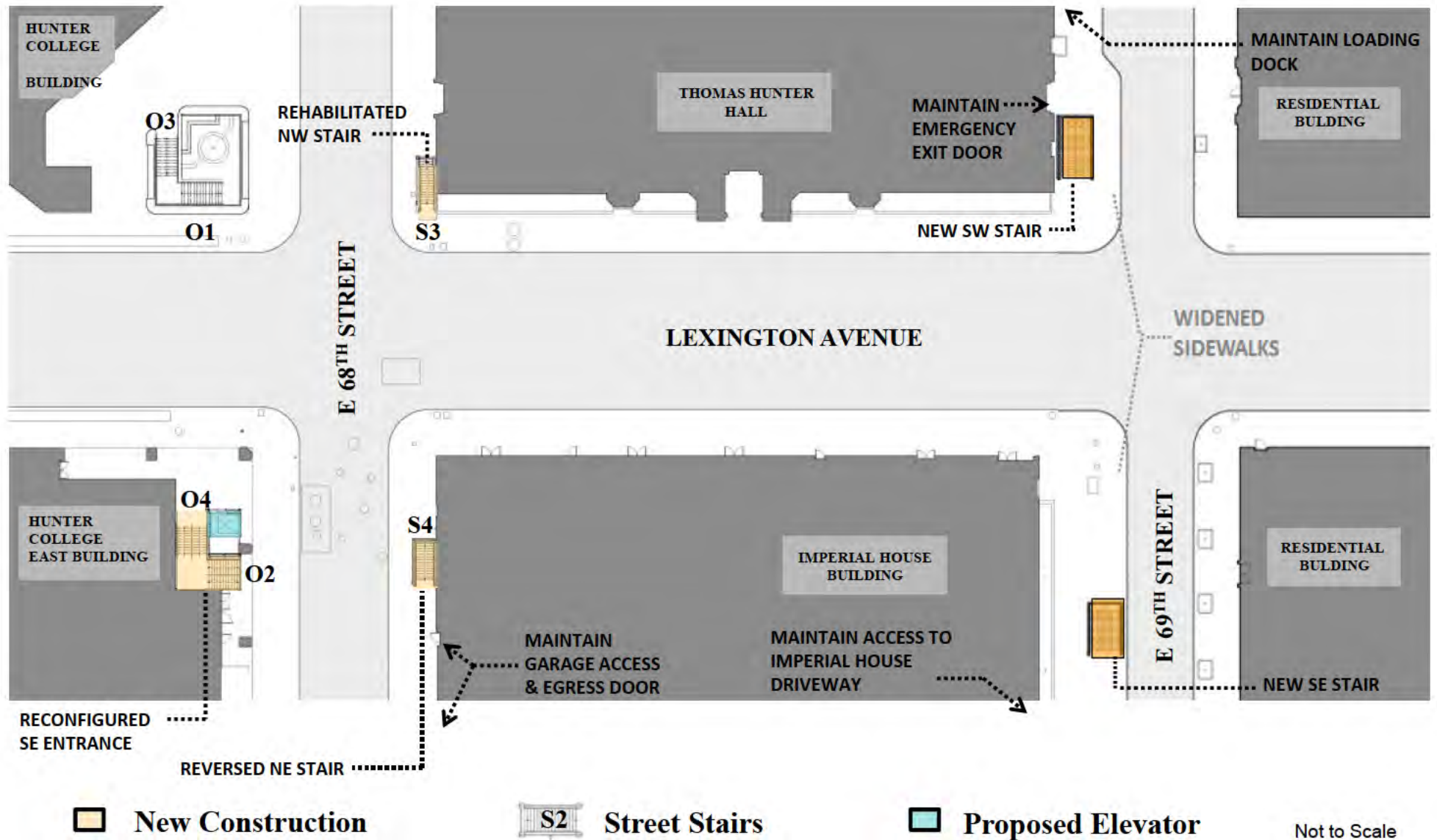
Street Level Plan - Proposed Project  
**Figure S-3**

*Street Level Improvements – Proposed Project with Option E1*

Under the Proposed Project *with Option E1*, a new street stair would be provided on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue instead of mid-block between East 68th and East 69th Streets. Improvements at East 68th Street would be as described above (Figure S-4). The new stair on East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue 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 building wall (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 drive on the south side of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue would be maintained.

