

A Regional Rail Center:
MOYNIHAN EAST & WEST
August 2007





Acknowledgments

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Special thanks to Maura Moynihan for her leadership on this project.

Note: the drawings at the top of some of the pages in this report are based on the ornament on the ceiling of the Farley Post Office.





Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction and Purpose	6
The Benefits	8
Transform Penn Station into the Regional Rail Center	
Create a Great Public Space and a Gateway to NYC	
Establish a Transit-Oriented District	
Create a Passenger-Friendly Design	
Integrate the Station with the Neighborhood	
Provide More Efficient and Flexible Train Operations	
The Plans	15
Moynihan West	
Moynihan East	
Do the Venture’s Plans Deliver the Benefits?	18
Conclusion	22

Penn Station is the **most heavily used** train station in the country **in spite of itself.**

A new Moynihan Station would become the region's **pre-eminent transportation center** and a catalyst for the nation's largest transportation-oriented development district, providing New York with **enormous new capacity** for efficient transportation and compact, energy-efficient, high-density development.



Executive Summary

Although Penn Station is the nation's busiest train station, it is also surely one of its least attractive or functional. Every day, 350,000 people are forced to experience its congested platforms and stairs, navigate its confusing maze of hallways, find their way to poorly marked subway entrances, and suffer its depressing interior spaces and lack of amenities.

A quick visit to Grand Central across town is enough to be reminded of how uplifting and convenient the traveling experience can be.

Penn Station's many failures are regrettable because the station lies at the nexus of a regional network that is growing rapidly and expected to continue to grow further. NJ TRANSIT's (NJT) Trans-Hudson Express, the Long Island Rail Road's (LIRR) East Side Access, new "through" service and other possible transit improvements will greatly increase the number of people traveling from, to and through Penn Station – if the capacity is available.

Fortunately, we have the opportunity to create a great new Penn Station that will meet these challenges. Plans are on the table to transform the historic Farley Post Office building across Eighth Avenue into a world-class intermodal transit facility, relocate Madison Square Garden to the Post Office Annex at the Ninth Avenue end of the Farley Building, demolish the antiquated arena that currently sits over and confines Penn Station, and build a grand new train station on that site.

This new complex would be named in honor of the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, whose vision for the Farley Post Office as a grand and welcoming train station initiated the process now underway.

The scope of benefits that could result from a new Moynihan Station Complex is expansive. They can be classified into six major categories:

1. The transformation of Penn Station into the new Regional Rail Center.
2. Creation of great new public spaces and a gateway to New York City and the region.
3. The establishment of a transit-oriented development district following the precepts of Regional Plan Association's "access tree."
4. A passenger-friendly station design that is uplifting, simple to understand, easily traversed, and that provides capacity for additional passengers.
5. Integration of all of the elements of the district, with improved street level and below-grade circulation systems linking transportation systems and destinations in the district.
6. More efficient, more productive and less costly train operations.

The Venture – a joint effort by Vornado Realty Trust and Related Companies – has been working with Madison Square Garden, the Empire State Development Authority's Moynihan project team, Manhattan City Planning, Amtrak, NJT, and the MTA's LIRR, Metro-North and NYC Transit divisions to complete preliminary designs for both the redesigned Farley Post Office building (Moynihan West) and the brand-new train station on the existing Penn Station/MSG site (Moynihan East). This report discusses the proposal in light of the six benefits described above. The Venture's plans have great potential to achieve these benefits, but care must be taken to make certain that the developers' plans do not compromise the primary function of the Moynihan Station complex as a grand train station servicing the entire metropolitan region and beyond.



Introduction and Purpose

Since 1961 when the original marble-and-granite Beaux-Arts masterpiece known as Pennsylvania Station was torn down in an act of sanctioned urban vandalism, its replacement has offered commuters and intercity travelers alike an experience that they will not soon forget – for all the wrong reasons.

Every weekday, 350,000 commuters travel through Penn Station, waiting in claustrophobic queues to leave narrow and overcrowded platforms, only to trudge through a low-ceiling labyrinth of corridors to find themselves either in clogged subway stations or emerge disoriented into daylight onto too-narrow sidewalks. And at the end of the day, they reverse the process, adding a wait for a train platform announcement without the simple luxury of a seat. If they are not regulars, they are likely to be confused by the poorly marked maze of entrances, exits and corridors that hides the station from them or misdirects them.

Above Penn Station sits Madison Square Garden, a sports and entertainment arena with 320 events a year that, because of its structural requirements, oppresses the space below and prevents Penn Station from properly serving its users. Penn Station is hardly even visible from the street.

By contrast, Grand Central Terminal, which dodged the wrecking ball wielded at Penn Station, offers such an uplifting experience that even hardened commuters stop to marvel at the Main Concourse’s elaborately painted ceilings while tourists flash away with their cameras. **When was the last time a tourist took a photo of Penn Station?**

Yet Penn Station is the busiest rail station in the nation. One-third of Amtrak’s customers are going to, from, or through it. It is the major terminus for the busiest commuter rail operator in America – the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) – and for the third busiest, NJ TRANSIT (NJT). Flanking the station are the New York subway system’s fifth and sixth most heavily used stations, with the third ranked, Herald Square, only a block to the east. Though 325,000 daily trips are made in and out of the two subway stations named “Penn Station,” they are functionally all but isolated from it.

Penn Station is the most heavily used train station in the country in spite of itself.

Penn Station’s many failures are regrettable because the station lies at the nexus of a regional network that is growing rapidly and expected to continue to grow further – if the

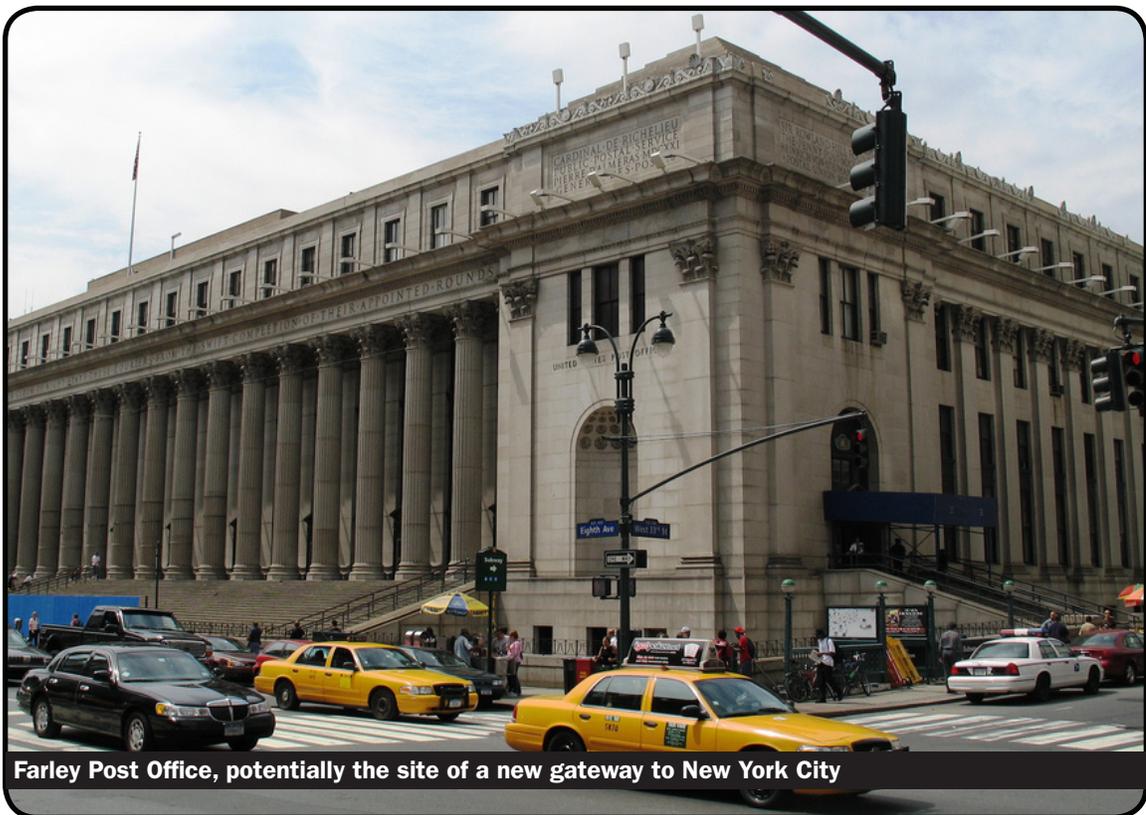
capacity is available. In the last decade, the number of Penn Station riders on commuter rail and Amtrak has grown by 26 percent on an average weekday, and subway ridership at the two adjacent stations has swelled by 34 percent. In the next ten years, expected service improvements will increase the number of people traveling through Penn Station.

