

# WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE PLAZA BUS TERMINAL

New transit infrastructure at a critical transfer point in Brooklyn

KENNY ZHOU, RAE LEI



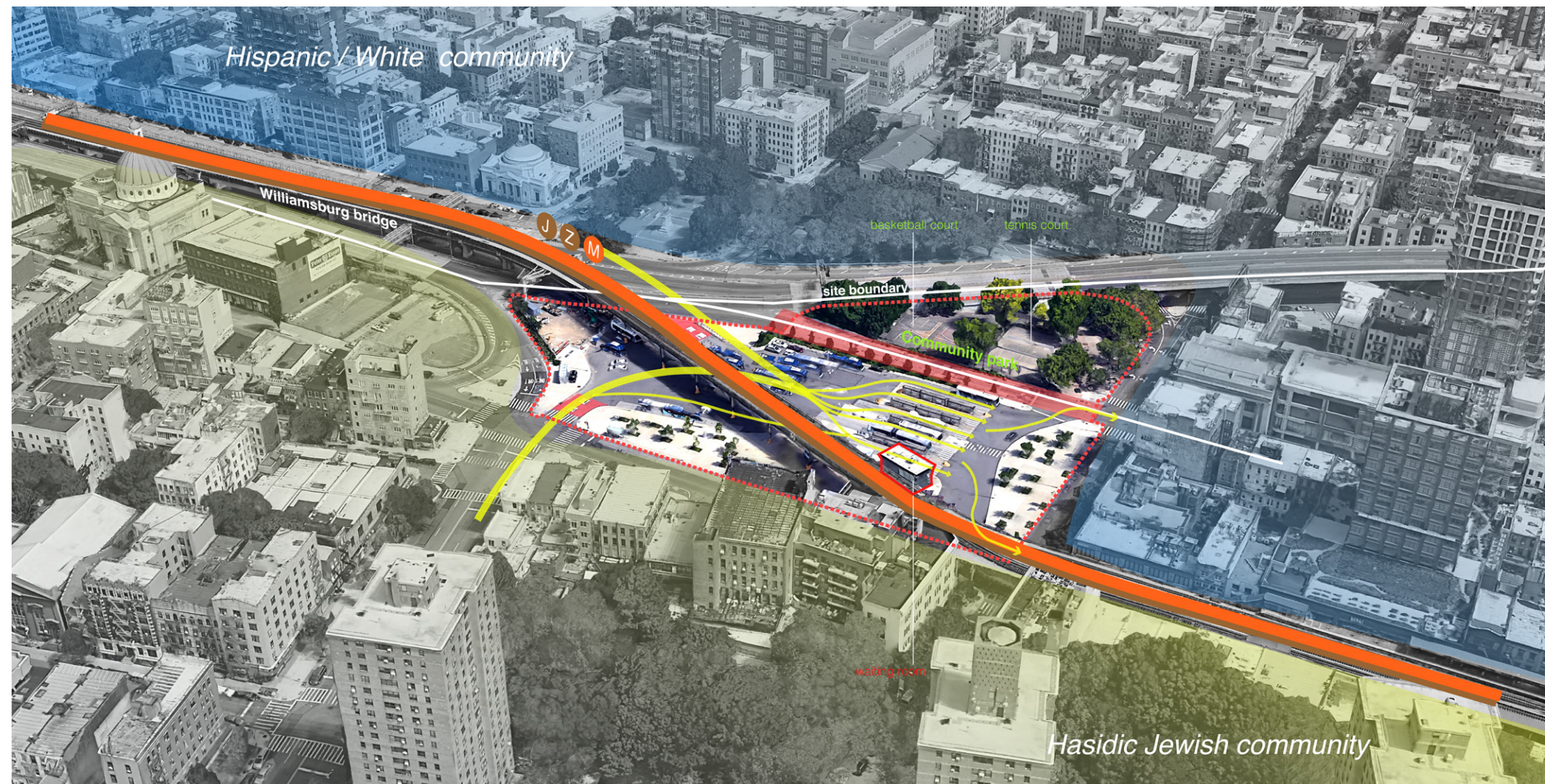
At Williamsburg bridge plaza bus terminal, passengers wait for buses. Image: Chang W. Lee, New York Times



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Bus terminal existing conditions

## INTRODUCTION

Buses are not just equipment people take to go from point A to point B. Buses form valuable connections between its two terminals. People rely on buses to visit families and friends, and at our site, the Williamsburg Bridge Plaza Bus Terminal, people also rely on buses to worship at synagogues, take English lessons, and the elderly actually prefer buses to Subways as they are more convenient and accessible.

