



A bold voice for transportation workers

FAILING TO FUND GATEWAY IS NOT AN OPTION

In February of 2016, TTD's Executive Committee adopted a policy statement calling on Congress and the Obama Administration to take [immediate](#) steps to fund arguably the most critical infrastructure project in our country: the Gateway Program and Hudson Tunnel Project. More than two years later, bipartisan and state support for the project has strengthened yet there has been little progress toward finding a real funding solution. In fact, we are moving in the wrong direction, with the current administration publicly opposing the project and taking a series of actions that threaten to halt progress. This is unacceptable and has dire economic consequences for the Northeast Corridor and the nation as a whole.

The Gateway Project encompasses several separate but interconnected projects designed to provide desperately needed upgrades to and expand capacity on the nation's busiest rail corridor. The most prominent piece of Gateway is the construction of a new two-track tunnel under the Hudson River, which, combined with the rehabilitation of the existing 108-year-old tunnel, would double capacity between New York and New Jersey. The project would also upgrade and expand the 108-year-old Portal North Bridge, replace the Sawtooth Bridge at Kearny Meadows Junction, and upgrade and expand infrastructure along the critical stretch of track between Penn Station Newark and the expanded Penn Station/Moynihan Station in New York City. Once completed, this project would result in a fully integrated transportation system that will increase capacity and improve service reliability throughout the Northeast Corridor.

Critics of federal investment in Gateway have belittled the project as simply a local transit need that should be paid for by New York and New Jersey. This shortsighted argument ignores how mega-projects like this are funded across the nation and represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the national importance of this corridor. Proponents of the project, including bipartisan elected officials at the state, local, and federal levels, understand the critical regional and national importance of the project and the economic growth it will usher in. More importantly, they understand the economic shockwaves that will be felt if we fail to act and the project is allowed to languish.

The Northeast Corridor is home to one in three of all jobs in the United States, and contributes \$3 trillion annually to the U.S. economy, and 20 percent of the nation's GDP. While the physical construction of Gateway will be done exclusively in New York and New Jersey, this stretch of track is the linchpin for the entire East Coast rail network, as well as lines running into the Midwest. While the pre-World War I infrastructure was already in need of repairs, damage and flooding from Hurricane Sandy caused additional damage that cannot be ignored. If construction on the new tunnel under the Hudson does not begin soon, Amtrak will be forced to shut down existing tubes (tracks) one at a time for repairs. This would reduce rail traffic capacity to 25 percent of its current level, sending ripple effects throughout our nation's passenger and commuter rail networks and causing significant economic hardship. Such a move would be a national emergency and preventing this from happening must be treated as a national priority.

During his campaign and early in his term, President Trump seemingly understood the stakes and importance of this project. Gateway appeared on lists of priority infrastructure projects during the transition, and at a Senate hearing last May, Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao [stated that](#), “Gateway is an absolute priority in terms of our focus.” Following a positively reported White House meeting on the Gateway Project with President Trump and Secretary Chao, Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York and then-Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey announced a combined commitment of \$5.55 billion of state funding for the Hudson Tunnel, and an additional \$695 million for the Portal Bridge. The states have also committed to a 50-50 split in costs for the overall \$30 billion project.

In recent months, however, the Trump Administration has taken a series of steps to undermine federal investment in the project. After previously receiving a medium-high rating from the Trump Administration in 2017, the Hudson Tunnel and Portal Bridge projects were downgraded to a medium-low rating by the Federal Transit Administration in its annual report to Congress. With a rating under medium, neither the Portal Bridge nor the Hudson Tunnel projects are eligible for the federal New Starts funding. Additionally, in the 11th hour of wrapping up the omnibus spending bill, the President threatened to veto the spending package to fund the entire government unless Gateway funding was stripped from the bill. As a result, the \$900 million House appropriators originally slated for Gateway was stripped. Instead, the bill included \$541 million in additional spending for Amtrak and the states of New York and New Jersey that could be used to fund Gateway. However, DOT will still need to approve Northeast Corridor grants to Amtrak and could interfere with funding to New York and New Jersey.

Failure to allow these funds to be spent on Gateway as intended by Congress would result in further costly delays to the project and threaten the economic stability in the region and nation at large. This stark departure from the President’s campaign rhetoric and focus on rebuilding our nation’s infrastructure, as well as from the typical partnership formed by the federal government and local partners on projects of this scale and importance, raises serious concerns.

Transportation labor urges the Trump Administration to recognize Gateway’s regional and national economic importance, commit to ensuring federal investment to complete the urgently needed project, and elevate the Hudson Tunnel and Portal Bridge’s rating to allow these shovel-ready projects to proceed. It would be a mistake to walk away from a project that will create and sustain thousands of construction, rail and related jobs. Failure to replace this century old transportation infrastructure and support this project’s funding needs forgoes those economic benefits and may bring the traffic on the nation’s busiest transportation corridor to a grinding halt.

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