



## Photos, Video: Inside The Beautiful New Second Avenue Subway

BY SCOTT HEINS ON JAN 2, 2017 11:45 AM



*(Scott Heins/Gothamist)*

One hundred years of planning, funding squabbles, and construction finally came to fruition Sunday as the Second Avenue Subway opened for service along four new stations on the Upper East Side. Excited riders rushed down into the sparkling new stations at noon and crowded onto waiting Q trains bound for Coney Island.

Among the thousands were Governor Andrew Cuomo, MTA Chairman Thomas Prendergast, hundreds of journalists, and thousands of New Yorkers, who displayed emotions ranging from tearful joy to (of course) wry cynicism.

Less than 10 minutes after the new subway line was opened, service disruptions

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brought trains to a halt. One packed train at 86th Street was stopped for nearly 15 minutes. On board, Greenpoint resident Jeremy Lewitt smirked at the delay. "The first of many," Lewitt joked. "I had somewhere to be hours ago!"

Upper East Side resident Jeff Auerbach squeezed in close with his family for a group selfie on the first train bound out of the 86th Street station Sunday. "I've heard about this project for twenty-plus years, and it's unbelievable that it's finally come to be," he said. Like many, Auerbach hopes the new Second Avenue line will open up breathing room on the Lexington Avenue 4/5/6, New York's most crowded subway line. Auerbach was also dismissive of criticism that the new subway line has taken too long, proven too costly, and, with its scaled-back "phases" of completion, left riders near Harlem's 125th Street station high and dry for the time being.

"I think, with any project, as massive as this undertaking was, there are going to be cutbacks that need to be made," Auerbach said. "But the fact that they got it running, finally, after 100 years—that's great. The stations are beautiful, they did a tremendous job of putting it together. The architectural design of it and artworks are fabulous."

Those underground works of art include portraits from Chuck Close and mosaic figures by Vik Muniz, along with expansive new pieces from Jean Shin & Sarah Sze. On Sunday, the art proved to be sensation, with hundreds of riders stopping to snap photos of the large-scale works in their new, underground homes.

With its three-station route drastically scaled back from the borough-spanning "T" line that was first intended to run from 125th Street to Lower Manhattan, the span of new subway track still required \$4.4 billion in funding and almost ten years of work (the MTA has stated publicly it plans to "fast track" the next Second Avenue phase, which would reach 125th Street). Originally slated to start running in 2013, the subway line was technically opened on Saturday night when Cuomo hosted a glitzy (and private) party for a few hundred lucky New Year's Eve revelers.

"I did not actually think it was going to happen," Upper West Side resident Melanie Jolson said Sunday. "They've been saying this thing would open for decades, so I wanted to see it with my own two eyes."

If you'd like to see it for yourself, note that there is only partial service on the extended line from January 2nd through January 8th: starting at 6 a.m. and running until 10 p.m. Twenty four-hour service is expected to launch on January 9th.