

Most Comments Oppose Street-Running for the Interborough Express—Part 1

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The most frequent comments about the Interborough Express (IBX) have been those opposed to the MTA's proposal for a street-running section in Middle Village, Queens. In fact, I have found only a couple of comments favoring street-running anywhere on the IBX line.

Recent comments on street-running submitted to the MTA will be the focus of Part 1 of this article. Part 2 will provide recent comments on street-running, which have been posted elsewhere.

Generally, most IBX commenters prefer subway-type railcar over Light Rail Transit (LRT) cars for the IBX line. As said in a comment posted at the recent Tech Transit Association video, "[Is Light Rail Okay for the IBX?](#)" "LRT is a jack of all trades, master of none type of transit."

There appears to be a lack of clarity in some comments regarding what is meant by "light rail." In many cases, the commentators who favor "light rail" are referring to subway-like, high-floor railcars of the types sometimes called "light metro," not low floor railcars designed for street-running.

Several comments on each of the sites reviewed suggested automated, driverless trains, which I have also come to believe would be a good choice for the IBX line. That will be the topic of a future article.

A number of IBX comments strongly suggest that high-floor railcars would be superior to low-floor cars for this line. Those views are consistent with my article [No Low-Floor Railcars for the Interborough Express](#).

Commenters have also questioned the provisions for transfers between the IBX line and subway lines, and whether the proposed Light Rail Transit (LRT) mode would have

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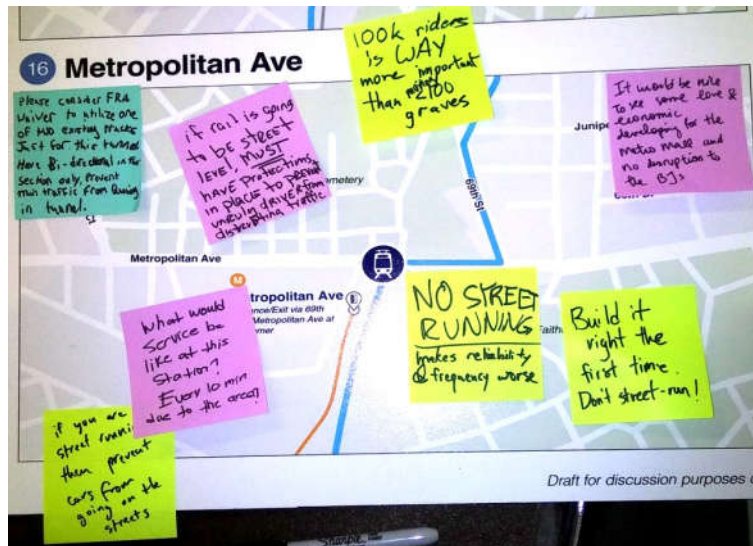
adequate capacity and frequency. I have touched on these topics in earlier articles and expect to say more on these topics, and on comments that have been posted on these topics, in future articles.

Comments to the MTA

The MTA has been collecting comments on the IBX proposal by asking attendees at its IBX Open Houses to place notes on information boards and on its IBX project website. I attended the Open House at Brooklyn College on November 8, 2023² and took the photo below of the comments posted for the Metropolitan Avenue Area. Five of the eight comments were about the street-running problem. They were:

- If rail is going to be **street level**, MUST have protections in place to prevent unruly drivers from disturbing traffic.
- 100k riders is WAY more important than moving 2100 graves. [In fact, moving graves does not appear to be necessary]
- If you are **street running**, then prevent cars from going on the **streets**. [I suggest that would be impractical]
- NO **STREET RUNNING** – makes reliability and frequency worse.
- Build it right the first time. Don't **street-run**.

² See the [MTA IBX project page](#), the open house [presentation](#) and [associated informational boards](#), and the link to [share your feedback via a digital engagement tool](#).



I previously posted a copy of the comments posted on the IBX project website through March 12, 2023 with my article, [“Light Rail Not Preferred for the Interborough Express.”](#) Recently, I obtained the comments filed there through December 22, 2023. These comments were all posted after the MTA selected the LRT mode for the IBX line. A copy of those comments and a complete copy of all comments posted there to that date are attached to this article. Here are representative comments about street-running, posted in the last nine months of 2023, which I have clarified slightly and in which I have emphasized references to “**street**” in bold typeface:

- The section in Middle Village ... has the potential to negatively impact the neighborhood through noise and traffic as a **street-level** section is proposed.
- The tunnel should be built to avoid **street running** at Metropolitan Ave.
- I believe that **street running** the trains on Metropolitan Avenue and 69th Street as indicated would cause many problems with the proposed frequency of operation as a simple car-train collision would effectively bring the system to a halt for multiple hours.
- Please do not include any **street-running** segments. It adds too much time and possible delays to the system which would severely hurt the entire project.
- Please ... work to avoid **street running**, which can create a significant bottleneck. For instance, MAX light rail in Portland is incredibly capacity and

speed constrained, partially due to its downtown mixed traffic **street running** section.

- Shared **streets** will cause unnecessary delays, traffic, and safety issues for thousands.
- The light rail IBX on the **streets** for a couple blocks won't be a disaster. The problem is I don't currently trust this to be implemented well, and I don't think it makes sense to take the IBX to the **streets** when you don't need to, you can still dig a short and small tunnel under the cemetery.
- Using LRT as the mode for the IBX is fine, however **on-street running** should not be implemented. The IBX needs to be entirely grade separated (with the exception of the BAT [Brooklyn Army Terminal]). I think that additional costly safety measures have to be installed & put into place once IBX trains start running on the **street** alongside traffic & pedestrians. This unnecessarily increases costs. I advise against doing this.
- There should be no at-grade **street** crossings, which will degrade frequency and reliability.
- The IBX cannot run on Metropolitan Avenue! many accidents waiting to happen to future pedestrians and drivers traffic will be huge issue to IBX trains.
- Please don't make the IBX run at **street level** at All Faiths. It will kneecap the project. The extra cost from tunneling will be well worth it.
- For both safety and reliability of headways/frequency of service, I urge the MTA to consider any and all alternatives to **street running** the LRVs around All-Faiths Cemetery as the roads around 69th Street and Metropolitan Ave is already very congested and there is a school nearby.
- Why will the portion of the route near Metropolitan Ave run on the **street**? The current plan makes it seem like this will be a huge bottleneck.
- Having the interborough express traveling along city **streets** is absolutely out of the question Adding more traffic to Metropolitan Avenue would kill this project.

- **Street running** the trains ... would cause many problems with the proposed frequency of operation as a simple car-train collision would effectively bring the system to a halt of multiple hours.
- The **street running** section and light rail selection are unconscionable.

CONCLUSION

The MTA should avoid street-running on the IBX line.

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.