



Proposed H.S. 472, 51-30 Northern Boulevard, Queens

STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW FINDINGS STATEMENT

Pursuant to Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law (State Environmental Quality Review Act [SEQRA]) and 6 NYCRR Part 617, the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA), as lead agency under SEQRA, makes the following findings.

Name of Action: Proposed H.S. 472

Project Location: The project site is a privately-owned property (Block 1192, Lots 41, 47, 48, and 54) at 51-30 Northern Boulevard within Queens Community District 2. The project site is bounded by Northern Boulevard to the north, elevated railroad tracks (Amtrak) to the south, 54th Street to the east, and a one (1) story commercial development (Tower Square Shopping Center) to the west. The project site is approximately 3.15 acres (137,000 square feet) in area. The project site is located within a M1-1 Light Manufacturing zoning district, in which schools are not permitted as-of-right.

The project site currently contains a vacant, approximately 45,600 square foot (sf), one (1) story commercial building on the western portion of the project site and a large paved parking lot on the eastern portion of the project site. The on-site building, which was formerly occupied by a sporting goods store (Sports Authority), is currently vacant.

Description of Action: On behalf of the New York City Department of Education (DOE), the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) proposes the acquisition of a privately-owned property containing a vacant commercial building and a paved parking lot. The proposed action entails the demolition of the existing structure on site, and construction of a new high school facility which will accommodate approximately 3,079 students. The proposed high school facility, currently known as H.S. 472, will serve students in grade levels nine through twelve within the Borough of Queens; the new facility will



house three (3) different high school programs, including a District 75 program.¹

Funding for site acquisition, design, and construction of the proposed school facility will be provided by DOE's Five-Year Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2020-2024. It is expected that the new school will open in September 2023.

Lead Agency: New York City School Construction Authority
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SEQR Status: Unlisted

SEQR Project No: 19-017

Facts and Conclusions in the Targeted FEIS Relied Upon to Support the Decision:

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed action will entail the demolition of the existing building on the project site, and the construction of a new public school facility. As contemplated, the preliminary plan provides for a new school facility of six (6) stories containing approximately 304,617 square feet (sf). The proposed school will be built on the western portion of the project site with frontage on Northern Boulevard. The proposed school's main entrance will be located on Northern Boulevard. An additional entrance will be provided on the western side of the school building for District 75 students arriving and departing the site by school bus. The new public school facility will provide approximately 3,079 seats for students in grade levels nine through twelve, and is intended to include the following: classrooms for grade levels nine through twelve, special education classrooms, two (2) lobby areas, auditorium, gymnasium, library, music rooms, art classrooms, science rooms, exercise rooms, two (2) administrative suites, two (2) guidance suites, two (2) staff lunch rooms, and storage. The proposed action will also provide an approximately 26,911 sf outdoor play area on the northeastern portion of the project site. The new high school will generally operate during typical school hours, from September to June.

¹ District 75 programs provide citywide special education services for students in need of intensive or specialized services.



PURPOSE AND NEED

The new public school facility will serve high school students and special education students in Queens. Construction of the new high school facility has been proposed to provide additional permanent public school seat capacity in Queens.

DOE's Five-Year Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2020-2024 allocates capital funding for the creation of a total of 8,164 additional seats at the high school level in Queens to address existing overcrowding and forecast changes in student enrollments and also to support DOE's policies regarding class-size reduction and transition from the use of transportable classroom units (TCUs).

POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) and Supplemental Environmental Studies report, completed on March 18, 2019, established that significant adverse impacts to transportation - specifically traffic, transit (bus), and pedestrians - would be expected with the proposed project. Further, the EAF and Supplemental Environmental Studies report established that other technical areas examined in the EAF will not result in significant adverse impacts on the environment and, as a result, these technical areas did not require further analysis. Therefore, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is "targeted" in that it has a detailed focus on transportation. As per the EAF, the technical areas not warranting further analysis in the targeted FEIS are: Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy; Socioeconomic Conditions; Community Facilities and Services; Open Space; Shadows; Historic and Cultural Resources; Urban Design and Visual Resources; Natural Resources; Hazardous Materials; Water and Sewer Infrastructure; Solid Waste and Sanitation Services; Energy; Air Quality; Noise; Public Health; Neighborhood Character; and Construction-Related Impacts. These technical areas have been analyzed through the EAF and Supplemental Environmental Studies report. Transportation is the only technical area presented in the targeted FEIS, as summarized below.

