



NEWS RELEASE

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New Study Recommends Manhattan East Side Rail Access from New Jersey and Light Rail for Midtown

A new [study](#) released today by the Regional Plan Association recommends extending the Access to the Region's Core project (ARC), the new trans-Hudson passenger rail tunnel being built by NJ TRANSIT and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, in a second phase from its current terminus at 34th Street near Penn Station to the East Side under Madison Avenue, with a possible link to Grand Central. The study also recommends a light rail loop in midtown to increase midtown circulation in anticipation of development on the Far West Side and at Moynihan Station.

“New York and New Jersey need the same access over the Hudson River that Long Islanders will realize when the LIRR starts arriving at Grand Central in 2015 – shaving times off already long commutes and getting to their jobs faster,” said Jeffrey M. Zupan, Senior Transportation Fellow for RPA and the report's primary author. He added that the agencies were wise to move early on defining the ARC project first to reach across the Hudson, but allow for construction of a future second phase to reach the east side.

“ARC is one of the most urgently needed transportation improvements in the region given nearly 90% of the increase in suburban commuting into Manhattan over the past generation has been from west of the Hudson River, and that the Lincoln Tunnel and Penn Station Tunnels are now at capacity,” said Bob Yaro, president of Regional Plan Association.

The three-part analysis, the result of a multi-year research effort, entitled, “The New Trans-Hudson Tunnel: Making it Work Best,” is a follow-up to a 2003 RPA report and incorporates new data not previously available.

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The first part of the report conducts a detailed comparison of two different ARC extensions possibilities: one to Madison Avenue and one in a loop formation which would continue on to two additional stations at 50th Street and 7th Avenue and 11th Avenue in the low 40's (see page 5, Figure 1). It concludes ARC should be extended to Madison Avenue rather the loop configuration because it's less expensive and 75% of the ridership benefits would be retained with the one-station extension.

The extension would shave approximately 20 minutes per day off the commutes of 30,000 New Jersey commuters arriving at Penn Station but destined for the East Side. Those riders now face a two-seat subway ride across town to the Midtown central business district around Grand Central.

The extension would also provide other transportation benefits including:

- relieving the exclusive bus lane leading into the Lincoln Tunnel (by 130 few buses per day);
- diverting passengers from an overcrowded Penn Station; and
- reducing vehicular traffic congestion into Manhattan (by 1,200 vehicles per day).

“With the city already choked in traffic, ARC should be efficiently designed to lure drivers out of their cars and onto rail service. Providing direct access to the East Side where many jobs are will do that,” said Christopher Jones, Vice President for Research at RPA and report co-author.

The second part of the report recommends establishing a light rail loop in Midtown to address circulation issues related to planned development on the Far West Side and Moynihan Station. The analysis (page 9 and 10) looked at a number of other options including a 42nd Street light rail line from the Hudson River to 1st Avenue and a transit link from Penn Station.

The report concluded the light rail loop running along 42nd Street to the Hudson River, back along 34th and up Broadway to Lincoln Square would benefit the most number of currently underserved areas. The report ultimately recommends that plans for the light rail loop move forward in tandem with the design of Moynihan Station, the new Madison Square Garden and the #7 extension.

“Midtown circulation problems are only going to worsen when development on the Far West Side begins,” said Richard E. Barone, Transportation Planner at RPA and report co-author. “Now is the time to start thinking about accommodating that growth.

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“Lastly, the report urges NJTRANSIT to further review how to use the additional rail capacity ARC will create. Guidelines are offered for determining if adding more service on existing lines, eliminating transfer points or adding new lines altogether should be considered. Those guidelines recommend NJ TRANSIT take into account: ridership growth potential, travel time reduction, waiting time reduction, more service on overcrowded lines, potential to divert auto traffic, providing service where none currently exists, strengthening land use near stations, limiting auto-oriented sprawl and relative cost (page 11, Table 7).

The ARC project is the subject of a Supplemental Draft Environmental Statement just released by NJ TRANSIT for which public hearings will be held this week. Construction of ARC is scheduled to begin during the fourth quarter of 2009 and be completed by 2017. The project is expected to cost approximately \$7.5 billion dollars, with funding from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the State of New Jersey and the federal New Starts Program. The recent rise in Port Authority tolls was carried out in part to help finance ARC, another important step in making the project a reality, and is a comparable to congestion pricing revenue being used to finance MTA expansion projects.

ARC is designed to add rail capacity from points west of the Hudson into midtown Manhattan. Recent growth in the corridor has consumed most of the existing transit capacity and this growth is expected to continue. There is no capacity in the auto crossings, in the exclusive bus lane leading to the Port Authority Bus Terminal or in the commuter rail / intercity rail tunnel leading into Penn Station. PATH and ferry capacity does exist but is poorly positioned to attract many added riders.

The report is dedicated to George Warrington, the late executive director of NJ TRANSIT, who was the driving force behind the Access to the Region’s Core project.

“George’s drive behind this project will be sorely missed,” said Zupan. “His vision of what the region’s transportation system could be, and his advocacy for public transit, is why ARC has got as far as it has in winning support from both sides of the Hudson.”

This report was made possible through the generous support of The Nicholson Foundation. The complete report can be found on web at

<http://www.rpa.org/pdf/RPAARCandNYCReport.pdf>.