



**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
CORPORATIONS, AUTHORITIES AND COMMISSIONS
SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

SUBJECT: AMTRAK/Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Progress With Respect to the Rehabilitation of the East River Tunnels and the East Side Access Project.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the hearing is to examine and discuss the current status of the East Side Access (ESA) project--including rehabilitation of the East River Tunnels (ERTs)--relative to the impact of recent storms, the COVID-19 Pandemic, and resultant economic shutdown.

May 7th, 2021

10:00 AM

Virtual | Facilitated By The NYS Senate

ORAL TESTIMONY WILL BE BY INVITATION ONLY

The East River Tunnels are critical pieces of infrastructure through which hundreds of trains and thousands of commuters pass each day. Hundreds of millions of gallons of water inundated the tunnels during Superstorm Sandy and left them in a precarious state of disrepair. A 2017 report by Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli said the number of trains delayed or canceled because of problems with the tubes and their switches increased 72 percent since Sandy, and accounted for a significant number of the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR's) overall on-time problems. Indeed, that report is now over three years old, and as the corrosion inside the tunnels has worsened, so has its impact on the quality of the railroad's service. It also poses a major safety threat, and in 2017 Newsday wrote, "[I]et's not wait until there is a terrible accident or a system failure that renders the tunnel unusable and requires another emergency response. We're sounding the alarm now so there is urgency at Amtrak...to schedule the repairs and upgrades." However, as we enter 2021 there is no clear and actionable operational plan to fix the tunnels and it is unclear that this project is a commanding priority for Amtrak.

Amtrak has stated in the past that it must wait for the completion of East Side Access before it can turn to the East River Tunnels, since a total shutdown of a tube is required for its repair. The Committee wishes to hear expert testimony on alternatives to a lengthy shutdown, conditioned upon the total completion of ESA. For example, the recent successful usage of "in-service refurbishment" on the NYC Transit L Subway Line demonstrates that a complete shutdown of an entire tube may well be unnecessary. Further, a recent study commissioned by the Gateway Program Development Corporation and issued by London Bridge Associates recommended "in-service refurbishment" for the rehabilitation of the North River Tunnels in the Hudson River. These tubes, similarly-situated to the East River Tunnels, were also inundated during Sandy and the report found that only weeknight and weekend outages would be required. This method seems highly preferable to the danger attendant to waiting for the completion of East Side Access and the disruption that would result from congesting the East Side Access tubes.

This Public Hearing will provide an opportunity to discuss the current status of the ESA project--including rehabilitation of the East River Tunnels (ERTs)--relative to the impact of recent storms, the COVID-19 Pandemic, and resultant economic shutdown. Your testimony will help identify any issues affecting project participants, transit workers, riders, and other stakeholders and to ensure that the various constructions associated with the ESA progress efficiently for all intended beneficiaries.

**Senator Leroy Comrie | Chair
Senate Standing Committee
On Corporations**

**Senator Tim Kennedy | Chair
Senate Standing Committee
On Transportation**

PUBLIC HEARING REPLY FORM

Persons invited to present testimony at the public hearing are requested to complete this reply form **as soon as possible** and e-mail it to:

Richard Olivier-Marius
Committee Clerk/Analyst to Senator Comrie
Chair of the Senate Committee on
Corporations, Authorities & Commissions
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E-Mail: richard@leroycomrie.org

- I plan to virtually attend the public hearing entitled "AMTRAK/Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Progress With Respect To the rehabilitation of the East River Tunnels and the East Side Access Project."
- I have been invited to make a public statement at the hearing. I will answer any questions that may arise. I will provide an electronic copy of my testimony 48 hours in advance of the hearing via email to: richard@leroycomrie.org
- I will require assistance and/or handicapped accessibility information.

Please specify the type of assistance required:

NAME: _____

TITLE: _____

ORGANIZATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

E-MAIL: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

FAX TELEPHONE: _____