- NJ TRANSIT will be adding a new commuter rail tunnel under the Hudson (Trans-Hudson Express, or THE, formerly known as Access to the Region’s Core) by 2016. The tunnel will make it possible for every one of NJT’s nine major northern New Jersey rail lines to terminate in Manhattan, and it will double the number of travelers arriving to the Penn Station complex during peak times.
- In 2013, when the LIRR’s East Side Access project is completed and LIRR trains can access Grand Central Terminal, Penn Station’s peak-period capacity will be opened up, making it possible for some Metro-North trains on the New Haven and Hudson lines to access Penn Station.
- This connection will provide capacity for new “through” services (including Long Island-New Jersey, Connecticut-New Jersey, and Upstate New York-Long Island), which will make Penn Station even more of a regional rail hub.
- Dedicated one-seat train service to John F. Kennedy and Stewart airports remains a possibility.
- The New York State Senate High-Speed Rail Task Force has developed a plan for increased rail service in the Empire Corridor between Penn Station and Upstate New York. This plan would more than double the number of daily trains and introduce express service.

In addition to expected transit improvements, the neighborhood around Penn Station will soon be redeveloped, as the Far West Side is transformed into a new Central Business District with Penn Station well situated to serve it. About 10 million square feet of office space is expected to be added in the immediate vicinity of the station in the next 20 years. The entire Hudson Yards area (West of Eighth Avenue from 30th to 42nd Streets) will include an additional 24 million square feet of office space and 14,000 new dwelling units. This new development will put even more demand on the station, even after the #7 subway is extended to the neighborhood.

The existing Penn Station is simply not up to these challenges. Fortunately, there is an historic opportunity for change. The James A. Farley Post Office, on the west side of Eighth Avenue at 32nd Street, is a grand building built by the same architects, McKim, Mead & White, as the original Penn Station. Proposals are on the table to transform it into a world-class intermodal transit facility, relocate Madison Square Garden to the Post Office Annex at the Ninth Avenue end of the Farley Building, demolish the antiquated arena that currently sits over and confines Penn Station, and build a grand new train station on that site. This new Moynihan Station complex would consist of Moynihan West (the Farley Building west of Eighth Avenue) and Moynihan East (a new building between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, replacing the existing Penn Station). It would be named in honor of the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, whose vision for the Farley Post Office as a grand and welcoming train station initiated the process now underway.

This paper catalogues the transportation benefits that would be accrued from the construction of Moynihan East and West. **If properly implemented, Moynihan Station will offer travelers the same aesthetically uplifting experience as Penn Station's early twentieth century predecessor, while providing the capacity to meet the region's growing mobility needs well into the twenty-first century.** Taken together, the Moynihan Station complex from Seventh to Ninth Avenues, between 31st and 33rd Streets, could contain a world-class train station, a new sports arena, and public entrances spread across the entire site. This complex would become the region's pre-eminent transportation center and a catalyst for the nation's largest transportation-oriented development district, providing New York with enormous new capacity for efficient transportation and compact, energy-efficient, high-density development.





The Benefits

The scope of benefits that could result from a new Moynihan Station Complex is expansive. They can be classified into six major categories; in the following section, they are described.

1. Transform Penn Station into the Regional Rail Center

Moynihan Station should be positioned to be a true Regional Rail Center whose importance will greatly increase in coming decades as the significant transit service improvements planned by NJT, LIRR, Metro-North and Amtrak lead to increased ridership, and as highway congestion in the tri-state area makes highway access more problematic.

By 2016, all of northern New Jersey's nine rail lines will have one-seat access to the complex, which will double peak time ridership. By 2013, thanks to East Side Access, LIRR will be able to increase the quantity of direct service to its branch lines from Moynihan Station. Added to this could be brand new service to two of Metro-North's three major rail lines, growing intercity rail service on both the Washington-to-Boston Northeast Corridor and on the Empire Line to upstate New York, through-services among the three commuter rail lines, and direct airport service to JFK and Stewart.

Put another way, Penn Station will be the only place in the region where one can catch a subway train to four out of the five NYC boroughs, a suburban train directly on 22 of the region's 23 commuter rail lines, an Amtrak train to major cities in the Northeast, South and Midwest, or a train to the airport.

The Moynihan West and Moynihan East improvements will be needed to accommodate the unprecedented growth in ridership that will be generated by these service expansion plans.

Rail-to-rail and rail-to-subway transfers should be made much more convenient. The station should be laid out more efficiently for more reliable and extensive train service. Passengers should enjoy a higher level of amenities, easier access and more rational circulation patterns. Of course, a pleasant and reliable traveling experience would invite still more users.

2. Create a Great Public Space and a Gateway to NYC

Moynihan West should preserve the celebrated architectural features of the Farley Post Office while transforming its use for dual public purposes – an arena and a train station. Both of these major uses should function within one structure with minimum conflict, with separate entrances and circulation. Both could enjoy a new grand train hall as the central focus of attention – however, it is critical that this space feel like a public space whose primary purpose is as a train hall. MSG and other uses can have a presence there but they should not overwhelm it.

In Moynihan East, a grand new public space should be created, open to natural sunlight. This train hall is particularly important because more than 400,000 people a day will pass through or wait for a train within it. Again, there is a role for retail and other uses there but these should not impede on the hall's function as a transportation center.

Moynihan East should be visible and inviting from the street and nearby subway stations, unlike Penn Station today. For those arriving on commuter and intercity trains, Moynihan East should be a majestic new gateway to New York City. The space should be easy to navigate to, from and within, with multiple links to the outside, to the intercity and commuter rail trains below, and to the subway stations nearby.

3. Establish a Transit-Oriented District

The landmark new train station should be a magnet for a great urban Transit-Oriented District (TOD) equaling if not surpassing New York City's other significant TODs, Grand Central Terminal and Rockefeller Center. A new Moynihan Station will be a necessary amenity for the hundreds of thousands of new residents and workers that are expected in the Far West Side in the next 30 years. In fact, the full redevelopment of the area (as described above, 24 million square feet of office space and 14,000 new dwelling units) cannot be achieved without a significant improvement in train service from

New Jersey to Penn Station and a new Moynihan Station.

The “Access Tree” model, first described in RPA’s Second Regional Plan, calls for the density above a transit station to match the richness of the transit service below it. The development rights that come with both Moynihan East and West will make it possible to build substantial development directly above both buildings. Alternatively, some or all of the development rights could be transferred to nearby sites on adjacent blocks.

Finally, Moynihan Station should include retail spaces designed and located to serve busy travelers as well as those who might linger to shop. Retail should serve to liven up the space, as it does in Grand Central, but it should not overwhelm the hall, which is first and foremost a transportation facility.

4. Create a Passenger-Friendly Design

Circulation and Amenity. The maze of corridors in today’s Penn Station is confusing, lacking even clear lines of sight to help in navigation. Confusing and competing signs presenting incomplete or conflicting messages – vestiges of a series of independent and uncoordinated capital projects by the various rail operators – should be replaced by a uniform and consistent system of signs and architectural finishes.

For commuters, the paths to NJT and LIRR ticketing areas, waiting areas, and boarding zones should be direct and logical. LIRR and NJT ticketing and waiting areas should be near each other in order to facilitate joint ticketing and connections between the two operators’ trains. Finally, pedestrian corridors to NJT’s new Trans-Hudson Express station on 34th Street should align with the Moynihan East commuter concourses, and each of the Moynihan East concourses should provide access to all eleven existing station platforms, to make it easy for passengers to find their trains.

