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U.S. | NEW YORK | NY TRANSIT

MTA Outlines Two Options for L Train Tunnel Closure

Both plans spell pain for passengers trying to travel between Manhattan and north Brooklyn



Work in progress in April in the tubes that carry the L train between Brooklyn and Manhattan. *PHOTO: MARC A. HERMANN/MTA NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT*

By **ANDREW TANGEL**

May 4, 2016 11:59 p.m. ET

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority outlined two options for a looming closure of the New York City subway's L train tunnel, setting the stage for a debate over how much pain riders will endure—and for how long.

One option calls for fully closing the L train's East River tunnel for 18 months. This plan would sever a key link for Brooklyn riders, making it much more difficult for patrons to get to dining and nightlife spots in trendy neighborhoods such as Williamsburg.

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own subway route along 14th street in Manhattan. That is because the L doesn't intersect with other subway lines in that borough, and a tunnel closure would prevent those trains from getting to a rail yard in Brooklyn for repairs, inspections and maintenance.

A second option would keep one of the L train's two tracks running under the river but with infrequent—and likely crowded—subway service between both boroughs. This repair plan would take three years.

The dual options were unveiled by MTA officials on Wednesday as they embark on a public-relations campaign about the L train's closure, which is expected to begin in early 2019.

The tunnel overhaul is expected to cost an estimated \$800 million to \$1 billion, and officials compared its scope to repairs of damage the 1 subway line sustained in the Sept. 11, 2001, World Trade Center terrorist attacks.

Nine of the subway system's 14 underwater tunnels were damaged by superstorm Sandy in 2012, but the L train tunnel suffered among the worst.

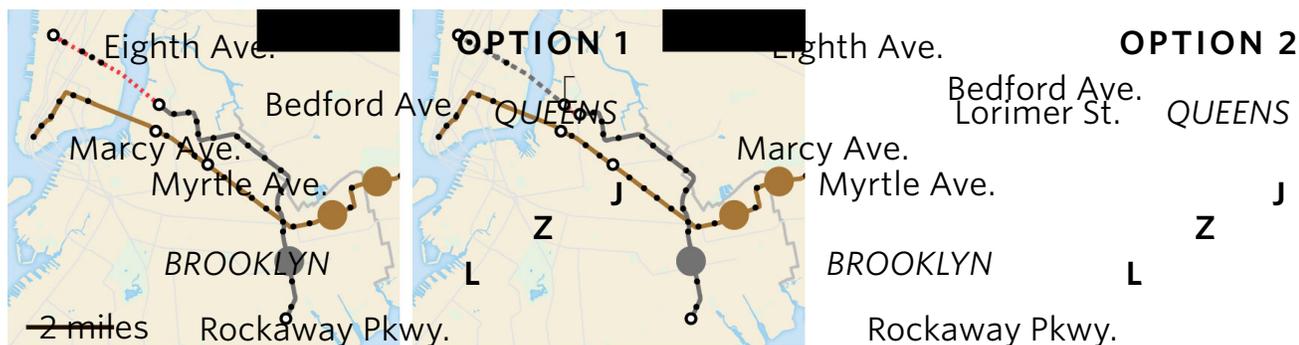
Repairs have long been expected to prove the most disruptive to New York City's transit network because the L is the only subway line between Manhattan and northern Brooklyn, carrying an estimated 225,000 riders between the boroughs each weekday.

“The L train is an important line to the people who ride it because there is no substitute,” said Mitchell Moss, director of the Rudin Center for Transportation at New York University. “It's the coronary artery to Williamsburg and the neighborhoods to the east.”

The closure is part of an MTA plan to rehabilitate what is officially known as the

L Train Pain

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority unveiled options for closing the L subway tunnel between Manhattan and Brooklyn starting in 2019. An estimated 225,000 riders pass through the tunnel each weekday.



Two-track, 18-month closure

- No L trains between Eighth and Bedford avenues
- L operates between Rockaway Parkway and Bedford Avenue
- J and Z trains make all stops

One-track, three-year closure

- No L trains between Lorimer Street and Bedford Avenue, free shuttle buses provide alternate service
- L service operates in two sections:
 - 1) Rockaway Parkway and Lorimer Street

Source: Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Canarsie Tunnel.

Built in 1924, the tunnel's internal electrical systems and concrete innards are deteriorating—damage hastened by lingering effects from corrosive saltwater from superstorm Sandy, officials said.

