

Work begins on rail tunnel under Hudson

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The nation's largest current public works project began yesterday when state and federal officials ceremonially broke ground in Hudson County on a second passenger rail tunnel under the Hudson River.

Almost a century after the existing trans-Hudson rail tunnel opened in 1910, speaker after speaker stepped to the podium behind a warehouse on Tonnele Avenue in North Bergen and hailed the tunnel project as a mass transit legacy to future generations. The project, which will take eight years to complete, will double capacity on NJ Transit trains.

"We are making a contribution to the future that I think is untold. A hundred years from now, the nation and its Northeast corridor will be a better place because of the decisions and the actions we're taking today," Gov. Jon Corzine said.

The event was orchestrated to maximize the political power of a massive stimulus project in a downturn, with a gaggle of politicians and a huge American flag draped over two pieces of heavy construction equipment. Bleachers held a crowd of cheering union workers, some of the roughly 300 people who gathered for the event. And behind it all, a steady stream of NJ Transit trains rolled into and out of the existing tunnel just to the north.

Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff called the tunnel project "a breakthrough like no other we've had in this country in some time."

"This project is truly a historic one. It's been roughly 100 years since the last rail tunnel under

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