Giving Amtrak travelers a higher level of amenity than they have today is critically important. Penn Station is the origin or destination for 20 percent of the nation’s intercity rail travelers, despite very limited comfort and amenities at the station. The expansion and redesign of Amtrak facilities as part of the new Moynihan Station is particularly important as inter-city service is expanded with the completion of Trans-Hudson Express and East Side Access, and congestion in the region increases.

Passenger Information. Instead of today’s “each railroad for itself” confusion, the new Moynihan Station should encourage transit agencies to work cooperatively, adopt universal directional signs, and provide real-time train information.

Seating. Penn Station currently does not offer enough seating to commuters waiting for their track announcements (though Amtrak does offer a seating area). This is particu-

larly problematic because track announcements are difficult to make in advance due to Penn Station’s through-service operations. (Grand Central doesn’t have seating either but passengers can wait sitting in the train before it departs.) Moynihan Station should offer comfortable waiting areas for Amtrak travelers and commuters alike.

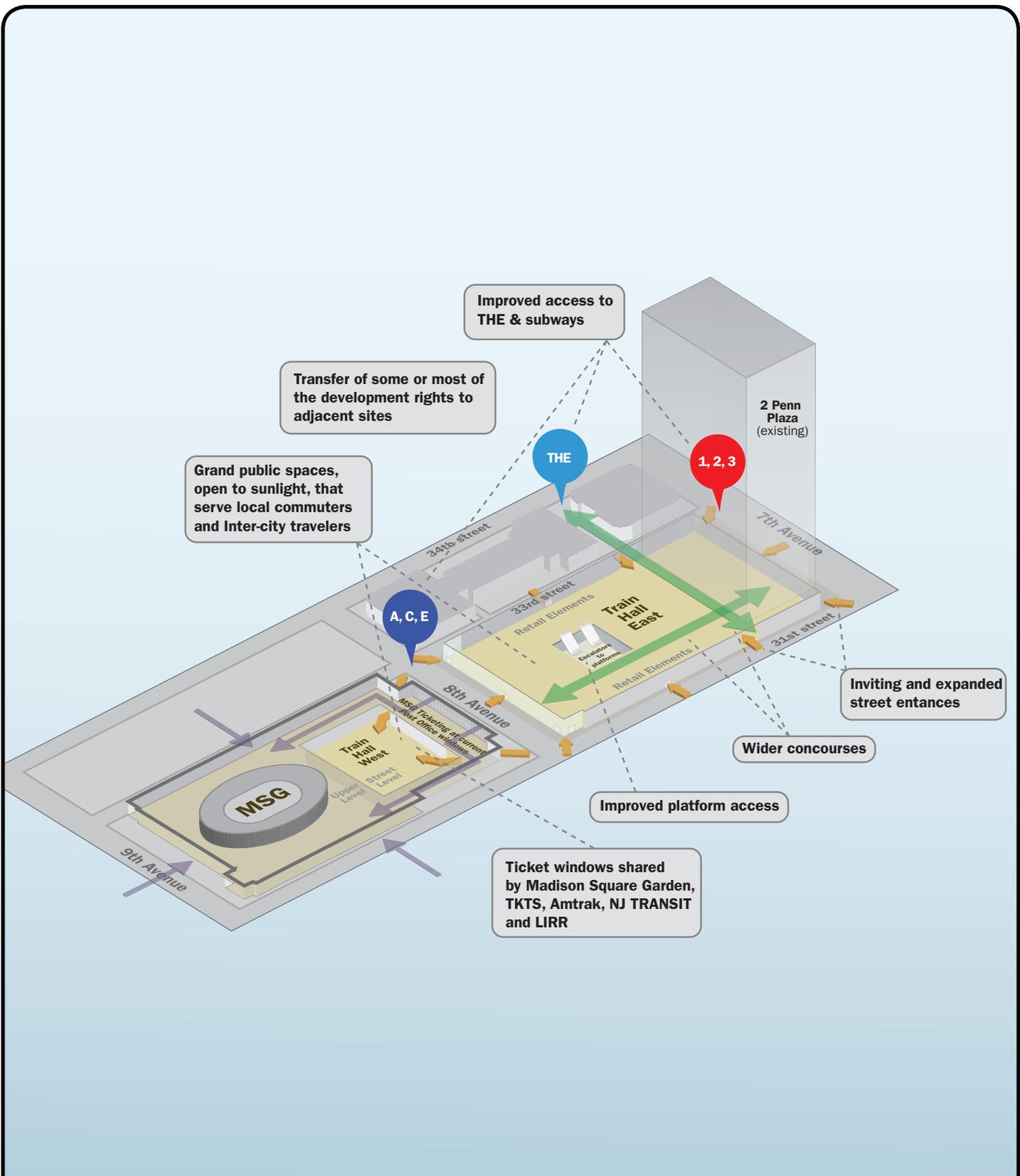
Relief of Overcrowded Concourses. The increased use of Penn Station, though of course a positive development, has put added pressure on the poor circulation features brought about by years of piecemeal improvements combined with vestigial elements of the original station. Little more can be done to improve circulation within the existing structure. The new Moynihan Station should include very wide concourses to accommodate high pedestrian traffic demand, and numerous vertical circulation elements to get people to and from their platforms as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Shorter Queues. For travelers, perhaps the most galling feature of the existing Penn Station is the long waits to leave the crowded platforms. The new station should greatly increase the number of “vertical circulation elements” at each platform, significantly reducing the amount of time passengers must wait to leave the platforms, and speeding up the process of clearing a platform of passengers following train arrivals. For commuting passengers looking to board crowded trains in the evening peak period, the length of the boarding queues at stairs and escalators down to the platforms also would be reduced, since boarding passengers would be spread over a greater number of stairs and escalators.

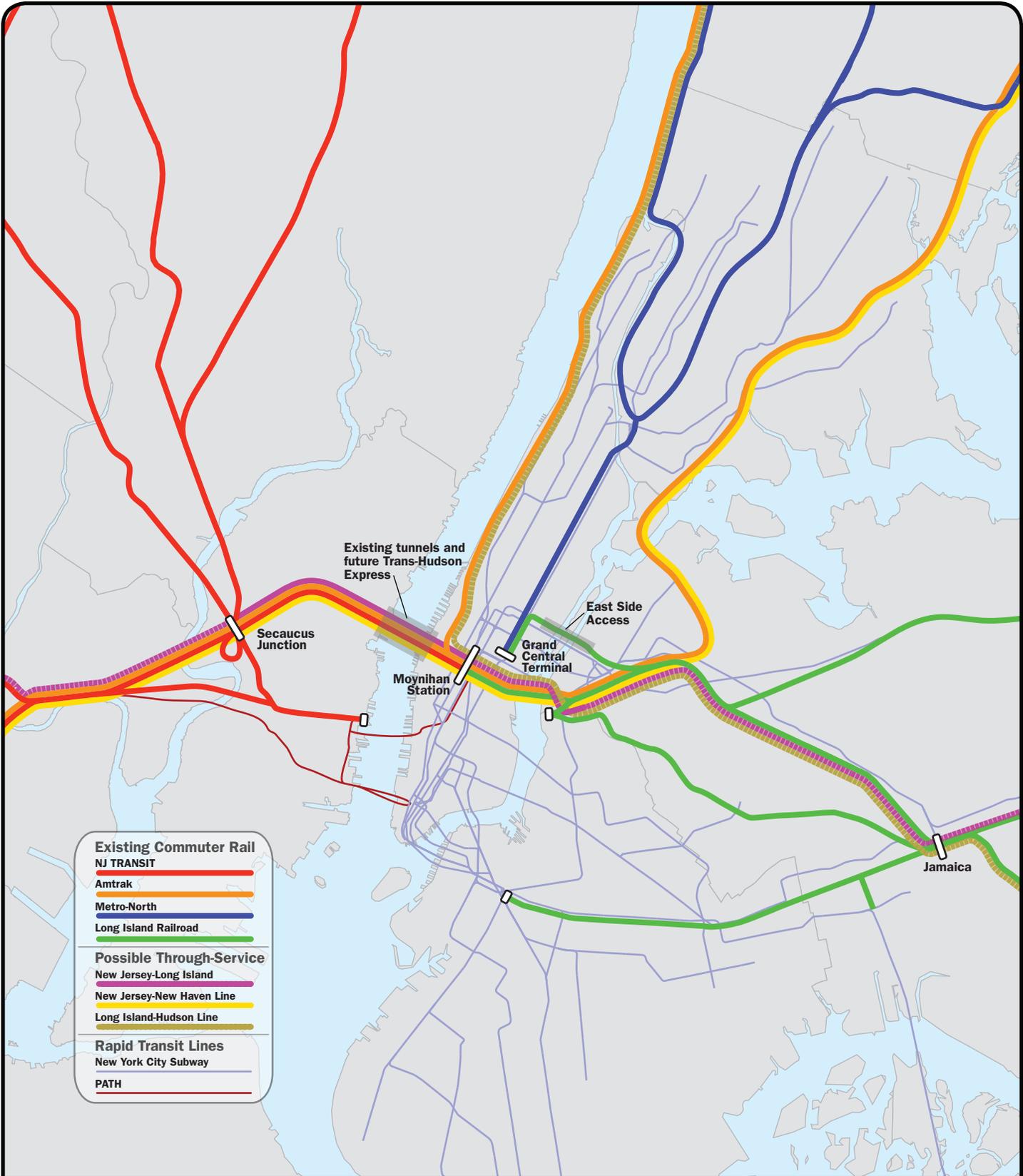
Platform space should also not be too constrained by overly wide columns to support any new development above the station. Towers above may be acceptable in certain locations, but their structural support system should not impede on the building’s primary purpose as a transportation facility.