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

With the proposed project, significant adverse traffic, transit (bus), and pedestrian impacts are expected. Mitigation measures were identified to avoid the impacts and restore No Build conditions, wherever possible. However, some potential impacts cannot be fully mitigated and some will be unmitigatable, as described below.

The proposed project is expected to result in significant traffic impacts at five (5) of the study area intersections. Three (3) out of the five intersections can be fully mitigated with signal timing adjustments to avoid project-generated traffic impacts. A signal timing adjustment at Northern Boulevard and Broadway/54th Street during the AM peak hour can improve the overall intersection Level of Service (LOS), but



will not fully mitigate traffic operations to No Build conditions. During the PM peak hour, the project-generated impacts at the intersections of Northern Boulevard with Woodside Avenue/51st Street and with Broadway/54th Street are unmitigatable.

The proposed project will not result in any significant parking impacts. The proposed school will increase the parking demand by 161 vehicles, which will increase the shortfall in available on-street parking from two (2) to 13 percent on the most restrictive days; however, this shortfall may not be considered a significant impact for this project due to the availability and close proximity of transit in the area.

Two (2) bus routes, the Q18 and Q66, are anticipated to experience significant impacts during the AM and PM peak hours as a result of the proposed project. The Q18 eastbound and westbound routes are expected to experience significant impacts during both peak hours, while the Q66 westbound route is expected to experience a significant impact during the AM peak hour and the Q66 eastbound route is expected to experience a significant impact during the PM peak hour. These impacts can be mitigated by adding one (1) additional Q18 bus per direction and one (1) additional Q66 westbound bus during the AM peak hour, and one (1) additional Q18 eastbound bus, one (1) additional Q66 eastbound bus, and two (2) additional Q18 westbound buses during the PM peak hour.

With the proposed project, pedestrian volumes at the Northern Boulevard Subway Station were assumed to increase with the increment of students and staff utilizing subway transit during the AM and PM peak hours. The subway stair analysis identified a potential significant stair impact on the southbound subway stair S4 during the AM peak hour of pedestrian movement, which is 7:45 to 8:45 AM. However, from an operational standpoint, the peak travel period for high school students will occur earlier, between 7 and 8 AM, as area high schools typically have an 8 AM start time for the first class. Therefore, if the start time for the proposed HS 472 is before 8 AM, then the school-generated southbound subway trips will not overlap with the peak hour for commuters at subway stair S4 and will not result in a significant stair impact. Adding the AM peak hour incremental high school student subway trips to the 7 to 8 AM subway station volumes will not result in a significant impact at subway stair S4. Therefore, the proposed project will not result in any subway service impacts.

The proposed project will result in significant pedestrian impacts at the east crosswalk of Northern Boulevard at McDonald's/former Sports Authority, and at the east (diagonal) crosswalk and northeast corner of Northern Boulevard and Broadway/54th Street (Northern Boulevard Subway Station). The impact at the east crosswalk of Northern Boulevard at McDonald's/former Sports Authority can be improved by widening the crosswalk pavement marking width from 10 to 20 feet. The impact at the east (diagonal) crosswalk of Northern Boulevard and Broadway/54th Street can be improved by widening the crosswalk pavement marking width from 10 to 20 feet, but will not fully mitigate the impact (i.e., will not restore pedestrian operations to No Build conditions). The impact at the northeast corner of this intersection cannot be mitigated because there is limited roadway and sidewalk space; therefore, no additional sidewalk widening (i.e., curb



extensions) can be provided at the northeast corner to mitigate the potential pedestrian impact at this corner.

