

**Statement of Regional Plan Association  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
Board of Directors  
MTA Capital Program  
September 29, 1999**

I am Jeffrey Zupan, Senior Fellow for Transportation for Regional Plan Association. With me is Albert Appleton, RPA Senior Fellow, who is a principal member of RPA's MetroLink project team. RPA applauds the MTA's continuing commitment to bring the transit system to a State of Good Repair. RPA is also gratified that this plan includes funds to finally begin long overdue system expansion.

Unfortunately, the actual expansion program is a grave disappointment. The proposed three mile subway stub from 125th Street to 63rd Street will utterly fail to accomplish its stated goal – relief of crowding on the Lexington Avenue line. Chart 1 shows first the current passenger volumes for southbound peak hour Lex express trains at 42nd Street. These volumes already exceed even the MTA's own minimal overcrowding threshold. Chart 1 then shows projected Lexington ridership growth over the next 20 years and the meager impact that the MESA stub would have upon it, leaving the Lexington with ridership and crowding far above today's already unacceptable levels. This is all MTA data.

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Why won't the stub help the Lex rider? Simple. As the MESA report indicates, the stub will not take Lex riders where they want to go, so that 19 out of every Lex 20 riders will still have to use the Lex.

**Is it intelligent public policy to spend \$3.5 billion for a Lexington improvement project that leaves Lex riders significantly worse off?**

Chart 2 shows the additional impact of the second element of the MTA's proposed expansion program – East Side Access, the connection of the LIRR to Grand Central--on Lexington Avenue subway conditions. This otherwise highly desirable project that RPA has supported for 30 years would add still more people to the Lex (Chart 2's last bar). Thus, **the MTA's expansion plan would leave the Lex with one-third more riders than today, a physical impossibility.**

What's the alternative? Build the full Second Avenue subway/MetroLink program in tandem with East Side Access!

Chart 3 lists the gainers and losers from the MTA's proposed expansion program. It speaks for itself. **Projects this divisive are not what a "Metropolitan" Transportation Authority should be proposing.**

Finally, Chart 4 lists those who would lose if the widely endorsed MetroLink Second Avenue Subway program is not constructed – namely the entire City and Region. The MTA has yet to study MetroLink in any detail, even though it offers an integrated way to achieve the goals of five separate MTA studies. If the MTA did, RPA is certain you would be here today to make MetroLink the centerpiece of your capital program.

RPA is prepared to discuss with the MTA how to achieve this as suggested in our full critique of MESA submitted at your September 15th MESA hearing (available on the RPA website at [www.rpa.org](http://www.rpa.org)).

