



## STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW

### STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

JUNE 12, 2007

Pursuant to Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law and the regulations of the State Environmental Quality Review Act ("SEQRA") as found in 6 NYCRR Part 617, the New York City School Construction Authority ("SCA"), as Lead Agency, makes the following findings:

**Name of Action:** Metropolitan Avenue School Campus, Queens

**SEQR Project No.:** 05-012

**SEQR Status:** Type I

**Description of Action:**

On behalf of the New York City Department of Education ("DOE"), the 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 69<sup>th</sup> 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.

Vehicles and pedestrians entering and departing the campus would use a new access point from Metropolitan Avenue that would be developed as part of the project. An additional vehicular entrance to the campus would also be developed off 70<sup>th</sup> Road, but would be restricted and available only for emergency access. A total of approximately 157 parking spaces for school staff would be provided on the campus, generally along its interior driveways.

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

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

**Agency Jurisdiction:**

The New York City School Construction Authority is the Lead Agency pursuant to the Public Authorities Law (§1725 et seq.).

**Date Final Environmental Impact Statement Filed:** May 21, 2007

**Facts and Conclusions Relied upon to Support the Decision:**

In accordance with the regulations promulgated pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act ("SEQRA"), 6 NYCRR Part 617, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS") was prepared and issued by the Lead Agency for the proposed project 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.

Following completion of the public comment period on the DEIS, the project was modified to reduce the size and student capacity of the proposed campus, restrict general vehicular and pedestrian access to the campus's Metropolitan Avenue entrance, and incorporate on-campus parking for school staff. The modified project was analyzed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement ("FEIS") that was prepared and issued by the Lead Agency on May 21, 2007.

The FEIS determined that the proposed action would not result in significant adverse impacts to the following areas: land use and zoning; community facilities; neighborhood character; historic and archaeological resources; urban design and aesthetics; infrastructure and energy; air quality; soil and groundwater; and, construction-related impacts. However, significant adverse impacts to traffic and transportation, and noise conditions could occur; these impacts could be partly mitigated through the implementation of measures identified in the FEIS.

## 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);
- 69<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak);
- 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue (North Leg) and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak);
- 71<sup>st</sup> 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:

- 69<sup>th</sup> 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 71<sup>st</sup> 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; 69<sup>th</sup> Avenue; 69<sup>th</sup> Road; 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue (north); and, 71<sup>st</sup> 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.

**69<sup>th</sup> Road and Metropolitan Avenue**

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

**71<sup>st</sup> 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 71<sup>st</sup> 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 71<sup>st</sup> 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 71<sup>st</sup> 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);
- 69<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak);
- 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue (north leg) and Metropolitan Avenue (PM peak);

- 71<sup>st</sup> 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 69<sup>th</sup> 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 69<sup>th</sup> 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 69<sup>th</sup> Avenue, for a 5.7 dBA increase. This increase in noise levels would remain unmitigated.

#### 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 is therefore expected to provide relief to the other existing overcrowded high schools (such as Forest Hills High School) that currently serve those areas.

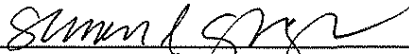
**CERTIFICATION OF FINDINGS TO APPROVE/FUND/UNDERTAKE**

Having considered the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements, and having considered the preceding written facts and conclusions relied upon to meet the requirements of 6 NYCRR 617.11, this Statement of Findings certifies that:

1. The requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617 have been met;
2. The beneficial impacts of the construction of the proposed new school facility far outweigh the adverse environmental impacts, which can be largely mitigated by the measures identified in the FEIS. The balance of benefits and mitigatable impacts provides a full and compelling rationale to proceed with the project; and,
3. Consistent with social, economic and other essential considerations from among the reasonable alternatives available, the action is one which minimizes or avoids adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable by incorporating as conditions to the decision those mitigative measures which were identified as practicable.

**New York City School Construction Authority**

Name of Agency



Signature of Responsible Official

**Sharon L. Greenberger**

Name of Responsible Official

**President & CEO**

Title of Responsible Official

**June 12, 2007**

Date

**30-30 Thomson Avenue, Long Island City, New York 11101**

Address of Agency