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By Hannah Furfaro

NYU Proposes Replacements for the L-Train

Among the ideas: aerial gondolas over the East River



The new Apple Store in Williamsburg, an area feeling anxiety over the closure of the L train planned for 2019-20.

PHOTO: KENA BETANCUR/GETTY IMAGES

The planned shutdown of the L subway-train tunnel is already causing flutters of anxiety among Brooklynites and businesses, but a new report says such worries could be eased with more ride-sharing services, dedicated bus lanes and even aerial gondolas high over the East River.

Released this week by **New York University's Rudin Center for Transportation**, the report recommends many ways for both the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and businesses to soften the impact on neighborhoods like Williamsburg.

“The L train is packed on weekends and the evenings because people go to Williamsburg for the bars, the social life and the music,” said Mitchell Moss, director of the Rudin Center. “We believe it’s essential to use some of the newer transportation modes as part of the planning for the L shutdown.”

Starting in January 2019, the tunnel is expected to shut down for 18 months to fix damage to the tube beneath the East River caused by superstorm Sandy in 2012.

Mr. Moss said that while the MTA should “make sure the buses and subways are fully expanded and improved,” businesses should also provide solutions. For example, he said, restaurants could help subsidize customer costs for app-driven car services.

The report also asks policy makers to consider connecting the Lower East Side to Williamsburg with an aerial cable line of high-speed gondolas, a proposal being pitched by an organization called East River Skyway.

The MTA and other public agencies are already considering several of the report’s recommendations, including increasing ferry service on the East River and service on connecting subway lines.

In an email, MTA spokeswoman Beth DeFalco said the agency is “committed to open partnership and community engagement as we develop alternative service plans to minimize impacts on L train riders and surrounding businesses during the closure.”

Jonathan Butler, co-founder of the Brooklyn Flea and Smorgasburg food vendor fair, said connections such as the Brooklyn Bridge and ferry services will likely keep Williamsburg waterfront businesses somewhat sheltered.

He predicted sharper impacts for neighborhoods further out—places beyond inexpensive taxi trips from Manhattan.

Even so, Mr. Butler said, “It kind of seems unbelievable that it’s going to happen” near Williamsburg, an area that has grown so much over the past decade. “It’s like kicking a sprinter in the shins.”

Rachel Beider, who owns a massage-therapy business, has operated in Williamsburg for eight years. Ms. Beider said she has about 30 employees, many of whom live in Manhattan and are bracing for a longer commute.

She said she is glad she recently opened a second location in Greenpoint. “If I were dependent on just one location in Williamsburg,” she said, “I feel like I might be in trouble.”