

# NEW YORK POST

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## The 7 train extension is finally here, and I couldn't be happier

By Steve Cuozzo



Steve Cuozzo rides the 7 train

Photo: Helayne Seidman

Kiss the closing doors.

I love our subways. The most thrilling thing for me about today's launch of the No. 7 line extension to Hudson Yards is simply that it means more subway. The 660 track miles in passenger service are now 661.5 miles. Our 468 stations are now 469, thanks to the beautiful new end-of-the-line stop at 11th Avenue and West 34th Street.

Take that, London Underground, with your measly 270 stations and 250 miles! And of course, unlike London's, our subways don't shut down at midnight.

When the MTA dispatches the first No. 7 train bound for the new station from Flushing today at 1:07 p.m., it, of course, marks a great milestone for the city. The extension from Times Square to Hudson Yards brings the Far West Side, preening with new development and the High Line Park's northern terminus, in easy reach of everyone.

But to me, the inauguration strikes a more emotional chord. I've always been crazy about the subways, even in the dark decades when they were filled with graffiti, non-opening doors and muggers everywhere.

Today's trains are merely dirty, overcrowded, sometimes exasperating but rarely scary. I like them much better this way.

Where to start? Just about everything about the subway system seems impossible in the best way.

The subway is a machine-age masterpiece. Much of it is more than 100 years old. It's in dire need of capital repair —Friday's G-train derailment was a reminder — but I hope it never loses its clanks, groans, squeals and soot. Once we were a city built on physical labor. The factories are gone but the subways are their proud progeny.



They conjure an age when we got things done — fast. It took nearly seven years to build the 1.5-mile No. 7 extension. It took four years to build the entire, original, 28-station IRT line linking City Hall and West 145th Street between 1900-1904.

The subway is impossibly efficient. I decline rich pals' offers of limousine rides back to the office because a subway ride will get me there in half the time.

It's impossibly well-constructed. Stand on the Lexington Avenue 77th Street station platform, a local stop, and you can't hear a 10-car, 365-ton express hurtling through the tunnel beneath it.

Our subways are impossibly scenic. About 40 percent of the system runs open-air, via Erector Set-like els and "open cuts" (below grade but exposed to daylight). On the transoceanic journey on the A to the Rockaways, a hard turn south after Rockaway Boulevard announces heralds passage from asphalt to the sea.

The subway is also impossibly impossibly life-affirming. In every car, more than on the street, all of the city's extremes bump and grind with cheerful abandon — only infrequently do things get out of hand.

Although rarely acknowledged, the subway is sexy. Face-to-face seating and moody lighting make for lustier people-watching than in a bar.

“Avoid eye contact” is a lie. Everyone on the subway makes (usually) polite eye (and other body-part) contact. I've done it for 43 years with not a scar to show for it.

What did that couple do the night before? How do they make love?

Except for underlying schist, little in New York is lasting. The skyline morphs. Fortunes come and go, neighborhoods rise and fall. Every day breeds anxiety. But the subway will see us through tomorrow — and tomorrow and tomorrow.