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Press Release

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[MTA Headquarters](#)

IMMEDIATE

### Massive Tunnel Boring Machine Begins Journey Under Manhattan

*\$10 Million, 200 Ton Equipment Will Dig Tunnel to Provide LIRR Access to Grand Central*

The MTA's East Side Access project - which brings Long Island Rail Road trains into Grand Central Terminal - reached another milestone when a Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) recently began drilling under Manhattan. East Side Access is a \$6.3 billion project that will provide access to Grand Central Terminal for Long Island Rail Road commuters. When complete in 2013, East Side Access will serve approximately 160,000 customers a day.

The \$10 million, 200-ton TBM arrived in pieces earlier this year, which were lowered into the 63rd Street tunnel in Long Island City via a massive excavation. The pieces were then transported through the tunnel, under the East River, to a "launch box" under 63rd Street and 2nd Avenue. The TBM was assembled in the launch box and began testing earlier in the fall, and has traveled approximately 500 feet to date. It is now digging its way toward Grand Central at approximately 50 feet per day, first moving east along 63rd Street and then curving down Park Avenue to Grand Central. A second TBM arrived in September and will begin digging a second tube for the project later this month.

The bi-level 63rd Street tunnel was constructed starting in 1969, designed to carry both subway and commuter rail trains. Due to budget shortfalls, the tunnel remained unused until 1989, when F train service was routed through the tunnel's upper level to 63rd Street and Lexington Avenue. Until now, the lower level has terminated at 63rd Street and 2nd Avenue, where the TBM began boring toward Grand Central. Connecting tunnels will be completed in Queens to link the tunnel to the LIRR's Main Line and Port Washington branch tracks.

The project will have a number of significant regional transportation benefits, including:

- Reducing Penn Station train arrivals while increasing LIRR Manhattan arrivals by 41 percent
- Reducing pedestrian crowding in Penn Station
- Eliminating standees on the LIRR between Jamaica and Penn Station
- Improving the reliability of train service
- Reducing crowding on the subway lines that use Penn Station and the No. 7 line
- Reducing daily vehicle miles of travel in the region and improving air quality
- Allowing for Metro-North Railroad service to Penn Station, thereby providing for a more balanced transportation system
- Providing convenient access between the east side of Manhattan and AirTrain to JFK
- The Third Track project in combination with East Side Access will provide robust and reliable LIRR service opportunities to two Manhattan terminals - Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal