



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

September 5, 2019

HAND DELIVERED

Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
4 World Trade Center
150 Greenwich Street – 22nd Floor
New York, NY, 10006

Re: Port Authority Bus Terminal Replacement Project, Draft Scoping Document

The New York City Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination, on behalf of the City of New York, submit the following comments on the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) Planning-Level Draft Scoping Document dated May 23, 2019 (Draft Scope) concerning the Port Authority Bus Terminal (the PABT) Replacement Project (Project).

As the City outlined in testimony delivered to the Port on July 10th, 2019, we agree with the importance of the PABT Project in supporting the growing population and connectivity in the region serviced by the PABT. We reiterate that the City has stated its goals for the Project: 1) that the Project must plan for all intercity buses and not only those utilizing the PABT today; 2) that PANYNJ ensures no additional negative impacts to the air quality in Midtown and that the Project furthers the City's goals of reducing air pollutant emissions; 3) that PANYNJ works with the City on a world-class facility and implement the design objectives as outlined by City and other local stakeholders, including but not limited to the integration of multiple transportation modes and the pedestrian network; 4) that PANYNJ-owned property be improved with mixed-use developments and new open space; and 5) that PANYNJ continues to engage the City and local stakeholders – both in New York City and New Jersey – in a long-term commitment to trans-Hudson planning.

We are providing both general comments that supplement our testimony delivered on July 10, 2019, as well as comments on specific sections of the Draft Scope.

I. General Comments

1. In order to ensure that the Project can achieve these objectives, PANYNJ should incorporate the New York City Department of City Planning in the planning process as official Participating Agencies, as defined in 40 C.F.R. § 1501, in addition to MOEC and the City Department of Transportation, which are already identified as cooperating or participating agencies.
2. In addition to objectives specified in the Draft Scope, we recommend strengthening goal language to further improve the Project's overall objective of creating a great place that

compliments Midtown's physical and pedestrian environment.

- a. Under Goal 6 (reduce the impacts of bus services on the built and natural environment), the Project should also reduce criteria pollutants, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and other health harming air pollutants from the terminal and bus operation, and alleviate vehicular traffic congestion in surrounding City streets.
- b. Under Goal 4 (strive to achieve consistency with local and regional land use plans and initiatives), the Project should enhance the pedestrian experience in and around the PABT and enhance opportunities for bicycle access.

NYC DOT has implemented and is preparing to implement a number of street improvement projects (SIPs) to enhance safety and mobility of all street users adjacent to and nearby the proposed site using non-capital treatments (e.g. truffle paint, Kwick-Kurb, markings, etc.). As part of any alternative selected, construction of the new PABT should include reconstruction, in capital materials (e.g. concrete), of SIPs which are either adjacent to the site or along pedestrian elements where the site is expected to significantly increase pedestrian activity. This could include wider sidewalks on 8th and 9th Avenues and curb extensions on all corners where feasible to accommodate anticipated growth in pedestrian and bicycle volumes/activities.

3. Section 1.2.1, "Independent Initiatives" describes the Curbside-intercity market accommodation and additional storage and staging at Galvin Plaza as separate projects of independent utility.

Intercity buses have long used the PABT as a primary hub for passenger boarding and alighting in Midtown Manhattan. Buses play a key role in reducing reliance on private automobiles, expanding affordable transportation choices, and increasing efficiency in the use of limited street space. In recent years, capacity limitations and geometric constraints of the PABT, combined with expanded use of double-decker buses for intercity operations, have prompted increasing reliance on on-street bus stops for intercity bus operations in Midtown and other neighborhoods. This increased reliance on on-street bus stops, rather than efficiently organized terminal-based bus stops, has led to increased local traffic congestion and air pollution, noise, sidewalk crowding, and other nuisances that degrade the quality of life in Midtown Manhattan neighborhoods.

The lack of capacity in the current PABT limits the City from adopting bus stop siting policies and criteria that might shift more buses off-street. The reconstruction and expansion of the PABT presents an opportunity to minimize and avoid the growing burdens related to on-street intercity bus operations. The City strongly supports the use of off-street facilities for bus passenger loading and storage, especially where these off-street operations can be designed to minimize bus traffic circulation on congested local streets. A well-designed off-street intercity bus facility will enable more efficient use of scarce street space, provide a higher quality waiting environment for passengers, and generally reduce overall adverse impacts. Based on the description of increased demand for travel, the City's priority to alleviate vehicular traffic congestion around the PABT, and the Port's historic role in housing both commuter and intercity buses within the bus terminal, the City believes that the Project should provide capacity to accommodate the existing and growing trend of intercity buses using curbside dropoffs in part due to the lack of capacity within the existing terminal.

We recognize that the Port Authority is in good faith proceeding to evaluate the potential for separate projects that address the full range of bus demands, and we encourage that effort to continue. However, to date there is no guarantee that such projects will advance, or advance at the same speed and priority as this Project. We reiterate the City's objection to proceeding with a partial solution to expansion of bus capacity that accommodates commuter expansion but not intercity expansion, and strongly encourage the Port Authority to continue working with the City and other affected stakeholders to finalize a plan that ensures both bus markets are housed in the future.