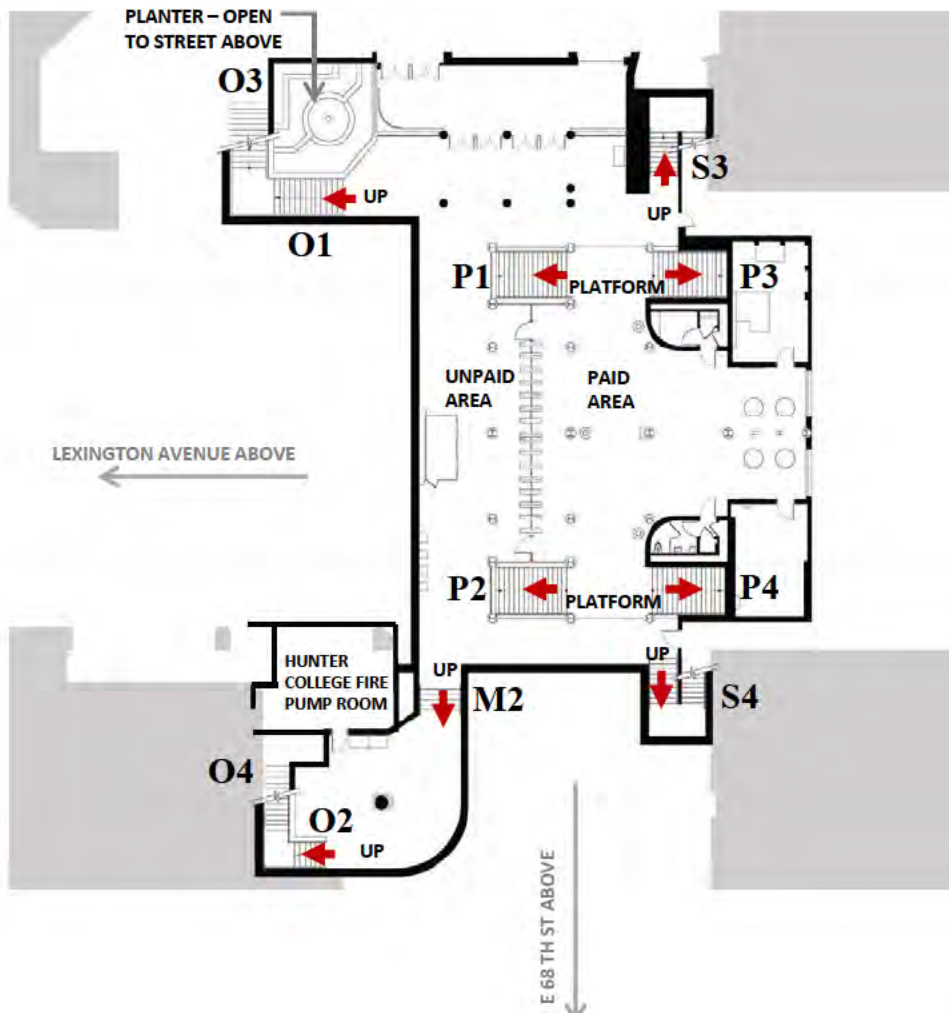
*Improvements to Existing Mezzanine – Proposed Project and Proposed Project with Option E1*

- **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 level, including the new elevator, is shown on Figure S-5.
- **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 end 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. The platform elevators are shown on Figure S-5.
- **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 (Figure S-5). 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.



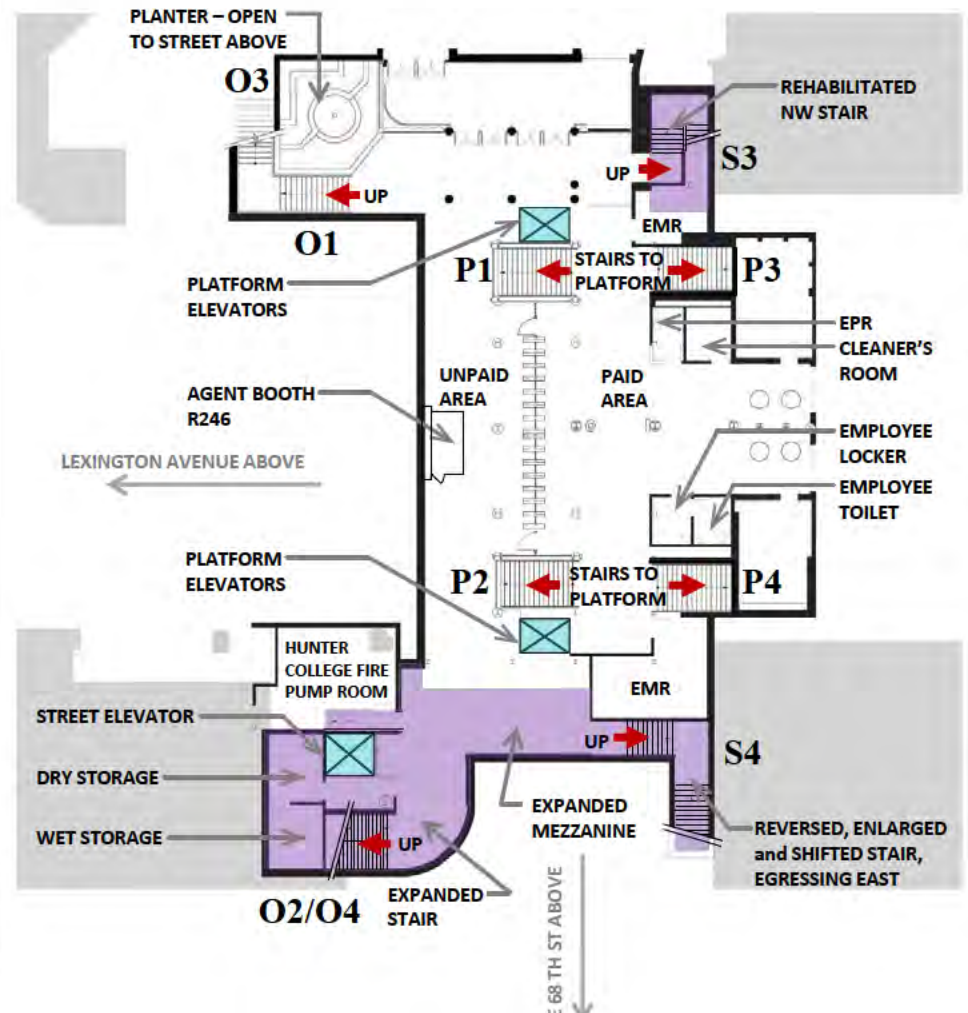
Street Level Plan - Proposed Project with Option E1  
**Figure S-4**

