



American Planning Association
New York Metro Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

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Statement

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Long-term Regional Benefits of ARC Undone by Short-term Myopia?

The New York Metro Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) has prepared this statement in response to recent deliberations over the fate of the “Access to the Region’s Core” Project (the ARC Project). The New York Metro Chapter of the APA is a 1,200-member local chapter in the larger 41,000-member American Planning Association, which is a national organization of professionals dedicated to creating livable communities of lasting value. Our membership represents diverse interests and perspectives and comprises planners, designers, engineers and others from both the private and public sector who are involved in planning for the region’s communities, including the City of New York. We address local issues that affect the physical, social, natural and economic environments of the region on a daily basis.

On October 7, 2010, New Jersey’s Governor Christie accepted the recommendation of the ARC Project Executive Committee to terminate the ARC Project based on a 30-day review, which found that the project could exceed its current budget. The next day, Governor Christie agreed to extend his review at the request of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation. This pause provides a unique opportunity for all major project stakeholders, including the State of New Jersey, the City and State of New York, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and the US DOT to remember the significance of this seminal project and its value to the region and the nation.

While Manhattan is recognized as the center of an economic region that stretches for hundreds of square miles, it’s clear that the business districts of Manhattan do not belong to New York City alone. The strength of the metropolitan area, and the nation itself, relies on continuing to attract the one in four workers in Midtown Manhattan who commute from the suburbs, half of those from west of the Hudson River. Businesses based in Manhattan rely on New Jersey’s pool of labor, just as New Jersey relies on the payroll of those same businesses.

To achieve this, access to the Midtown Manhattan Central Business District is equally vital to both states and the city. By agreeing to further review, Governor Christie has made it clear that he understands the value of this project, and we implore him to reconsider his position on terminating it.

The ARC Project would create jobs, allow businesses to tap into a skilled labor market, provide for economic growth, and improve the quality of life for thousands of people in both New York and New Jersey. ARC is expected to create almost 6,000 jobs during the seven-year

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construction phase, at a time when jobs are urgently needed. Long-term, 16,000 jobs in New Jersey and 28,000 jobs in New York will be directly attributable to ARC, thereby expanding the City's labor market and promoting development on Manhattan's west side. And for a Mayor who has dedicated himself to limiting the impact of automobiles in New York City, Mr. Bloomberg should find much value in a project that is projected to remove tens of thousands of cars from the Hudson River crossings.

For New Jersey, the ARC Project will improve access to high-paying jobs, raise property values around NJ Transit stations, and improve community livability by reducing commute times. The improved accessibility resulting from the implementation of NJ Transit's Midtown Direct service over ten years ago resulted in a 25% increase in property values around stations. With the completion of the ARC Project, homes in Bergen County within walking distance of a rail station are projected to increase in value by almost \$30,000. The cumulative increase in home values in the region could grow to almost \$18 billion over eight years.

From a short-term vantage point, transformative projects like ARC may seem beset by insurmountable obstacles (engineering, economic, political or otherwise). Yet these are the very projects that should be addressed with the most vigor and whose financial challenges can be addressed with strict cost oversight and regional cooperation. Politically, it is difficult to see the reward for taking big chances, to invest in the future, and to build the base for the realization of long-term benefits. We also fiercely guard our political boundaries, sometimes at the expense of the broader and more meaningful economic region. These approaches are penny-wise, but pound-foolish, and lack the visionary approach taken just a half-century ago, when our country's Interstate highway system increased productivity and reduced costs in America.

As the visionary urban planner Daniel Burnham famously once said, "Make no little plans; for they have no magic to stir men's blood." U.S. Secretary of Transportation LaHood has demonstrated his commitment to the importance of this project by securing a two week stay of decision from Governor Christie. Mayor Bloomberg and Governor Patterson of New York should also recognize ARC's importance and acknowledge that this is much more than a New Jersey project. Governor Christie is responsible for ensuring overruns are minimized to taxpayers, but let's not lose the determination that led to the great infrastructure achievements of our past. We urge the public officials of New York, New Jersey, and the Federal government to recognize the deep, long-term value that the ARC Project will provide to the region and to forge a cooperative, regional partnership to ensure that this vital transportation improvement is completed.