

THE GATEWAY PROGRAM MYTH BUSTER

P O R T A L N O R T H B R I D G E

INTRO:

The Portal North Bridge Project replaces a congested, delay-prone, 2.3-mile stretch of the century-old Northeast Corridor with a modern, elevated railroad, including a new, fixed bridge over the Hackensack River to replace the current 100-year-old moveable span. This will result in the elimination of infrastructure-caused delays on this critical section of railroad leading to and from Midtown Manhattan.

MYTH:

Gateway's goal of achieving four tracks over the Hackensack River could be accomplished better and cheaper, by replacing only the bridge span (and not the approaches) with a 3-track or 4-track span, or replacing it with another moveable, low-level bridge.

FACTS

The Portal North Bridge alignment is designed to optimize rail operations, maximize reliability and efficiency, and reduce delays.

- A new, higher-clearance fixed-span is the most appropriate engineering solution for a crossing that supports 450 trains a day and avoids the maintenance costs and unreliability associated with a moveable span.

The initial 2-track Portal North Bridge Project adds new capacity by allowing longer, double-decker trains.

- Reduction in delays associated with current moveable span will create additional capacity for NJ TRANSIT to serve Penn Station New York with new, double-decker equipment and longer trains.

As was made clear during the permitting process for Portal North Bridge, the Coast Guard would NOT approve a fixed low-elevation bridge.

- Maritime and navigation laws are statute and pre-date railways.
- A low-level bridge would likely need to replace the existing bridge on its present alignment, requiring a lengthy disruption to the nation's busiest rail corridor, with serious impacts on the economy.

A 4-track bridge would not create additional capacity, since the Northeast Corridor remains constricted to 2 tracks on the rest of the route leading to the new tunnel, and Penn Station New York is at capacity until expanded.

- Achieving additional capacity requires the later Gateway projects – with additional costs – to build out Secaucus Junction tracks and expand Penn Station New York tracks.

A 4-track railroad bridge is NOT structurally feasible, given the size and width of the steel beams that would be needed to support heavy rail traffic on a single structure.

- Railroad bridges are heavier and bulkier than highway bridges because of the weight they must support.

A redesign of the project would require new engineering and environmental documentation, adding time and cost.

- The full Gateway Program includes building a second, two-track Portal South Bridge, which will expand capacity on this stretch of the railroad, in conjunction with other improvements, such as the expansion of Penn Station New York.

If it were technically feasible, a single 4-track bridge in both directions would create congestion, severely restricting operational flexibility and efficiency in this key section of the Northeast Corridor.

The ARC Project determined that two additional tracks could not be added to the north side of Secaucus (next to the NJ Turnpike).

- New tracks to provide more capacity can be more strategically located on the south side of the station (where ARC and now Gateway has proposed them).
- Therefore, a four-track bridge must be able to connect to tracks on both sides of the Northeast Corridor through Secaucus as well as to new tracks on the east side.

No engineering analysis exists demonstrating that a single four-track structure could be built and provide for adequate alignment of all four tracks to properly tie back into the Northeast Corridor through Secaucus Station to the east or Swift Interlocking to the west.

- The resulting alignment would likely mean severe speed restrictions.

Bottom line: The existing bridge must be replaced, or we risk increasing disruption to rail operations and more frequent delays.