

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL APPROVES LAND USE APPLICATION FOR ARC MASS TRANSIT TUNNEL

Wednesday, July 29, 2009

Port Authority Press Release

Approval Paves Way For Tunnel Work to Start in Manhattan

Work on the \$8.7 billion ARC Mass Transit Tunnel has been cleared to start in Manhattan later this year, following approval today of the project's land use plan by the New York City Council.

Council members voted unanimously 47-0 to approve the massive passenger rail project's special permit application under the city's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP).

"Today marks another step forward in the development of this monumental transportation infrastructure project that will provide enormous economic and environmental benefits for the entire region," said New Jersey Gov. Jon S. Corzine.

The council's vote will allow tunnel work to be ongoing on both sides of the Hudson River by year's end. In June, ground was broken in New Jersey to start the project near Tonnelle Avenue in North Bergen. Overall, the project will create approximately 6,000 construction-related jobs annually.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and its partner, NJ Transit, are working to complete the tunnel by 2017. The Port Authority has committed \$3 billion to the project.

Agency officials voluntarily submitted the project for review by city representatives under the land-use process, seeking to encourage public participation and community support for the initiative. Today's vote was the culmination of an extensive process to work with the City Planning Commission, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, city community boards and other local stakeholders on the project's design and plans.

On the drawing board for decades, the ARC Mass Transit Tunnel will double commuter capacity between the Garden State and Midtown Manhattan, allowing a maximum of 48 trains per hour compared to 23 now through the existing, 100-year-old, two-track tunnel. The project is designed to help keep the region economically competitive during the 21st Century.

The work in Manhattan will include an expansion of Penn Station under 34th Street and provide underground connections for the first time to the Sixth Avenue subway lines.

"We appreciate the City Council's overwhelming endorsement of the ARC Mass Transit Tunnel," said Anthony Coscia, the Port Authority's chairman. "This strong support for our generation's equivalent of the George Washington Bridge will help support our region's economic prosperity for generations to come."

Port Authority Executive Director Christopher O. Ward said, "This is an important step forward for the project and has involved input from a wide range of stakeholders. I would like to personally thank City Planning Commission Chair Amanda Burden, Speaker Christine Quinn, Borough President Scott Stringer, Land Use Chair Melinda Katz, Zoning and Franchise Chair Tony Avella and the leadership of both Community Boards 4 and 5 for their efforts in not only moving this project along, but improving it in the process."

Susan Bass Levin, the agency's deputy executive director, said, "The City Council's stamp of approval for the ARC Mass Transit Tunnel is yet another major endorsement for this vital project. Future generations of New Yorkers and New Jersey residents will thank the council members for their action."

Transportation Commissioner and NJ TRANSIT Chairman Stephen Dilts, said: "The city council's approval is another welcome milestone for the Mass Transit Tunnel. The council's action underscores the hard work and rigorous preparation done by NJ TRANSIT and the Port Authority."

NJ TRANSIT Executive Director Richard R. Sarles, added: "The NJ TRANSIT - Port Authority partnership will continue to pay dividends to residents of New Jersey and New York as construction on the Mass Transit Tunnel advances, with jobs today and improved commutes and less congestion in the future."

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey operates many of the busiest and most important transportation links in the region. They include John F. Kennedy International, Newark Liberty International, LaGuardia, Stewart International and Teterboro airports; AirTrain JFK and AirTrain Newark; the George Washington Bridge and Bus Station; the Lincoln and Holland tunnels; the three bridges between Staten Island and New Jersey; the PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson) rapid-transit system; Port Newark; the Elizabeth-Port Authority Marine Terminal; the Howland Hook Marine Terminal on Staten Island; the Port Authority Auto Marine Terminal; the Brooklyn Piers/Red Hook Container Terminal; the Greenville Yard-Port Authority Marine Terminal; and the Port Authority Bus Terminal in midtown Manhattan. The agency also owns the 16-acre World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan and is a partner in the Access to the Region's Core tunnel project.