Expanded Station Entrances. Today, most passengers entering Penn Station from the street use either the Seventh Avenue entrance at 32nd Street or the “LIRR entrance” just west of Seventh Avenue on 34th Street, both hopelessly overcrowded. Relatively few use the two Eighth Avenue entrances at 31st and 33rd Streets. None of these are true entrances – instead, they are nothing more than small vestibules leading directly to stairs and escalators. The new design should ensure that entrances to the station – particularly those on Seventh Avenue – are widened.

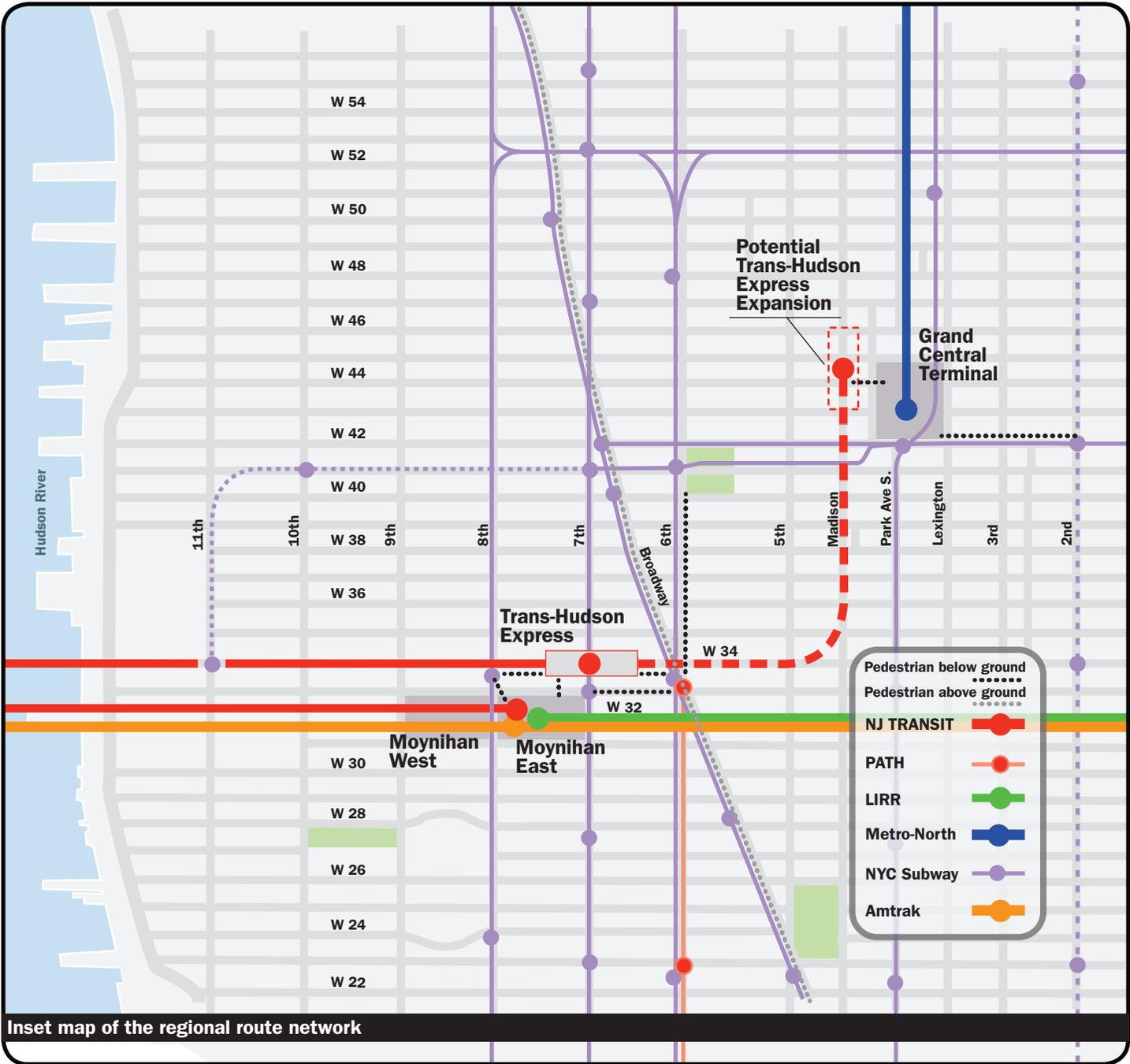
Taxi Access. The current taxi queuing on both Seventh and Eighth Avenues creates serious traffic problems, with the Seventh Avenue location particularly troublesome. The new design should eliminate this problem.



Desirable features of a new Moynihan Station



The network of existing and potential regional rail lines extending from Moynihan Station



5. Integrate the Station with the Neighborhood

The new Moynihan Station should be well integrated into its neighborhood. Ground-level concourses within the station should add to the street grid in an area where sidewalks are congested. Moynihan Station should facilitate the creation of an attractive, climate-protected underground network of corridors within the station and leading out to the surrounding neighborhood, potentially from Bryant Park to the new Madison Square Garden, and possibly even farther west as development proceeds in the Far West Side. The long-closed “Gimbels” underground corridor, which runs from Seventh Avenue to Sixth Avenue, should be reopened. Eventually, the corridor under Sixth Avenue that runs all the way from 34th Street to 40th Street could also be opened. Connections to all the subway lines should be improved, including to the Sixth Avenue lines.

