

**GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
May 12, 2021**

**Public Comments Received**

*The public was encouraged to submit public comments via the comment form on  
[www.GatewayProgram.org](http://www.GatewayProgram.org).*

*Comments were distributed to the Board, posted on the GDC website, and recorded in the public  
record.*

Name	Renaë Reynolds
Organization	Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Comment Topic	The Gateway Program
<p>Good afternoon,</p> <p>My name is Renaë Reynolds and I am the new Executive Director of Tri-State Transportation Campaign. TSTC is a 27-year old non-profit organization fighting for cleaner, fairer, and more accessible transportation options that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support the economies of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.</p> <p>Congress must act swiftly to make major infrastructure investments, like Amtrak’s Gateway Program, which will improve reliability of our rail network and bolster the region’s and nation’s economy. With traffic congestion on pace to exceed pre-pandemic levels, we must act now to avoid going back to the days of overcrowded trains and regular, extensive service delays due to antiquated infrastructure.</p> <p>Thank you to President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg for helping us to advance the Gateway Program to the next phase and we look forward to the publishing of the Record of Decision on the Hudson Tunnel Environmental Impact Statement by the end of this month. There has never been a more urgent time to modernize our rail infrastructure and expand rail capacity to handle present and future demand.</p> <p>The Gateway Program is a once-in-a-century project that will fix one of the busiest and most fragile segments of the Northeast Corridor, which connects 20% of our nation’s GDP. We have to be proactive instead of waiting for the next big infrastructure failure.</p> <p>Congress must also establish a more reliable and dedicated funding source for rail programs of regional and national significance. Current federal funding sources are too limited in scope and place an undue burden on states and localities to fund the majority of transportation projects that have a big impact on the national economy.</p> <p>The Gateway Program will play a big role in the region’s pandemic recovery. Construction of the Hudson Tunnel project alone is projected to create 17,000 jobs and generate \$19 billion in economic activity, while the Portal North Bridge will create another 11,600 jobs. The days of putting off our investments and playing catch up when it’s too late have to end now. Each day that this project is delayed adds \$1.2 million in inflation to the project’s overall cost. Congress must act now to make this critical investment before it requires an even greater investment for the same product.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	

Name	Brian Fritsch
Organization	Build Gateway Now Coalition
Comment Topic	Congress must support the Gateway Program
<p>Hello, I'm Brian Fritsch, Campaign Manager for the Build Gateway Now Coalition. Build Gateway Now is a coalition of over 45 civic, labor, business, and elected groups. Our coalition strongly believes that the Gateway Program is the nation's most urgent infrastructure project and essential to the long-term vitality of the New York City region.</p> <p>I would like to start my comments by thanking President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg for partnering with the Gateway Development Commission to advance the Gateway Program. We look forward to seeing a Record of Decision (ROD) on the Hudson Tunnel Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) by the end of this month. It has been well over three years since the Draft EIS was submitted and we were pleased to finally be able to stop our count-up clock marking the time to a new deadline when the U.S. Department of Transportation indicated a ROD was forthcoming. The importance of completing a ROD cannot be overstated, as it will allow vital pre-construction work, such as property acquisition, to begin.</p> <p>To improve reliability and quality of life for commuters and travelers, Congress must act and make major investments in our rail infrastructure, including building the Gateway Program. Not only is the American Jobs Plan essential in rebuilding our outdated and crumbling infrastructure, but we also need a surface transportation reauthorization that will finally put rail infrastructure on par with highway infrastructure, and recognize that both have a key role to play in moving people safely and efficiently.</p> <p>Although the pandemic has disrupted commuting and traveling patterns for millions, rail continues to be the best and most sustainable moving large numbers of people quickly. Post-pandemic we simply can't go back to the old days of overcrowded trains and massive delays due to old and failing infrastructure, and Congress must invest in our future.</p> <p>To that end, we must also find better ways to fund rail programs of regional and national economic significance. While current federal funding sources are available for infrastructure rebuilding, they are too limited in their scope. They create an undue burden on localities to fund the majority of transportation projects that have a substantial impact on the national economy, unlike funding sources for interstate highway projects. To highlight these points, the coalition sent a letter to DOT outlining our concerns and potential solutions. We will be following up with the Federal Railroad Administration to discuss this matter in more detail shortly.</p> <p>Many thanks to the members of the Gateway Development Commission for your continued service, and for the opportunity to submit our public comment to you today. We look forward to continuing to move the Gateway Program forward to promote health and prosperity for all.</p>	

Name	Laura Colacurcio
Organization	Association for a Better New York (ABNY)
Comment Topic	Support for Gateway Program
<p>The Association for a Better New York (ABNY) continues to support investments in infrastructure to support an equitable and inclusive economy for the New York City region. It is imperative that the Gateway Program move forward to improve the reliability and quality of life for commuters, travelers, and all who utilize this critical regional rail link. The Gateway Program is an investment in the future of our region, and in the near-term, construction for the Hudson Tunnel and Portal North Bridge projects will create an estimated 28,600 jobs combined during a crucial period of economic recovery. In addition, ABNY urges Congress to unlock federal funding sources to finance transportation projects of substantial regional and national significance, such as the Gateway Program. We are grateful to President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg for prioritizing the Gateway Program, and we are eager to see the forthcoming Record of Decision on the Hudson Tunnel Environmental Impact Statement after prior delays have caused the project's overall costs to soar.</p>	

