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## Bridge and Tunnel Types

By [MICHAEL M. GRYNBAUM](#)

Take a date to the Brooklyn Bridge for spectacular views and a romantic stroll. Take a drive in the Lincoln Tunnel and prepare for a cramped, crawling trip to New Jersey.

The [Queensboro Bridge](#) is the iconic set piece of [Woody Allen](#)'s "[Manhattan](#)," perhaps the most romantic portrayal of New York ever set to celluloid. The Holland Tunnel had its Hollywood moment, too: "[Daylight](#)," a [Sylvester Stallone](#) disaster film that imagines the thing destroyed by diamond thieves.

Both types of crossings represent humanity's ingenuity and ambition, engineering wonders that unite Manhattan to the other boroughs and points beyond. And yet the miracles that shepherd thousands of cars at high speeds underwater through New York City do not conjure quite the same devotion as their above-ground, more architecturally pleasing cousins.

"A bridge is in the sky; a bridge has poetry — even the ugliest bridge has a following," observed [Mitchell L. Moss](#), director of the Rudin Center for Transportation at [New York University](#). "But a tunnel? A tunnel is much more mechanical. A tunnel is all about moving fast. Tunnels are something you get through, not something you experience."

Mr. Moss was asked to ponder the larger sociological meaning of these two urban conveyances on Wednesday, after the news that a pair of the city's lifeblood arteries are to be renamed in honor of two towering New York politicians.

The soaring Queensboro Bridge will soon bear the name of [Edward I. Koch](#), the former mayor and amateur movie critic; [Hugh L. Carey](#), the former governor from Brooklyn, is poised to see his name on the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, the near-invisible underground passageway perhaps best known from its cameo as the headquarters of the "Men in Black."

So, should Mr. Carey feel less than groovy? Not according to Robert Polner, who co-wrote a biography of the former governor, "The Man Who Saved New York," that was published this year.

"He is a stubborn character, and a bulwark of sorts," Mr. Polner said of Mr. Carey. "In some ways, something like the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, which seems immovable, seems fitting."

Like Mr. Carey, who saved the city from financial ruin in the 1970s, the tunnel “holds back the floods, it holds back the waters,” Mr. Polner said. And he deemed the tunnel’s self-sustaining toll system appropriate for a governor known for fiscal reform.

Still, even Mr. Polner acknowledged that the tunnel, which has the least traffic of all the major city crossings, was not as powerful a symbol as its neighbor to the north.

“I think anyone would rather be named for the Brooklyn Bridge than the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel,” Mr. Polner said. “But I don’t think Carey is viewed as a glamorous figure.”

As for the “Men in Black” connection, Mr. Polner said there was absolutely no evidence to suggest that Mr. Carey might be an alien.

Mr. Carey and Mr. Koch now join another pair of notable politicians whose names grace a bridge and a tunnel: George Washington and [Abraham Lincoln](#).

“In California, they name airports after movie stars: [Bob Hope](#), [John Wayne](#),” Mr. Moss of N.Y.U. said. “At least in New York, we honor our elected officials. This is a reflection of how much more important civic and political life is in New York than in California.”

Mr. Koch, with his gregarious demeanor and outsize persona, would seem a natural “bridge” type. But one longtime acquaintance of the mayor suggested on Wednesday that the Queensboro might not have been his ultimate aim.

“You want to know what he really wanted? He wanted [Newark Airport!](#)” said George Arzt, a longtime friend and a former press secretary for Mr. Koch. “He has always said to me that after he passes on, he would like Newark Liberty Airport named after him.” (Mr. Koch, although born in the Bronx, grew up in Newark.)

Reached for comment, Mr. Koch was adamant that such a prospect never held much interest for him.

“That was just talk!” he said in a telephone interview. “It’s Newark — I want to be in New York! That’s why I purchased my cemetery plot in Manhattan.”

Mr. Koch agreed that he preferred a bridge to an underground crossing — “Who wants to get stuck in a tunnel if the air closes around you?” — and then said he had to run: he was on his way to Gracie Mansion for a birthday party, where Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) was expected to formally announce Mr. Koch’s new namesake.

But the former mayor asked a reporter to wait a moment so he could share a quotation he had found in “The Great Gatsby,” which he called appropriate for the occasion.

“The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge,” Mr. Koch said, reading from the novel, “is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.”

“Nobody else has a bridge like that,” Mr. Koch concluded happily. “Only me!”