6. Provide More Efficient and Flexible Train Operations

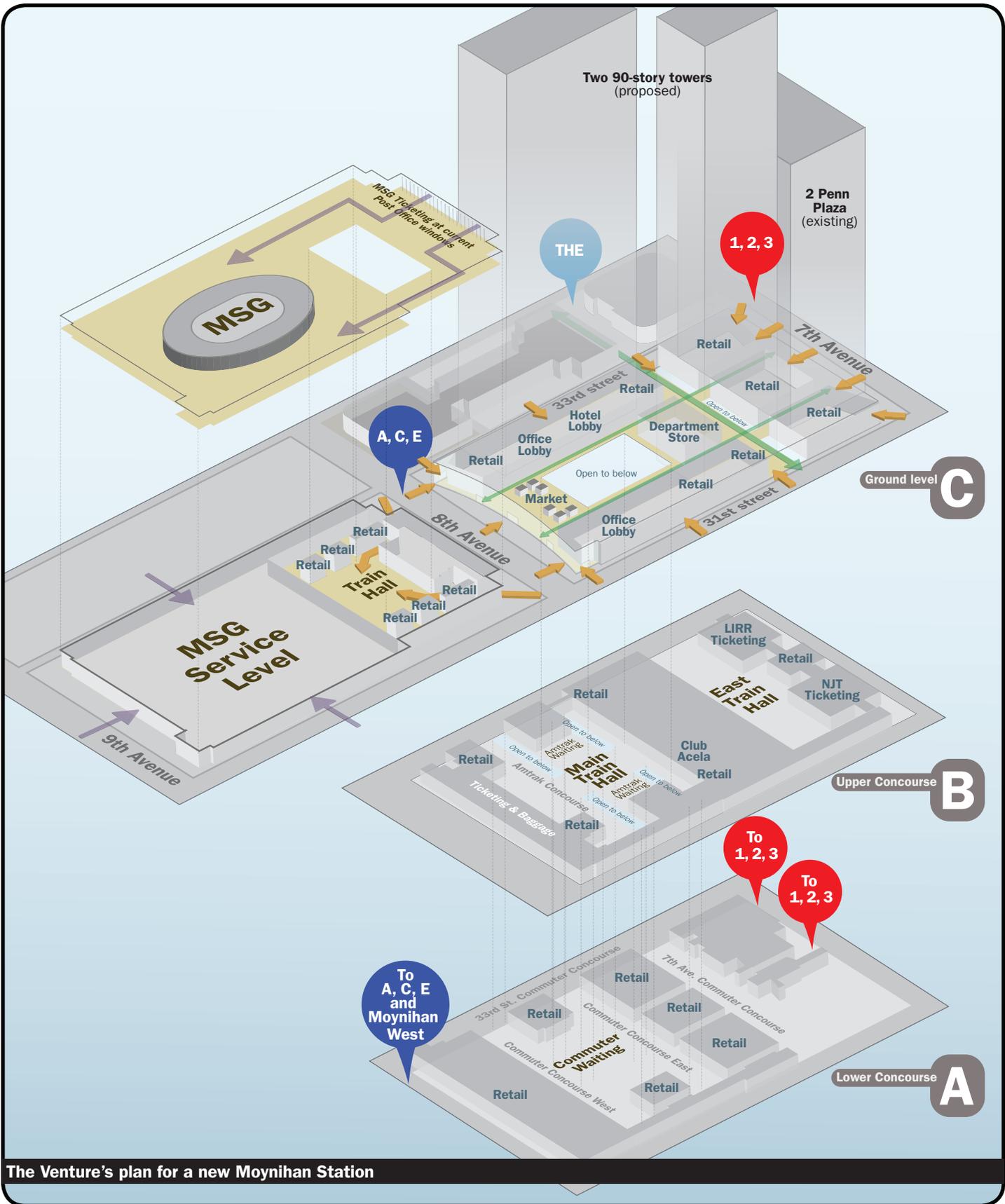
Universal Platform Access. Today, the three train operators – Amtrak, LIRR and NJT – are strait-jacketed by restrictions on the platforms they can use. Assignments also vary by time of day, inhibiting the ability for changes in response to emergencies. The new Moynihan Station should give all operators access to nearly all train platforms in both Moynihan East and West, as either emergency or long-term changes dictate. This would provide enormous advantage to the three carriers. Rather than being forced to use specific sets of tracks for all train movements, dispatchers would be able to shift track assignments in response to train delays or a track blockage that takes out a portion of the system. Passengers arriving to the station would be directed to any platform using real-time information systems and multiple access points to their departing train. This flexibility would reduce delays during outages and shorten the time needed to recover from them.

This new flexibility would also enable changes in future track assignments as services are added and passenger vol-

umes grow. Given the significance of train service improvements in the next 20 years, **the new Moynihan Station should be poised for maximum flexibility to respond to change, enabling the new station to offer a wide variety of services to more places.**

Shortened Dwell Times. The time a train spends in the station limits the capacity to turn commuter trains and adds time to through-trains. These dwell times are, in part, a function of the time required to off-load and board passengers. The new Moynihan Station design should provide more platform stair and escalator capacity and better distributing access along the platforms, to shorten the time needed to board a train. As a result, the railroads would be able to reduce the component of dwell time attributable to passenger off-loading and boarding. This would aid the process of recovering from delay conditions and at least marginally increase the number of trains that can be handled in the station.

Reduced Transit Operating Costs. Presently, NJT, LIRR and Amtrak operate relatively independently from each other. The new Moynihan station should give the three carriers the opportunity to consolidate many of their operating and maintenance functions, which could lower costs. Already, LIRR and Amtrak are saving money by jointly operating the Penn Station Central Control complex, which controls the movement of trains. The new Moynihan complex should allow the three carriers combine ticket selling, information dissemination, cleaning, maintenance, repair, security, common crew facilities, utility consolidation and perhaps ultimately a common operations center and common management – further cutting costs. These steps would have to be executed in a way that maintains a level of control for each operator, with contractual relationships subject to performance measures. In the long run, the operators may find that moving in this direction, possibly with a single entity in charge of the new station, would be to their advantage, overcoming the long history of competition and distrust that is as dysfunctional and outdated as the Penn Station they inherited almost 50 years ago.



The Venture's plan for a new Moynihan Station



The Plans

In 2005, the Venture – a joint effort by Vornado Realty Trust and Related Companies – won an RFP for the redevelopment of the Farley Building into a new train station. Ever since, the Venture has been in active negotiations with Madison Square Garden to move the arena into the Farley Annex, at the Ninth Avenue end of the building, and with MSDC, the city, and the transit agencies to build a brand new train station and two towers on the existing Penn Station/Madison Square Garden site. As a technical matter, the Venture does not have exclusive rights to developing Moynihan East. They do, however, have a significant natural advantage due to the fact that a) they are redeveloping the Farley building, and b) they have many holdings in the immediate vicinity of the complex, which would allow them to transfer development rights from the site should the City allow them to do so. This concept is elaborated on later in this report.

The Related/Vornado Venture, working with Madison Square Garden and public agencies, has completed preliminary designs for both Moynihan East and West. After the Venture’s plan is described below, this report discusses it in light of the six Benefits described earlier in this report. Should other development plans for Moynihan East emerge in the future, they should be assessed against these same criteria.

Moynihan West

According to the Venture’s preliminary design, Eighth Avenue would be the main entrance for both sets of visitors. Madison Square Garden patrons would be encouraged to use the building’s grand staircase. If necessary, they will stop at the Post Office’s ticketing windows, which would be converted into Garden ticket booths (with the postal functions possibly being retained at some windows). They would walk around either side of the ticket windows to a mezzanine walkway overlooking the train hall on the way to the arena to the west.

Travelers destined for Amtrak or commuter trains would likely prefer to enter the building at street level instead of climbing up the grand stair only to have to head back down four levels to the platforms. Street-level entrances would be located on the 31st Street and 33rd Street corners, as well as at mid-block between Eighth and Ninth Avenues on 31st and 33rd Streets. Additional entrances to Moynihan West would be built on Ninth Avenue. Upon entering, travelers would proceed to a modern, attractive, glass-canopied West

Train Hall to be built within the former mail sorting room behind and beneath the row of Post Office sales windows. They would stop by train ticket offices, if necessary, before moving down to the train platforms using a series of escalator banks. Thus although transit users and MSG patrons would be using the same building, their flows of traffic would be largely separated.

Both the Moynihan West station and the new Madison Square Garden arena would be directly accessible underground from the Eighth Avenue subway station and, via a walkway beneath 33rd Street, the Moynihan East site and Sixth Seventh Avenue subways. Escalators would bring both rail passengers and Garden patrons from the subway up to the level of the West Train Hall. From there, Garden patrons would ascend one more level on stairs and escalators to the main arena level.

