

34th Street Environmental Assessment (EA) FAQ
New York City Department of Transportation
March 2011

General

Q1: Will the 34th Street proposal be subject to an environmental review?

Yes, the 34th Street proposal will be subject to an environmental review. As the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) has applied for funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the project is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable laws. As per federal regulations and based on consultation with the FTA, NYCDOT will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for the 34th Street proposal. NYCDOT must also comply with the environmental review requirements of New York State's State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA) process and New York City's City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) process.

Q2: What is an Environmental Assessment (EA)?

An EA is a public document that discloses if a project has any significant environmental impacts. The purpose of the EA is to inform decision makers and the public of the potential impacts of a proposed project. The standards for what constitute a "significant environmental impact" are defined in federal, state, and city environmental guidance, and are not up to the discretion of NYCDOT. The FTA is responsible for reviewing the technical analysis presented in the EA and determining whether the proposed project would result in significant environmental impacts.

Q3: Who will certify that the EA has met federal requirements? Will the EA be available for review and comment by the public?

NYCDOT is responsible for preparing the EA, while the FTA is responsible for reviewing the document and directing NYCDOT to make changes, if needed. Once the FTA is satisfied that the EA meets all federal requirements, the FTA will issue the document. NYCDOT will then make the EA available for review and comment by the public. After public comments are received, the FTA will make a final determination as to whether or not the project has any significant environmental impacts.

Q4: Is NYCDOT also going to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project?

If the 34th Street project EA determines that the project will have a significant environmental impact, NYCDOT will be required under federal law to complete an EIS. If the EA determines that the project will not have a significant environmental impact, the environmental review phase of the project will be concluded with a Finding of No Significant Impact. The analysis in the EA will be conducted according to the guidelines in the CEQR Technical Manual, the same guidelines that would be used in the preparation of an EIS. NYCDOT will release the EA for review and comment by the public before the document is finalized.

Q5: Did the NYCDOT solicit public comments on the topics that will be covered by the EA?

Yes. In December of 2010, NYCDOT posted the work plan for EA on its website and invited comments from the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and members of the public. The EA work plan as distributed can be downloaded here:

http://www.nyc.gov/html/bmt/downloads/pdf/2010_34th_ea-work-plan.pdf

Q6: What is the schedule for the preparation of the EA?

NYCDOT began working on the EA in January 2011. NYCDOT will share preliminary results of the analysis with the public, including results of the traffic analysis, when those results are available, expected to be in late spring and summer of 2011. A full EA will be released for public comment when complete, expected in late 2011 or early 2012.

Q7: What alternatives will the EA analyze?

The EA will analyze two alternatives: (1) a “no build” option that assumes that no project will be built, and a (2) “build” option that assumes that the 34th Street project and other traffic improvements on adjacent streets will be built.

Q8: What geographic area will be studied?

The area studied depends on the type of potential environmental impact. For example, for archeological resources, the analysis will focus only on those sections of 34th Street where the project would require construction. On the other hand, for traffic, the analysis will include streets with potential traffic changes in a much wider area, including other nearby streets, midtown streets, and regional routes. Generally speaking, the EA will focus on an area a quarter mile north and a quarter mile south of 34th Street.

Analysis Areas

Q9: What topic areas will the EA analyze?

The EA will analyze 15 topic areas:

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| 1. Social conditions | 9. Natural resources |
| 2. Cultural resources | 10. Hazardous materials |
| 3. Parklands | 11. Safety and security |
| 4. Visual and aesthetic resources | 12. Construction impacts |
| 5. Transportation | 13. Indirect and cumulative impacts |
| 6. Air quality | 14. Environmental justice |
| 7. Energy and greenhouse gases | 15. Section 4(f) |
| 8. Noise and vibration | |

Q10: Will the EA analyze the project's potential effects on curbside parking and loading?

Yes. In the transportation chapter, the EA will analyze the effects of the proposed project on the amount of curbside parking and loading. For example, the EA will compare the amount of parking and loading space currently provided with the amount of parking and loading space to be provided with the proposed project. This analysis will be done for each block on 34th Street, as well as for other blocks where parking regulations are changed. This analysis will follow the guidelines of the CEQR Technical Manual.

Q11: Will the EA analyze the project's effects on local businesses, especially those that rely on curbside deliveries? Will the EA look at the effects on parking garages and lots?

Yes. In the social conditions chapter, the EA will evaluate the effects of the proposed project on local businesses and on parking facilities with curb cuts on 34th Street. This analysis will focus on delivery access and curb cut access on 34th Street. This analysis will follow the guidelines of the CEQR Technical Manual.

Q12: Will the EA analyze the project's effects on real estate values along 34th Street?

Yes. In the social conditions chapter, the EA will analyze the effects of the project on property values. This analysis will focus on the effects of changes in curbside access, traffic, noise, and air pollution on property values. This analysis will be done for each block face on 34th Street and other locations as needed. This analysis will follow the guidelines of the CEQR Technical Manual.

Q13: How will the EA analyze traffic effects?

The EA will determine the effects of the proposal on traffic on 34th Street, parallel side streets, adjacent avenues, the Lincoln Tunnel and Queens Midtown Tunnel, all other Midtown streets, and major connecting highways and arterial roadways in the city and region. To properly analyze the traffic effects of the 34th Street project, NYCDOT has developed an integrated traffic model called the Manhattan Traffic Model (MTM). The MTM will model all streets in Manhattan from 14th Street to 66th Street, from the Hudson River to the East River. In addition, the model will include all the bridges and tunnels, major arterial roadways, and highways in and around Manhattan. The first results from the traffic analysis are expected to be ready for presentation to the public in late spring of 2011. More information on the MTM is available here: http://www.nyc.gov/html/brt/downloads/pdf/201005_34th_traffic_analysis_summary.pdf

Q14: When was the data for the traffic model collected?

The 34th Street data for the traffic model was primarily collected in the fall of 2009. The data represents traffic on a typical weekday. This data collection methodology is mandated by the CEQR Technical Manual.

Q15: Will the EA analyze traffic, noise, and air pollution effects just on 34th Street?

No. As noted above, the EA will evaluate traffic impacts in all of Midtown and on all major connecting highways and arterial roadways in the city and region. The analysis of noise and air pollution will be based on the traffic analysis and, as such, will include any areas of Midtown that are shown to experience a significant increase in traffic. All methodologies will be based on federal standards where available, and otherwise based on standards in the CEQR Technical Manual.

Q16: Will the EA take into account other transportation and development projects slated for the 34th Street area?

Yes. NYCDOT is proposing building the 34th Street project, if found feasible, in the year 2012. The analysis in the EA will take into account all other transportation and development projects expected to be completed by that time.

Q17: Will the EA analyze the traffic and pedestrian safety of the project?

As with all projects, NYCDOT will do its own safety review of the proposed 34th Street project to ensure that it meets the agency's high safety standards. In addition, the EA will examine the effects on traffic and pedestrian safety based on federal guidelines.