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Contact: Paul Griffo
Tel.: (202) 366-4064

U.S. Transportation Secretary Signs Record $2.6 Billion Agreement to Fund New Tunnel Network To Give Long Island Commuters Direct Access to Grand Central Station

The federal government will provide $2.6 billion to help build a new network of train tunnels under New York City designed to connect trains from Long Island to Grand Central terminal, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters announced today. She added that the largest-ever federal investment in a single transit project, known as East Side Access, would help keep New York's crowded transportation network moving for decades to come.

"For a city that gives meaning to the phrase time is money, hundreds of thousands of commuters shouldn't have to waste both being caught in a daily cross-town shuffle," Secretary Peters said. "In a city famous for straight roads, straight talk and straight buildings, we're making sure that New Yorkers have a straight route to work and home again."

The Secretary said the project will give Long Island Railroad commuter trains direct access into the lower level of Grand Central, shaving more than 40 minutes off the daily commutes for tens of thousands of passengers once it is completed in 2013. She added that the project will include the construction of new tunnels under Manhattan and Queens that will connect to the existing 63rd Street Tunnel below the East River.

Secretary Peters said the project was needed to fix the current problem many Long Island commuters face of having to ride trains into Penn Station and then back-track via subway to jobs in and around eastern Midtown. "Anyone who has spent hours stuck in trains and subways traveling west just to get east will tell you how necessary East Side Access is," she said.

The Secretary added that the U.S. Department of Transportation's support was not limited to this one New York City project. She noted that the Department's Federal Transit Administration was providing $4.5 billion to help construct the Fulton Street Transit Center and build a permanent PATH terminal in lower Manhattan.

She also announced today that the Department would allow the MTA to commit up to $693 million in funds to begin construction of the Second Avenue Subway Line and that the federal share of such costs would be reimbursed with FTA transit funds, subject to appropriations and final labor certification. "Our commitment to New York is broad in its scope and grand in its ambition," Secretary Peters noted.

The Secretary was joined by Metropolitan Transit Authority and LIRR officials, members of the New York congressional delegation, and local leaders in signing the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) for the $2.6 billion, which will be provided between now and 2016.

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