The West Train Hall would provide direct access to six of the station’s 11 platforms. The remaining five platforms would be reached via a widened and lengthened West End Concourse.

Moynihan East

After Madison Square Garden moves to Moynihan West, the Venture’s plan is to tear down today’s Penn Station and rebuild it as a grand new structure with two train halls, new access to the platforms, three skylit atrium spaces, two east-west corridors linking the atriums, and new and relocated connections to adjacent subway stations and to the street. In addition, under the Venture development plan, the project would provide up to 5.5 million square feet of office, hotel, and retail space, including the development of two tall towers containing mostly office space. One tower would be located at the northwest corner of the site, near Eighth Avenue and 33rd Street, and the other further to the east and just north of 31st Street. A 250-room hotel is also envisioned at the top of the new 33rd Street office tower. In addition to retail space placed at key locations through the site, there would be a 300,000 square feet anchor department store west of the existing 2 Penn Plaza office building, which would remain. The western edge of Moynihan East would feature a “porous” market/retail area along Eighth Avenue between 31st and 33rd Streets, with a view toward Moynihan West and its grand staircase.

The proposed Venture design for Moynihan East includes several other key features. At the street level of the station (known as Level C), there would be two east-west

concourses connecting the Main Train Hall (in the western half of the building) with the East Train Hall (on the eastern half). The corridors would be constructed just north and south of the 32nd Street axis, adding to the street-level pedestrian circulation grid while also serving the station. The new department store would be centered along these two concourses, between the two train halls. Also on Level C, there would be a new skylit galleria oriented in a north-south direction just west of 2 Penn Plaza that would connect Moynihan East with the new Trans-Hudson Express station at 34th Street. The LIRR entrance on 34th Street just west of Seventh Avenue would be moved west to align with the Trans-Hudson Express concourse and reduce congestion at the 34th and Seventh intersection.

The Moynihan East concept provides a clearer demarcation between the spaces used primarily by commuters and those that are used by Amtrak intercity passengers. Unlike the current station, where commuters and Amtrak passengers mix within the Main Concourse, the proposed plan would have all Amtrak passengers board their trains from Level B and all commuters and suburban passengers board from Level A. Arriving passengers from any of the railroads will be able to use all available stairs and escalators to quickly ascend to the station concourses.

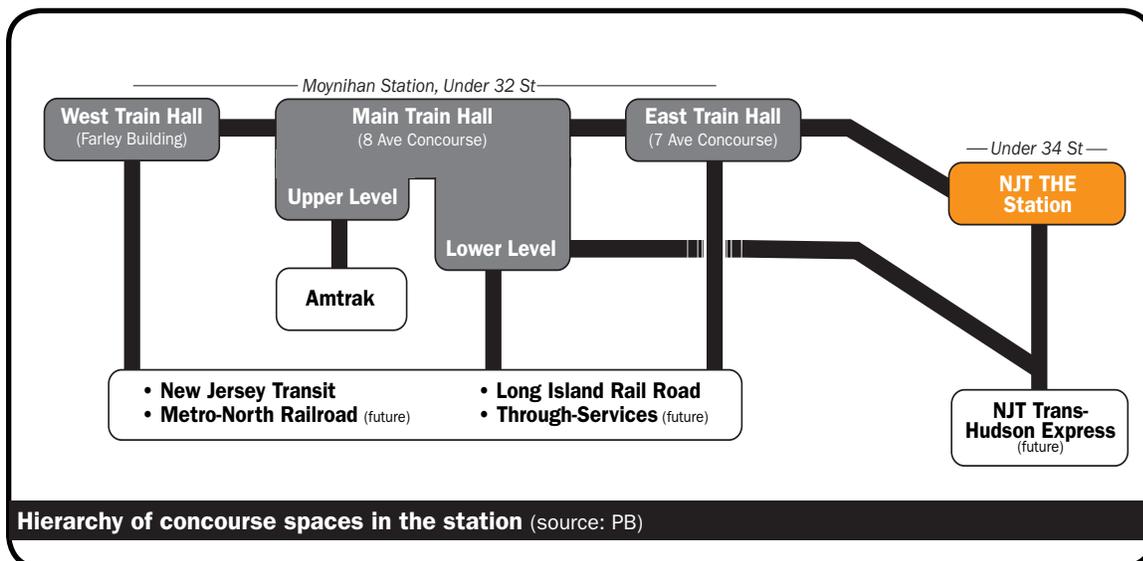
Within the Main Train Hall, Level B will be occupied by Amtrak's facilities for intercity rail passengers, including a large waiting room with seating, ticketing area with ticket vending machines and staffed ticket windows, baggage check and claim areas, passenger services office and the ClubAcela lounge. Departing Amtrak passengers would descend to their trains on escalators and elevators directly from this zone. Amtrak passengers would be able to reach this level via stairways and escalators either from Level A or Level C.

Level A would become the focal point for commuters and suburban rail passengers. At Level A there would be

three north-south concourses extending from 31st to 33rd Streets, each with access to all eleven station platforms, space for both queuing and circulation, and up-to-date train information. Two of these concourses would provide a direct underground connection to the Trans-Hudson Express station under 34th Street. Each concourse would be wider and have a higher ceiling than the corridors there today. The two concourses to the west – both within the Main Train Hall – would open up to a large commuter waiting area between them, below the Amtrak waiting room on Level B. The easterly concourse, formed by linking together and enlarging the existing LIRR and NJT Seventh Avenue concourses, will have its ceiling opened up to the new north-south galleria above. The current east-west connecting concourse at Level A under 33rd Street would be widened to better link these concourses, permit easier pedestrian flow and enable upgrading of the retail space.

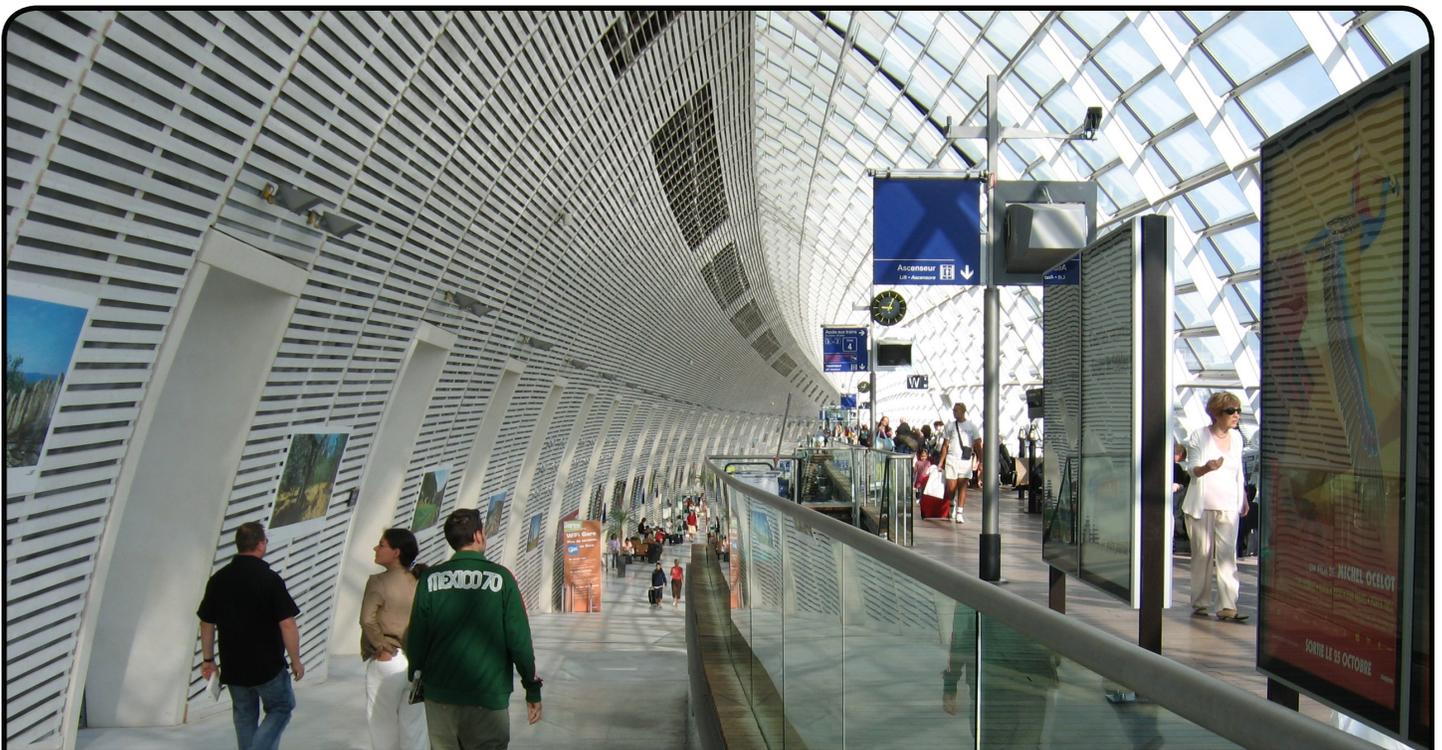
NJT and LIRR ticketing would take place in the Main Train Hall and East Train Hall. Some ticketing facilities and waiting room seating could be provided on balconies at Level B overlooking the commuter concourse, in order to maximize the area at Level A available for passenger queuing and circulation. The symmetry of the design and the proximity of the proposed LIRR and NJT ticketing facilities would make joint ticketing easier to accomplish than in the existing station.