The Williamsburg Bridge bus Terminal is located right off the Williamsburg Bridge where it meets the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. It used to be a trolley terminal, which has been replaced by bus service since 1948. The J, M, and Z trains also travel via the

bridge, afterwards connecting to elevated tracks on Broadway. The terminal is a major transfer hub as 6 MTA bus routes terminate here and 3 routes make stops nearby. Buses here reach to Greenpoint, Kings Plaza, Canarsie, Sheepshead Bay, Lower East Side, Long Island City, and even Rego Park and Jamaica in Queens. The Marcy Avenue J/M/Z Station is also 1 block away from the bus terminal. In addition, the Hasidic Jewish bus route B110, which connects the two Hasidic communities of Williamsburg and Borough Park, currently terminates nearby the terminal.

## SITE CONTEXT AND ISSUES

Our site is located at the center of many issues and

contexts. First, the bus terminal, along with the elevated subway tracks, divide two populations of Williamsburg: the mostly Hispanic and White population to the north, and the Hasidic Jewish community to the south.

The Hasidic Jewish community live by their own rules, essentially creating an enclave within the city. Their special bus route, B110, is privately operated, and only accepts Hasidic riders. Men and women are separated on the bus as per rules, which has been subject to some controversy, leading to some calls for NYCDOT to stop providing an

operating subsidy to the route. Through research, we found out that the Hasidic Jewish tend to have large families, and tend to be of the lower-income range as the men devote a significant amount of time to studying the Torah. Therefore, women have to both work and to take care of children. We also noticed a high concentration of synagogues in Williamsburg, and especially near the bus terminal. These synagogues form a social network for the community as it serves as a gathering space for prayer, community programs, and sharing meals.

Second, the bus terminal has already been subject to improvement, although we believe the designs are not adequate. From 2014 to 2017, several upgrades were realized through an NYCDOT capital program. The pre-2014 bus terminal cannot be called a bus terminal because it is just a big asphalt parking lot



Current Williamsburg bridge plaza bus terminal.

Image: Elizabeth Felicella for MNL Landscape Architects.

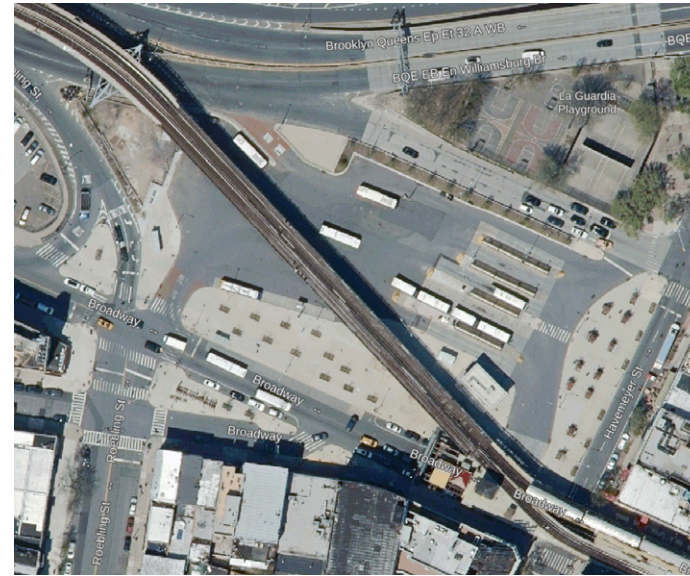


Hasidic Jewish men ride in front and women at the back of the B110 Jewish bus from Williamsburg to Borough Park. Image: WSJ





The site in 2014 before NYCDOT Capital Improvement  
Images: NYC then and now



The site in 2017 after NYCDOT Capital Improvement

with minimal bus shelters. The 2014 redesign created new benches, a small glass-paneled indoor waiting room, public restrooms, widened sidewalks, along with some trees. In 2017, an electrical bus pilot made possible by the MTA and the NY Power Authority introduced electric buses and charging equipment to the B32 route to Long Island City. In addition, the B44 Select Bus Service, which is the MTA's take on BRT buses, terminates here and uses high-capacity 60-foot articulated buses.

