Memorandum

U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

Subject: Technical Memorandum No. 9: 97th Street Ancillary Facility for Second Avenue Subway Project

Date: October 31, 2011

From: Nina Chung
Community Planner

Reply to
Attn. of:

To: Anthony G. Carr
Acting Regional Administrator

Through: Nancy Danzig
Director, Planning and Program Development
and
Christopher VanWyk
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Introduction

This memorandum documents FTA's review of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's ("MTA") design of one of the ancillary facilities related to the 96th Street Station for the Second Avenue Subway Project (Project). It also provides FTA's analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) pursuant to 23 CFR 771.130 of the MTA's design of the ancillary facility. FTA's analysis is based on the following:

(1) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), entitled "MTA New York City Transit Second Avenue Subway Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Evaluation" issued on April 8, 2004;
(2) Record of Decision (ROD) issued on July 8, 2004 on the Project;
(3) Site visits on September 8, 2010 and July 13, 2010;
(4) June 26, 2007 Document entitled "96th Street Station Proposed Entrances/Plazas/Ancillary Buildings Presentation to Community Board 8";
(5) October 28, 2008 Document entitled "Second Avenue Subway Task Force Community Board Eight 96th, 86th, and 72nd Street Station Entrances/Elevators/Ancillary Buildings";
(6) October 12, 2010 Document entitled "Second Avenue Subway Construction Progress Update Contract C-26002" presented to the Community Board 8 (document located at http://www.mta.info/capconstr/sas/documents/101012_cp.pdf); and
(7) August 5, 2011 Electronic mail from New York City Transit to FTA.

Items #4, #5, #6, and #7 above will be collectively referred to as MTA's Technical

Memorandum No. 9.

This review addresses the potential impacts of the design of one of the two ancillary facilities related to the 96th Street Station to be located at 1873 Second Avenue, the southwest corner of Second Avenue and 97th Street ("97th Street Ancillary Facility" or "Facility") in order to determine the following: first, the consistency of the design of the Facility with the design presented in the FEIS and second, if the current design would result in significant environmental impacts not evaluated in previous NEPA evaluations.

Although specific details on location and functions were known at the time of the FEIS, the level of design known and presented at the time of the FEIS for the Project was conceptual. The following specific design details are now known that were not presented in the FEIS:

-size of Facility: length, width, and height
-appearance of Facility: façade materials and details on cooling towers and intake/exhaust louvers

The final size and appearance will have no significant adverse impact on the quality of the human environment. We have reviewed the Technical Memorandum No. 9 and find that there will be no new significant environmental impacts as a result of the final design of the Facility compared to what was evaluated in the FEIS. In addition, there will no necessary changes to the mitigation measures described in the FEIS and ROD. The NEPA requirements pursuant to 23 CFR 771.130 have been met, and we recommend that no further environmental review is necessary.

Comparison of the FEIS Design and Current Design of the 97th Street Ancillary Facility

Two ventilation structures are required at each of the Project's 16 stations. The FEIS presented specific locations and functions of ancillary facilities. The specific location of the 97th Street Ancillary Facility was identified in the FEIS as 1873 Second Avenue located at the southwest corner of Second Avenue and 97th Street (FEIS Table 8-2 on page 8-14 and Figure 8-5). The functions of the ancillary facilities described in the FEIS include housing tunnel and ventilations functions, including fresh air intake, exhaust, emergency smoke exhaust, and relief of air pressure build-up caused by piston effect of train movement. The FEIS also indicated that some ancillary buildings would include a cooling tower on the rooftop and intake/exhaust louvers primarily on their rooftops. The description of the location and function of the 97th Street Ancillary Facility is consistent with the FEIS.

Below is a summary comparison of the description of size and appearance between the FEIS and current design.

Size

FEIS DESIGN

The FEIS provided a general sense of scale and massing of ancillary facilities; it did not provide specific dimensions for any ancillary facility, including the 97th Street Ancillary Facility. A range of dimensions for ancillary facilities was provided in various chapters of the FEIS. Chapter 2 of

the FEIS indicates that ancillary facilities would be approximately 25 feet wide, 75, feet deep, and four to five stories high (FEIS page 2-22). Chapter 6 of the FEIS indicates that ancillary structures could be three to four stories high and between 20 by 70 feet and 40 by 80 feet (FEIS, page 6-49). In Chapter 8, ventilation and cooling facilities could be approximately 25 to 40 feet wide, 75 feet deep, and up to 50 feet high (FEIS, page 8-9). And Chapter 11 indicates that ventilation structures would typically be 25 to 40 feet wide and up to 75 feet high. The presentation of varying sizes is due to the multiple chapters that discuss ancillary facilities in varying contexts, such as in Chapter 8: Displacement and Relocation as well as in Chapter 6: Social and Economic Conditions. The FEIS also indicates that cooling towers would be located on the roofs of building, which would be hidden from view by privacy screens (FEIS, Page 11-23).

CURRENT DESIGN

The 97th Street Ancillary Facility will occupy approximately 44% of the lot at 1873 Second Avenue: approximately 63 feet deep (on 97th Street) by 75 feet wide (on Second Avenue) and 70 feet high. Two (2) cooling towers will be located on the rooftop of the structure. The Facility will be composed of two rectangular volumes with no setbacks. On Second Avenue, the current design depth and height are within the range of sizes presented in the FEIS. However, the current design width is approximately 35 feet wider than the ranges presented in the FEIS.

