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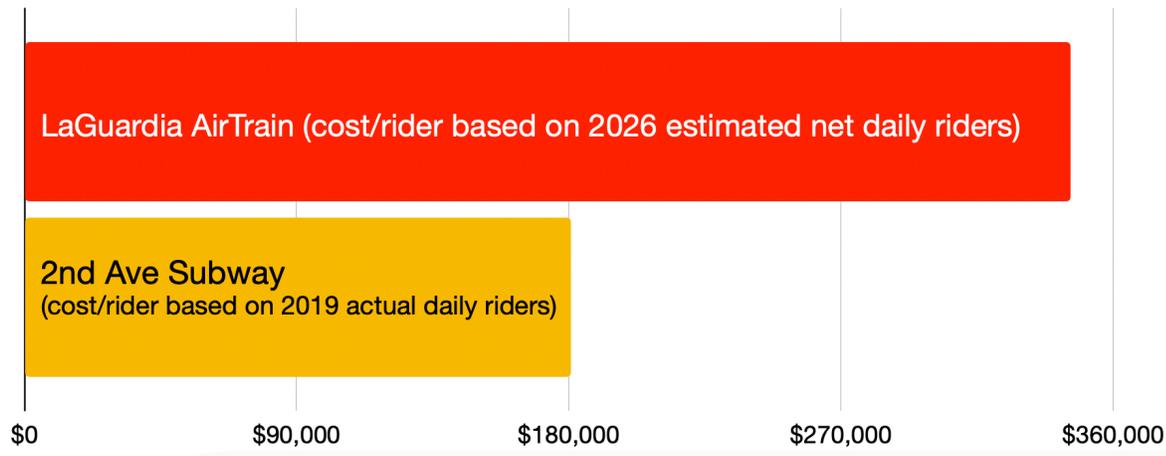
LaGuardia AirTrain will dethrone 2nd Avenue subway as world's most costly transit at nearly twice as expensive per rider!

LGA AirTrain will cost at least \$2.05B but carry only 6,000 new daily transit riders

The LaGuardia AirTrain will stand alone as the world's most expensive transit project per rider if Governor Hochul allows the Port Authority to proceed with the Cuomo-era project.

Experts believe the current Second Avenue Subway was the most costly transit project ever built, but the LaGuardia AirTrain will be about twice as expensive, when comparing construction costs to daily ridership.

Transit construction costs per rider



In 2019, the Second Avenue Subway from 63rd to 96th street generated 30,847 new daily riders net of 2016-2019 declines at nearby Lexington line stations, for a capital cost of \$5.57 billion or \$180,500 per rider.

Based on Port Authority ridership estimates, we believe the LGA Airtrain will carry fewer than **6,000 net transit trips a day**. The Port Authority's [Final Environmental Impact Statement \(FEIS\)](#) for the LaGuardia AirTrain estimates that by 2026, Airtrain will carry **9,173 air passengers** and **3,945 airport employees** daily for a **total of 13,117 daily riders**. However, the FEIS clearly shows that automobile trips to the train by airport employees parking at Willets Point and taxis and private cars dropping off passengers, are a big share

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of all Airtrain riders. (Importantly, the FEIS does not say how many rental car users from will probably use the Airtrain to get to and from Willets Point, which we believe will be substantial.) Therefore, we calculate \$2.05B project cost /6,000 net daily riders equals **\$346,000 per Airtrain rider — nearly twice as expensive as the Second Avenue Subway.**

Based on the Port Authority's own FEIS, a large part of what the LGA Airtrain does is provide an extremely expensive shuttle service for airport employees parking their cars, long-term parkers, rental car customers and taxi drop-offs travelling from Willets Point to the LGA terminals. As such, **the LGA project is more about making it easier to drive and park at LaGuardia than creating a superior transit option. Accordingly, we think the Port Authority's claim that the AirTrain is climate friendly is completely bizarre.**

- The 13,000 daily rider claim is overstated because the FEIS projects that 1,252 daily AirTrain air passengers will arrive at the AirTrain by car (drop-off or taxi/Uber/Lyft). Furthermore, the Port Authority's assessment of airport employees indicates that 2,295 will park private cars in Willets Point and use the AirTrain for a last stage of their commutes. These 3,547 riders will still represent car trips on streets and highways, just moved from LaGuardia to nearby segments of the street and highway systems. These car-access AirTrain trips may be even higher because the FEIS analysis is unclear in how it treats 2026 car rental airport trips.
- Netting out car-to-AirTrain trips, daily transit-only AirTrain usage in 2026 will be 9,571.
- The Port Authority's 2018 ridership analysis also indicates that access to the airport by bus and bus+subway trips will decline by 2,238 air passengers and 1,407 employees in 2025 if the AirTrain is built. These should be also subtracted from a net transit-access analysis of the AirTrain plan, as shown below.