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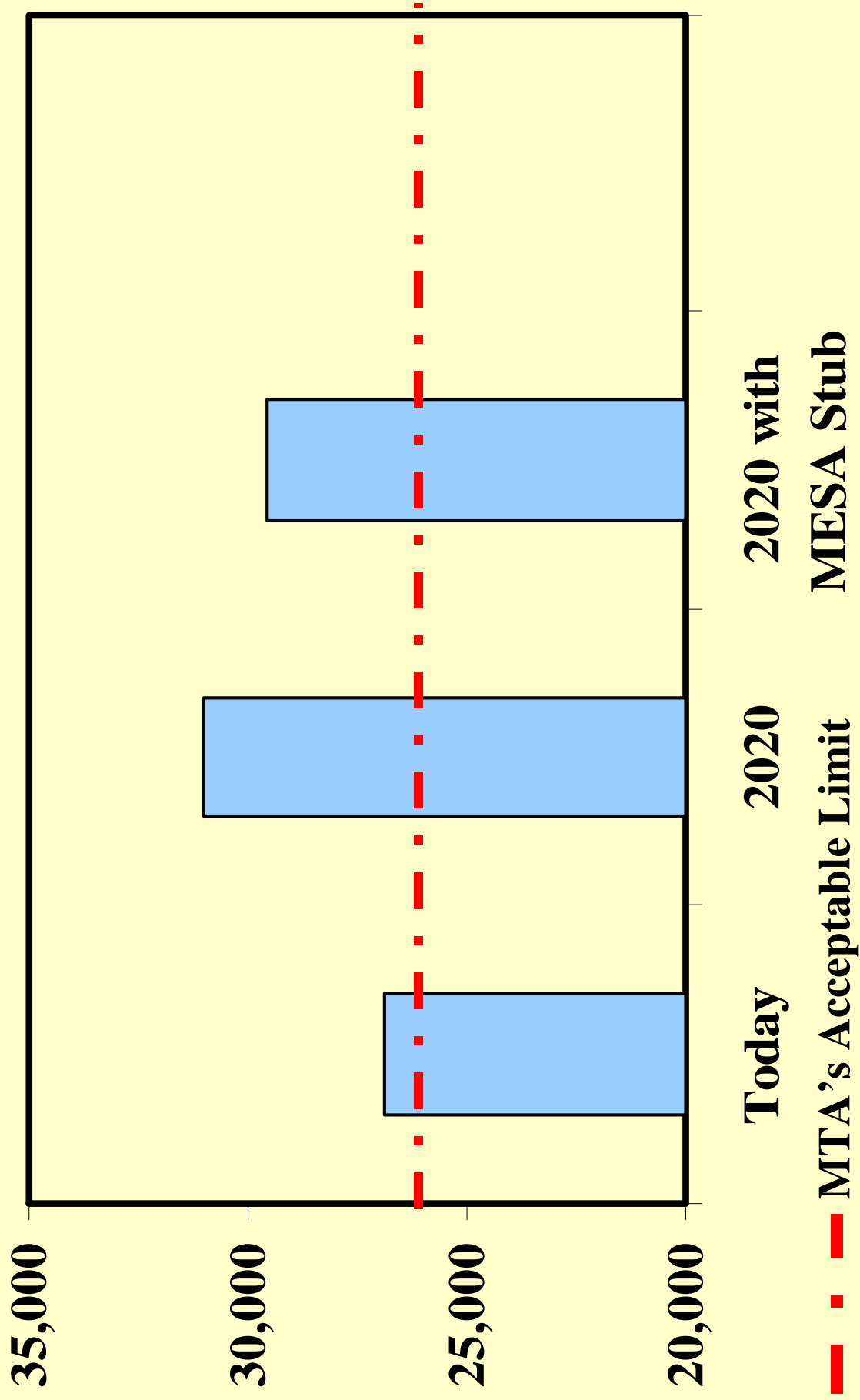
The stub has been characterized as a first step. But there is no second or third step – no plan as to what to do next – no commitment to anything beyond spending \$3.5 billion to complete in 2015 something that will not do the job. Is something proposed for completion in 2015 a practical first step? Is something that would require the multi-year process of environmental review and planning to be replicated two, three four times before a full Second Avenue subway is finally completed a practical first step towards it? To state such propositions is to refute them.

In fact the stub is probably not even a first step. Once its meager benefits are weighed against the years of disruptions from its piecemeal construction, **the likely result is that nothing will get built on the East Side. Thus the legacy of inaction that has left a 21<sup>st</sup> century city with a 1930s subway system will continue.**

