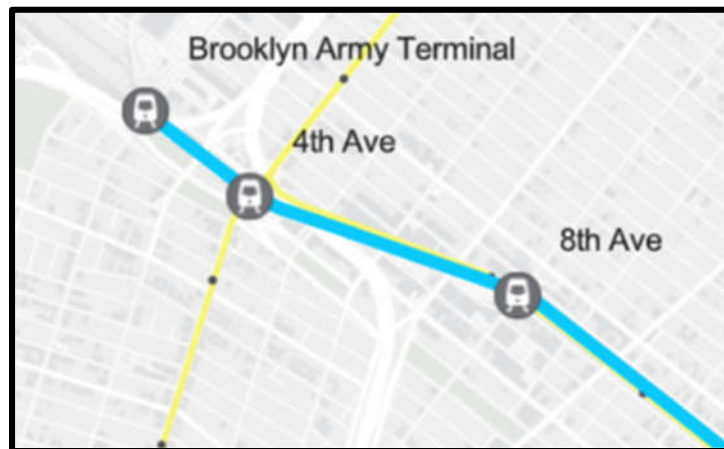


Revising Stations on the Interborough Express Line

By John Pegram¹

The MTA should consider revising its plans for stations at the Brooklyn end of the Interborough Express (IBX) line. It should drop the Brooklyn Army Terminal station, move the 4th Avenue station and optimize transfers with the N line at 8th Avenue.

The present station locations are indicated on the map below, where the IBX line is represented in blue. The R subway line, under 4th Avenue, is indicated in yellow. The N subway line parallels the IBX line from the lower right corner of the map (south-east), and then turns between 4th and 5th Avenues to head north under 4th Avenue.



MTA Proposal for Brooklyn-End IBX Stations²

1. Brooklyn Army Terminal IBX Station

The Brooklyn Army Terminal (BAT) is a collection of large buildings, located between 1st and Second Avenues, and between 59th and 63rd Streets. (See photo below).³

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² From MTA IBX Information Board 1 at <https://new.mta.info/document/126046>.

³ MTA. *Interborough Express Planning & Environmental Linkages Study* (Jan. 2023) (PEL Report), p. 39, available at <https://new.mta.info/document/114891>. Citations in the form “[###/1077]” are to this version of the PEL Report.



The MTA’s January 2023 *Interborough Express Planning & Environmental Linkages Study* (PEL Report) proposes an IBX terminal station at the 63rd Street end of BAT, between BAT and railyards.⁴ Based on the low projected ridership there and the proximity of a 3rd Avenue entrance to a relocated 4th Avenue station, as proposed below, an IBX station at BAT is unnecessary and not justified.

Ridership estimates provided to the author by the MTA in September 2023 predict that only about 900 riders would get on or off (“on-offs”) the IBX at the BAT station each weekday.⁵ (Assuming the same person used the same station in each direction, 900 on-offs would correspond to 450 people). That would be, for example, less than 1/3 of the on-offs at the IBX station with the second least predicted on-offs, at Livonia Avenue. BAT station on-offs would be only 3.8% of the predicted on-offs at the other end of the IBX line, at the Roosevelt Avenue-Jackson Heights station.⁶ Even a doubling or tripling of the MTA’s estimates would not justify an IBX station at BAT.

