



ROBERT SCAPPINO/THE STAR-LEDGER

Officials kick off construction in North Bergen yesterday for a Hudson River rail tunnel. From left are: federal transit administrator Peter Rogoff, Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), Gov. Corzine, Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) and Rep. Albio Sires (D-1st Dist.).

TUNNEL

Construction begins on Hudson rail route

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the Hudson was opened," he said. "A new tunnel has been talked about for 80 years. So this event is many decades overdue."

Rogoff said the federal government was committed to providing the full \$3 billion it had pledged toward the \$8.7 project, which also is being funded by NJ Transit, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. The money includes \$130 million in federal stimulus funding.

Scheduled for completion in 2017, the project is expected to generate 6,000 construction-related jobs and 44,000 to 50,000 permanent jobs. It will double NJ Transit's operating capacity from 23 to 48 trains an hour during peak commuting periods.

The first phase will carve an underpass beneath Tonnele Avenue, also known as Routes 1 & 9, to the foot of the Palisades rock formation, where boring is expected to begin sometime next year for the tunnel under Hudson County and

The tunnel project by the numbers

\$8.7 billion	Projected cost, in dollars
1.67 million	Rock to be excavated, in cubic yards
322,000	Soil, clay and silt to be excavated, in cubic yards
6,000	Estimated number of construction jobs
2,245 ft.	Length of the new 34th Street station
255	Number of dump trucks that will carry rock and soil through the Lincoln Tunnel each day
150 ft.	Depth of the new 34th Street station
96 ft.	Width of the new 34th Street station
30 to 40 ft.	Expected drilling progress each day through the Palisades and Manhattan
30 ft.	Expected progress each day under the Hudson
99 years	Age of existing Northeast Corridor tunnels
72	Number of high-speed escalators
48	Expected number of peak trains per hour in 2030
34	Number of peak trains per hour upon project completion
23	Number of peak trains per hour now
8	Anticipated years of construction

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on under the river. Work will be done simultaneously from the New York side.

In Manhattan, the tunnel will end deep below 34th Street in a new two-tiered station from Sixth to Eighth avenues, giving passengers access to 14 subway lines, PATH trains and the Long Island Rail Road.

Critics have questioned the de-

sign, which dead-ends at the new station in New York without a rail connection to the old Penn Station or the east side of Manhattan. That means Amtrak trains won't be able to use the station, which would be exclusively for NJ Transit.

"With this alignment, it's just not going to meet the transportation needs of the region," said Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey chapter of the Sierra Club, which

was originally in favor of a new tunnel.

"Today was more of a rush to do a groundbreaking than people at rush hour," Tittel said.

A rail connection to the existing Penn Station had to be scrapped because unstable rock above the new terminal forced NJ Transit to lower the depth of the new station to 150 feet.

A connection to Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan was scuttled because New York City would not allow digging near a 92-year-old water tunnel serving much of Manhattan, but Coscia said an eastern extension of the new tunnel could be revisited once a new water tunnel now under construction opens and the old one is decommissioned.

He defended the current design.

"It meets all the major objectives. The major objectives were to get into New York, to double capacity and to provide a connection with the existing diesel lines so people have a one-seat ride into New York," Coscia said, noting diesel trains will be converted to dual diesel-electric ones permitted into the city. "It does all that."

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