

## The Upper East Side's New Ride

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After about 50 years on the drawing board, and more than 40 years of on-again, off-again construction, residents of the Yorkville neighborhood on the Upper East Side finally have a way to get to work.

Q trains got rolling on the brand new Second Avenue line earlier this year, serving three new stations under Second Avenue at 72nd Street, 86th Street and 96th Street. Also included in the project was the refurbishment of the station at Lexington Avenue and East 63rd Street, which serves the Sixth Avenue F train service, in addition to the Second Avenue Q, with connection to the Lexington Avenue and Broadway lines.

The change marks the second expansion for the Subway in as many years, after the opening of the new station at Hudson Yards in fall of 2015, which brought the Flushing Line southwest of its original terminus at Times Square to 11th Avenue and West 34th Street.

The stations along the new line are deeper than the average station in the Subway and are accessible only by way of elevator or escalator.

Each station has a mezzanine level between the platforms and street level, with the mezzanines running parallel to the tracks and a series of escalators connecting the two levels.

Between the mezzanine and platform levels are large multi-colored banners reading "Second Avenue Subway," and more permanent installations reading "E Pluribus Unum" (the motto of the United States of America, which is Latin for "out of many, one"), or

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“Excelsior” (New York State’s motto, which is Latin for, “Ever Upward”).

Bright, airy and open, the new stations are unlike any others in the New York City Subway, boasting impressive public art displays and wide, lofty corridors that ferry passengers from trains to street level.

## **Lexington Avenue- East 63rd Street**

The first stop on the new line, colloquially called ‘63rd and Lex’ is the only of the new services’ stations to have been in use before this year.

But the new Q’s twenty first-century charm has descended onto the platforms of this deep, cavernous station. The F train platforms have been retrofitted with the new wall design: long, horizontal plastic stripes along the wall, complete with the “Lex-63” logo, intended to absorb track noise, and giving the station a lighter feel.

Among the public artworks at this station are large mosaics by artist Jean Shin, including one especially striking work depicting a crane lifting a steel section above a chaotic mess of twisted trusses and girders.

## **72nd Street**

The mezzanine at 72nd Street is lined with mosaics featuring a diverse array of people waiting for a train.

“I just wanted them to be normal people,” artist Vik Muniz told The New York Times last year.

The works –collectively titled “Perfect Strangers” – include a construction worker whose belt is heavy with gear, a police officer, a gay couple and Muniz himself – trying to control the papers flying from his briefcase.

## **86th Street**

The 86th Street station boasts perhaps the most intricate and detail-oriented mosaic work in the entire Subway system.

Artist Chuck Close made twelve mosaics, many of which immortalize some of New York’s prominent local artists – including two of Close himself.

The mosaics are each several feet high – and cover nearly the entire distance from the floor to ceiling in the mezzanine above the platforms.

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## **96th Street**

96th Street is the end of the line, for now.

The mezzanine in this station is lined with the work of Sarah Sze, an American artist.

The mezzanine above the tracks features a dizzying display of blowing papers against a deep blue sky.

As riders proceed down to the mezzanine level from street level on escalators, another of Sze's works is on display, featuring a large, blue-print looking work that astonishes in its attention to detail.

## **More to Come**

The full Second Avenue Subway is far from complete. The next phase of the project, which is expected to open by 2030, will bring trains farther Uptown along 2nd Avenue, to a terminal at 125th Street, where commuters will have the option to switch to the Lexington Avenue line.

Longer term plans involve bestowing a new letter unto the line – T – and bringing it all the way Downtown to Hanover Square in the Financial District.

But for now, the Upper East Side can rejoice – because the Second Avenue Subway is finally here.