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NEW HOPE FOR TENTH AVENUE STATION ON THE NO. 7 SUBWAY EXTENSION

By Michael Howard Saul



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Down, but not out, for Tenth Avenue.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Wednesday he is “confident” the city can preserve the ability to build a second subway station as part of the extension of the No. 7 subway line in Manhattan, a move that follows aggressive lobbying from the real-estate industry and the City Council.

“We need engineers to confirm that it’s viable, but we’re confident we’ve found a way to keep the prospect of a future Tenth Avenue station alive without delaying the current extension,” Bloomberg said in a statement.

The city, which agreed to pay for the extension for the cash-strapped Metropolitan Transportation Authority, is spending \$2.1 billion to extend the No. 7 line from Times Square to 34th Street and 11th Avenue. The city originally planned to build a second station at 10th Avenue and 41st Street but scrapped it when costs skyrocketed.

As The Journal reported earlier this month, the Bloomberg administration agreed to take a second look at this issue in the wake of intense lobbying from City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and the Real Estate Board of New York.

The administration had planned to announce this spring that it would move forward with the construction of the subway line, and that it was officially closing the door on building the second station. But officials said they've found a simple solution that preserves the option of building the second station, if funding develops in the future.

Under the new design proposal, the new station would be built with two entrances and two separate platforms – one for eastbound and one for westbound trains. The MTA prefers now to build subways where passengers can enter at any point, no matter what direction they're headed. But officials said the compromise preserves the option of the second station, allowing it to be built at later date without interrupting service.

The city will apply for \$3 million in federal funding for an engineering study to, among other things, confirm that the new design plans for the second station are viable. Bloomberg aides stressed the funding for the station, estimated to cost about \$550 million, still needs to be identified, and that the city has no intention of forking over the cash.

“Our priority has always been extending the train to the Hudson Yards area to help spur major commercial and residential growth there, and we're on track to complete it by the end of 2013,” Bloomberg said.

“The city is in no position to step in and pay for a Tenth Avenue station too,” he added, “but it will be good news if we can finish the current extension without closing off the possibility of it happening in the future.”

Quinn, a Manhattan Democrat, and top real estate officials traveled to Washington this spring to meet with a senior member of the vice president's staff to discuss the possibility of getting federal funding for the second station. Quinn said she left that meeting hopeful, and she lauded the mayor on Wednesday for changing his administration's stance on this issue.

“Preserving the opportunity to construct an additional subway station that connects to Manhattan's far West Side is absolutely critical to the future growth of this promising new neighborhood,” Quinn said. “Together, the City Council and the administration took great care to position the West Side for responsible, long-term development, and I am glad the mayor has recognized the importance of maintaining the ability to build an additional station along the 7-line extension.”

Mary Ann Tighe, chairwoman of the Real Estate Board, also applauded the mayor for seeking the federal funding.

“We recognize that funding for the full project is a goal we will need to work on collaboratively in the months ahead,” she said. “But without this action, and without this redesign, there would not even be hope that a station could be built. Now the residents and businesses located in this area, and those still to come to the far West Side, will know that a station is still possible.”