

# The Bulletin



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## ***The Bulletin***

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## **NEWARK CITY SUBWAY EXTENSION PROGRESS REPORT by Bruce J. Russell (Photographs by the author)**

Work continues on the 1.3-mile-long extension of the Newark City Subway from Penn Station to the former Lackawanna Railroad station on Broad Street, a 1904-era Italianate style edifice complete with clock tower. When done, riders will be able to board an LRV in Penn Station, proceed a short distance in tunnel, and then emerge onto the surface for the remainder of the journey. The installation of streetcar tracks on the streets of downtown Newark marks their return for the first time since about 1938, when the final lines were abandoned in favor of all-service electric buses, capable of running under wires or using internal combustion engines alone.

Emerging from the tunnel portal opposite the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, the line runs parallel to McCarter Highway for a short distance using a two-track private right-of-way. Then the two tracks separate. One continues on a narrow right-of-way behind several office buildings until the new Newark Bears minor league baseball stadium is reached. It then crosses Broad Street and proceeds to the station, finishing up at a bumper block. The other track, which will carry riders to Penn Station, runs to Broad Street, crosses it, and then parallels it to the station, where it meets the other track. About half of the extension consists of two tracks side by side, and the other half is made up of two single-track portions using separate alignments. This aspect of the line makes it interesting.

The track along McCarter Highway is near-

ing completion and consists of welded rail atop a concrete base. In front of Broad Street Station, trackage is likewise being installed. Work on the single-track segment on the west side of Broad Street adjacent to Washington Park is in the early stage of construction, with a preliminary trench excavated. This track will run adjacent to the curb.

Over \$200 million is being spent on this short extension of the Newark City Subway, which is many times what the original route to Franklin Avenue cost in 1937. Obviously NJ Transit considers this hefty price tag worth the investment. Newark's mayor, Sharpe James, views it as a catalyst for his city's economic and commercial revival. When it is finished, sometime in 2006, passengers will be able to make an easy transfer between the two NJ Transit stations. As of now, a bus ride is required, although many people simply walk the distance.

During the 1990s the Newark City Subway was reconstructed from a private right-of-way trolley line using a fleet of PCCs into a modern light rail route using Japanese-manufactured LRVs. In 2001 it was extended about a mile into Belleville and Bloomfield, where it now terminates at Grove Street, adjacent to a new shop and maintenance facility. Soon it will again be extended. On a long-term basis further extensions are possible using abandoned or underutilized railroad rights-of-way, but for this to occur a vast amount of additional funding will be required.

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