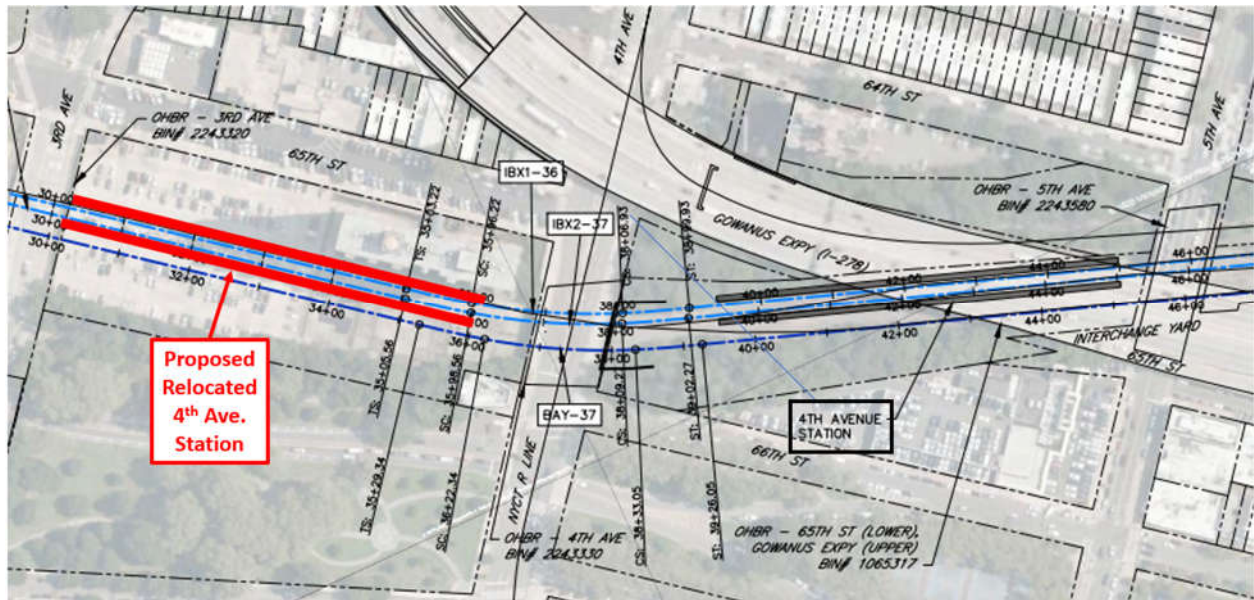
The BAT station would not provide any benefit to most local residents, as indicated by the fact that only 208 riders are predicted to board at the proposed BAT station during the morning rush hours.⁷

⁴ *Id.*, e.g., pp. 4, 21, 31.
⁵ See attached document.
⁶ *Id.*
⁷ *Id.*

IBX Riders going to and from BAT can be adequately served by a 3rd Avenue entrance to a relocated 4th Avenue IBX station, as proposed below. Alternatively, they could transfer at 8th Avenue to the N line and exit at 4th Avenue and 59th Street, two blocks east of the north end of BAT.

2. 4th Avenue IBX Station

The MTA has proposed a 4th Avenue station, to be located between 4th and 5th Avenues, under the Gowanus Expressway, indicated in black dark grey on the map below. As discussed further below, I suggest relocation of this station to be between 3rd and 4th Avenues, indicated in red below.



Proposed 4th Avenue Conventional Rail Station⁸

The MTA reports have not proposed an in-system transfer to the R line at 4th Avenue. From a transit operations perspective, it would not appear to make sense to build a new R line station there, where the R and IBX lines cross. However, the nearest R line station is a fairly long walk away, at Bay Ridge Avenue. An MTA neighborhood map indicates the R line station there is 5-6 minutes from the proposed IBX 4th Avenue station,⁹ as shown below. Probably too far to attract many transferring passengers.

⁸ From PEL Report, Appendix 1.16, Conventional Rail Plan, Sheet No. 03. [1023/1077].

⁹ Map available at <https://new.mta.info/document/2771>.



I suggest that riders wishing to transfer between the IBX and R lines would be most likely to transfer between the IBX and N lines at 8th Avenue, and transfer between the R and N lines at 59th Street, rather than walk outside for 5-6 minutes to or from the Bay Ridge Avenue R station. But the outside walk option would still be no less accessible in the case of the relocated 4th Avenue IBX station proposed here.

There does not appear to be any particular reason to locate the 4th Avenue IBX station nearer to 5th Avenue, below the expressway, as presently planned, other than spacing from the proposed IBX station at BAT. I suggest consideration of locating the 4th Avenue station between 3rd and 4th Avenues, where the right-of-way is under a platform supporting the Bay Ridge Towers parking lot. (See below).¹⁰



¹⁰ PEL Report, Appendix 1.14, Appendix A: Bay Ridge Branch Overhead Structures, Bridge Photo 3, “Bay Ridge Towers Overbuild.” [978/1077].