While MTA officials say the L train tunnel is currently safe for trains carrying passengers, they say they are trying to get ahead of problems that could result in unplanned service disruptions—or worse.

Pointing to a collapsed concrete structure inside the tunnel, MTA officials said a similar failure derailed a G train in Brooklyn last year, causing minor injuries.

In detailing the two tunnel-closure options they are weighing, MTA officials dismissed two other considerations.

Performing construction only on nights and weekends wouldn't work because potentially harmful silica dust generated by construction could extend closures into the workweek, MTA officials said. Air tests and cleanup would have to be completed before trains could resume running through the tunnel by perhaps Tuesdays.

Digging another tunnel would also be a non-starter, said the officials, who are worried about losing potentially hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding as the fourth anniversary of Sandy approaches and national elections loom.

“That would take years and years,” said Ronnie Hakim, president of the MTA’s New York City transit division, which operates the city’s subway and buses. “We just don’t have the time to even undertake—even if we could find the money—to do something like that.”

MTA officials are planning a public meeting in Brooklyn on Thursday; another meeting in Manhattan is expected later this month. The goal is to let riders and business owners weigh in on the closure options before the MTA’s board votes on a repair plan later this year.

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Riders will also get a preview of transportation alternatives that would accompany each tunnel-closure option.

MTA officials sketched out early plans including beefed-up subway service including on the G line, whose train length would double to eight cars.

There are plans for a shuttle bus to the J, M, Z lines to get riders over the Williamsburg Bridge. MTA officials suggested a new ferry link to East 20th Street in Manhattan, where riders could take increased express-bus service in Manhattan.

“People are rightly desperate to preserve any service they can,” said state Sen. Daniel Squadron, a Democrat whose district includes North Brooklyn and who called for public MTA meetings about the tunnel closure. “But at the end of the day it’s the best service that people are going to gravitate toward.”

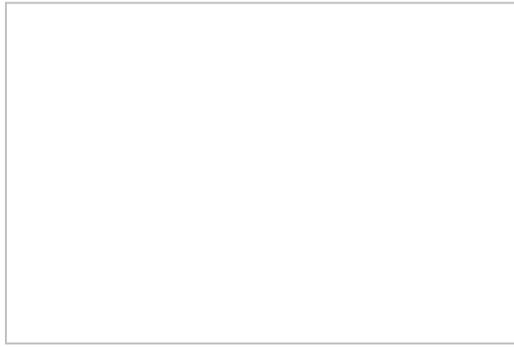
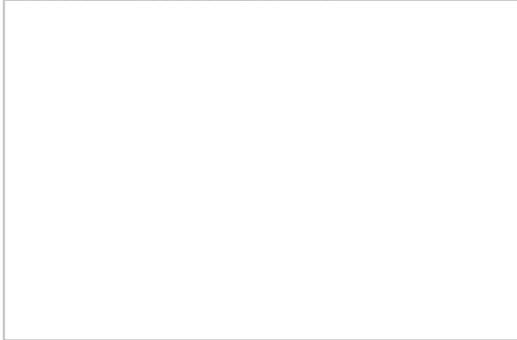
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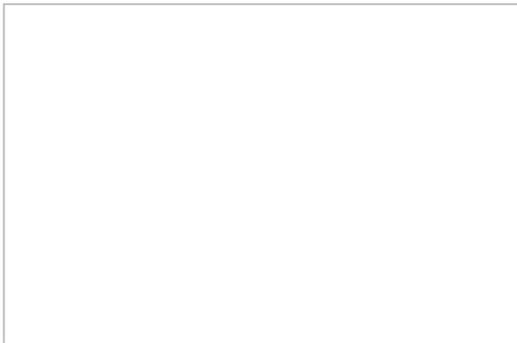
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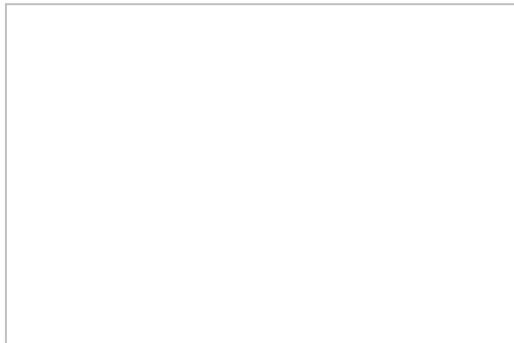
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