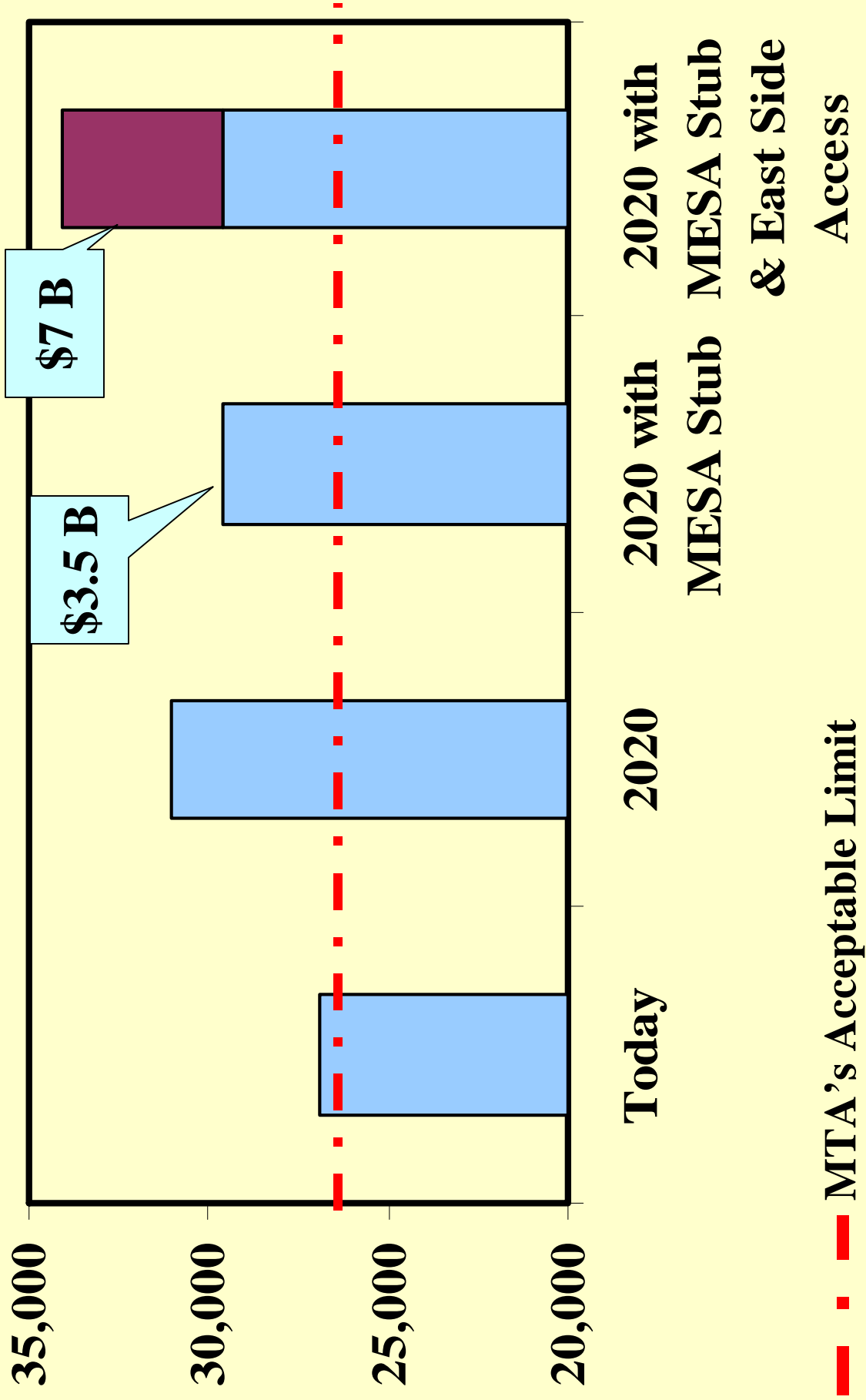
You should add \$1.3 billion to the \$700 million proposed for the Upper East Side stub to provide \$2 billion over the next five years for the MTA to plan, design, review and complete the first year of construction of a true Second Avenue subway MetroLink system within the five years.

Copies of these charts are included in my testimony. Thank you.

# Chart 1: Crowding on Lex Express Peak Hour



# Chart 2: Crowding & Costs: Lex Express



# **Chart 3: MTA Proposed Expansion Program**

## **Who Is Better Off**

1. Upper East Side/East Harlem riders to West Midtown
2. Long Island commuters to East Midtown

## **Who Is Worse Off**

1. All Lex riders from Upper East Side/East Harlem to East Side destinations
2. All Lex riders in Manhattan south of 59th Street
3. Lex riders living in The Bronx
4. Lex riders living in Queens
5. Lex riders living in Brooklyn
6. Westchester commuters to financial district

# **Chart 4: Who Loses Without *MetroLink***

1. Upper East Siders/East Harlem residents commuting to East Midtown
- 2.. Lex riders living in The Bronx
3. Lex riders living in Queens
4. Lex riders living in Brooklyn
5. Westchester commuters to financial district
6. Long Island commuters to financial district
7. Residents of the south-central Bronx
8. Residents of Co-op City
9. Residents of southeastern Queens
10. Residents of half of Brooklyn
11. Residents of Lower East Side and north to East Midtown
12. JFK Airport passengers and employees
13. Financial district, downtown Brooklyn, and Jamaica Center