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BY MAX RIVLIN-NADLER



Transit workers pump seawater out of the Canarsie tunnels after Hurricane Sandy on November 5, 2012
Metropolitan Transportation Authority / Patrick Cashin

A A sky gondola that takes Metrocards. More reliable subway service on connecting lines. Public-private partnerships with companies like Uber and Lyft. And even a fleet of electric scooters. These are among the sober-minded recommendations included in a report from NYU's Rudin Center for mitigating the upcoming L Train apocalypse, coming to an East River commute near you no sooner than 2019.

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The report, which includes widely-heard proposals like a designated bus lane on the Williamsburg Bridge and an increased East River ferry schedule, calls for the city and the MTA to make changes that will not only help commuters during the shutdown itself, but change the permanent transit infrastructure in a part of the city that desperately needs it.

That means considering options like an East River gondola and a scooter fleet

– alternative modes of transportation that will, according to the report, "vastly reduce the city's reliance on climate-vulnerable tunnels."

The report references the East River Skyway, a gondola that was first proposed in 2014 by real estate developers to help with the already inadequate transit options along the condo-saturated East River waterfront (which the mayor has already tried to tackle with ferry service and his [ill-advised trolley proposal](#)). The gondola could theoretically transport 5,000 passengers per hour in both directions. While that falls far short of the over 1,000 riders an L Train can carry in a single ride, it would help alleviate the economic impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. ("Gridlock" Sam Schwartz [likes the idea too](#).)

The scooter pitch is based off of a startup in San Francisco that offers three-dollar rides to commuters. The NYU report believes these type of tech-centric ideas will "tap into the tech-savvy and innovative minds of Williamsburg." In defending the idea of putting app-wielding millennials on Scooters on already-clogged streets that are [increasingly lethal to cyclists](#), the report argues that scooters are "space-efficient and low-cost; their effects on congestion and air quality will be minimal." The report also suggests that CitiBike increase its incentives for membership, and calls for the city to work with private companies like Uber and Lyft to create ride-sharing incentives to cut down on congestion on the bridge itself, as well carpooling requirements for commuters.



NYU Rudin Center

Other mitigation proposals are more banal and feasible, like the bus-only lanes on the Williamsburg Bridge for rush hour and increased subway stops on connecting lines. And yet the de Blasio administration has yet to accept that the shutdown is not only a reality, but a pressing issue for millions of commuters. In July, [the mayor questioned](#) whether the MTA should shut down the tunnels at all, in a rather belated attempt to win favor of outraged area business owners.

But the majority of residents and business owners had already accepted that not only will the tunnel be closed for eighteen months, but that it's better to have a complete shutdown than a partial one which would drag repairs on for eternity. The NYU study agrees, calling the total shutdown "an intelligent decision."

The MTA has already committed to expanding service on the M and G Trains during the shutdown, and Polly Trottenberg, the Department of Transportation Commissioner, has said the city will study new traffic patterns to help alleviate the transit crunch, including [a plan to shut down 14th Street in Manhattan](#) to car traffic.

If the L-pocalypse were to become a political football between the state-controlled MTA and the mayor's office, the results could be truly dire. For a bit of a preview of what the would look like, [just try getting to LaGuardia airport for the next five years](#).



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