



MAS Moynihan Station Position Statement

New York needs a new train station.

At 550,000 daily passengers, Penn Station is burdened beyond its limits. More than a decade ago, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan promoted a solution: expand the station westward across Eighth Avenue to the James A. Farley General Post Office. It was a farsighted idea to augment the current station — not to replace it. The Municipal Art Society supported this plan from the beginning and continues to support it today. To accommodate present and future needs, a new Midtown train station must be developed on both sides of Eighth Avenue. This need will become even more acute as the Port Authority and New Jersey Transit plan and build additional rail tunnels under the Hudson, terminating beneath 34th Street.

A grand gateway requires grand design.

The MAS believes that Moynihan Station must be developed as an inspiring work of contemporary civic architecture. Cities around the world have realized a renaissance of their historic train stations through the practice of adaptive re-use. Good examples exist in Berlin, Bilbao, London, and Washington, DC. Unfortunately, it has been discouraging to see the quality of successive designs for Moynihan Station decline with each new plan.

The first renovation design gave passengers expansive interior views and visual cues to direct them to their destinations. It allowed for the restoration of the bright, spacious environment that characterized the magnificent original Pennsylvania Station. It also provided dedicated passenger entrances and internal access between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. More recent proposals fail to match the original standard with regard to these elements. In addition, the latest proposal does not recognize the need to establish logical passenger circulation between the two new train halls.

At the same time, we see great potential in the idea of moving Madison Square Garden off its current site. This large space — once occupied by the original Pennsylvania Station train hall —

should be reborn as a public train station worthy of the city it will serve. Both above ground and below grade, “Moynihan East” should be developed as a fitting complement to “Moynihan West” in the restored Post Office across Eighth Avenue.

The Farley Post Office must be safeguarded.

McKim, Mead & White’s Post Office, completed in 1912, is a masterpiece of Beaux Arts architecture and is a city, state and national landmark. It is a 20th Century treasure that we believe is worthy of a rebirth in the 21st Century. Plans to construct a new Garden in the building’s western portion, however, create a disturbing scenario that could leave the eastern half as little more than a lobby for the arena. This must not happen.

First, the architectural integrity of the building’s Eighth Avenue façade must not be compromised. Inappropriate signage — whether it is temporary billboards or permanent lighting fixtures — is incompatible with the structure’s significant architectural details. Second, the United States Post Office must not lose its historic home at the top of the iconic Eighth Avenue steps. Third, visitors to the Garden must be able to find their destination with well-placed entrances and signage that does not interfere with access to the building’s main tenant, Moynihan Station. Fourth, entrances to the Garden should be positioned on the ground level of Eighth Avenue — flanking, but not atop, the grand staircase — on 31st and 33rd Streets, and on Ninth Avenue.

A corridor of economic opportunity.

To the west of Moynihan Station, from Ninth Avenue to the Hudson River, lies a golden opportunity for development that will enhance the economic, cultural and aesthetic values of Midtown. One of the city’s great assets — the light, air and views of the waterfront and Hudson River Park — is just a few blocks beyond the station. The city can realize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to promote and facilitate the westward expansion of Midtown by affording the public well-placed entry and egress on Ninth Avenue.

Public projects need careful planning and strong public oversight.

All New Yorkers have a stake in this public project to build Moynihan Station. The city, state and federal governments have provided \$600 million in funding, and as much as an additional \$1 billion dollars in public investment will be needed. We believe the project can be a model of enlightened progressive development. A unique public/private partnership must be fashioned and it must be directed by a public authority and safeguarded with strong public oversight. The Moynihan Station Development Corporation, or its successor, must fill this role and use its authority, independence and leadership to ensure that a public train station remains this project’s top priority.