



**STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW
NOTICE OF COMPLETION OF
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

DATE: May 21, 2007

SEQR PROJECT NO.: 05-012

LEAD AGENCY: New York City School Construction Authority
30-30 Thomson Avenue
Long Island City, New York 11101-3045

Pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (Article 8 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law) and the regulations adopted pursuant thereto (6 NYCRR Part 617), a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) has been prepared covering the action described below and is available for public inspection at the office of the Lead Agency and applicant as set forth below. Pursuant to §1730.2 of the Public Authorities Law, the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) is SEQR Lead Agency. The FEIS is also available at the SCA's website (www.nycsca.org).

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed project was issued on May 17, 2005. Following publication and distribution of the DEIS, the public comment period remained open for thirty (30) days, and closed on June 16, 2005. Since publication of the DEIS and completion of the public comment period on the DEIS, the size and student capacity of the proposed project have been reduced and other aspects of the proposed project modified, as discussed more specifically below.

NAME OF ACTION: Metropolitan Avenue School Campus
Forest Hills, Queens, New York City

LOCATION: 87-01 69th Avenue (a/k/a 92-34 Metropolitan Avenue)
Forest Hills, Queens, New York
Tax Block 3886, Tax Lots 800 & 830

SEQR STATUS: Type I

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

On behalf of the New York City Department of Education (DOE), the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) proposes to construct a new school campus in the Forest Hills section of Queens that would provide a total of approximately 1,900 additional public school seats. The campus would accommodate two school

organizations: one approximately 1,000-seat high school serving students in grades nine through twelve, and one approximately 700-seat intermediate/high school serving students in grades six through twelve. The campus would also provide approximately 200 seats of capacity for District 75 special education students.

The proposed new facility would be developed on approximately eight (8) acres of vacant land owned by the SCA and located on a former industrial superblock (Block 3886, Lots 800 & 830). This block is bounded to the north by Metropolitan Avenue, to the west by Woodhaven Boulevard and Trotting Course Lane, to the south by Union Turnpike, and to the east by 69th Avenue, Sybilla Street, and Ursula Place.

The proposed school campus would be located within the boundaries of Community School District No. 28, although Woodhaven Boulevard is the boundary between Community School District Nos. 24 and 28. The proposed new campus would contain a total of approximately 300,000 gross square feet within a five-story structure. The school campus would contain general education classrooms; science demonstration rooms and laboratories; art and music rooms; auditorium; library; gymnasium; cafeteria and kitchen; administrative and support space; and, facilities for District 75 students.

The proposed school campus is intended to provide additional public school capacity at the intermediate and high school levels in the Borough of Queens. During the 2005-2006 school year, the Queens high schools located nearest to the proposed campus, Forest Hills High School and Newtown High School, respectively operated at 160 and 152% of their facilities' intended capacities, even with the use of Transportable Classroom Units.

The current proposal incorporates modifications from the previous proposal that was analyzed in detail in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. First, the previous proposal had involved the development of a campus that would accommodate four school organizations, consisting of two primary/intermediate schools and two high schools. Under the current proposal, the primary school grade levels would be eliminated and the overall capacity of the campus would be reduced.

Second, under the previous proposal, vehicular access to the campus was to have been provided from both Metropolitan Avenue and 70th Road, and pedestrians would also have been able to enter the campus from Sybilla Street. Under the current proposal, all entering and departing vehicles and pedestrians shall use the campus's Metropolitan Avenue entrance; an additional leg would be added to the existing intersection of Metropolitan Avenue and Selfridge Street to accommodate the school campus's driveway. The campus's 70th Road entrance shall be available only for emergency access, but would otherwise be restricted.

Third and finally, the previous proposal did not include on-campus accessory parking for teachers and staff. Under the current plan, a total of approximately 157 parking spaces for school staff would be provided on the campus, generally along its interior driveways.

The SCA would begin construction of the campus in Summer 2007, and student occupancy of the facilities would begin in September 2010. The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to DOE's Five-Year Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2005-2009.

POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

A number of intersection turning movements and approaches at intersections in the study area would experience significant traffic impacts as a result of vehicular traffic generated by the proposed project. Mitigation measures involving conventional, relatively low-cost engineering modifications (e.g., signal timing adjustments, on-street parking restrictions), were identified that, if implemented, would improve all but one of the impacted intersection approaches/lane groups such that they would operate at the same or better service conditions than they would in the future without the project (i.e., under No Build conditions). However, the project-generated impacts at Woodhaven Boulevard and Union Turnpike cannot be mitigated through signal timing adjustments and on-street parking prohibitions alone. The project would, therefore, have an unmitigated impact at that intersection.

Based on guidance provided in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, in the future with the project (i.e., Build conditions), project-generated traffic would result in significant adverse impacts at the following signalized intersections during the indicated weekday peak hours:

- Woodhaven Boulevard and Metropolitan Avenue (AM and PM peaks);
- Trotting Course Lane-Alderton Street and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak);
- 69th Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak);
- 70th Avenue (North Leg) and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak);
- 71st Avenue-Continental Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue (AM and PM peaks);
- Ascan Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue (AM and PM peaks);
- Union Turnpike and Metropolitan Avenue (AM and PM peaks); and,
- Woodhaven Boulevard and Union Turnpike (AM and PM peaks).

