

Our comment on “NJ’s Troubled Transportation Outlook”, Mark J. Magyar, NJ Spotlight, Dec. 3, 2010:

Extension of the No. 7 subway to Secaucus would be the best substitute for ARC. It would take more NJ travelers, especially our abused bus riders, to where they really want to go: stops along 42nd St, including the Port Authority Bus Terminal and Grand Central Station, with all their excellent connections. It would offer New York City residents another convenient way to work on New Jersey’s Gold Coast and beyond. It would be an effective way to reduce bus traffic congestion and air pollution on the west side of Manhattan. It can be completed within the working lifetime of most people who are current or potential riders. The proposed Amtrak tunnels are 20, maybe 30, years in the future at best.

The earliest possible construction of new passenger rail tunnels is of the utmost urgency for this region. We need the additional capacity and redundancy now. Needless to say, it would be an economic boon and would help maintain the New York region as a center of world commerce and as a desirable and affordable place to live. Where there is a political will, there is a way to make this happen sooner. The MTA has already completed boring the two requisite tunnels for the Bloomberg administration’s No. 7 extension to the far west side, which will open in 2013 - not decades from now.

At **SubwayToSecaucus.com**, however, we believe that the best trans-Hudson route for the No. 7 would be a branch that heads directly west from 10th Ave. & 42nd St to Weehawken (Lincoln Harbor Hudson Bergen LRT station) and Secaucus Transfer. It does not have to wind through 34th St. & 11th Ave. to New Jersey. The relatively few New Jersey riders destined for Javits Center can easily transfer at 10th Ave. & 42nd St. We offer a more elegant solution.

Construction of a subway tunnel under the Hudson would be cheaper than a heavy rail ARC tunnel. Subway trains are electrified, are lighter, and do not require heavy locomotives, let alone the dual mode engines envisaged for ARC. Accordingly, they can descend and ascend at steeper grades than locomotives.

Martin Robins explained that the MTA rejected the No. 7 extension to New Jersey during the early stages of ARC because the anticipated increased passenger volume would stress current station capacity along the current No. 7 route. That supports our contention that there is sufficient customer demand to justify an extended No. 7 line. Local passenger capacity in the 42nd St. corridor can be increased by lengthening the Times Square Shuttle platforms to allow longer trains for the Shuttle.

The current estimated cost of \$5.3 billion for the Bloomberg administration’s No. 7 extension to New Jersey seems realistic and is considerably less than the conservative estimated cost for ARC, \$8.7 billion to the 34th St. dead-end station, plus another, rarely-mentioned, \$5 billion to connect to Grand Central Station. Some ARC proponents accused Governor Christie of conspiring to redeploy ARC funds to replenish the state’s nearly bankrupt Transportation Trust Fund. It is ironic that they now argue that there are too many other pressing transportation needs to support a No. 7 subway extension.