ROUTE 9A PROJECT | FSEIS

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT CASE STUDY | TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

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CRP 5540 | Environmental Planning
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Fall 2010
ROUTE 9A, New York, New York

Introduction
Located near the Hudson River waterfront between Battery Place and 59th Street in Manhattan, Route 9A (also known as West Street or the West Side Highway) is a multi-modal, six- to eight-lane urban arterial highway, a continuous Class I bikeway, and continuous walkway. It carries cars, trucks, buses, bicycles, pedestrians, and various recreational users.

The construction of this green boulevard was the result of a 1994 FEIS/ROD.

Prior to 9/11 Route 9A provided a continuous 5-mile, Class I bikeway from Battery Place to 59th Street, where it connects into the Riverside South bikeway. Each weekday morning, 260 commuter buses carrying 14,000 people came from the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel HOV lane. The route served 170,000 people per work day.

This case study report investigates the environmental review process as it relates to the Route 9A project and transportation systems (traffic, public transportation, and pedestrians).

Route 9A is one of many federally funded Lower Manhattan Recovery Projects. Beyond the cumulative impacts that this project may create, it also had to consider other Lower Manhattan Recovery Projects with regards to construction and approval coordination, and numbers of VMTs and pedestrian users.

FSEIS Objective + Agency
The purpose of this Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) was for the reconstruction of a portion of Route 9A – between Chambers St. and West Thames St. – affected by terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The proposal was reviewed under NEPA as a supplement to the 1994 Route 9A Reconstruction Project FEIS, with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) acting as lead agency in cooperation with the United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

FHWA regulations states: “…a draft EIS, final EIS, or supplemental EIS may be supplemented at any time. An EIS shall be supplemented whenever the Administration determines that (1) changes to the proposed action would result in significant environmental impacts that were not evaluated in the EIS; or (2) new information or circumstances relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts would result in significant environmental impacts not evaluated in the EIS.”

The analyses in the supplement were based on new data for both existing and future conditions specifically developed as part of the Federal Transportation Lower Manhattan Recovery Projects Cumulative Analysis Framework. The data and analysis methodologies were consistent with those employed by PANNNJ’s Permanent WTC PATH Terminal EIS, MTA/NYCT’s Fulton Street Transit Center EIS, and South Ferry Terminal Environmental Assessment.
Project Chronology

- **1994** – FEIS/ROD for Route 9A Reconstruction
- September **2001** – Near completion, terrorist attacks destroy/damage, among other structure, transportation infrastructure including portions of Route 9A
- March **2002** – 6-lane temporary road constructed and Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel reopens
- June **2003** – Notice of Intent to conduct SEIS for the reconstruction of damaged portions of Route 9A released
- May **2004** – DEIS Notice of Availability issued
- June **2004** – Public hearing held
- July **2004** – Public review period closes
- May **2005** – FSEIS submitted
- July **2005** – Record of Decision published
- July **2006** – Promenade South opens
- April **2007** – Construction on remaining portion of damaged Route 9A, from West Thames St.-Chambers St., begins
- November **2010** – Construction on-going

Alternatives Considered

- **No-Action** – would make permanent the 6-lane temporary roadway that was constructed after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.
- **At-Grade** – would restore the 8-lane configuration that existed prior to 9/11
- **Short-Bypass** – would include a 4-lane surface roadway and a 4-lane, below-grade bypass roadway in the vicinity of the WTC site
Impact Overview

Traffic

At Opening Year (2009)
- Temporary condition exists for much of the study area because of the adjacent recovery efforts at the WTC site
- Construction truck access routes will continue to affect operation of any alternative

At Full Operational Year (2025)
- LOS: No-Action would have several movements that operate poorly; At-Grade performs better than No-Action; Short-Bypass performs best
- Short-Bypass removes as much as 75% of total traffic from surface streets, and directly lowers number of potential accidents between vehicles and pedestrians

Public Transportation

At Opening Year (2009)
- At-Grade and Short-Bypass preserve public transportation services and moderately improve bus transportation
- Improved traffic conditions on Route 9A under either Build Alternative, compared to the No-Action Alternative, would allow buses that run on or cross Route 9A to operate more efficiently

At Full Operational Year (2025)
- No-Action results in increased traffic congestion and diminished traffic conditions
- Build Alternatives reduce congestion and increase travel speeds on Route 9A in the peak hours
- Since public transportation services operate on and near Route 9A, the Build Alternatives would improve overall public transportation service in the study area

Pedestrians

At Opening Year (2009)
- Temporary condition exists for much of the study area because of the adjacent recovery efforts at the WTC site
- Although the At-Grade crossings provide sufficient anticipated pedestrian crossing capacity, the need for pedestrian bridges to supplement crossings will be assessed on a case-by-case basis

At Full Operational Year (2025)
- At-Grade and Short-Bypass provide acceptable operating conditions at all crossing locations, due to design elements that include wide pedestrian refuge areas in the middle and signal phasing favorable for crossing
- Short-Bypass has substantially less pedestrian and vehicle activity because of the separate underground route available for vehicles, and provides most pedestrian-friendly conditions in the area of greatest pedestrian crossing activity (between Liberty and Vesey Streets)
Though an anticipated completion date was 2010, construction is on-going. The World Trade Center 9/11 Memorial is scheduled to open for a service on September 11, 2011.

Alternative Recommendation

- **No-Action** — would make permanent the 6-lane temporary roadway that was constructed after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 — **DOES NOT MEET GOALS OF PROJECT**
- **At-Grade** — would restore the 8-lane configuration that existed prior to 9/11
- **Short-Bypass** — would include a 4-lane surface roadway and a 4-lane, below-grade bypass roadway in the vicinity of the WTC site — **BENEFITS DO NOT OUTWEIGH COSTS**

Sources

Lower Manhattan Info | [http://www.lowermanhattan.info/construction/project_updates/promenade_south_route_57469.aspx](http://www.lowermanhattan.info/construction/project_updates/promenade_south_route_57469.aspx)


NYS DOT | [www.nysdot.gov/display/project/route9a](http://www.nysdot.gov/display/project/route9a)