Name	Tom Bracken
Organization	NJ State Chamber of Commerce
Comment Topic	Gateway
<p>To improve reliability and quality of life for commuters and travelers, we need Congress to make major investments in infrastructure, including building the Gateway Program. Post-pandemic we simply can't go back to the old days of overcrowded trains and massive delays due to failing infrastructure, Congress must invest in our future now.</p> <p>Gateway is an investment in the future of our region for the next 100 years; rehabilitating and expanding the busiest section of the Northeast Corridor connecting 20% of our nation's GDP. We cannot allow these critical pieces of our transportation network to reach a point where they need to be taken out of service.</p> <p>Gateway is critical for the economy's recovery from the pandemic. Construction of the Hudson Tunnel project alone has been projected to create 17,000 jobs and \$19B in economic activity, while the Portal North Bridge will create another 11,600 jobs. There has never been a better time to invest in the future of our region. We have already delayed far too long in acting on this project and every day of additional delay adds \$1.2 million in inflation to the project's overall cost.</p> <p>Additionally, as we recover and rebuild New Jersey's economy, Gateway will play a significant role in making our state more attractive as a place to work and live.</p>	

Name	Greg Lalevee
Organization	International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 825
Comment Topic	Gateway Tunnel
Video:	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFgAevSb0oc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFgAevSb0oc</a>

Name	Charlie Samboy
Organization	New York Building Congress
Comment Topic	Invest in Gateway, a cornerstone of our future economic success
<p>The New York Building Congress continues its strong support of the Gateway Program, which remains the most urgent infrastructure project in the United States. As part of our comments for the March Commission meeting, we noted our call for President Biden and the Administration to honor their pledge for a \$1.3 trillion infrastructure package. Since that meeting, we are encouraged by the President’s American Rescue Plan, which provides \$1.7 billion to Amtrak, and the American Jobs Plan, which proposes \$2 trillion to be invested in infrastructure nationwide, including rail corridors and transit lines. Both actions signal that our federal officials understand how imperative it is to invest in commuter rail.</p> <p>The Gateway Program will work in concert with New York State’s investments in and around Penn Station to create a world-class transportation rail hub and an expanded central business district in New York City. While the COVID-19 pandemic shut down most offices for more than a year and saw transit ridership plummet 90 percent, recent actions by the public and private sector demonstrate that New York is coming back and that we should take heed of this moment. With coronavirus cases falling precipitously and vaccination rates increasing substantially, 80,000 City workers began their return to office buildings on May 3rd and Governor Cuomo announced that the MTA would resume 24-hour subway service on May 17th. More recently, Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase, two of the largest banks in New York, announced offices opening on a compulsory basis beginning in June and July, respectively. Companies large and small across the five boroughs are beginning to resume in-person work and we will no doubt begin to see a concurrent increase in ridership levels in our transit systems, including the Northeast Corridor (NEC).</p> <p>We recognize that the pandemic has, as a matter of need, created more flexible options for workers. Remote-work policies have gained significant traction among major companies, with some extending their work-from-home policies even long after the pandemic is over. Nonetheless, we do not believe remote work policies will be the norm for most employers or industries long-term. With a return to in-person work will come a renewed call for personal space and on-time performance for daily commutes, two very important qualities that our failing transit infrastructure has not been able to provide for some time. Gateway will be a cornerstone piece of 21st Century infrastructure that connects 20 percent of our nation’s GDP. Its construction will dictate the next hundred years of our region. We cannot allow current economic trends to deter us as a nation from investing in our future. We must move forward with rebuilding and expanding our transit infrastructure. That said, we hope to see a Record of Decision on the Hudson Tunnel EIS be delivered soon so that we can begin work on the Gateway Program once funding is allocated. Investing in the Gateway Program can pave the way for our country’s economic success, for the benefit of Americans today and generations to come.</p> <p>Very truly yours,  Carlo A. Scissura, Esq.  President &amp; CEO  New York Building Congress</p>	

Name	Joseph Clift
Organization	Individual
Comment Topic	Action Item 0521-01: HTP - Commitment to assume role of NEPA sponsor and federal grant recipient
<p>Good afternoon commissioners. My name is Joseph M. Clift. I am speaking to you today as an advocate for high-quality cost-effective regional rail service in the tri-state area and as a past Director of Planning for the Long Island Railroad.</p> <p>As you take control of the Gateway Program, the first step being your approval today of Action Item 0521-01, I implore you to shift from your predecessor organization's focus as a spender to the actions of a builder. A spender organization is one that focusses on how much money is being spent on capital projects, a measure of input. A builder organization focuses on what improvements in rail service capital projects will produce for rail riders and how cost-effectively those improvements are produced, measures of output.</p> <p>With that change in focus should come a re-evaluation of the current Hudson Tunnel Project, initially based on the findings and recommendations of the London Bridge Associates report (accessible on the GDC website) that repair-in-place is feasible and the fastest way to bring the Hudson Tunnel up to a state-of-the-art state of good repair, and later to the examination of alternatives to the current scope of work for HTP that are far faster and far less costly at bringing more capacity to trans-Hudson rail service.</p> <p>Thank you for this opportunity to comment.</p>	