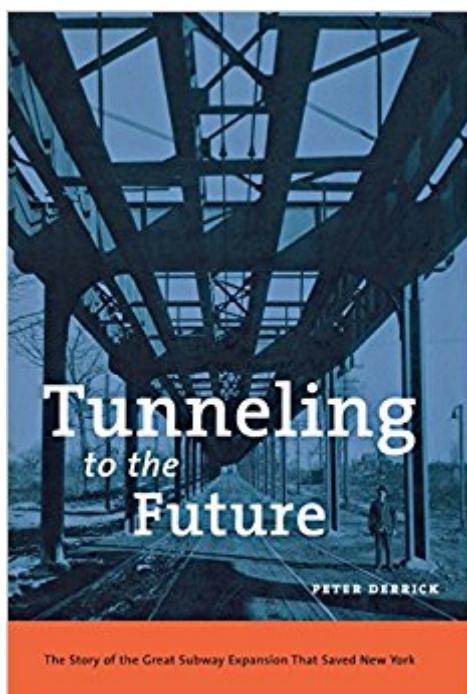


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# Tunneling To The Future: The Story Of The Great Subway Expansion That Saved New York



## **Synopsis**

In 1910, New York City was bursting at the seams as more and more people crowded into a limited supply of housing in the tenement districts of Manhattan and the older areas of Brooklyn. With no outlet for its exploding population, and the burgeoning social problems created by the overwhelming congestion, New York faced a serious crisis which city and state leaders addressed with dramatic measures. In March 1913, public officials and officers of the two existing rapid transit networks shook hands to seal a deal for a greatly expanded subway system which would more than double the size of the two existing transit networks. At the time the largest and most expensive single municipal project ever attempted, the Dual System of Rapid Transit set the pattern of growth in New York City for decades to come, helped provide millions of families a better quality of life, and, in the words of Manhattan borough president George McAneny (1910-1913), "proved the city's physical salvation." It stands as that rare success story, an enormously complicated project undertaken against great odds which proved successful beyond all measure. Published in conjunction with the History of the City of New York Project.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

In 1913, more than two-thirds of New York City's residents lived in tenements and the Lower East Side had the highest population density in the world, housing approximately 600,000 people in less than two square miles. Contagious diseases such as TB were rampant, and the infant mortality rate

in the Italian community had grown to 71%. In response to these dangerous conditions, city officials decided to double the mileage of New York's subway lines (which first opened in 1904) and triple their capacity, to encourage people to move uptown and into the outer boroughs. Derrick, the archivist for the Bronx County Historical Society, has produced a rousing history of the myriad struggles to build these lifesaving additions to the city's rapid transit system. Charting the fights between the city and privately owned transit companies (the two were sharing the cost of the subway system's expansion), he shows how the popular Hearst press and other media attacked the private companies for greed, while the companies themselves discovered that the new subway lines would not be as immediately profitable as they had planned. Derrick carefully explicates the impact of these rapid transit extensions on the city's economy, housing, jobs, neighborhood development and human interactions. Writing in a clear, compelling style, he constructs his history within the framework of several disciplines. Though the level of detail may overwhelm general readers, those already knowledgeable about New York political and social history will welcome this excellent addition to the literature of the city's planning, development and economics. (Apr.) Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Set in America's centum transportare, the century that saw the ascendancy of a national highway system and commercial flight, this is an exceptional history of the development of the unglamorous underground transportation system critical to the expansion of New York City. Bronx County Historical Society Archivist Derrick complements Clifton Hood's *722 Miles* (S. & S., 1993) with a precise recounting of this little-known story, exploring the political and economic indecision that preceded the subway's building at a time when the very survival of the nation's largest city its teeming tenements a catalyst for poverty, disease, and crime seemed threatened. He depicts ego-driven decision makers unable to meet the most crucial needs of New Yorkers, until finally someone who understood the purpose of government emerged from the faceless crowd to guide the project. Derrick's well-written narrative is packed with thoroughly researched facts and reasoning. Occasional digressions into details of proposed tunnel locations slow down the narrative, but in the end, Derrick boldly describes this extraordinarily complex project as "the most important decision made by New York's government in the twentieth century." An excellent addition to any large collection of American history. John E. Hodgkins, Yarmouth, ME Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Peter Derrick's book covers the "Dual Contracts" era of subway construction in New York, when

numerous lines were built between 1910 and 1931 by the IRT and the BRT /BMT. Derrick focuses on the interactions between executives of the then-existing subway companies and municipal politicians. Only a few paragraphs cover the "Independent" subway system, which was built after 1931. Endnotes, bibliography, etc., comprise 155 pages of this book, or nearly a third of its pages. There are eight maps and 24 period photographs. There is nothing in this book about station design, track layouts, operating procedures, or rolling stock. In fact, the book ends when construction began. It was a worthy endeavor of historical research to document the political deal-making of this period, but some readers may be disappointed that the author's interest was solely in the back-room political gamesmanship that preceded construction

Well written history of the development NYC subway system in its early years.

Every tunnel engineers needs the story of the tunnels in New York, those who don't know history are condemned to repeat it

No other historian has identified so important a piece of NYC's history on which so little is known, and written so lucidly about it. This is not just enjoyable history. You cannot understand New York City today without reading Derrick's book. The greatest city of the modern era had its pivotal moment early in the 20th century with the decision in 1913 to double the size of its subway system: the largest public-works expenditure in the Western Hemisphere to that date. This decision, a dozen years and more in the making and led by Manhattan Borough President George McAneny, was propelled by the inability to resolve the problems of disease, crime, prostitution, overpopulation and poverty that overwhelmed Manhattan's Lower East Side, spilling into more affluent neighborhoods throughout the city. Getting employees out of impoverishment and to their jobs was now an impediment to development and modernization. The vision that turned farm lands into an urban center was a leap into the unknown and Derrick meticulously details this exciting chapter in NYC's history, a chapter that when fully understood, reveals how issues get resolved and great accomplishments propelled. In comparison, the highway system of the Robert Moses era was but an auxiliary event.

Dr. Peter Derrick was born and raised in NYC, and his professional expertise is in transportation. There is no better person to tell the tale of the development of the New York subway system. While the actual details of physical construction are not covered in this book, the most important aspect of

building the subway is - policy. The political processes in place at the time had a tremendous role in making the city what it is today.

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