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[NY Transit](#)

MTA Capital Plan Calls for New Stops in Bronx and Penn Station

Metro-North Extension Gains Speed

By

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ENLARGE

A Metro North train in Tarrytown. Associated Press

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority wants to add four Metro-North Railroad stations in the Bronx and extend the commuter line into Penn Station—even though it doesn't know how it

will pay for \$15.2 billion of \$32 billion worth of construction and repair projects over the next five years.

"Penn Station Access" has long been on the drawing board, but the authority's capital plan—due for unveiling Wednesday—calls for tackling the project, according to documents the MTA posted on its website.

"The expansion of Metro-North service to the East Bronx has the potential to transform not just the Bronx, but the entire region," said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. , a supporter of the project. "The end result is an improved quality of life for the Bronx, along with increasing real-estate values."

Under the plan, Metro-North's New Haven line—it currently serves Grand Central Terminal—would use tracks already in use by Amtrak trains heading to Boston. It would involve constructing Metro-North stations in areas with relatively few mass transit options: Hunts Point, Parkchester, Morris Park and Co-op City.

"All the key infrastructure is there, for the most part," said Richard Barone, director of transportation programs at the Regional Plan Association Inc., who characterized the project as a relative low-hanging fruit. "It's mostly about adding some stations, maybe adding some tracks."

The MTA, which declined to comment on the plan Monday, didn't say how much it expects the Metro-North project to cost or how long it would take to complete. The MTA's board is slated to consider the five-year capital plan at its meeting Wednesday.

Another MTA megaproject under way is known as East Side Access, the construction of a Long Island Rail Road station under Grand Central. The LIRR currently terminates at Penn Station, which is choked by train traffic vying for limited space. East Side Access would alleviate that congestion when it is completed by December 2022, as currently expected.

The MTA's 2015-19 capital plan calls for spending \$5.5 billion on those two projects, as well as the second phase of the long-stalled Second Avenue Subway project. An additional \$3.1 billion would pay for improvements to bridges, tunnels and toll plazas.

The bulk of the \$32 billion plan—\$23.5 billion—would pay for repairs and upgrades to New York City's subway and bus systems and commuter railroads, according to the MTA documents.

This "core" part of the plan calls for additional rollout of advanced subway signals to allow for greater capacity amid growing ridership, for example. It also would pay for continued development of real-time subway information.

How—or whether—the MTA can pay for the projects is another question. The authority's release of its next capital plan is expected to set the stage in coming months for potentially contentious debates over whether to raise fares and tolls more than already planned, or increasing state subsidies and dedicated taxes that fund transportation.

The \$15.2 billion funding gap won't be the MTA's first. The current capital plan had an initial funding gap of \$9.9 billion, which the authority largely closed by reducing the program's scope and taking on more debt, according to a July report by the office of New York state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

If the MTA's capital needs aren't funded, New York City's status as a world class city could suffer, said Robert Paaswell, a former executive director of the Chicago Transit Authority who teaches civil engineering at the City College of New York.

"If you don't invest more money, you can't aggressively meet what you need for the future, and the system won't modernize as fast as it should," he said.