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Press Release

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MTA Headquarters

IMMEDIATE

# Massive Tunnel Boring Machine Lowered in Queens

*\$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 today when the first giant pieces of a Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) were lowered into the mouth of the 63rd Street Tunnel in Queens. 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.

"For transit aficionados, the arrival of a Tunnel Boring Machine is like the moment when the Christmas tree arrives at Rockefeller Center," said Mysore Nagaraja, President of MTA Capital Construction Company. "This is a big milestone in the East Side Access project and we look forward to setting the machine on its earth-eating journey later this summer."

The 200 ton TBM was tested outside of Rome, Italy in April and then disassembled and shipped by boat in pieces, which arrived late last month. The pieces were then taken by truckload to Long Island City, Queens, where they will be lowered into the 63rd Street tunnel via a massive excavation. The pieces will then be transported through the tunnel, under the East River, to a "launch box" under 63rd Street and 2nd Avenue. The TBM will be assembled in the launch box and will begin digging its way toward Grand Central later this summer. A second TBM will arrive later this year to dig a second tube for the project.

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. The lower level currently terminates at 63rd Street and 2nd Avenue, where the TBM will pick up shortly to begin 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 JFK International Airport (via the AirTrain at Jamaica)
- Supporting local and regional land use and economic development patterns.





