

Penn problem 2: Plans to dig a new tunnel before repairing the existing one are backward

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Carless Jerry Nadler, the longtime Manhattan congressman and before that, assemblyman, has ridden Amtrak to Albany and D.C. for decades and is a leading thinker on rail. He was right on the need for a cross-harbor rail freight tunnel and has single-handedly forced the Port Authority to pursue this project, for which it was created a century ago.

Nadler was also correct that the No. 7 extension should have been aligned to travel south from Times Square to Penn Station and then west to 11th Ave., connecting Grand Central and Penn. Alas, that didn't happen.

Now, Nadler is right once again that Amtrak's Sandy-damaged Hudson (and East River) tubes should be repaired nights and weekends rather than shutting them entirely, as Amtrak insists it must do to fix them. Nadler agrees that the MTA's successful L train and F train East River tunnel repairs can be replicated for Amtrak's tubes. The Port Authority paid London Bridge Associates \$600,000 for a [comprehensive study proving](#) that the tubes can, in their British phrasing, utilize "In-Service Refurbishment," what Americans call repair-in-place.



Fix it first. (John Minchillo/AP)

Nadler wants two new tubes, as do we, but waiting a decade or so for those to open and only then closing and fixing the old tubes is extremely dumb. What's also extremely dumb is for Amtrak to plow under a whole city block south of Penn (Block 780) for a \$12 billion eight-track dead-end terminal for the new tunnel. Much smarter and cheaper is a link to Grand Central for eight tracks there.

The congressman should press Amtrak and the bistate Gateway Development Commission to repair the tubes concurrently with digging the new tunnel rather than sequentially.

Since Amtrak is also refusing repair-in-place under the East River, the LIRR cannot maintain its current Penn schedule and the reduced schedule will not be reliable. No wonder Long Island commuters and pols are complaining.

America's investing a trillion dollars in infrastructure. It must ensure that massive projects are completed quickly and economically. The way to do that is to fix the tubes first.