

MEGA-CONSTRUCTION PROJECT RELOCATION CHALLENGES



by **Delores J Singletary, R/W-RAC, Project Manager**

What started out as just an idea (over 100 years ago) became the most extraordinary capital construction subway project in New York City (NYC) history, undertaken by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). ORC was fortunate to be a major participant in the relocation of residential and business tenants required to move for the construction of new subway entrances and ancillary facilities associated with the Second Avenue Subway (SAS) project. Excavation took place at a depth of 80-100 feet below ground, along Second Avenue in the heart of NYC, using a Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) to drill through the bedrock of below the Borough of Manhattan. Permanent deep tunnel sub-surface easements, permanent and temporary surface easements, air rights, and fee acquisitions comprised the property rights acquired for excavation and construction of the tunnel, ancillary facilities, construction access, and the actual subway station entrances.



Tunnel Boring Machine

ORC not only provided relocation services in support of the Phase 1 SAS project, but our team simultaneously performed business relocations on a dual MTA megaproject known as the East Side Access (ESA), one of the largest transportation infrastructure projects currently underway in the United States. ESA encompasses work in multiple locations in Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx and includes more than 8 miles of tunneling, 47 escalators, and 22 elevators with a completion date of late December 2022-23. The ESA project will eventually bring Long Island Railroad trains into Grand Central Terminal, within the heart of New York City, along with its current Penn Station terminus, making it one of the world's most expensive underground rail-construction projects.

inspiring confidence in progress...

Residential and business relocations for the two projects included a combined 159 permanent and temporary relocations. Though the SAS inaugural opening was January 1, 2017, and though all relocation activity is complete, ORC has become one of MTA's most trusted right-of-way consultants, and our team continues with QA/QC file maintenance.

Entering the New York City (NYC) right-of-way market was no easy task, as most agencies traditionally used in-house personnel to perform relocation services, and past projects rarely required adherence to the



Photo taken by D. Singletary

“URA.” Since the SAS was funded in part with federal monies, though, the MTA adhered to the requirements of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 as amended (42 U.S.C. §4601 et seq.) and applicable federal regulations (49 C.F.R. Part 24), collectively known as the “Uniform Act” (URA).

NYC has three residential rent categories: Market Rent, Rent Stabilization, and Rent-Controlled. Site Survey interviews with residential tenants revealed that a significant number of tenants resided in one of these identified rental unit categories, and each category had a distinct impact on how relocation eligibilities would be calculated.

The relocation “scope of services” far exceeded the normal everyday relocation of residential tenants and presented challenges for MTA to take a creative approach and application of new ideas into the relocation process while still adhering to the URA. The challenge was met by the design of an MTA computer software program, implemented by ORC



**Delores Singletary SAS
Phase 1 Grand Opening**

to calculate replacement housing benefits using specific tenant variables relative to their identified housing category. As a result of an extremely creative relocation program, approximately 10% of residential tenants became homeowners by applying the Rental Assistance Payment towards purchase of their replacement dwelling.

So, this ambitious project that started out humbly on a Manhattan bus stop bench used as an ORC office, has become an on-going and extremely cooperative client relationship. If you're ever in New York City, you can visit one of these extraordinary project sites with a deeper understanding of how they came to be.