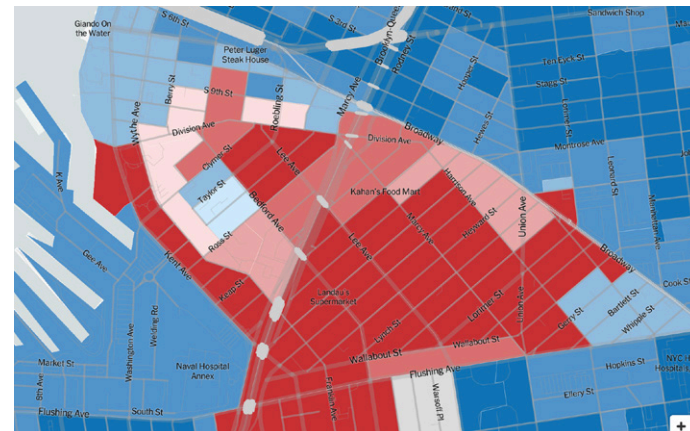


Electric bus pilot and charging equipment in 2017  
Image: MTA

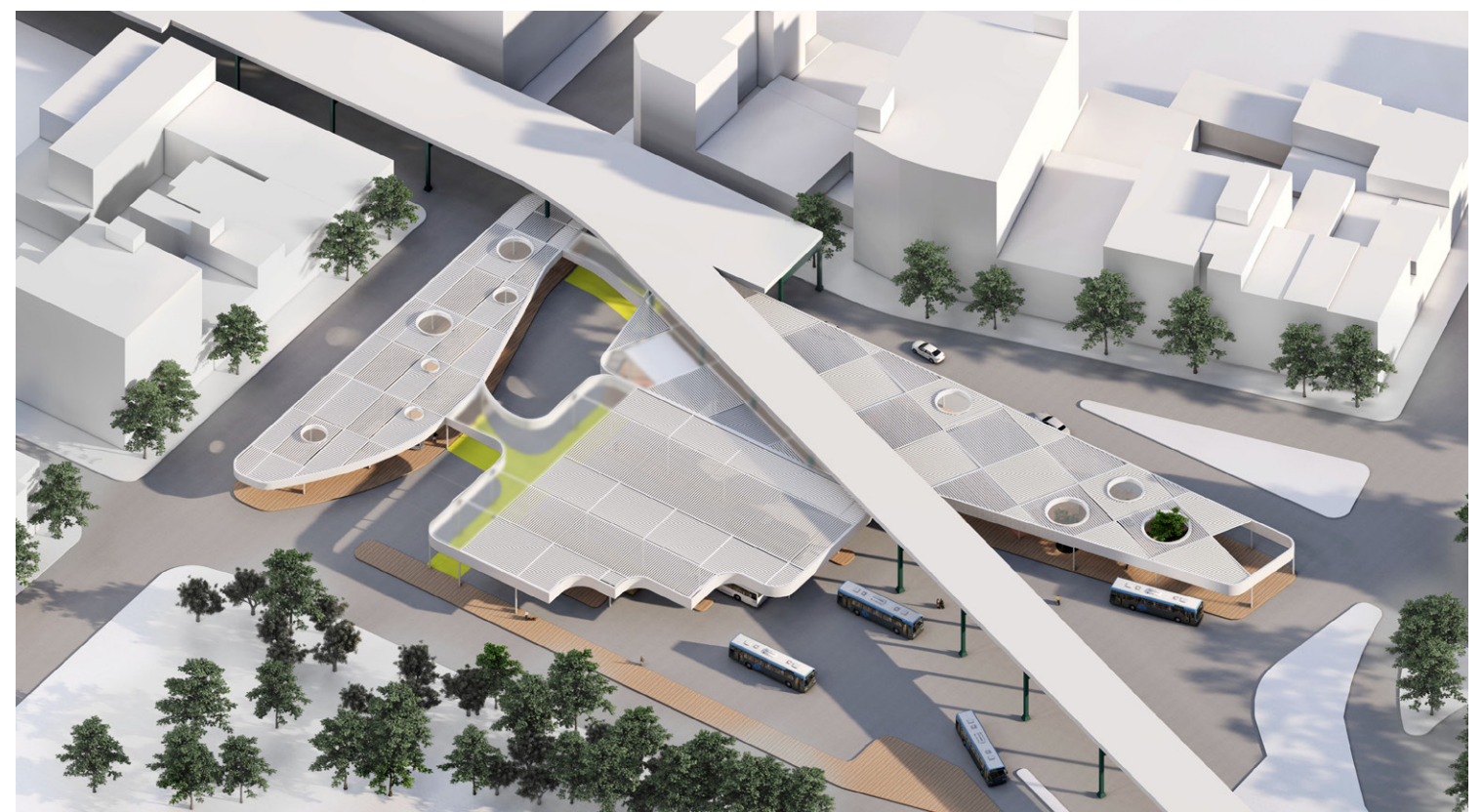
With Select Bus Service, future electric bus conversion, proximity to the J/M/Z trains, and its central location, the Williamsburg Bridge Plaza Bus Terminal is an important piece of transportation infrastructure for NYC, and it needs even more improvements to adequately serve the many riders who pass through on a daily basis.

