

MTA chair: East Side Access may be delayed

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[Long Island Rail Road](#) commuters may have to wait until 2019 for a one-seat ride to Grand Central Terminal, the chairman of the [Metropolitan Transportation Authority](#) said Tuesday.

At a [Long Island](#) Association meeting in [Melville](#) Tuesday, MTA Chairman Joseph Lhota told a room full of business, community and elected leaders that "the most recent analysis" of the agency's \$7.3 billion East Side Access plan included an expected completion date of 2019 -- a year

later than when the project was last analyzed.

In an interview later, Lhota said he may have been "a little injudicious" in his statement to the group, and revised his comments to say the MTA is still aiming to finish the so-called "megaproject" by 2018, but various complications could delay it until the following year.

"If everything bad happens, it might push it out a year," Lhota said in the interview. "Our date is still 2018 and I'm doing everything I can to keep it at 2018."

Late last year, MTA officials vowed that the project would not be finished later than 2018, and that they were still working to hit the previous target completion date of 2016. The MTA previously has expected completion dates of 2013 and even 2011.

Lhota said there have been complications working underneath a rail yard, where a tunnel going under the East River is being built. It is the busiest rail yard in [North America](#).

Agency officials have previously warned that the project could be delayed because of complications from [Amtrak's](#) separate, competing rehabilitation of the four East River tunnels.

The MTA megaproject has a completion deadline of April 2018 to keep \$2.6 billion in federal funding.



Lhota said after the meeting that the agency would make that deadline if missing it meant losing the funding.

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