The size and massing of the Facility will not have any direct adverse visual impact to the residents of adjacent buildings. The structure would be built to the southern property line along Second Avenue, which is the same width of the structure that previously existed; and the structure would be built only 63 feet deep along 97th Street, which is same depth as the structure that previously existed and which is not the property line. The ancillary structure will be visually divided on the Second Avenue side into two distinct volumes – one volume would be 45 feet wide and 70 feet high and the adjacent volume would be 30 feet wide and 59 feet high. The height, bulk, and form of the Facility are consistent with zoning, which allows buildings in this area to be built to the lot-line at a height of up to 85 feet before a setback is required. Therefore, the change in width from what was described in the FEIS will not result in any additional significant impact not already disclosed in the FEIS.

Appearance

FEIS DESIGN

The FEIS provided conceptual guidelines for the design of ancillary facilities; it did not provide specific details on the design of any Project ancillary facility. The conceptual guidelines (FEIS page S-47) included commitments that ancillary facilities would be sensitive to the surrounding architectural context; would not disturb the visual context of the study area; would not change the study area's urban design; and that community input on the design would be solicited during the design phase (FEIS page 6-49). The FEIS indicated that some ancillary buildings would include a cooling tower with a privacy screen on the rooftop and intake/exhaust louvers would be located primarily on their rooftops. The FEIS provided illustrative examples of existing ancillary facilities, such as sidewalk grates and row-house façade in Brooklyn. The FEIS (FEIS Figure 2-11) also provided a conceptual illustration of a Second Avenue Subway ancillary building: a row house façade with the interior of the building reconstructed as a ventilation facility.

CURRENT DESIGN

The current design façade of the 97th Street Ancillary Facility will not look like a row-house, as in the FEIS conceptual illustration. The façade will include a granite base, brick-colored terra-cotta tiles (color similar to bricks or brownstone), translucent glass, and silver-colored metal slats for the ventilation louvers. As already noted, the structure will consist of two rectangular volumes with no setbacks. Two (2) cooling towers will be located on the rooftop. The cooling towers will sit behind the façade louvers, effectively serving as screens for the cooling towers. The Facility will be built with materials that are consistent in the nearby area.

-Terra-cotta colored ceramic tiles will be used on the Facility's façade, which will relate to the masonry facades of buildings nearby. This is also consistent with the predominant building material – brick and brownstown – found in the nearby area.
-Granite will be used on the base of the Facility. This is consistent with other nearby buildings.
-Glass will be used at the corner of the Facility. The glass will be semi-transparent and will be illuminated. The use of glass will give the appearance of activity at night.
-Silver-colored metal slats will also be used along the 97th Street and Second Avenue facades to visually hide the ventilation louvers. In addition, aluminum bands will run across both facades horizontally, dividing the structure visually into five and six stories.

The rectangular volumes are consistent with the built context of rowhouses and many of the apartment buildings are designed with rectangular plans.

The language of the FEIS with regard to the design of ancillary facilities makes the reader aware that the design of the ancillary facilities was not finalized and the design would be determined by the specific site location, site conditions, relative location to other Project elements, context, as well as continued public outreach. Although illustrations of existing ventilation facilities were provided as examples of what ancillary facilities could look like, no specific information on the design of any Project ancillary facility was provided. The FEIS provided general guidelines that would be used, such as consistency with urban design, and that community input would be solicited during the design phase. The visual division of the ancillary structure into two distinct volumes will minimize the appearance of the size of the Facility. The difference in width of the total structure as it was described in the FEIS compared to the current design will not result in any new significant impact with regard to the appearance of the structure. The current design of the 97th Street Ancillary Facility is consistent with the conceptual design guidelines presented in the FEIS and there will be no significant change in impacts as a result of the current size and appearance of the 97th Street Ancillary Facility.

Public Outreach

MTA has been conducting ongoing public outreach related to the Second Avenue Subway project. This outreach is being conducted through a Second Avenue Subway Task Force established by Manhattan Community Board 8. MTA has had a number of discussions with the

Community Board 8 related to the 97th Street Ancillary Facility:

June 26, 2007: 97th Street and 93rd Street Ancillary Facilities
March 3, 2008: 97th Street, 93rd Street, 86th Street, and 83rd Street Ancillary Facilities
October 28, 2008: 97th Street, 93rd Street, 86th Street, 83rd Street Ancillary Facilities
October 12, 2010: 97th Street Ancillary Facility

The designs of each ancillary facility are similar to each other. At each of these meetings, the designs of the ancillary facilities were presented, including granite bases, terra-cotta tiles, glass, and metal louvers. Buildings were always rectangular and built to the property line.

Conclusion

Based on our review of Technical Memorandum No. 9, there will be no new significant environmental impacts as a result of the current design of the 97th Street Ancillary Facility. In addition, there will be no necessary changes to the mitigation measures described in the FEIS and ROD. The NEPA requirements pursuant to 23 CFR 771.130 have been met, and no further environmental review is necessary.

Concur

Anthony G. Carr
Acting Regional Administrator

10/31/11
Date