



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Transit
Administration**

The Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

NOV 02 2009

Mr. Ross B. Capon
President and CEO
National Association of Railroad Passengers
900 Second Street, N.E., Suite 308
Washington, DC 20002-3557

Dear Mr. Capon:

Thank you for your letter dated September 30, cosigned by National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) Chairman of the Board George Chilson and endorsed by multiple organizations. You requested that the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) redirect the design of the Access to the Region's Core (ARC) project (also called the Mass Transit Tunnel) to directly serve Penn Station as well as take the lead to restart planning for a connection between Penn Station and Grand Central. Your letter is a follow-up to a meeting between Federal Transit Administration (FTA) officials and Albert Papp, George Haikalis, and Sean Jeans-Gail on August 21.

FTA appreciates the detailed thoughts you provided on ways to improve the project, including the suggestions for providing a direct connection to Penn Station "without delaying completion or increasing costs" of the ARC project. We at FTA strongly share the goal that this historic project is delivered on time and within budget, and that it serves the public interest. Thus, as you know, based on concerns raised by your group in 2008, as well as Amtrak, on the issue of providing a direct connection to Penn Station, FTA, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and New Jersey Transit (NJT) worked with Amtrak and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in July 2008. The purpose was to determine whether there was any way to access Penn Station directly while avoiding the environmental and other concerns raised during the public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The results of the discussions between FTA, FRA, NJT, MTA and Amtrak are described in the Final EIS and in the Record of Decision for the ARC project that was issued on January 14, 2009, and provided to your organization, and were summarized in FTA's letter to NARP on March 16. The project has progressed to a stage where major redesigns, such as you are proposing, cannot occur without significantly delaying the project.

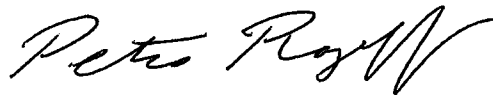
Your letter also requests that USDOT lead the effort to restart planning for the long sought connection between Penn Station and Grand Central that was developed and analyzed in the 2003 ARC Major Investment Study (MIS). As described in the Record of Decision, that alternative was eliminated at the end of the MIS process because, compared to the two other alternatives under consideration, its engineering and operability challenges were greater and its ridership advantage was considered less significant when the West Side development was taken

into account. But recognizing the importance of this connection, as described in Chapter 18 (“Response to Comments on the Draft EIS and Supplemental Draft EIS”) of the Final EIS, the ARC project was specifically designed so as not to preclude future extension to the East Side. It is FTA’s understanding that further study of the potential extension from New York Penn Station Expansion (NYPSE) to the East Side is being considered by NJT and that they are in discussion with MTA senior management about the potential for extending beyond NYPSE east and north to serve the Grand Central Terminal area or just east, potentially to the Sunnyside Yard area in Queens. Either of these possibilities is allowed for in the ARC design. At this point, however, FTA is not aware that any decision has been made about next steps to elaborate on the attributes and needs associated with different alternatives for extending the ARC project or for directly connecting Penn Station to Grand Central.

As noted in your letter, the Federal Government relies on the local planning process to identify the need for transportation investment in an area and gives deference to that decision. Should local decisionmakers wish to address these issues, they are most welcome to do so. At this time no project sponsor has approached FTA with a request to study a connection to Grand Central either from the existing Penn Station or from the ARC project to the east and north. If and when this were to occur, FTA would participate, consistent with all applicable federal requirements.

If I can provide further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at (202) 366-4040. A similar letter has been sent to Mr. Chilson.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Rogoff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "R" at the end.

Peter M. Rogoff

cc: Mr. Richard Sarles, NJT
Mr. Jay Walder, MTA