

GETTING LIRR TO GRAND CENTRAL

by Observer

The task of constructing an underground link to take Long Island RR services into a new deep level section of Grand Central Station in the heart of New York's Manhattan Island is making steady progress. When completed the link will diverge at Sunnyside Coach Yard from the tracks leading to Penn Station in South Manhattan. The new tracks will pass below the Yard and then enter the currently unused lower level of the 63rd Street tunnel passing in a westerly direction below the East River and Roosevelt Island before running below 63rd Street in Manhattan. (The upper level of this tunnel has carried Subway Line F since 2001). The new route will then turn quite sharply to the south immediately below the Metro North RR tracks from the northern suburbs to reach Grand Central Station which fronts on to 42nd Street. There will be a new Long Island RR station occupying two additional levels each with four platforms, underneath the existing two-level Metro North station. A new entrance on the west side of the station at 45th Street will lead down to a new LIRR concourse underneath the existing concourse from where lifts and escalators will lead down to the eight new platforms. A mezzanine circulating area between the new LIRR upper and lower platforms will be 140 feet below Park Ave above the station complex, and 90 feet below the Low level platforms of the existing station.

Work completed since the start of the project in 2001 is the greater part of the 63rd Street tunnel but the section under Sunnyside Yard and the route curving round to Grand Central are currently being bored by four tunnelling machines – two for the hard rock under Manhattan and two for the softer ground under Sunnyside yard. It will take until 2015 to complete this massive task and when open the new link is expected to be used by 162,000 passengers per day with a peak service frequency of 24 trains per hour.

Grand Central was the New York Terminus of the New York Central RR and was used additionally by the New Haven RR. It hosted many New York Central long distance trains for Chicago and the densely populated States of Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and northern Pennsylvania and the New Haven's frequent Boston fliers. Under Amtrak those long distance services which survived were transferred to Penn Station in 1991, leaving Grand Central with just the three Metro North commuter routes, two over ex-NYC tracks and one over the New Haven (including a few branches off that route). The new deep level facility will bring yet more commuters into Grand Central and will give LIRR a second station in Manhattan; about two thirds of LIRR's passengers currently arriving at Penn Central are heading for destinations closer to Grand Central and will be saved a further subway journey.