The Venture design for Moynihan East would also include one or more iconic features, not unlike the clock at Grand Central Terminal, which could become meeting places for passengers. The location and design of these features are still uncertain, complicated by the desire to offer such a feature for both intercity and commuter passengers. Since the current design separates these two markets, two such focal points, each distinctive, may be both desirable and necessary.





Today's Penn Station: dark, unsightly and overcrowded



Avignon train station in France: airy, functional and people-friendly



Do the Venture's Plans Deliver the Benefits?

Earlier in this report, we outlined the six broad transportation benefits that a redesigned Penn Station could provide. Here are the Venture's proposals, along with RPA's suggestions on how to improve the design.

1. Transform Penn Station into the Regional Rail Center

The Venture Plan will significantly improve the efficiency of Penn Station as well as the comfort and convenience of those traveling from, to and through the station. The increased ridership that NJT, Amtrak and Metro-North are expecting in coming decades will be comfortably accommodated in the new station with more train hall space, wider concourses and more numerous vertical circulation elements.

- » It is imperative that there be no major disruptions to train station operations during construction of the complex, which the Venture expects to last until 2018. Construction will require a carefully choreographed series of phases that significantly disrupt neither the operation of well over 1,000 Amtrak, LIRR and NJT trains daily, nor the schedule of events at MSG. The recent reconstruction of the LIRR's Atlantic Terminal and related subway facilities underscores just how disruptive construction of this kind can be and how important it is to carefully design, stage, and execute it.
- » A related issue is the need for a broader district-wide strategy for bringing construction equipment and materials into (and demolition debris and fill out of) the Far West Side. With major construction slated to begin at the Javits Center, the Hudson Yards, the #7 subway extension, at Penn Station and the Trans-Hudson Express tunnels, unless a district-wide strategy is implemented for these activities, they could cause unprecedented disruption of traffic all over Midtown Manhattan and adjoining districts for a generation or longer, with enormous implications for quality of life and economic activities throughout the City.

2. Create a Great Public Space and a Gateway to NYC

The Venture Plan preserves the grand entrance to the Farley Building and breathes new life into the main Hall by converting the Post Office windows to ticket counters for MSG. It also creates three new beautiful and light-filled train halls that are visible and inviting from the street, the train platforms and nearby subway stations.

- » Given the fact that there are several dozen windows in the Post Office Hall, RPA encourages the Venture to study the feasibility of assigning a few windows to the transit agencies and TKTS (discount ticket booths for Broadway and off-Broadway shows), in addition to MSG and the Post Office. A real multi-use hall would be of great public benefit. Window assignment should be flexible and respond to short-term needs among all potential users.
- » Although a healthy mix of uses in the station can help to activate it, there is a concern that MSG and retail operations will overwhelm the train halls visually and functionally. Efforts should be made to promote the sense that this is primarily a public space.

3. Establish a Transit-Oriented District

A new Moynihan Station, no matter who develops it, will provide vital access for residents and workers in the soon-to-be redeveloped Far West Side. In addition to serving that development, the Venture's current designs also include two new towers above Moynihan East, which would obviously also greatly benefit from their location near transit. Together, the towers would include up to 5.5 million square feet of office, hotel and retail space. The majority of the 15,000 people who work in those buildings or are simply visiting would have arrived by transit directly into Moynihan Station without having to negotiate a street crossing or another mode of travel. They would also have access to the new and more varied retail establishments in

the complex without having to venture outside. Intercity travelers would be able to stay at the hotel within the complex.

In order to reduce the complexity and cost of construction over an active train station, the Venture is also considering transferring a large portion of the development rights to nearby sites. Vornado owns several land parcels in the immediate area of the station that could be the sites of larger redevelopment thanks to the transfer of air rights from Penn Station. This course of action would require the City to designate a special receiving district as part of its ULURP process.

- » RPA encourages the Venture and the City to continue investigating the transfer of most development rights to other sites in the immediate vicinity of the station. It would greatly simplify the construction process, as the new Moynihan Station structure could be built using the existing MSG's support columns, and reduce the risk of significant disruptions in train service. Transferring the development rights should have no effect on the value of the development in proximity to the station, and in fact may add value by taking the development a slight distance removed from the transportation activities below.
- » The Ninth Avenue entrance to Moynihan West should not feel like a back entrance to the train station (or to Madison Square Garden for that matter). The building should be designed to be inviting from all directions.
- » Connections between the Seventh and Eighth Avenue subways and Moynihan Station should be wide enough to ensure ease of transfer for train travelers, office users and pedestrians.

4. Create a Passenger-Friendly Design

Circulation and Amenity. The Venture's design would greatly simplify and improve pedestrian circulation in the station for intercity travelers and commuters alike. The

open station design, with high ceilings and glass skylights, would also help orient travelers, making their trips faster, while paradoxically also making them willing to linger longer.

For commuters, the paths to the NJT and LIRR ticketing areas, waiting areas, and Level A boarding zones would be direct and logical. Adjacent LIRR and NJT ticketing and waiting areas would facilitate joint ticketing and connections between the two operators' trains. The pedestrian connections to NJT's new Trans-Hudson Express station on 34th Street would align with the Moynihan East commuter concourses, and each of the Moynihan East concourses will provide access to all eleven existing station platforms, making it easy for passengers to find the place where they can board their train.

Amtrak passengers would use the concourse's grid system to bring them to Level B. They would be able to easily bypass the shoppers and pedestrians that could accumulate at Level C, as well as avoid the crowds of commuters who will dominate the concourses on Level A during rush hours. Direct escalators to the platforms from Level B will allow Amtrak departing passenger flows to remain separate from those of commuters. All of the facilities and amenities required by Amtrak travelers would be provided in the Main Train Hall at Level B, including ticketing, train information, seated waiting areas, the ClubAcela first class lounge, and baggage check and claim facilities. With a strong enough security system, it may even be possible for this baggage-handling facility to check in passengers bound for Stewart or JFK airports.

Passenger Information. Moynihan's three train halls would each offer access to all 11 platforms and 21 sets of tracks. Directional signage would be universal. Real-time train information for all trains would be found in all three train halls, and information would be closer to the station's entry points, which is especially helpful when train service is delayed.

