



July 26, 2016 – **DOUGLASTON DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEWS** – By Ruth Brown

## **Escape from Williamsburg! Straphangers Already Fleeing to Avoid 18-Month L-Train Closure**

Time to get the L outta Williamsburg!

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority will shut the Hurricane Sandy-ravaged L train tunnel to Manhattan for 18 months of repairs starting in January 2019, the agency announced on Monday, and local straphangers are already packing their bags for greener subway lines.

“It’s something that will motivate me to likely leave Williamsburg,” said Haley Garofalo, who rents off the Lorimer Street stop, and says her roommates are also eyeing an exit. “I know people who have already started leaving, moving to Fort Greene.”

The transit agency had been [tossing up between the year-and-a-half full closure or a three-year partial shutter](#) that would have reduced service between the boroughs by 75 percent, and announced its final decision after months of [meetings with anxious locals](#) – the majority of whom favored the faster option, according to [a survey](#) by rider advocacy group Riders Alliance.

Garofalo said she does think the full closure was the best choice – she just doesn’t want to be around to endure it. In addition to visiting Manhattan in her spare time, she takes the J and Z line to work every day, and fears they’ll be overflowing with many of the 225,000 straphangers who currently traverse the L tube every day.

“It is already crowded and I can only imagine how much more crowded it will get,” she said. “I’m not looking forward to that – commuting in New York already stinks.”

[Transit officials do plan on easing the blow](#) by running more trains on the J, M, and G lines, beefing up the Gs with more carriages, and [offering free transfers between the Broadway G station and the Lorimer stop](#).

And L trains will still run in the Borough of Kings as a local service between the Bedford Avenue and Canarsie stations, with around one train stopping every eight minutes, according to the agency.

But many of the tourists and Manhattan visitors who flock to the area on evenings and weekends aren’t going to get on board with some convoluted route, said a local real-estate broker, and the nabe’s nightlife scene will likely take a hit.

“If you’re a tourist, you’re going to take the most convenient form of transportation,” said Jakub Nowak, a commercial broker with Marcus and Millichap. “I do think it will have an impact.”

It has been particularly tough luring new tenants to the neighborhood during the uncertainty over the closure since the news broke in January, Nowak said. The market will improve now there is a concrete timeline, but landlords will still have to offer cheaper rents, replacement buses, and other perks to court

tenants, he said.

“We can build out space for you, give you free rent,” he said. “On the residential end of things, I think there will be people who are willing to live there, but they’re going to want a discount for it.”

And it’s already happening — luxury developer Douglaston Development [has been promising free shuttles to alternative stops for residents](#) of its One North Fourth Place tower since March.