MITIGATION MEASURES AND UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

With the proposed project, significant adverse traffic, transit (bus), and pedestrian impacts are expected, and mitigation measures were identified to avoid the impacts and restore No Build conditions. However, some potential impacts cannot be fully mitigated and some will be unmitigatable, as described below.

Traffic. Avoidance of most potential traffic impacts can be achieved by signal timing changes, as noted below.

- Northern Boulevard and Woodside Avenue/51st Street: Shifting two (2) seconds of green time from the Northern Boulevard permissive phase to the Northern Boulevard protected left phase, and five (5) seconds of green time from the Northern Boulevard permissive phase to the Woodside Avenue/51st Street phase during the AM peak hour will restore the LOS to No Build conditions for the eastbound left-turn lane on Northern Boulevard, the defacto northbound left-turn lane on Woodside Avenue, and southbound 51st Street and will avoid project-generated traffic impacts. During the PM peak hour, there is an unmitigatable impact on the northbound approach that cannot be mitigated by standard improvement measures such as signal timing adjustments. The proposed signal timing change at Northern Boulevard and Woodside Avenue/51st Street during the AM peak hour does not result in any pedestrian impacts.
- Northern Boulevard and Broadway/54th Street: Shifting three (3) seconds of green time from the Northern Boulevard phase to the Broadway/54th Street permissive phase during the AM peak hour will restore the LOS for north and southbound Broadway to No Build conditions. This signal timing shift will avoid project-generated traffic impacts on the north and southbound approaches; however, the westbound approach will deteriorate to an unacceptable LOS D condition. During the PM peak hour, there are unmitigatable impacts on the north, south, and eastbound approaches that cannot be mitigated by standard improvement measures such as signal timing adjustments.
- Northern Boulevard and BQE Ramps: Shifting one (1) second of green time from the Northern Boulevard protected through/right-turn phase to the Northern Boulevard protected left-turn/BQE Ramps protected right-turn phase during the AM peak hour will restore the LOS for the southbound right-turn lane on the BQE Ramps to No Build conditions and will avoid project-generated traffic impacts. Shifting three (3) seconds of green time from the Northern Boulevard protected through/right-turn phase to the Northern Boulevard protected left-turn/BQE Ramps protected right-turn phase during the PM peak hour will restore the LOS for the eastbound left-



turn lane on Northern Boulevard to No Build conditions and will avoid project-generated traffic impacts.

- Broadway and 51st Street: Shifting one (1) second of green time during the AM peak hour and two (2) seconds of green time during the PM peak hour from the Broadway phase to the 51st Street phase will restore the LOS for north and southbound 51st Street to No Build conditions and will avoid project-generated traffic impacts.
- Woodside Avenue and 37th Avenue: Shifting two seconds of green time from the Woodside Avenue phase to the 37th Avenue phase during the AM peak hour will restore the LOS for westbound 37th Avenue to No Build conditions and will avoid project-generated traffic impacts.

Transit. Two (2) bus routes, the Q18 and Q66, are anticipated to experience significant impacts during the AM and PM peak hours as a result of the proposed project. The AM peak hour impacts can be mitigated by adding one (1) additional Q18 bus per direction and one (1) additional Q66 westbound bus during the AM peak hour. The PM peak hour impacts can be mitigated by adding one (1) additional Q18 eastbound bus, one (1) additional Q66 eastbound bus, and two (2) additional Q18 westbound buses during the PM peak hour.

Pedestrians. Two (2) potential significant pedestrian impacts can be improved by pavement marking changes, as noted below.

- Northern Boulevard and McDonald's/former Sports Authority: Widening the existing ten (10) foot wide east crosswalk to 20 feet wide will improve pedestrian conditions from LOS E to acceptable LOS D in the Build AM peak hour. This mitigation measure will avoid a significant project-generated pedestrian impact.
- Northern Boulevard and Broadway/54th Street: Widening the existing ten-foot wide east (diagonal) crosswalk to become 20 feet will improve pedestrian LOS conditions from LOS F to E in the Build AM and PM peak hours. While this mitigation measure will not completely avoid a significant project-generated pedestrian impact nor restore the LOS to No Build conditions (LOS D in both peak hours), it will improve conditions within the crosswalk. In addition, curb ramps should be constructed at the corners to provide ADA access to this expanded crosswalk. The pedestrian LOS impact on the northeast corner will remain unmitigated due to sidewalk and roadway space constraints at this intersection.