## DESIGN

New design improvements should make the bus terminal into a public space that welcomes all community members. This is why we propose bringing the B110 Jewish bus to terminate in the bus terminal instead of its current location a few blocks away. This would offer more bus and subway connections for the Hasidic riders. In addition, a small synagogue would offer the Hasidic community a reason to visit the terminal. The most important piece is the canopy that provide shade to protect riders from weather. Heaters would be suspended from the structure for winter to keep warmth. Other designs include expanded waiting areas, seating, small market kiosks, expanded electric charging equipment, and signage.



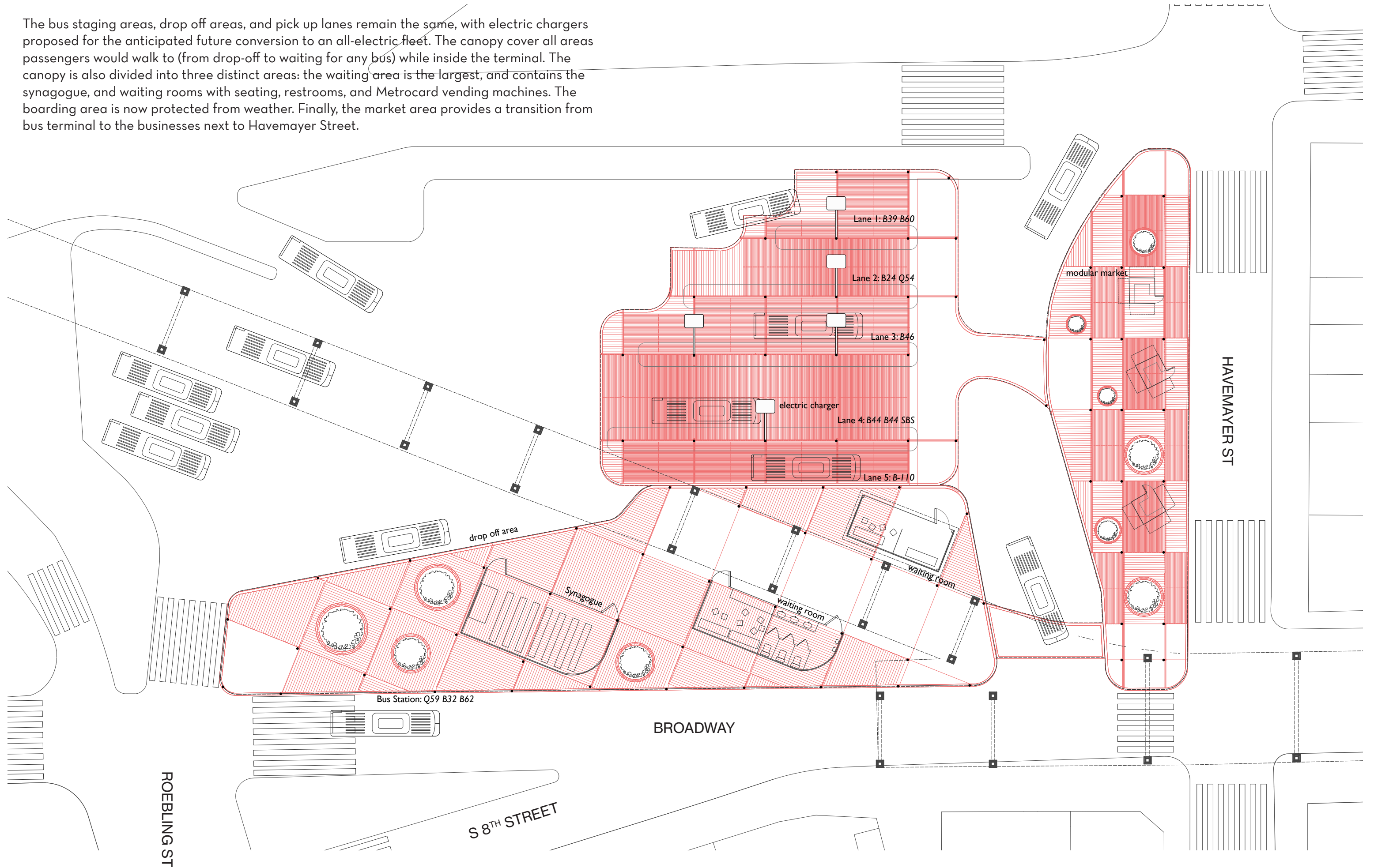
Voting results of the 2020 presidential election. This red enclave in heavily democratic Brooklyn is the Hasidic Jewish community in Williamsburg. The bus terminal exists at the border between these communities, and the J/M/Z trains also form a border along Broadway. Image: NY Times



Above: Bus terminal existing conditions after 2014-2017 NYCDOT improvements.  
Below: Proposed new upgrades, including shaded canopy structure, expanded electric bus charging equipment, adequate directional signage, and new architectural programs, which include a synagogue, indoor and outdoor waiting areas for riders and drivers, seating, and mobile market kiosks.



