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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

MTA East Side Access Project to Begin Queens Tunneling Phase

Machines Will Dig Four Tunnels Connecting LIRR Main Line to 63rd Street Tunnel

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) officials today dedicated two tunnel boring machines that are a part of the East Side Access project. The machines will create four tunnels under Sunnyside Yard in Queens, connecting the tracks of the Long Island Rail Road Main Line with the tunnel under the East River that leads to Grand Central Terminal. The tunnels, to be completed in October 2012, are the last to be built as part of East Side Access. Two separate machines that are excavating tunnels and caverns in the bedrock under Manhattan are on schedule to complete their work this May. The machines were named Tess and Molina by sixth graders at I.S. 204 in Long Island City.

After the completion of the overall project in 2016, LIRR trains traveling through Sunnyside will be able to head to Pennsylvania Station, as they have since 1910, or, for the first time, to Grand Central Terminal.

"One hundred years ago, the tunnels under Penn Station gave Long Islanders easy access to Manhattan, essentially giving birth to Long Island as we know it today and leading to enormous growth in the region," said MTA Chairman Jay H. Walder. "Today, East Side Access will build on this growth and transform this region in a similar way. Commuters throughout Long Island and Queens will have more service to Manhattan and shorter travel times to the East Side—making these communities even more attractive places to live, increasing housing values, and unlocking the next wave of economic development potential on Long Island."

East Side Access will reduce commuting times by as much as 40 minutes a day for about 160,000 customers who currently travel to Penn Station and then must take a subway, bus or walk to the East Side. It will also reduce passenger crowding levels at Penn Station and thereby enable Metro-North trains to access Penn Station for the first time.

"One day in the not too distant future, a conductor will say eight magic words that have never been spoken on Long Island: 'This is the train to Grand Central Terminal,'" said Helena E. Williams, President of the Long Island Rail Road. "East Side Access is the equivalent of the 'moon shot' for the LIRR because it will transform how we do business"

The East Side Access project is being managed by MTA Capital Construction. The tunnels in Sunnyside are being built by G.T.F., a three-way joint venture comprised of Granite Construction Northeast, Inc., Traylor Brothers, Inc., and Frontier-Kemper Constructors, Inc. The joint venture won the bidding for the contract in September 2009 with a bid of \$730 million, and have been preparing to launch these machines in the months since. Each will complete two runs underneath Sunnyside Yard.

"We are building the largest transportation construction project in the country," said Dr. Michael Horodniceanu, President of MTA Capital Construction. "It's an unbelievably complex undertaking which involves working in and around the busiest rail yard in the United States. I'm extremely proud of the level of teamwork all the staff and contractors are engaging in to make this project a reality."

The machines were named by sixth graders at I.S. 204, the Oliver Wendell Holmes School, in Long Island City, who submitted nearly 90 names after the MTA asked them for ideas. Tess, the blue-faced machine that is being assembled and was the backdrop for today's press conference, was named by Sangida Bagum. The name stands for Tunnel Excavation Sunny Side. The name Molina is a play on the word mole. It was submitted by a team of three students, Mohammad Malik, Michael Morales, and Angel Peralta, and is given to the machine with the red cutter head that will begin tunneling first. It is in an open trench below the level of the press event.

Each machine has a 22-foot diameter cutterhead and weighs approximately 642 tons including the trailing gear, which includes storage tanks, electrical support and exhaust fans. Each machine is approximately 300 feet long from the cutterhead to the rear of the trailing gear. In contrast to the tunnel boring machines being used to cut through Manhattan bedrock, these machines are designed for the geological conditions found in Sunnyside, where the soil is a mixture of sand, clay and boulders and the water table is high. The machines will remove soil and install inter-locking concrete rings, creating a tunnel as they proceed. To facilitate excavation and transportation of the soil that is removed, each machine turns it into a "slurry," or paste that is thinner than pudding but thicker than shampoo.