

Permit in hand, rail tunnel work can start in NYC

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BY JUDY RIFE

NEW YORK — Construction of the new commuter-rail tunnel that is the centerpiece of the \$8.7 billion project known as Access to the Region's Core will begin on the New York side of the Hudson River before the end of the year.

The project's special-permit application through the city's land-use review process received unanimous approval this week from the New York City Council.

The 47-0 vote clears the way for construction of an underground expansion of Pennsylvania Station at 34th Street and new connections to city subway lines.

NJ Transit and the Port Authority, the project's partners, broke ground in North Bergen, N.J., in June. The first contract involves building an underpass beneath Tonelle Avenue to carry train tracks to the point where they begin their descent into the new tunnel under the river.

The two agencies estimate construction will generate about 6,000 jobs a year through 2017 when ARC will be completed.

City played active role

The tunnel will double commuter-rail capacity between the two states and give residents of Orange and Rockland counties a one-seat ride to Midtown, eliminating transfers at Secaucus Junction.

The application to the City Council was done voluntarily, in an effort to encourage public participation and community support for the project. The city's planning commission, as well as the Manhattan borough president and two community boards also played active roles in the review.