AirTrain net transit ridership 2026

	Air Passengers	Airport employees	Totals
Total AirTrain ridership projected for 2026	9,173	3,945	13,118
Employees estimated to park private cars at AirTrain Willets point station		-2,295	-2,295
Passengers projected to arrive at AirTrain Willets point via car drop off or taxi/Uber/Lyft	-1,252		-1,252
Projected LGA bus and bus+subway declines if AirTrain is built	-2,238	-1,407	-3,645
		Net transit-only trips/day	5,926

Sources:

FEIS Appendix B "Project Description" pp 9-11

FEIS Appendix C "Ridership"

Available at <https://www.lgaaccessseis.com/final-eis-document>

LGA Ground Access Mode Choice Model and AirTrain Ridership Forecast. Port Authority 2018

<https://www.anewlga.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/LGA-AirTrain-Ridership-Report.pdf>

TABLE 2 AVERAGE APM PASSENGERS FORECAST

	PORT AUTHORITY		FAA	
	2026 ¹	2031 ¹	2026	2031
Daily APM Passengers				
Air Passengers	13,167	14,173	9,173	9,891
Employees	3,945	4,098	3,945	4,098
Total Daily APM Passengers	17,112	18,271	13,117	13,989
Annual APM Passengers (millions)				
Air Passengers	4.8	5.1	3.3	3.6
Employees	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5
Total Annual APM Passengers (millions)	6.2	6.7	4.8	5.1

FAA total 2026 ridership projection. Screenshot from FAA Final Environmental Impact Statement Proposed LaGuardia Access Improvement Project Appendix B, page 10

**Table 8-1
Daily AirTrain Ridership Summary for 2025**

Ridership components	Paid	Employees	Air Passengers				Connecting Pax	Subtotal Pax	Total
			Resident		Visitor				
			Business	Non-Business	Business	Non-Business			
Drop-off at WP/ AirTrain	x	47	232	693	269	730	0	1,924	1,972
Subway to AirTrain	x	773	391	1,399	755	2,426	0	4,972	5,744
LIRR to AirTrain	x	799	522	1,470	1,112	2,967	0	6,071	6,870
Paid Ridership sub-total	x	1,620	1,145	3,563	2,136	6,123	0	12,967	14,586
Auto – Employee Parking at WP		2,295	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,295
Inter-Terminal		0	0	0	0	0	1,267	1,267	1,267
Unpaid ridership sub-total		2,295	0	0	0	0	1,267	1,267	3,562
Total Ridership		3,915	1,145	3,563	2,136	6,123	1,267	14,234	18,149

Port Authority estimate of airport employees driving cars to park at AirTrain terminal in Willets Point. Screenshot from LGA GROUND ACCESS MODE CHOICE MODEL AND AIRTRAIN RIDERSHIP FORECAST 2025–2045, Port Authority, 2018 page 38

TABLE 27: PASSENGER GROUND ACCESS MODE SHARES (2026 FORECAST)

Mode	Daily Air Passengers	Share	Difference from No-Build	% Difference from No-Build
Drop-Off	13,667	17.5%	-2.7%	-13.4%
Auto Park (Short Term)	4,091	5.2%	-0.2%	-3.7%
Auto Park (Long Term)	754	1.0%	0.0%	-2.4%
Auto Park (Off Airport)	1,062	1.4%	-0.1%	-7.8%
Rental Car	6,054	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Taxi/TNC	34,421	44.0%	-7.0%	-13.6%
Shared Ride/Van	1,987	2.5%	-0.4%	-14.1%
Hotel Shuttle	1,982	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%
NYC Airporter	737	0.9%	-0.2%	-18.1%
Bus-Only	1,899	2.4%	-0.5%	-16.3%
Subway + Bus	1,856	2.4%	-0.5%	-18.2%
LIRR + Bus	530	0.7%	-0.2%	-18.0%
Subway + AirTrain	3,628	4.6%	4.6%	—
LIRR + AirTrain	4,293	5.5%	5.5%	—
Taxi/TNC + AirTrain	869	1.1%	1.1%	—
Drop-off + AirTrain	383	0.5%	0.5%	—
Total Air Passengers	78,212	100.0%	—	—

NOTES: LIRR – Long Island Rail Road NYC – New York City TNC – Transportation Network Company
 SOURCE: RSG.

FAA estimate of 1,252 daily air passengers arriving at the AirTrain terminal via taxi/Uber/Lyft. Screen shot from FAA Final Environmental Impact Statement Proposed LaGuardia Access Improvement Project Appendix C page 42.

