



METRO

MTA's 'grave' task at historic Harlem site

By [Ginger Adams Otis](#)

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The MTA is poised to ramp up archeological tests at its busy Harlem bus depot after confirming it sits atop an African-American burial ground.

The agency spent the summer working with a community group to research claims that the boundaries of a 17th-century graveyard extend across First Avenue to its 126th Street depot.

"The MTA acknowledges that at one time it appears there was an early colonial burial ground in the immediate vicinity," said MTA spokesman Kevin Ortiz.

The depot is slated for a 2015 overhaul, but Ortiz said testing for human remains, among other things, would likely be done before construction starts.

The Rev. Patricia Singletary, head of the Elmendorf Reformed Church that owned the burial site in the 1600s, hopes the site can become a memorial.

"It's our desire that this become the premier spot when people come to Harlem," she said.

Historian Chris Moore of the New York Public Library said the East Harlem graveyard contained five generations of enslaved and free blacks who settled in the area in 1658.

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