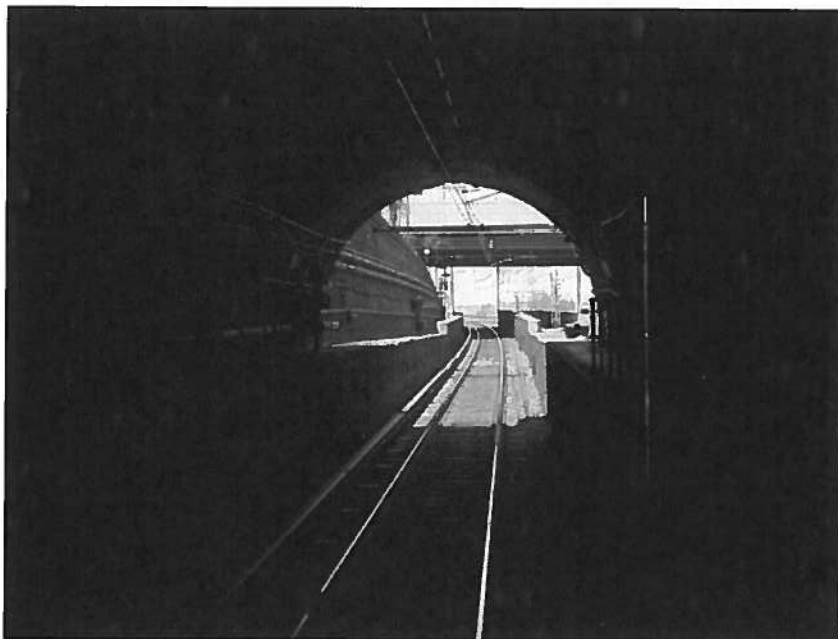


Christie was wrong to cancel tunnel project in 2010, N.J. residents say in poll



The mouth of one of the 105-year-old Hudson River rail tunnels after entering from the New Jersey side. A Rutgers-Eagleton Poll found residents have rethought their support of Gov. Christie's decision to cancel the ARC tunnel, but aren't ready to finance a new tunnel. (Larry Higgs |NJ Advance Media for NJ.com)



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on October 22, 2015 at 8:12 AM, updated October 22, 2015 at 8:13 AM

More than half of New Jersey residents say that Gov. Chris Christie make the wrong decision when halted construction of a new Hudson River train tunnel five years ago, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton poll.

But they're also not ready to write a blank check for a new tunnel plan.

The poll, conducted by phone earlier this month, found that 51 percent of those polled said Christie should have gone through with the tunnel, called ARC, in 2010, while 27 percent believe he did the right thing by canceling that the project. Another 22 percent were unsure.

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"This is a definite departure from 2010, when over half of New Jerseyans supported Gov. Christie's decision to cancel the ARC tunnel because he foresaw cost overruns," said Ashley Koning, assistant director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling at Rutgers University. "Five years, one Superstorm, and numerous transit delays later, it has become clear to New Jerseyans just how critical functioning tunnels are to the state."

Christie cancelled the tunnel after federal projections of cost overruns said the \$9 billion project could have ballooned to \$14.7 billion. **Christie said he didn't want to saddle taxpayers** with that potential burden.

Financial worries about funding Gateway still resonate with two of every three people polled. About one in four polled said they want work to start as soon as possible and worry about funding later.

A little over half of the 935 state residents polled expressed some concern about the current condition of the trans-Hudson tunnels. One year ago, **Amtrak officials warned that the tunnels would have to be taken out of service for a year** to be gutted, due to damage from floodwaters driven by Hurricane Sandy.

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questions on Tuesdays and Thursdays on NJ.com. You can also Tweet **@CommutingLarry**.

Amtrak officials also gave them a maximum life of 20 years, barring a problem, making it critical for a new tunnel, called Gateway, to be built. In September, **Christie and New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo committed to fund a fair share** of the \$20 billion estimated tunnel cost.

Disagreement with Christie's 2010 decision jumps to 60 percent when residents are told about the tunnels' age and condition, just 26 percent take his side when given this information, the poll found.

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Caution was expressed about committing to fund Gateway, with 76 percent of the Republicans polled said they were against Christie's decision to fund a new tunnel. Support also varies by region of the state and whether a person commutes by car or by transit, the poll found.

"Context matters when discussing these issues. Those who rely on the trans-Hudson tunnels view the ARC cancellation as a big mistake," said Koning.

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