The SCA and/or DOE will continue to consult with NYCDOT and NYCT regarding these recommended measures to mitigate traffic, transit, and pedestrian impacts, including those impacts which can only be improved and the impacts that cannot be mitigated.



ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

No Build Alternative

Under the No Build Alternative, the SCA will not construct a new public school facility on the project site to provide additional public school capacity in Queens. Accordingly, under this alternative, the existing vacant commercial building and surrounding paved parking lot will remain on the project site.

Unlike the proposed project, the No Build Alternative will not provide additional public school capacity on the project site to accommodate current and future student enrollment in Queens. Therefore, this alternative will not meet the project's purpose and need.

The No Build Alternative will not result in any significant adverse impacts related to transportation - traffic, transit (bus), and pedestrians, nor require mitigation or improvement measures to avoid or minimize impacts.

IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

Both natural and human-made resources will be expended in the construction and operation of the proposed project. These resources include the use of land, funding, building materials, energy, and human effort required to develop, construct, and operate various elements of the proposed project. They are irreversibly and irretrievably committed because their reuse for some other purpose other than the project either is not possible or is highly unlikely.

The land (including its development potential) that comprises the project site is the most basic resource that will be committed irretrievably. In addition, the project's funding is an irretrievable resource since it will no longer be available for investment in other projects. The actual building materials used in the construction of the school (e.g., steel, concrete, glass, etc.) and the energy (e.g., natural gas, diesel fuel, electricity, etc.) consumed during construction and by the school's various mechanical systems will also be irretrievably committed to this project.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SHORT-TERM USE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

The proposed project entails the construction of a new school facility that will replace an existing vacant commercial building and surrounding paved parking lot. The new school facility will provide approximately 3,079 seats for grade levels nine through twelve within Queens.

During construction, there will be some short-term adverse effects on the environment. These will include temporary disruptive effects due to increased traffic and noise levels associated with construction activities, and diminution of air quality due to fugitive dust and vehicular emissions. Given the limited scope and



short duration of the construction activities on the project site, and the specific mitigation measures that will be undertaken as necessary, these short-term adverse effects will not be significant impacts.

Longer-term negative impacts will include changes to transportation. However, mitigation measures are available to fully mitigate or partially mitigate most of the project's impacts on transportation. These negative effects of the project will not be expected to adversely affect long-term productivity.

Positive consequences of the proposed project will include the provision of new public school capacity on the site to meet the needs of current and projected future high school students in Queens.

GROWTH-INDUCING ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed project entails the construction of a new school facility that will replace an existing vacant commercial building and surrounding paved parking lot. The new school facility will provide approximately 3,079 seats for grade levels nine through twelve within Queens. The proposed project will provide additional public school capacity in Queens where currently there is an existing need for additional school seats and will not be expected to induce growth in the area.



CERTIFICATION OF FINDINGS

Having considered the targeted FEIS, and having considered the preceding written facts and conclusions relied upon to meet the requirements of 6 NYCRR 617.11, this Statement of Findings certifies that:

1. The requirements of Article 8 of the New York State Conservation Law and the implementing regulations of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 6 NYCRR Part 617, have been met; and
2. Consistent with the social, economic and other essential considerations from among the reasonable alternatives available, the action is the one that avoids or minimizes adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, and that adverse impacts will be avoided or minimized to the maximum extent practicable by incorporating as conditions to the decision those mitigation measures that were identified in the targeted FEIS and in this Findings Statement.

Name of Agency: New York City School Construction Authority

Signature of Responsible Official:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorraine Grillo". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Name/Title of Responsible Official

Lorraine Grillo, President and CEO

Date:

July 22, 2019