Relief of Overcrowded Concourses. The Venture's Moynihan East plan would significantly improve Penn Station's most troublesome conditions. The 33rd Street

Condition	Platform...										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Existing Station	8 stairs or escalators	8	5	5	6	6	9	9	9	10	8
Proposed Moynihan East and West	10	10	11	12	12	13	11	11	10	11	9
Total Added stairs or escalators	2	2	6	7	6	7	2	2	1	1	1

Number of vertical circulation elements (source: PB)

Connecting Concourse (otherwise known as fast-food alley), now constrained by the One Penn Plaza property line, would be widened. The Level A concourse to the west would also be widened. To the east, the separate LIRR and NJT concourse areas, now disconnected, would be joined and widened. New escalators would be installed connecting the east-west pedestrian spines at the Level C with the Level A, speeding commuters to and from their trains. Similarly, new escalators would bring Amtrak riders to the Level B waiting areas. Each of these features would reduce pedestrian congestion. The pedestrian level of service analysis that will be undertaken to support detailed design and fulfill the requirements of the project's Environmental Impact Statement will be used to ensure that pedestrian circulation facilities are adequately designed to meet projected future demand.

Shorter Queues. The Venture's plans currently call for as many as 37 stairways and escalators to be added over the 11 platforms – 21 under Moynihan West and 19 under Moynihan East. These new vertical access points would increase by as much as 45 percent the total number of platform stairs and escalators, significantly reduce the amount of time passengers must wait to leave the platforms, and speed up the process of clearing a platform of passengers following train arrivals. For commuter passengers looking to board crowded trains in the evening peak period, the length of the boarding queues at stairs and escalators down to the platforms also would be reduced, since boarding passengers would be spread over a greater number of stairs and escalators.

Penn Station currently meets the minimum standards for accessibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, five of the eleven station platforms have only a single passenger elevator, which makes it very difficult for wheelchair-bound passengers to access trains on a platform when the elevator is out of service for repairs or maintenance. The Venture plan would provide at least two elevators to each platform. The proposed plan also provides significantly more elevators linking the concourse levels with each other and with street level. The extra elevator capacity also would be helpful for passengers carrying luggage or with baby strollers. The greater number of elevator connections to street level will make it easier to access an elevator near the station entrances and taxi pick-up and drop-off points.

Expanded Station Entrances. With the new design, the entrance at Seventh and 32nd would be expanded into two larger entrances just to the north and south, widening the effective width by a factor of three. The station will have entrances on all four avenue and street frontages, with grand entrance lobbies on both Seventh and Eighth Avenues. Within the Seventh Avenue lobby, two large banks of stairs and escalators will lead down to the commuter concourse, providing a threefold increase in capacity

over the existing 32nd Street stairs and escalators. At 34th Street, the LIRR entrance would be eliminated in favor of a larger set of escalators located further to the west within an interior public space that would align with the East Train Hall across 33rd Street and provide indoor access to the One Penn Plaza office tower and a new tower to be located on Seventh Avenue. This relocated entrance would lessen the incredibly jammed and unsafe conditions at Seventh Avenue and 34th Street and align that entrance with the new Trans-Hudson Express station's access points.

The Eighth Avenue entrance, expected to gain in importance as the West Side develops, would become the grand gateway into the train station, situated directly across the street from the Farley Post Office grand staircase.

Taxi Access. The new design calls for mid-block taxi drop-off and pick-ups on 31st and 33rd Streets, which are more centrally located to the train station. They would also eliminate the traffic problem of taxi queuing on Seventh and Eighth Avenues.

- » The two towers that the Venture is planning to build over Moynihan East would require significant structural support passing through the station. Footings in the train station must be designed to maximize circulation space on train platforms and the concourses above them. As we mentioned above, another course of action to consider would involve transferring part or all of the development rights to other sites on surrounding blocks.
- » The Venture's plans should include good seating for both Amtrak travelers and commuters.

5. Integrate the Station with the Neighborhood

With two new east-west street level concourses and a new north-south midblock walkway running from 31st to 34th Streets in Moynihan East, and widened sidewalks outside the entire complex, the Venture's plan would expand the street grid and create a much more inviting experience for pedestrians. Retail uses would add to the attraction, even for those not riding trains. A planned roof garden and indoor winter garden at the top of the retail zone would be accessible to the public. Widened spaces on both Seventh and Eighth Avenues would serve as meeting and gathering places, now not available.

The widened and improved 33rd Street Concourse at Level A would be the central "main street" of this underground walkway network. Planned improvements to the Eighth and Seventh Avenue subway stations would extend the network beneath these two avenues. The Venture's plan also calls for the re-opening of the long-closed "Gimbels"

underground corridor, which runs under 33rd Street from Seventh Avenue to Sixth Avenue.

- » The Gimbels corridor should be connected to adjacent buildings – some of which will be developed by Vornado – to improve access to and from the station.
- » Entrances to the Seventh and Eighth Avenue subway stations, currently bottlenecks, should be expanded.

6. Provide More Efficient and Flexible Train Operations

The Venture’s plan would give all operators access to nearly all train platforms in both Moynihan East and West, giving them greater flexibility with platform assignments. The station’s design would also allow for the transit agencies to reduce their costs by sharing operations such as ticketing.

- » The Venture’s design may allow for the sharing of infrastructure and operations, but the transit agencies have not agreed on a particular plan. The location and allocation of ticket windows and ticket vending machines, for instance, has not yet been determined.
- » Another unresolved issue is the location of each transit agency within the complex. Although the station complex would be designed so that passengers for any train would be able to board from either Moynihan East or West, each transit agency would still have its own “hub” with its own identity somewhere in the complex. After Amtrak rescinded its earlier plans to occupy the Moynihan West facility for cost concerns, NJT came forward with plans to occupy the site. More recently, Amtrak has again expressed interest in moving its operations to Moynihan West. It may make more sense to have Amtrak occupy that facility, since it is believed that its riders are less subway-oriented; Moynihan West is farther from the three subway lines (and PATH) under Sixth and Seventh Avenues, though it is close to the Eighth Avenue line. On the other hand, the enormous increase in Far West Side development would benefit from a commuter rail presence west of Eighth Avenue. Amtrak in the Farley Building would also help separate those riders from commuters, and more easily provide both sets of users with the different amenities each needs. Also unresolved is the issue of which transit agency would most appropriately operate in Moynihan West during the long construction period for Moynihan East. (Other agencies could have temporary facilities in Moynihan East.)



Conclusion

The Moynihan Station project is a complicated project with a large number of moving parts. The Venture, the Empire State Development Authority's Moynihan project team, Manhattan City Planning, Amtrak, NJT, and the MTA's LIRR, Metro-North and NYC Transit divisions have been working together diligently to negotiate plans that satisfy the parties' varying objectives. Together, they have succeeded in addressing several issues, though some are still under discussion. The following issues must be resolved for the project to be successful:

- Location of each transit agency within the Moynihan complex – both permanently and during construction.
- Staging construction while maintaining train operations.
- Size, shape, location and impact of support-column footings at platform level.
- Configuration of the department store at ground floor to facilitate commuter pedestrian movement.
- The amount of development rights that can be transferred to neighboring sites, and the location of those receiving sites.
- Location and allocation of ticket windows and ticket vending machines for each operator.
- Use of the windows in the Post Office historic hall by MSG, transit agencies and the Post Office itself.
- Number and configuration of platform stairs and escalators from Level A and Level B.
- Location and configuration of stairs, escalators, and elevators among Levels A, B and C.
- Number and locations of iconic features for commuter railroads and for Amtrak.
- Signage for MSG, both on the Farley façade and in the West Train Hall.
- Amount and location of retail operations in and around the train halls.

The Venture's current proposal has great potential to achieve the benefits described earlier in this report, but care must be taken to make certain that the developers' plans do not compromise the primary function of the Moynihan Station complex as a grand train station serving the entire metropolitan region and beyond. We also encourage the Venture and public agencies to create an open and transparent project planning process, as public input is key to developing what could – and should – become one of New York City's best public spaces. In the event that a development proposal different from the Venture's comes out for Moynihan East, it should be able to meet the goals discussed in this report.

“Today, we can be more hopeful than at any time for the fulfillment of my father's vision... After years of delays and false starts, we cannot let optimism slip into complacency.”

– Maura Moynihan

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Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county, New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. Since 1922, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

RPA's current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing. For more information about Regional Plan Association, please visit our website, www.rpa.org.

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