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Waiting for the train

BY AMANDA FUNG

On the far West Side, push for subway stop suddenly has residents feeling connected

SEVEN YEARS AGO, Bruce MacAffer moved into The Strand, a 350-unit condominium on West 43rd Street and 10th Avenue. He was drawn by the new Hudson River Park, the area's vibrant arts scene and the proximity of Hell's Kitchen, with all its restaurants and bars.

But all that came at a price—his new home was and still is a long hike from the subway.

"In the winter it's a long, cold walk, with the temperature dropping five degrees with every step," says the senior director of real estate for advertising giant WPP Group. "Most of the other major neighborhoods in the city have subway stops within decent walking distance."

For Mr. MacAffer and the neighborhood's other 10,000-odd residents, there may be hope yet. Two weeks ago, the Real Estate Board of New York, with support from commercial tenants, business leaders and construction industry leaders, launched a campaign to revive a previously planned subway station at West 41st Street and 10th Avenue. The powerful industry trade group has created a Web site and a petition to garner support for building the station.

"I have volunteers from the brokerage community out there collecting signatures from residents and office tenants," says Steven Spinola, REBNY's president.

Current plans for the 7 line extension envision just one subway stop, at West 34th Street and 11th Avenue. Originally, there were plans to build a second station on West 41st Street. But in 2008, those plans were cut back to building just a shell for a station. And in the past year, even those plans were scrapped, making it almost impossible to build a station.

Locals still are reeling at having been literally left out in the cold. "There is a huge need," says



OUT IN THE COLD: Bruce MacAffer's home, at West 43rd Street and 10th Avenue, is a long walk from the subway.

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committee of Community Board 4. "The station is important in this area because there is much development going on here."

That goes for companies as well. When Ogilvy & Mather chose to shift its New York operations to 630 11th Ave. in January 2008, the

NEIGHBORHOOD JOURNAL prospect of a new station nearby was one of

the reasons management signed a 20-year lease for the 550,000-square-foot building, says Mr. MacAffer, who worked on the deal. His employer, WPP, is Ogilvy's parent.

"The potential of future transportation was seen as a plus," he says. "This neighborhood is growing fast, and it's one of the last underdeveloped areas in the city."

All told, there are nearly 18 residential buildings with a total of 15,816 units within a half-mile radius of the potential subway station, according to a survey conducted by REBNY. They include Larry Silverstein's two-tower, 1,359-unit Silver Towers, and The Related Companies' planned 59-story mixed-use tower at 440 W. 42nd St. Most of those towers were built within the past few years; some are still rising.

Today, most local residents have to rely on the 42nd Street crosstown bus and cabs to reach the closest major subway hub at Times Square. Other lucky residents who have moved into the newer luxury towers can use free shuttle buses. But those are offered only during peak hours.

"The crosstown bus line is extraordinarily slow and unreliable," says Ms. Berthet. "The shuttles, which aren't public, just add to the traffic and pollution. The streets are now so overwhelmingly congested."

Rush hour traffic along West 42nd Street and 11th Avenue leading into the Lincoln Tunnel is especially dangerous for pedestrians, some residents say, noting they must take that route when walking to the closest subway station on Eighth Avenue.

"The station is a no-brainer," says Marissa Redande, president of the Manhattan Plaza Tenants Association. "People can't afford cabs anymore and the MTA will get [more subway fare]." ■

BRUCE FINNIS