## Existing Mezzanine



PLATFORM STAIR      PROPOSED ELEVATOR

## Proposed Mezzanine



RECONFIGURED MEZZANINE/STAIR

Not to Scale



NORTH

Mezzanine Level Plan East 68<sup>th</sup> Street  
Figure S-5

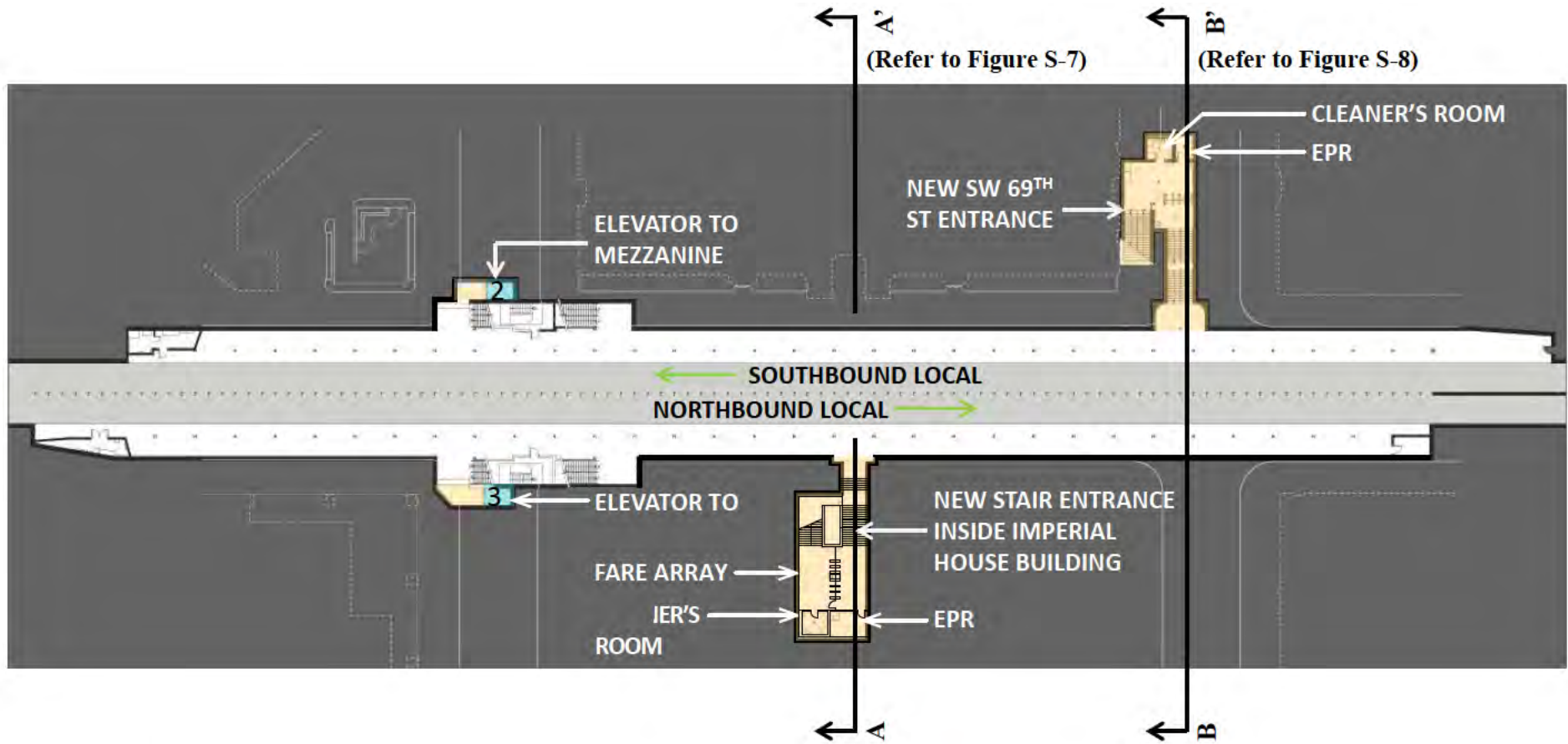
*Platform Level Improvements – Proposed Project*

- 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 (Figure S-5), providing ADA access between the platform level and the mezzanine level.
- Northern End of Station—Platform Stairs: New stairs would be constructed near the north end of the northbound and southbound platforms (Figure S-6). 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 (Figure S-7 shows a section view of the new mid-block stair and mezzanine at 931 Lexington Avenue, and Figure S-8 shows a section view of the new stair and mezzanine at East 69th Street). Each of these new small mezzanines would include unattended turnstiles, MetroCard Vending Machines, and communication systems.
- 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.


*Platform Level Improvements – Proposed Project with Option E1*

- The ADA-compliant mezzanine-to-platform elevators and the southbound platform would be as described above. The northbound platform would be as described above except that the stair and new small mezzanine would be shifted approximately 100 feet to the north (Figure S-9). Figure S-10 shows a section view of the platform stairs, mezzanines, and street stairs under the Proposed Project *with Option E1*.

