

New York Penn Station Service Optimization Study Phase I Report

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – JULY 2026

1. What is the New York Penn Station Service Optimization Study (the Study)?

The Study seeks to determine how much additional service capacity could reasonably be unlocked from the existing Penn Station complex through targeted, cost-effective infrastructure improvements and changes to railroad operations without substantially expanding the existing footprint.

FRA is conducting the Study in two phases:

- Phase I examined the track, platform, and vertical circulation elements (VCEs) within the existing station complex, between West 31st to West 33rd Streets and 6th to 10th Avenues.
- Phase II is upcoming and will evaluate broader regional infrastructure and operational strategies that may further enable long-term service growth, including infrastructure beyond Penn Station, train fleets, and other important topics such as how this service growth will be managed in the future.

2. Why do we need the Study?

There is no status quo at Penn Station; with the construction of the new Hudson Tunnel, change is coming.

The poor passenger experience (congestion, crowding, and service reliability) facing Penn Station customers today is serious and will only become more severe as train service and ridership grow in the future. Once upgrades on the Northeast Corridor (NEC) between Newark, NJ, and Penn Station are complete, Penn Station will be the binding constraint on how much passenger service the New York area rail system can accommodate from the west. Thus, it is necessary to determine how much additional service capacity could reasonably be unlocked from the existing Penn Station complex through targeted, cost-effective infrastructure improvements, without substantially expanding the existing footprint.

3. Why is the Study being conducted in two phases?

The Study is being conducted in two phases to align proposed improvements to the station complex (Phase I) with the timeline of the broader Penn Transformation project. Phase II complements Phase I by evaluating broader regional infrastructure and operational strategies that will further enable long-term peak-hour and all-day service growth.

4. What was studied in Phase I?

Phase I of the Study analyzed potential improvements to infrastructure and railroad operations within the existing station complex, focusing on tracks, platforms, and vertical circulation elements (stairs, elevators, and escalators). The results of Phase I will inform the work of Penn Transformation Partners (PTP) as they advance their design for the Penn Transformation project and will be refined in Phase II.

5. How were railroad stakeholders engaged in Phase I?

FRA engaged railroad stakeholders (Amtrak, New Jersey Transit [NJ Transit], and the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority [MTA] with its subsidiaries Long Island Rail Road [LIRR] and Metro-North Railroad [MNR]) throughout Phase I of the Study through a series of workshops.

6. How were prior studies incorporated into the Phase I work?

Prior studies were used as a reference for relevant data/information.

7. What are the main results from Phase I?

The analysis in Phase I found that organizing the station into three distinct operating zones—North, Central, and South—offers the most promising balance of capacity, reliability, flexibility, and feasibility. This approach builds on how Penn Station works today, adding targeted infrastructure changes to account for the new Hudson Tunnel and improvements to platform clearance, dwell times, and train flow.

The improvements identified through the refined operating concepts are grouped into two infrastructure packages: Penn Transformation Improvements (near-term pedestrian flow, track, and platform improvements) and Penn Station Future (additional platform and track reconfiguration that may be implemented sometime in the future). The improvements identified in Phase I will be further analyzed and refined in Phase II.

8. Why were costs not provided in the Phase I Report?

While a conceptual-level analysis of cost was conducted as part of Phase I of the Study, detailed costs will be developed through coordination between FRA, Amtrak, and PTP. In particular, the Study could not account for PTP's proposed improvements and efficiencies gained from doing construction work concurrently.

9. What is the timeline for implementing the improvements identified in the Phase I Report?

The Penn Transformation Improvements will be implemented as part of or in conjunction with the Penn Transformation Project. Further coordination between Amtrak, PTP, FRA, and the railroad stakeholders is necessary to refine the implementation timeline.

The Penn Station Future improvements will not be precluded by the Penn Transformation Project, but there is currently no timeline for implementing those improvements.

10. Who will implement the improvements identified in the Phase I Report?

FRA, Amtrak, and PTP will work collaboratively to advance the Penn Transformation Improvements as part of or in conjunction with the Penn Transformation Project.

The entity responsible for implementing the Penn Station Future improvements has not been identified.

11. What will be studied in Phase II?

In Phase II, FRA will expand the Study's analysis beyond the footprint of the Penn Station complex to cover the service areas of MNR, LIRR, and NJ Transit. Phase II will focus on improving the reliability of rail service to and from Penn Station and will consider additional changes in railroad operations and capital improvements beyond the Penn Station complex, in conjunction with the Phase I infrastructure improvements. Phase II also will focus on implementation of the Study's ultimate findings, including governance structures, funding strategies, and agreements between operators and other key stakeholders.

12. Will railroad stakeholders be engaged in Phase II?

Yes, FRA will continue to engage railroad stakeholders in Phase II.

13. Will Phase II allow for public and advocacy group engagement?

Yes, FRA will incorporate public engagement in Phase II.

14. When will Phase II be complete?

Phase II will be completed in 2028.

15. Why is there an Addendum to the Phase I Report?

Phase I of the Study was completed in June 2026, before Amtrak selected PTP as the master developer for the Penn Transformation Project. The Addendum acknowledges the need for PTP to build upon the Phase I findings through additional evaluation and refinement. This work will support the continued development of the Penn Transformation Project.