

MTA Breaks Ground For 63rd Street Connection

BY CRAIG McGUIRE

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority recently broke ground on the last leg of a long overdue project aimed at reducing subway commuter congestion in Queens.

A 1,500-foot underground connection between the 63rd Street tunnel and the Queens Plaza subway station will open up another route to midtown Manhattan by connecting the B and Q lines, which end at 21st Street in Long Island City, to the E, F, G and R lines.

Dubbed the "Tunnel to Nowhere" due to a lack of connections to other Queens subways, the 63rd Street subway is part of a project started in the 1960s that was shackled for a time by budget cuts in the 1970s, but always mired in delay.

Costing taxpayers an estimated \$645 million, doled out by federal, state and municipal agencies, the project will take more than six years to complete.

Calling the groundbreaking "the end of a long and arduous journey," MTA Chairman Peter Stangl said, "The increase in the number of trains means that crowding on the E and F lines, the city's busiest trains, will be reduced, making life a little bit easier for thousands of Queens customers."

With this additional connection, MTA officials estimate 15 more trains per hour will enter Manhattan during rush hour.

At the September 22 groundbreaking at 41st Avenue and 29th Street, Queens Borough President Claire Shulman pledged her support of the project.

"We plan to help the MTA make this go as smoothly as possible," said Shulman. "We will let residents know when traffic has to be rerouted and help out local businesses to make it as easy as possible."

The 63rd Street tunnel opened in 1989, more than 20 years after it was planned as part of an ambitious project to build 11 new subway lines in Queens.



Secretary Barbara Lorens, President Bob Wilson and Executive Director George Stamatiades of the Dutch Kills Civic Association help break ground for the last leg of the 63rd St. subway line.