# Platform Level



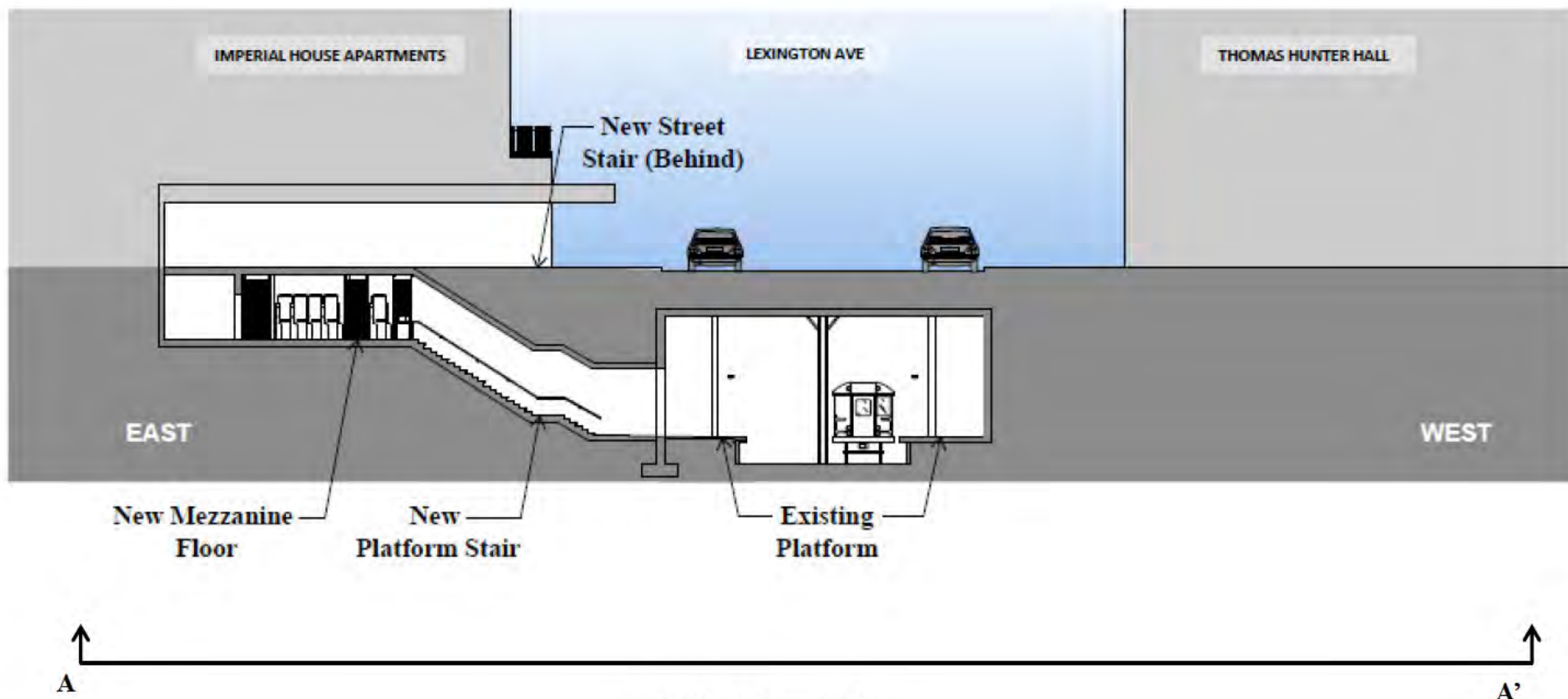
 **New Construction**

 **Proposed Elevator**

Not to Scale



Platform Level Plan - Proposed Project  
**Figure S-6**

