

Lower Manhattan Transit Matters

Most of us – commuters, residents, visitors – use public transit to and from Lower Manhattan. Alternatives include local and express buses, ferries, taxis, cars, bicycles and walking. However, where else is so well served by subways?

Fifteen pairs of tracks connect Lower Manhattan to the region. One pair, PATH, crosses the Hudson River; four pair cross the East River; and ten pair (two disused) cross Canal Street. ([Transit Lines](#))

Lower Manhattan enjoys a distributed access system. Instead of a central terminal, between Chambers Street and the Battery there are twenty stations, including PATH, served by seventeen routes. These stations are generally located in four catchment areas – Chambers Street, Fulton Street, Wall Street and The Battery. Any place in Lower Manhattan is within an easy walk of several stations. ([Catchment Areas](#))

Even so, despite all of its advantages, there are important opportunities to improve access to Lower Manhattan. These are of two types:

1. Better access to parts of the region, particularly those served by commuter rail rather than the subway.

2. Access for certain routes to more of the catchment areas.

Although natural geography favors access to Midtown from the north it is built geography – Pennsylvania Station and Grand Central Terminal – that favors it from the west and east. ([Regional Transit](#))

From the west access might be improved by making better use of PATH to Lower Manhattan and by improving subway access from Pennsylvania Station. ([West](#))

From the east the question seems to be how to provide service from the LIRR in Jamaica and Kennedy airport all the way to Lower Manhattan. ([East](#))

From the north it is expected that the Second Avenue subway line will divert riders from the Lexington Avenue line. Also, if Metro North service comes to Pennsylvania Station the west side subways could also relieve the Lexington Avenue line. ([North](#)) ([West Side Access](#))

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Downtown

Regional Transit

Half of the region is closer to Lower Manhattan than Midtown Manhattan; however it is not necessarily more convenient to Lower Manhattan. Why?

Because many of the region's transportation systems favor Midtown.

Taking the ferry from Staten Island one expects to travel through Lower Manhattan to Midtown.

And taking Metro-North from Westchester one expects to travel through Midtown to Lower Manhattan.

However, from the east and west, why is it not equally easy to go directly to Lower Manhattan or to Midtown?

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Downtown

West

From the west, although Lower Manhattan and Midtown are equidistant from New Jersey, NJ Transit's terminal at Pennsylvania station is in Midtown but its Hoboken Terminal is across the Hudson River from Lower Manhattan.

There are few, if any, proposals to either extend NJ Transit from Hoboken Terminal to Lower Manhattan or to extend the subway to Hoboken.

One link between NJ Transit and Lower Manhattan has been PATH between the Hoboken Terminal or the Newark Station and the World Trade Center.

Another link has been the subway lines between Pennsylvania Station and Lower Manhattan.

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Downtown East

From the east, although Lower Manhattan and Midtown are nearly equidistant from Jamaica, the LIRR's terminal at Pennsylvania station is in Midtown, as will be its planned terminal at Grand Central, but its Atlantic Avenue terminal is in Downtown Brooklyn, across the East River from Lower Manhattan.

There have been many proposals to either extend the LIRR from Atlantic Terminal to Lower Manhattan or to extend the subway, using the Atlantic Avenue branch of the LIRR, to Jamaica .

However, there has not been agreement on what to build.

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Downtown North

From the north, Metro-North's terminal at Grand Central is in Midtown. Passengers for Lower Manhattan transfer to the Lexington Av IRT.

There have been many proposals to improve access to Lower Manhattan from the north. These include extending Metro-North from Grand Central to Lower Manhattan, running some Metro-North trains as an express service on a four track Second Av Subway, and adding a branch of the Second Av Subway to a transfer at Grand Central.

The current idea is that the Second Avenue Subway will reduce congestion on the Lexington Avenue line by attracting some of its passengers.

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Downtown

West Side Access

To improve access to Midtown from the north, in a plan similar to bringing some LIRR service to Grand Central, some Metro-North service may be brought to Pennsylvania Station.

There are two branches to this proposal. One branch would be along the west side of Manhattan below Riverside Park. The other would loop through eastern Queens.

Bringing Metro North to Pennsylvania Station would provide an alternative route to Lower Manhattan using the 8 Av IND or the 7 Av IRT rather than the Lex Av IRT.

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Downtown Catchment Areas

Each transit line serving Lower Manhattan has stations in one or more of four catchment areas:

- Chambers
- Fulton
- Wall
- Battery

Those lines that have a stop in each catchment area serve Lower Manhattan best.

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