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# Otisville Tunnel to undergo repairs

**\$3M project to line sections of exposed rock**

OTISVILLE - Metro-North Railroad will spend \$3 million this year to repair original sections of the 105-year-old Otisville Tunnel and protect trains from falling rocks and icicles. The tunnel, shaped like a horseshoe and running for one straight mile through the Shawangunk Mountains, still has two unlined sections of exposed ...



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Engineer and inspector Reginal Raphael shines a flashlight beam on the side of the Otisville Tunnel June 20. Metro-North Railroad will spend \$3 million to repair original sections of the 105-year-old mile-long tunnel.

**By Judy Rife**

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OTISVILLE — Metro-North Railroad will spend \$3 million this year to repair original sections of the 105-year-old Otisville Tunnel and protect trains from falling rocks and icicles.

The tunnel, shaped like a horseshoe and running for one straight mile through the Shawangunk Mountains, still has two unlined sections of exposed rock at its western end. Over the years, other sections were covered in brick, concrete or steel plates.

These remaining cave-like sections, which cover 925 feet a quarter-mile in from the western portal below Otisville Road, are pocked with loose rock, a condition aggravated by water raining into the tunnel.

"It's a state-of-good-repair project and it's a safety project," said Andrew Igoe, a senior construction engineer for the railroad.

The repairs will include scaling of loose rock, power washing and applying fiber-reinforced shotcrete on the unlined sections. Strip drains will be installed in 18 places where leaks are heaviest to direct water from the roof of the tunnel to the sides. Rock drains will also be drilled in nine places on the sidewalls.

Collectively, the repairs are designed to eliminate the potential for damage or injury from falling rocks and icicles, as well as significant interruption of train service. All trains stored at Metro-North's yard in Port Jervis pass through the tunnel at the start and finish of their days.

In preparation, the railroad and its primary contractor, Merco Inc. of Lebanon, N.J., have been installing air and water lines for equipment operation and temporary liners and pipes to collect wastewater, which will be trucked off-site for treatment. Crews will work from platforms and buckets on specialized trucks designed to travel on the tracks.

The actual repairs will begin next month and should be completed before the end of the year. Igoe said the work will require off-peak busing between mid-July and mid-October but is otherwise likely to be invisible to the tunnel regulars. About 125 people a day use the Port Jervis station.

The project represents Metro-North's first investment in the tunnel since it leased the Port Jervis line from Norfolk Southern in 2003 and assumed responsibility for its maintenance.

The lease, which gives Metro-North the option to ultimately purchase the 66-mile line, has spurred upwards of \$200 million in other repairs and upgrades.

For example, this year, in addition to the tunnel repairs, the railroad has embarked on a \$67 million replacement of the line's circa-1940s signal system.

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