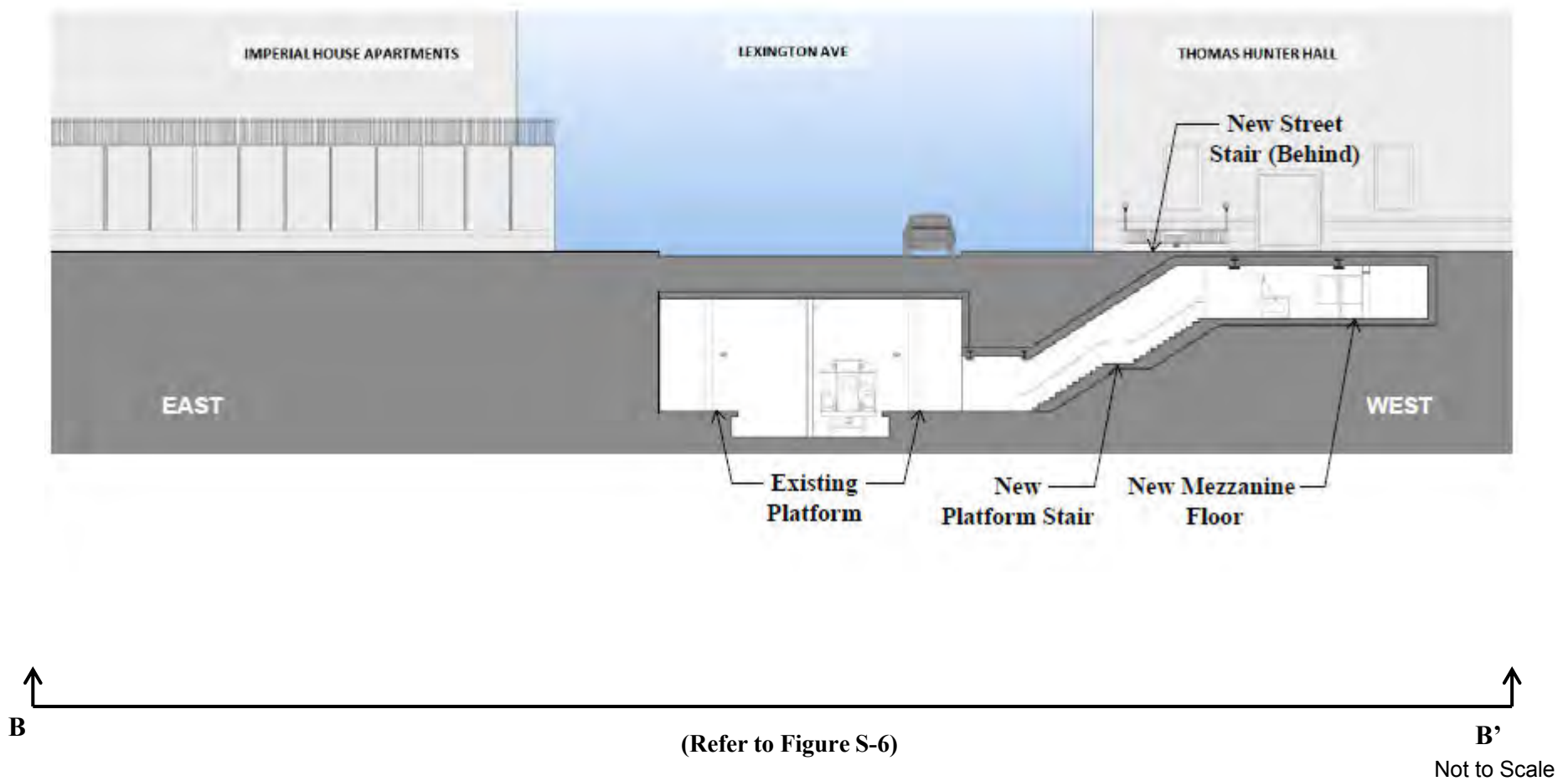


(Refer to Figure S-6)

Not to Scale



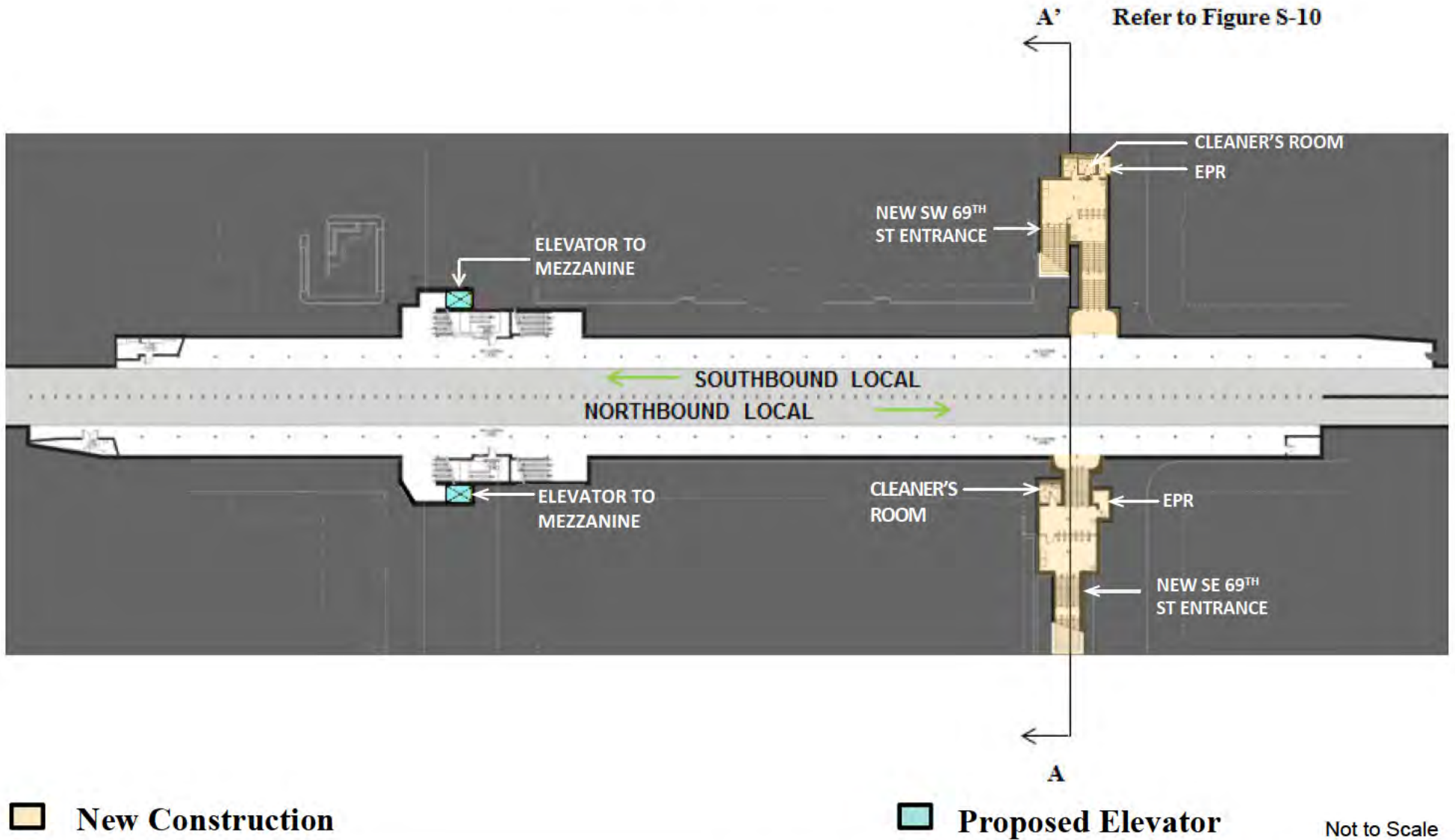
Section View of Mid-Block Stair and Mezzanine - Proposed Project  
**Figure S-7**



