

Look at What They Want the Congestion Tax to Pay For.
Tell Your [State Senator](#), [Assembly Member](#) and [Council Member](#):
“No Congestion Tax!”

Call 3-1-1 and let [City Hall](#) know where you stand.
And while you are at, please give the [Governor](#) a piece of your mind!

http://www.nypost.com/seven/02282008/postopinion/opedcolumnists/the_mtas_latest_disaster_99660.htm

NEW YORK POST

THE MTA'S LATEST DISASTER



By STEVE CUZZO

February 28, 2008 -- THREE years after work began on the Fulton Street Transit Center, the MTA has made zero progress on what it's long touted as the project's most crucial component - "untangling" the snarl of underground platforms, mezzanines and passageways that link nine subway lines.

But that message was missing from yesterday's latest MTA *mea culpa*, in which it unveiled its revised, \$29 billion capital program for 2008-13 and upped the Fulton boondoggle's budget to almost \$1.2 billion (vs. \$750 million in 2004).

The agency admitted last month it lacks the dough to build the domed pavilion that's been the Fulton scheme's public face for four years. That's unforgiveable enough - yet hardly the worst news.

The MTA has bamboozled many into thinking the "untangling" work is progressing. A Jan. 29 New York Times story, for one, said: "Several underground portions of the Fulton Street subway project have been completed or are close to being finished, including a renovation of the platform and mezzanine serving the Nos. 2 and 3 trains."

Right. Stroll through the 2/3 station, and you'll see the truth: It might've been tidied up a bit, but it's hard to tell the difference. And the platforms are no better marked or integrated into the rest of the station complex than they were before.

Yesterday's MTA progress report kept up the snowjob, claiming the No. 2/3 platform "rehabilitation" was "completed" last year. In fact, no meaningful subterranean work to make the station more user-friendly has even *started*.

The report dropped *that* bombshell almost in passing, by noting that other parts of the underground job were covered in the contract-letting process for building the dome - which yielded just one, budget-breaking bid.

In other words, the *real* underground work is stuck in the same limbo as the above-ground pavilion. (The MTA can claim only *one* minor bit of progress: a new entrance to the uptown 4/5 station at Broadway and Maiden Lane.)

No work has begun on rehabilitating the No. 4/5 station or reconstructing the A/C station and mezzanines - the heart of the "untangling" job - because the MTA hasn't yet hired a contractor, although it says it has the money for it.

Bottom line: The station remains exactly the same confusing jungle of filthy, badly lit platforms, mezzanines, ramps, passageways and staircases it's always been.

It all *could* have been remedied with fresh paint, better lighting and signs. Instead, the MTA persuaded politicians and downtown advocates that the station needed a complete makeover. But now the agency can't even get that job off the ground.

So, having done nothing on the above-ground pavilion and next to nothing on the key below-ground work, what *has* the MTA been spending its dough on, besides turning six buildings into empty lots?

Mainly on pushing through the Fulton scheme's *least* important element - building an underground pedestrian corridor to link the Fulton station with the planned new PATH terminal at Ground Zero and the Cortlandt Street R/W station.

This part of the project has the area suffering from chaotic excavations on Broadway, Maiden Lane, and Dey, Cortlandt, Nassau and Church streets - plus (ironically) indefinite closure of the Cortlandt Street station.

Yet even those who endorsed the Fulton "untangling" knew the pedestrian tunnel was strictly optional. Why has the MTA wasted years and hundreds of millions of dollars on a folly for which there was neither need nor demand, while twiddling its thumbs on bidding out the more important work?

Ex-Gov. George Pataki and former MTA Chairman Peter Kalikow were in charge when the Fulton fiasco was set in motion. But now the buck starts and stops with Gov. Spitzer. If he doesn't start taking an interest soon, it will become *his* horror show.

scuozzo@nypost.com