**Table 8-13
 AirTrain Air Passenger Mode Switches, 2025 Daily Trips**

Existing Mode in Base Scenario	Total for Base	Existing Mode in Build Scenario											New Mode in Build Scenario					
		Auto Drop-off	Auto Short-Term Park	Auto Long-Term Park	Off-Airport Park	Rental Car – At Airport	Rental Car – Off Airport	Taxis/FHVs	Hotel Courtesy Vehicle	Shared Ride Van/Shuttle	NYC Airporter	Bus	Subway + Bus	LIRR + Bus/Taxi	Auto Drop-off at WP/AirTrain	Taxi/FHV at WP/AirTrain	Subway to AirTrain	LIRR to AirTrain
Auto Drop-off	15,497	12,356	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,048	0	980	1,112
Auto Short-Term Park	4,369	0	3,660	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	340	370
Auto Long-Term Park	783	0	0	783	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Off-Airport Park	1,123	0	0	0	778	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	159	186
Rental Car – At Airport	1,296	0	0	0	0	1,296	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rental Car – Off Airport	4,735	0	0	0	0	0	4,735	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Taxis/FHVs	39,612	0	0	0	0	0	0	35,008	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	875	1,629	2,100
Hotel Courtesy Vehicle	1,960	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	835	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	511	614
Shared Ride Van/Shuttle	2,352	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,352	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NYC Airporter	737	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	260	0	0	0	0	1	261	354
Bus	2,616	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,495	0	0	0	0	482	638
Subway + Bus	1,885	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	768	0	0	0	559	558
LIRR + Bus/Taxi	777	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85	0	0	49	138
Total for Build	77,377	12,356	3,660	783	778	1,296	4,735	35,008	835	2,352	260	1,495	768	85	1,048	876	4,972	6,071

Port Authority estimate of decline of 2,238 bus and bus+subway trips in 2025 by air passengers if AirTrain is built. Screenshot from LGA GROUND ACCESS MODE CHOICE MODEL AND AIRTRAIN RIDERSHIP FORECAST 2025–2045, Port Authority, 2018 page 49

Table 8-15

Mode Switched from the Existing Modes to AirTrain for Employees in 2025 (Daily Trips)

Existing Mode in Base Scenario	Total for Base	Existing Mode in Build Scenario										New Mode in Build Scenario				
		Auto Driver – Park at Employee/P10 lot	Auto Passenger – Park at Employee/P10 lot	Auto Driver – Park elsewhere	Auto Passenger – Park elsewhere	Taxis/FHVs	NYC Airporter	Bus	Subway + Bus	LIRR + Bus/Taxi	Non-Motorized	Auto Driver-Empl Parking at WP	Auto Passenger-Empl Parking at WP	Taxi/FHV at WP/AirTrain	Subway to AirTrain	LIRR to AirTrain
Auto Driver – Park at Employee/P10 lot	6,439	4,212	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,220	0	0	1	5
Auto Passenger – Park at Employee/P10 lot	143	0	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	0	0	0
Auto Driver – Park elsewhere	1,652	0	0	1,652	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Auto Passenger – Park elsewhere	83	0	0	0	83	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Taxis/FHVs	184	0	0	0	0	108	0	0	0	0	0	27	0	47	1	2
NYC Airporter	52	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	27
Bus	3,008	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,415	0	0	0	0	0	0	338	254
Subway + Bus	2,604	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,790	0	0	0	0	0	399	414
LIRR + Bus/Taxi	205	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	99	0	0	0	0	9	97
Non-Motorized	144	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	144	0	0	0	0	0
Total for Build	14,514	4,212	95	1,652	83	108	1	2,415	1,790	99	144	2,247	48	47	773	799

Port Authority estimate of decline of 1,407 bus and bus+subway trips in 2025 by air passengers if AirTrain is built. Screenshot from LGA GROUND ACCESS MODE CHOICE MODEL AND AIRTRAIN RIDERSHIP FORECAST 2025–2045, Port Authority, 2018 page 51

2nd Ave Subway net ridership 2019

Line/stations	2016	2019	Lex 2016 minus 2019
2nd Ave			
96th		19,704	
86th		26,307	
72nd		31,585	
Lex 63		21,574	
		99,170	
Lexington Line			
96th	26,939	17,432	-9,507
86th	64,793	43,282	-21,511
77th	36,103	25,996	-10,107
68th	35,068	23,430	-11,638
Lex 59th	67,684	54,907	-12,777
5th Ave 59th	18,637	15,854	-2,783
			-68,323
		2nd Ave net	30,847

Analysis by Reinvent Albany.

Daily riders/station from <https://new.mta.info/agency/new-york-city-transit/subway-bus-ridership-2019>

Construction cost per daily rider, comparison

	LGA AirTrain	Second Ave Subway	
	Net riders		
	5,926	30,847	
	Cost		
	2,050,000,000	5,570,000,000	
Cost/rider	\$345,933	\$180,569	1.92

Capital costs: SAS - *Building Rail Transit Projects Better for Less: A Report on the Costs of Delivering MTA Megaprojects*. Regional Plan Association. February 2018.
<https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/rpa-org/pdfs/RPA-Building-Rail-Transit-Projects-Better-for-Less.pdf>

AirTrain - FAA Record of Decision page 42