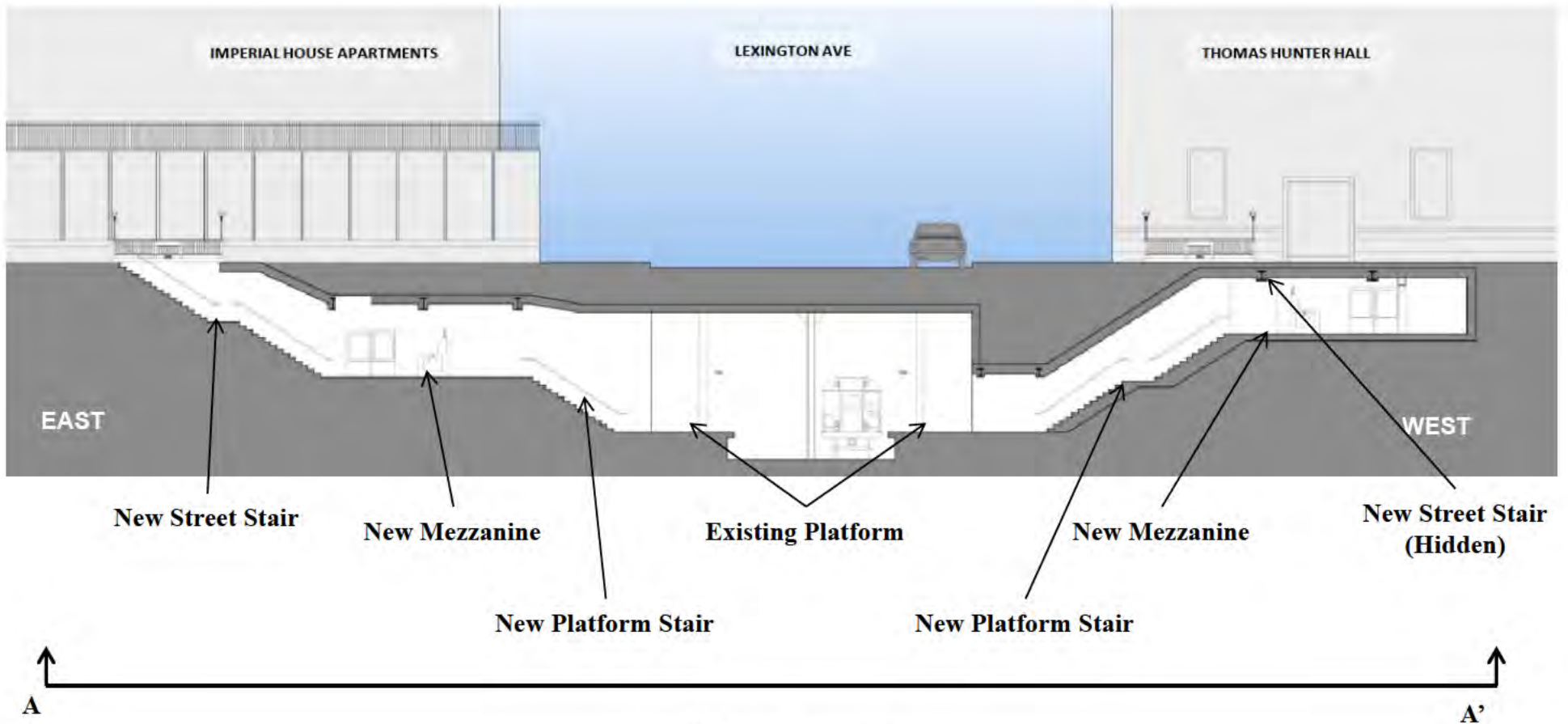
Section View of East 69<sup>th</sup> Street - Proposed Project  
**Figure S-8**



# Platform Level



Platform Level Plan - Proposed Project with Option E1  
**Figure S-9**



(Refer to Figure S-9)

Not to Scale

Section Along East 69<sup>th</sup> Street – Proposed Project with Option E1  
**Figure S-10**

### *Other Station Improvements*

In addition to the ADA-compliant elevators and the circulation improvements described above, the Proposed Project would include the following:

