



Work begins on nation's largest mass transit project

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NEW YORK (CNN) -- The largest mass transit project in the country got under way Monday with the help of federal stimulus dollars, as public officials broke ground on a second passenger rail tunnel beneath the Hudson River.

The new tunnel will link New Jersey with New York and eventually will double capacity on the nation's busiest rail corridor, running from Washington to Boston, Massachusetts, officials said.

Officials participated in the groundbreaking for the \$8.7 billion project as commuter trains passed behind them in North Bergen, New Jersey, before entering the existing train tunnel, which went into operation in 1908.

"As we start digging this tunnel, I think that what really it means, we are digging our way out of an economic crisis," said Sen. Bob Menendez, D-New Jersey. "As we're getting under way, we're seeing the dividends of the Recovery Act being paid right now."

The [Department of Transportation](#) announced Monday that it will commit \$3 billion to the project over its lifespan. Of that, \$130 million is coming from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the department said..

It is the largest commitment to any transportation project anywhere in the United States in the history of the Department of Transportation, according to administrator Peter Rogoff of the Federal Transportation Administration.

"This is what President Obama means by recovery. It means putting people back to work now to improve the lives of so many others for years to come," Rogoff said.

The project -- known as ARC, for Access to the Region's Core -- is expected to create 6,000 design and construction jobs.

"This is going to promote mobility, reduce commuter congestion, staunch carbon emissions, enhance regional competitiveness and lay a foundation for an extraordinary expansion of mass transit in the most densely populated state in the nation, New Jersey," [New Jersey](#) Gov. John Corzine said.

New Jersey Transit says 170,000 passengers now travel through the existing train tunnel beneath the Hudson River to New York each day. When completed, the second tunnel will enable that figure to increase to 255,000 passenger trips. The additional passengers will disembark at a new concourse to be built at Penn Station in New York, 150 feet below street level.