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Contacts:

Stephen Sigmund – ssigmund@gatewayprogram.org; 917-459-7794

Molly Beckhardt – mbeckhardt@gatewayprogram.org; 917-586-3622

**JAMES STARACE JOINS GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AS CHIEF OF
PROGRAM DELIVERY**

Acting Chief Technical Officer Hamed Nejad to Serve as Chief Engineer

Newark/New York – The Gateway Development Commission (GDC) announced at the Commission’s Board Meeting today that James Starace will join GDC as Chief of Program Delivery in August. Hamed Nejad, who has served as Acting Chief Technical Officer since September 2024, will transition into the role of Chief Engineer.

New York GDC Commissioner and Co-Chair Alicia Glen, New Jersey GDC Commissioner and Co-Chair Balpreet Grewal-Virk, and GDC Amtrak Commissioner and Vice Chair Tony Coscia said, “The Hudson Tunnel Project is not only the most urgent passenger rail project in the country, it is also one of the largest and most complex. We need the best of the best leading the way. Jim brings deep experience working on many of the most significant infrastructure projects on both sides of the Hudson River, and we are thrilled to welcome someone with his background and expertise to the project. His experience will be critical as we continue to advance construction in the years ahead.”

GDC CEO Tom Prendergast said, “A generational project of this magnitude and complexity requires top-notch engineering talent. With tunnel boring through the Palisades on the horizon, excavation well underway in Manhattan, and the under-river tunneling contract to be awarded later this year, there is no room for error. Jim brings 40 years of experience to the table from his tenure at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, including the new Goethals Bridge, Newark Liberty International Airport Terminal A, and the AirTrain Terminal at Jamaica Station. Hamed, who has been acting in the role of Chief Technical Officer since last year, has played a key role in advancing multiple packages through procurement and into construction. I have full faith that Jim and Hamed will get this incredibly important project done right, and on scope, schedule, and budget.”

James Starace said, “I’m grateful for the opportunity to lead GDC’s technical and engineering team in delivering the Hudson Tunnel Project. After decades spent building large infrastructure projects in New York and New Jersey, I know the unique challenges that come with working in this region, and how to work within them. The Hudson Tunnel Project is the most urgent transit project of our time, and I look forward to working with the team to get the job done for the riders who deserve a 21st century rail experience.”

Hamed Nejad said, “Building the Hudson Tunnel Project has been a major goal of mine for years. I’m proud that the project is moving full steam ahead now. As its technical demands continue to grow, it is an honor to be tasked with working with Jim Starace to bring together

the ten construction packages that make up the project to deliver reliable rail transportation and economic resilience to our region and nation.”

James Starace, P.E., comes to GDC from HNTB, where he has worked with the New Jersey Turnpike Authority’s program team on the \$11 billion Newark Bay-Hudson County Extension Improvements Program. He brings more than 40 years of experience to GDC delivering large-scale transportation projects in the New York/New Jersey region. During his extensive tenure at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ), Starace held a variety of senior-level positions, including leading the 550-person Engineering Department for more than seven years as Chief Engineer.

Starace has worked on many of the region’s most significant infrastructure projects, including the new Goethals Bridge, the Newark Liberty International Airport Terminal A, LaGuardia Airport Redevelopment, the Bayonne Bridge “Raise the Roadway” project, the redevelopment of John F. Kennedy Airport, the PATH 9 car program, the Holland Tunnel Electrical and Mechanical rehabilitation, and construction of the AirTrain Terminal at Jamaica Station.

As Chief of Program Delivery, Starace will oversee the department responsible for design and construction of the HTP. He will lead all aspects of remaining design and engineering, construction, interface management, and other technical work areas. Starace will also work closely with GDC’s Supporting or Executing Partners (SEPs) – PANYNJ, Amtrak, and NJ TRANSIT – to identify and proactively mitigate risks that could impact the project’s schedule or budget. Starace will serve on GDC’s executive leadership team and will report directly to the CEO.

Hamed S. Nejad, P.E., has served as Acting Chief Technical Officer since September 2024. During this time, he has overseen work to advance two HTP construction packages past 50% completion, the start of the first tunnel boring project, and the award of the largest HTP construction contract to date.

Prior to joining GDC, Nejad worked on multiple heavy civil construction projects across the U.S., Australia, and the Middle East, including the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) East Side Access program, the Harold Structures Eastbound Reroute, the I-84 bridge replacements, and the Belt Parkway Bridge project.

In his new role as Chief Engineer, Nejad, reporting to the Chief of Program Delivery, will continue to play a key role overseeing technical elements of project design and construction, including design review, value engineering, quality control, permitting and environmental compliance, and safety and construction management.

The GDC Board also took the following actions during the meeting today to support the Commission’s ongoing work to advance the HTP:

- Authorized GDC to execute contracts for construction site security services, expert procurement services, and auditing services to perform required independent audits of GDC’s financials.

- Authorized GDC to negotiate Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) for the Hudson River Tunnel Project and NJ Surface Alignment Project. These PLAs establish standardized work and pay rules, set forth the process by which unions can refer employees to work on these projects, and create a standardized grievance and arbitration procedure for resolving disputes.

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The Gateway Program is the most urgent major infrastructure program in the country – a comprehensive set of rail investments that will improve commuter and intercity services, add needed resiliency, and create new capacity for the busiest section of the Northeast Corridor (NEC). The NEC is the most heavily used passenger rail line in the country, hosting more than 2,200 train movements and 800,000 passenger trips daily.