- New Electrical Panel Rooms (EPR), and elevator machinery rooms (EMR)
- New ADA Fare-card Access System gate adjacent to the new reconfigured East 68th Street/Hunter College Station fare control area
- Modified existing agent booth to become ADA-compliant
- A “Call-Button” communication system between accessible fare control gate and agent booth
- ADA-compliant station maintenance facilities/rooms including accessible toilets
- Electrical upgrades for equipment, lighting, emergency lighting, facility rooms
- Braille signs and signage with identification of accessible paths of travel
- Modified platforms to provide ADA-compliant boarding areas, new tactile platform edge warning strip
- Relocation of the existing fire standpipe, and provision of a new fire standpipe where needed
- Installation of Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) cameras near elevators and elevator landings, with video monitoring from the agent’s booth
- Installation of all communication requirements, including ADA-compatible telephones, text-type telephones, sound power telephones in elevators, fire alarm system and intercoms
- Installation of new Passenger Assistance Stations (PAS) in control areas at the north end of the station
- Installation of new ADA-compliant stainless steel stair side-rails, handrails and center railings
- Provision of drainage for new and reconstructed stairways
- Relocation and/or maintenance of utilities (water, steam, sewer, communication, electrical)
- Replacement of the existing public address (PA) system

### **Siting Assumptions for Elevator & Stair Placement / Path of Travel**

A “Path of Travel” analysis was conducted in accordance with FTA Circular C 4710.1, issued on November 4, 2015. This Circular provides guidance to recipients and sub-recipients of FTA financial assistance necessary to carry out provisions of the ADA of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the U.S. Department of Transportation’s implementing regulations at 49 CFR Parts 27, 37, 38, and 39.

As used in this section, a “path of travel” includes a continuous, unobstructed way of pedestrian passage by means of which the altered area may be approached, entered, and exited, and which connects the altered area with an exterior approach (including sidewalks, parking areas, and streets), an entrance to the facility, and other parts of the facility. The term also includes the restrooms, telephones, and drinking fountains serving the altered area. An accessible path of

travel may include walks and sidewalks, curb ramps and other interior or exterior pedestrian ramps, clear floor paths through corridors, waiting areas, concourses, and other improved areas, parking access aisles, elevators and lifts, bridges, tunnels, or other passageways between platforms, or a combination of these and other elements.

The path of travel analysis was conducted to evaluate whether, upon completion of the proposed alterations to this key station, people using wheelchairs can reach all primary function areas needed to use the station (including platforms, ticketing, toilets, waiting rooms, drinking fountains, etc.), although their path of travel may vary from the general public access route. In addition the analysis evaluates whether the key station meets all other DOT Standards throughout for elements in place when the station was made accessible, including signs, detectable warnings on platform edges, accessible fare vending, text telephones, visual display of public address announcements, etc.

To incorporate vertical access at this station, construction cost, constructability, underground utility relocation, ADA compliance, passenger flow/convenience, intermodal transfers, safety and security were evaluated. At street level, roadway and sidewalk width, traffic patterns, and bus routes/stops were reviewed. Within the existing constraints and the factors mentioned above, the proposed locations of the elevators provide the safest path of travel. Roadway traffic patterns and bus routes/stops, as well as property line limitations also were evaluated.

Within these constraints, elevators and station entrances were sited in locations that could functionally best process current and future passenger loads while considering the following:

- sited to be centrally located and provide the safest path of travel for disabled and other passengers on the street/sidewalk levels,
- sited to provide a safe distance from platform edges at the platform level for wheelchair users and pedestrians,
- sited in locations that would minimize the negative impact to vehicle flow, and to passenger flow within the stations.

Designs were completed in accordance with the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) as applicable to MTA NYCT. A Path of Travel analysis was conducted, which determined that the Proposed Project or the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would offer the most optimal combination of platform, mezzanine and street level improvements to achieve the maximum level of access for able and disabled passengers without impacting established and projected passenger loads. Potential street level transportation impacts were likewise minimized by taking into account vehicular and pedestrian flows.

### **Anticipated Conditions with the Proposed Project**

(The following applies to the Proposed Project, and the Proposed Project *with Option E1*, unless otherwise indicated.) The Proposed Project is expected to be operational by 2020. The conditions discussed below assume that the segment of the Second Avenue Subway in the vicinity of the East 68th Street would be in operation.

Implementation of the improvements comprising the Proposed Project would meet the Purpose and Need and the goals and objectives, as described below.

- **ADA-compliant Key Station.** With implementation of the station improvements, the station would provide ADA-compliant access to passengers with mobility impairments or other disabilities, thereby increasing the system-wide number of destinations accessible for these passengers. The station would also be ADA-accessible for employees of MTA NYCT.