4. The proposed Project should have an objective of reducing GHG emissions as well as criteria pollutants (PM, VOC, NO_x). With respect to the environmental analysis, the air quality and transportation analyses should be performed in accordance with the standards and methodologies set out in the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual.¹ Specifically, the Project should look at the neighborhood scale criteria for evaluating both NO_x impacts and PM 2.5 impacts. Further, receptors for the analysis model should be located along all adjacent multi-story development near moving ramp lanes. New receptors should include residential receptors at the Galvin Plaza private development site, and office receptors at the north private development site at West 42nd Street and Eight Avenue (Private Commercial Development) if developed.

II. Comments to Draft

II. Purpose and Need

1. Section 2.3. While only six goals are listed, the narrative indicates seven. Please revise.

III. Project Alternatives

2. Section 3.2.1. This section notes that the Long List of Alternatives contemplates storage and staging be accommodated as part of the project. On a high level, the City agrees that the Project should incorporate storage and staging facilities. With respect to anticipated street impacts, the City deems surface lots to be insufficient accommodation and sees the Project as unviable without storage and staging facilities. All storage and staging should be located off-street.
3. Section 3.2.2.1. This section highlights the need for the replacement terminal to accommodate a growing demand for Intercity buses. The City agrees and supports a Project that contemplates more facilities to accommodate the growing trend, including but not limited to more gates. The City would like to see PANYNJ commit not only to building space for the current users of the PABT, but to expand capacity for new buses to be shifted into the PABT.

¹ Draft, Section 4: Environmental Analysis Framework

IV. Environmental Analysis Framework

As a general matter, we would like to see an environmental review process that contemplates future New York City actions where the City would use a CEQR analysis framework and methodologies relied on by the City in ULURP actions to inform any decision on discretionary actions.

4. Section 4.1. On page 33, *New York City Actions*, revise to broadly state that PANYNJ will work with the City to meet the City air quality, transportation, and urban design goals. Past conceptual versions of this Draft Scope have outlined specific New York City actions that may be necessitated in order for the Project to go forward, including street right-of-way authorizations and, generally, the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). Please revise to incorporate specific New York City actions that the PANYNJ believes will be required for the Project.
5. Section 4.2. Revise to specify what CEQR criteria will be analyzed and methodologies will be employed to study air quality and transportation. The City strongly prefers a detailed CEQR analysis on the localized impacts of GHG emissions on new and sensitive receptors. Revise to read “See Section 4.4.3, Technical Studies” in the last sentence.
6. Section 4.4.3.
 - a. Currently, the document identifies a number of technical topics that will adhere to CEQR methodologies and standards: a) Urban Design and Visual Resources; b) Shadows; c) Noise and Vibration; d) Water and Sewer Infrastructure; e) Greenhouse Gas and Climate Change. The City strongly suggests that similar CEQR-consistent analyses be conducted at this stage of the environmental review for the Air Quality and Transportation chapters.
 - b. Please provide documentation of PANYNJ’s environmental commitments related to the PABT, as alluded to in the Greenhouse Gas and Climate Change category.
7. Section 4.5.2.1. The Draft Scope states that bus demand volume for the Project site would be constant in the No Action and With Action scenarios, under the logic that demand for travel is not induced by the creation of a replacement PABT facility. The City believes that while overall travel demand may be the same between West of Hudson origin points and Manhattan, a large volume of buses is not likely to be accommodated within the Project area without an off-street structure. An increase in bus volume, were it to not be accommodated within an off-street facility would likely require additional bus loading and layover areas which could only be accommodated by dedicating significant curbside or street capacity. Any changes to street capacity would have safety and traffic implications for the City. Thus, a No Action alternative should assume a lower anticipated growth of buses within the Project area than the with-action alternative, taking into account the capacity constraints that exist in physically housing buses on the street.

V. Agency and Public Coordination

8. Section 5.1. Revise to note the role of CEQR in the environmental review process and ULURP in the planning process.

9. Table 5-1. Revise to incorporate the Department of City Planning as a Participating Agency. One of the “Goals and Objectives” of the Project is to achieve consistency with local land use plans and initiatives, and DCP is the local agency in New York City in charge of land use. DCP is not requesting to be considered a Cooperating Agency (per 40 C.F.R. Section 1501.6) at this time.

We note that Table 5-1 limits the City Planning Commission’s responsibilities to “[c]onsultation and possible approvals related to modifications to local streets/sidewalks.” We find this limitation on responsibilities to narrow and believe a broader statement that captures all potential land use actions subject to City review is more appropriate in the Responsibilities column as is related to the Department of City Planning, the City Planning Commission, and the City Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the Planning-Level Draft Scoping Document. We look forward to continuing to work with PANYNJ as this project proceeds. If you have any questions concerning these comments, please contact the project manager, Ingrid Young, at (212) 788-6848.

Sincerely,



Hilary Semel
Director and General Counsel
Mayor’s Office of Environmental Coordination

cc:

Vicki Been, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development
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