The bus staging areas, drop off areas, and pick up lanes remain the same, with electric chargers proposed for the anticipated future conversion to an all-electric fleet. The canopy cover all areas passengers would walk to (from drop-off to waiting for any bus) while inside the terminal. The canopy is also divided into three distinct areas: the waiting area is the largest, and contains the synagogue, and waiting rooms with seating, restrooms, and Metrocard vending machines. The boarding area is now protected from weather. Finally, the market area provides a transition from bus terminal to the businesses next to Havemayer Street.







Current Williamsburg bridge plaza bus terminal. Image: Elizabeth Felicella for MNLA Landscape Architects.

This view shows the small synagogue in the terminal for the Hasidic community. Clear directional signage point to riders exactly where they need to go to complete their trips.





# ALL BUSES

**LANE 1**  
B39 LOWER EAST SIDE  
B60 CANARSIE

**LANE 2**  
B24 GREENPOINT  
Q54 JAMAICA

**LANE 3**  
B46 KINGS PLAZA

**LANE 4**  
B44 SBS SHEEPSHEAD BAY  
B44 LOCAL SHEEPSHEAD BAY

**LANE 5**  
B110 BORO PARK



Current Williamsburg bridge plaza bus terminal. Image: Elizabeth Felicella for MNLA Landscape Architects.

Electrical charging equipment is mounted for every bus lane. The pedestrian crossing is painted in yellow on the ground and is shielded from weather by a connecting segment of the canopy linking the market and the boarding areas.