In addition, project-generated traffic would result in significant adverse impacts at the following unsignalized intersection:

- 69th Road and Metropolitan Avenue (AM and PM peaks).

The significant adverse impacts described above could be mitigated through the series of measures described below:

Woodhaven Boulevard and Metropolitan Avenue

- Re-allocate five (5) seconds of green time from the north-south phase to: (i) three (3) seconds to the east-west phase, and, (ii) two (2) seconds to the north-south left-turn phase during the weekday AM and PM peak periods.
- Prohibit on-street parking along the east side of Woodhaven Boulevard for a distance of approximately 200 feet south of Metropolitan Avenue during the weekday AM and PM peak periods, and re-stripe the northbound approach to accommodate one exclusive right-turn lane. This change would result in the loss of approximately four (4) existing parking spaces along the east side of Woodhaven Boulevard, south of Metropolitan Avenue, during the weekday AM and PM peak periods.

Prohibit parking along Metropolitan Avenue during weekday PM peak period

- Prohibit on-street parking along both sides of Metropolitan Avenue between the signalized Trotting Course Lane-Alderton Street intersection and the unsignalized 71st Road intersection during the weekday PM peak period in order to provide two continuous travel lanes in the eastbound and westbound directions along this section of Metropolitan Avenue. This change is similar to the existing parking restriction along Metropolitan Avenue during the weekday AM peak period, and would result in an additional time restriction for approximately fifty-two (52) existing curbside parking spaces along the north side of Metropolitan Avenue and approximately forty-five (45) existing curbside spaces along the south side of Metropolitan Avenue during the weekday PM peak period. The resulting eastbound and westbound capacity increases along Metropolitan Avenue would help mitigate the projected traffic impacts at the intersections of Metropolitan Avenue and: Trotting Course Lane-Alderton Street; Selfridge Street; 69th Avenue; 69th Road; 70th Avenue (north); and, 71st Avenue-Continental Avenue.

Trotting Course Lane-Alderton Street and Metropolitan Avenue intersection

- Modify the signal phasing sequence to provide a fourteen (14) second leading westbound phase, followed by a fifty (50) second concurrent east-west phase, during the weekday AM and PM peak hours. The existing forty-one (41) second northbound phase should remain, as should the three (3) second yellow and two (2) second all-red clearance intervals.

69th Road and Metropolitan Avenue

- Install signage to prohibit left-turn and through vehicle movements from the stop-controlled northbound and southbound approaches of 69th Road during the weekday AM and PM peak periods.

71st Avenue-Continental Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue

- Re-allocate three (3) seconds of green time from the east-west phase to the north-south phase during the weekday AM and PM peak periods.

Ascan Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue

- Re-allocate two (2) seconds of green time from the east-west phase to the north-south phase during the weekday AM peak period.
- Re-allocate one (1) second of green time from the east-west phase to the north-south phase during the weekday PM peak period.

Union Turnpike and Metropolitan Avenue

- Re-allocate two (2) seconds of green time from the east-west phase to the north-south phase during the weekday AM and PM peak periods.

In addition to the mitigation measures described above, the following improvements are recommended for the signalized Selfridge Street/Metropolitan Avenue intersection to provide for the safe and efficient movement of traffic in conjunction with the proposed geometric modifications to accommodate the school's access driveway as a fifth leg to this intersection.

Selfridge Street and Metropolitan Avenue

- Modify the existing traffic signal hardware at this intersection to accommodate the proposed site-access driveway as a new fifth leg to the intersection. This new south leg should be designed to accommodate one exclusive left-turn egress lane and one shared through/right-turn egress lane in the northbound direction, as well as two southbound ingress lanes.

- Maintain the existing ninety (90) second signal cycle length during the weekday AM and PM peak periods. During the weekday AM peak period, re-allocate green time to provide forty-nine (49) seconds of green time to east-west movements, ten (10) seconds of green time to Selfridge Street and the existing driveway, and sixteen (16) seconds of green time to the proposed site-access driveway. During the weekday PM peak period, re-allocate green time to provide forty-three (43) seconds of green time to east-west movements, eleven (11) seconds of green time to Selfridge Street and the existing driveway, and twenty-one (21) seconds of green time to the proposed site-access driveway. Three (3) second yellow and two (2) second all-red clearance intervals should be maintained during both the weekday AM and PM peak periods.

It should be noted that the projected traffic impact at the signalized intersection of Woodhaven Boulevard and Union Turnpike cannot be mitigated by signal timing adjustments and on-street parking prohibitions alone. Motorists on all approaches to this intersection currently experience delays corresponding to LOS "D", "E", or "F" during the weekday AM and PM peak hours. Even if the proposed school campus is not constructed, traffic operations at this intersection are projected to continue to worsen over time as a result of continued traffic growth throughout Queens and additional development activities in the area (such as the planned grocery store/retail development on the southwest quadrant of the Trotting Course Lane-Alderton Street/Metropolitan Avenue intersection).