An IBX station entrance at 3rd Avenue would be a particularly good location. An entrance there would be little more than a long block walk from the south end of Brooklyn Army Terminal at 2nd Avenue. Also, the B37 bus route runs along 3rd Avenue. If run more frequently than now, buses on that route could provide convenient access to locations along the entire waterfront and into Bay Ridge.

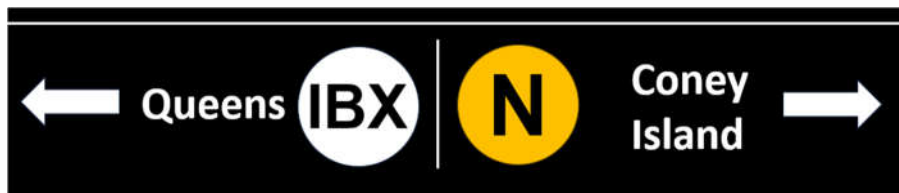
3. 8th Avenue IBX Station

By now, the potential importance of the 8th Avenue IBX station, as a convenient place for transfers, should be apparent.



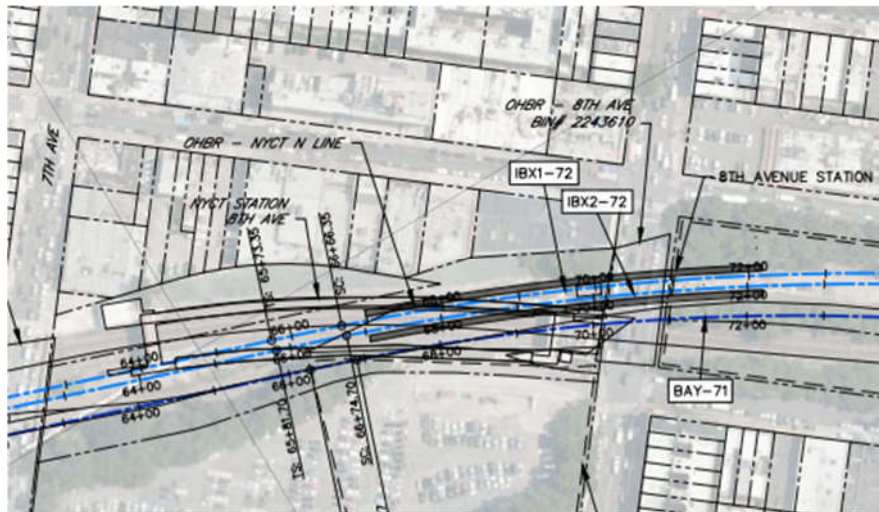
After leaving its 8th Avenue station, northbound N trains turn onto 4th Avenue, meeting the R line at the 59th Street station. The N line provides fast, express service from 59th Street to downtown Brooklyn and Manhattan, with convenient transfers to other lines. Southbound from 8th Avenue, the N train travels on the Sea Beach line to Coney Island—Stillwell Avenue.

Ideally, a cross-platform transfer between IBX and N lines should be provided at 8th Avenue.



Imagined Sign at 8th Avenue Station

Currently, the MTA proposes to place the 8th Avenue IBX station under the existing N line station and 8th Avenue, as shown below:¹¹



The existing railroad and subway right-of-way is wide enough at 8th Avenue to permit a four-track transit station there at the level of the current N line station, allowing for cross-platform transfers between the IBX and N lines. There appears to be enough distance either side of that station for the IBX tracks to rise up to that level. If costs make that arrangement impractical, at least up-escalators and elevators should be provided to expedite transfers directly between the IBX platforms and the N platforms at the 8th Avenue station.

CONCLUSION

The MTA should consider dropping its plan for a Brooklyn Army Terminal station, relocating the 4th Avenue station to between 3rd and 4th Avenues, and optimizing transfers between the IBX and N lines at the 8th Avenue station.

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

¹¹ From PEL Report, Appendix 1.16, Conventional Rail Plan, Sheet No. 04. [1024/1077].

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.