

Most Comments Oppose Street-Running for the Interborough Express—Part 2

John B. Pegram¹

The most common, recent comments about the Interborough Express (IBX) are those opposed to the MTA's proposal for a street-running section in Middle Village, Queens.

Comments on street-running submitted to the MTA were the focus of Part 1 of this article. In this Part 2, I will provide recent comments on street-running posted elsewhere.

Comments on RMTransit

As mentioned in my January 27, 2024 article, Reactions to [“Reactions to Interborough Express Light Rail.”](#) RMTransit posted a YouTube video [“Why Light Rail isn't the Solution for New York.”](#) As of March 5, 2024, that video had over 146K views. The RMTransit teaser image on YouTube is below:



¹ © John Pegram, 2024.

A principal reason given in the video for saying that light rail is a compromised solution for the IBX line, inappropriate for a large city, was the street-running section in an otherwise off-street line.

Representative comments on street-running posted with that video follow:

- My only worry is traffic or accidents on **street level** causing delays.
- The MTA didn't even reach out to the cemetery in Middle Village to explore work on the tunnels to avoid that preposterous **street running** section.
- The Light vs. Heavy debate isn't really a huge deal to me. What is a massive deal is the **street running** section. That will cripple the reliability and makes zero sense. The tunnel through All Faiths Cemetery needs to be widened. It's 525ft long.
- I know the neighborhood where that cemetery is they don't want to dig under. **Street running** will NEVER happen in a million years. Politics in NYC and NYS are profoundly broken.
- I'd worked for LA for many years and laughed at many of the light rail lines that speed along grade separation just to slow down once it hits **street level**. Cheap garbage that eventually will have to be updated for billions more once the population increases...
- Light rail will make the **street traffic** even worse.
- I live in Middle Village.... the neighborhood where the IBX has to do **street-running**, I would benefit enormously from the IBX being built.... When the IBX exits out of the existing RoW [Right-of-Way], it turns right onto Metropolitan Avenue, traffic on that 500-foot section of road between the existing RoW and 69th Street can get really, really ugly. You have to deal with 3 different MTA bus routes, a lot of truck traffic, a lot of private automobile traffic, and mobs of teenagers pour into and out of Christ the King High School. Any light rail trams will be snarled in that mess of traffic, slowing down the entire line, add in the inevitable car accident or breakdown, the entire line will come to a screeching halt.
- It's incredibly disheartening to see the MTA shoot itself in the foot like this.

The Tech Transit Video Comments

The Tech Transit Association has posted a video, [“Is Light Rail Okay for the IBX?”](#) disagreeing with the RMTransit video in some respects, but agreeing that street-running would be a problem and that high-floor railcars would be preferable to low-floor ones for that line. Here are the principal comments on street-running that have been posted with that video:

- The biggest issue I have with the IBX being LRT is the fact it has to **street run** and the possibility of it being low floor. I live in a city where the most reliable transit is the LRT/MRT, and I would want to recommend that high-floor LRVs should be used, and to reach out to the cemetery to cut off the **street running** section.
- As someone who used to live in the Middle Village/Maspeth/Ridgewood area, that bottleneck that will force the train onto the **street** and snake through the 5-6 blocks, will be HEAVILY fought, scrutinized and legally challenged by the people of that particular area.
- For **street running**, would it be possible for the MTA to make those **streets** “Light rail only”?
- Going on the **street** should not be an option.
- The whole point of light rail is the ability to operate on streets. To the extent that anyone uses LRT for lines that are fully grade separated, it's a mistake. It's making sacrifices in terms of weight and complexity in order to allow **street** running....
- Manufacturers realize that these [light rail] vehicles are primarily intended for **street running** applications in which extremely long trains aren't feasible because of things like blocked intersections. They know that if someone needs the higher capacity of a train longer than that they would simply use metro rolling stock.
- It looks to me like that stupid short bit of **street running** will be forcing capacity down....

- Removing the **street running** allows the trains to be longer with essentially unlimited frequency potential to match any future peak capacity needs comfortably. Light rail is not the problem, but the version of light rail that MTA has been suggesting is a problem.
- **Street running** in a shared lane with cars is never ideal, and there are going to be plenty of blockages and delays because of it, but ultimately it's going to be fine since it's just a small part of it. Additionally, if this ends up becoming a bigger issue, MTA is fully capable of closing the right-of-way from cars.
- The silly **street running** section....
- Light rail was only chosen because of the **street-running** section.
- Don't be like the fools in Seattle, ditch the **street running**.
- Please eliminate this short section of **street running**.

CONCLUSION

The MTA consultants need to plan a widened cut-and-cover tunnel through the All Faiths Cemetery. The plan for street-running around the cemetery is dead.

This article expresses the personal views of the author and does not express the views of his employer, or any client or organization. The author has degrees in law and physics, and has taken several engineering courses. After five years of work as an engineer, he has practiced law primarily in the field of patents for over 50 years, dealing with a wide variety of technologies. He is a life-long railfan and user of public transportation in the United States, Europe and Japan.

As usual a PDF copy of this article is attached.