- **Reduced pedestrian congestion at platform stairs.** With the addition of new stairs at the north end of the platform, the existing congestion at the stairs leading to the East 68th Street mezzanine would be reduced. Although not all stairs would meet MTA NYCT's 30-second clearance time guideline, the Proposed Project would result in a substantial improvement in clearance times, especially for stairs performing poorly under existing conditions.
- **Improved circulation at the mezzanine level.** With the operation of new entrances at the north end of the station, fewer passengers would be using the East 68th Street mezzanine. Under the Proposed Project in 2020, for the peak 15-minute period in the morning, approximately 28 percent fewer passengers (625 persons) would be using the East 68th Street mezzanine than would under the No-Build condition. Similarly, in 2020, for the PM peak 15-minute period, approximately 26 percent fewer passengers (444 persons) would be using the East 68th Street mezzanine than would under the No-Build condition. When coupled with the street stair improvements listed in the following bullet, the reduced passenger flow through the 68th Street mezzanine would greatly ease congestion currently found at the bottom of the street stairs.
- **Reduced pedestrian congestion at the street stairs.** With the widening of the stair on the southeast corner of the East 68th Street/Lexington Avenue intersection and the stair at the northeast corner of the intersection, and the new station access at the north end of the station, congestion at the street stairs is expected to be reduced under the Proposed Project compared to existing conditions and the 2020 No-Build condition.
- **Elimination of pedestrian interference at the northeast corner of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue.** The street stair at this location would be relocated east approximately 30 feet and reoriented so that passengers exiting the stair would be heading east. As such, exiting passengers would no longer emerge and interfere with pedestrian flow at the northeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street. Entering passengers would no longer have to negotiate through, and interfere with, pedestrians at the corner.
- **Improved efficiency of train access and occupancy.** With the provision of additional access to the station at the north end of the station, it is anticipated that most passengers with origins/destinations north of East 68th Street would use the new stairs, and thus, utilize cars at the north end of the train, thereby providing greater balance in train loading/unloading and utilization.
- **Improved efficiency of pedestrian circulation and reduced walking time.** With the new access to the station, passengers leaving trains at the north end of the platform with a destination north of East 68th Street would no longer have to double back to the north at street level along Lexington Avenue, resulting in more convenient station access and passenger travel time savings. Similarly, passengers approaching the station from points north of East 68th Street could enter via the new stairs, avoiding the extra walk.
- **Minimization of construction risks, duration, costs and environmental impacts.** The Proposed Project avoids disturbance of sensitive utilities and avoids underpinning of Thomas Hunter Hall, thereby reducing construction risks, duration, costs and environmental impacts. Interruptions of the transit system during construction are reduced by design. Construction methods are used that minimize interference by maintaining alternate station access from the north end of the station during construction at East 68th Street.

In addition to the above, an important advantage inherent in the design is that the Proposed Project would provide two distinct and separate locations for station egress, one at the south end of the station and one at the north end. As such, if need be, the station could be evacuated more quickly, and if events render one egress area inaccessible, an alternative means of egress would exist. The Proposed Project is included in the current 2014-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – PIN number ST04-6951 – developed by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC).

## **4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION**

The discussion below applies to both the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project *with Option E1*, unless otherwise indicated specifically for Option E1.

### **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.

As with any construction project in the City, 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 (NYCDCA).

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 (see Chapter 13: Construction Impacts).

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*

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 NYC 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. 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 this EA (Appendix C), 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 two letters dated 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 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 the building. Similarly, 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. The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (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 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. 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 worse 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 *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 Chapter 10). In addition, MTA NYCT would incorporate control measures to minimize potential construction-related air quality effects into construction contract documents (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 would change the configuration of East 69th Street as a result of the installation of a neckdown on the south side of the street west of Lexington Avenue, but this would not affect travel lanes on East 68th Street, East 69th Street, or Lexington Avenue.

The Proposed Project *with Option E1*: in addition to changing the configuration of East 69th Street as a result of the installation of a neckdown on the south side of the street west of Lexington Avenue, would also require the installation of a neckdown on the south side of the street east of Lexington Avenue. This would not affect travel lanes on East 68th Street, East 69th Street, or Lexington Avenue.

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 would be 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.

#### *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* would not require modification at 931 Lexington Avenue and therefore no building materials would be disturbed. 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.

### **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 affected by the Proposed Project. In a letter dated October 27, 2015, FTA informed OPRHP that it will use the August 29, 2012, and April 2, 2015, no-effect findings to make a *de minimis* use finding under Section 4(f) for the Thomas Hunter Hall and the Imperial House Apartments (see 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) will be afforded an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed *de minimis* impact findings during the NEPA public comment period on 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 effect 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”.

This 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.

### **Public Outreach and Project Coordination**

MTA NYCT has been conducting ongoing public outreach related to the Proposed Project. MTA NYCT has been, and will continue to be in contact with Community Board 8 and has established relationships with civic organizations, the management of residential buildings, officials at Hunter College and with businesses within the project area of Lexington Avenue between East 68th and East 69th Streets.

In addition, between November 2012 and November 2013 (see Section 14.5 for dates and details), MTA NYCT met with the 69th Street Tenants Corporation to describe the environmental review process, existing congestion at the station, the scope of the Proposed Project, anticipated construction duration and the cost, and street stair options identified in this EA. At some of these meetings, the 69th Street Tenants Corporation suggested options for a street stair to serve the northbound platform at the north end of the station; options that would not involve a street stair on south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue. For each suggested option, MTA NYCT analyzed the alternative presented to determine if it satisfied the project goals and objectives and project purpose and need.

Coordination with public agencies, including New York City Department of Transportation, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, has occurred and is ongoing for the 68th Street/Hunter College Subway Station Improvement Project. These efforts will continue as the project is developed in greater detail during final design.

This EA has been made available for public review. Copies of the EA are available for review on MTA’s website and at the offices of MTA, FTA and Community Board 8. A public meeting will be held regarding the project and a 30-day public comment period will be extended for the EA. A public hearing, promoted through newspaper announcements and advertisements, will be conducted and the public will be invited to make oral and written comments. After considering public comments, FTA’s findings under NEPA will be issued and made available to the public.

Based on the analyses presented in the EA and after considering public comments, FTA will determine whether or not the Proposed Action would result in any significant adverse environmental impacts. If applicable, FTA will issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) if there are no significant environmental impacts.