More substantial improvements, such as the construction of turn lanes or prohibition of turns at the intersection, would be required in order to address these pre-existing traffic operations and intersection capacity deficiencies at the intersection of Woodhaven Boulevard and Union Turnpike. The SCA has and shall continue to coordinate with the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) to identify potential measures that would ameliorate the impacts of the additional traffic generated at this intersection due to the proposed school campus. Capacity and safety improvements at the Woodhaven Boulevard/Union Turnpike intersection will be investigated as part of NYCDOT's Congested Corridors project, which will examine operational and safety improvements at a variety of critical transportation corridors in New York City, including along Woodhaven Boulevard from Queens Boulevard to Atlantic Avenue.

As discussed above, the potential mitigation measures include the proposed institution of restrictions prohibiting on-street curbside parking on both sides of Metropolitan Avenue between Trotting Course Lane-Alderton Street and 71st Road during the weekday PM peak period in order to provide additional roadway capacity in the eastbound and westbound directions. Similar restrictions on curbside parking

are already in place during the AM peak hour. Also, restrictions of curbside parking along the east side of Woodhaven Boulevard for a distance of approximately 200 feet south of Metropolitan Avenue during the weekday AM and PM peak periods has also been identified a part of the proposed traffic impact mitigation for the intersection of Woodhaven Boulevard and Metropolitan Avenue.

The implementation of additional parking restrictions in the area, particularly along Metropolitan Avenue, may not be consistent with the concerns of the local community. Therefore, an alternative set of potential mitigation measures has been identified which does not include any new restrictions on curbside parking. This alternative set would consist of the following mitigation measures instead of the curbside parking restrictions described above:

- Lengthen the existing ninety (90) second signal cycle to one hundred twenty (120) seconds at all signalized intersections on Metropolitan Avenue between Selfridge Street and 71st Avenue-Continental Avenue, and reallocate the green time at these intersections accordingly to provide additional east-west capacity along Metropolitan Avenue.
- Re-stripe the northbound and southbound approaches to the signalized intersection of 71st Avenue-Continental Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue to accommodate one exclusive left-turn lane and one shared through/right-turn lane on each approach.

Although these alternative measures would provide additional capacity without instituting new restrictions on curbside parking, they would not be sufficient to fully mitigate the project-generated impacts at the following intersections:

- Woodhaven Boulevard and Metropolitan Avenue (AM and PM peaks);
- Trotting Course Lane-Alderton Street and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak);
- Selfridge Street and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak hour);
- 69th Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak);
- 70th Avenue (north leg) and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak);
- 71st Avenue-Continental Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak); and,
- Woodhaven Boulevard and Union Turnpike (AM and PM peaks).

All the mitigation measures discussed above are subject to review and approval by NYCDOT, which makes the final determination of the need for these improvements. The SCA will coordinate with the NYCDOT on the implementation of all appropriate mitigation measures before the opening of the proposed school campus.

NOISE

The noise levels currently experienced at the rear yards for the five (5) residential properties located at 87-09, 87-15, 87-19, 87-23, and 87-31 69th Avenue were modeled using the Federal Highway Administration's Traffic Noise Model (TNM) because those yards would be the closest to the campus's interior driveway, and would, therefore, be the nearest sensitive receptors to the noise generated by campus-related traffic. That modeling indicated that in the future without the project, the rear yards would experience low noise levels during the AM peak hour, ranging from 49.1 dBA to 50.9 dBA.

In the future with the project, the TNM model indicated that the noise levels at two (2) of the rear yards would increase noticeably (*i.e.*, by more than 5.0 dBA). Noise levels would increase from 49.1 dBA to 56.5 dBA at the rear yard of 87-09 69th Avenue, for a 7.4 dBA increase. Noise levels would increase from 49.4 dBA to 55.1 dBA at the rear yard of 87-15 69th Avenue, for a 5.7 dBA increase. This increase in noise levels would remain unmitigated.

Other potential environmental impact assessment areas were fully examined, including land use and zoning; community facilities; neighborhood character; historic and archaeological resources; urban design and aesthetics; infrastructure and energy; air quality; soil and groundwater conditions; and, construction impacts. No other significant adverse impacts were identified.

BENEFICIAL IMPACTS

Development of the proposed school complex would provide approximately 1,900 additional permanent public school seats at the intermediate and high school levels in the Borough of Queens. The high school portion of the campus shall be zoned for residents of the area adjoining the campus, and therefore is expected to provide relief to other existing overcrowded high schools (such as Forest Hills High School) that currently serve those areas.

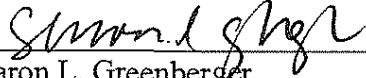
Metropolitan Avenue School Campus, Queens
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CONTACT:

Lead Agency Contact: Ross J. Holden
Vice President and General Counsel

Address: New York City School Construction Authority
30-30 Thomson Avenue
Long Island City, New York 11101-3045

Telephone: (718) 472-8220



Sharon L. Greenberger
President & CEO

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Date