

**GATEWAY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
BOARD MEETING**

August 20, 2025

Public Comments for August 20, 2025, Board Meeting

(Received as of August 19, 2025)

*The public was encouraged to submit public comments via the comment form on
www.GatewayProgram.org.*

Name	Jacob Kocsis
Organization	Associated Construction Contractors of New Jersey
Comment Topic	Project Labor Agreements
ACCNJ will be providing brief comments on the benefits of project labor agreements.	

Name	Nathan Kilbert
Organization	United Steelworkers International Union
Comment Topic	Project Labor Agreement for NJ Surface Alignment
<p>The United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union, AFL-CIO (“USW”) submits this public comment regarding the Gateway Development Commission’s potential approval of a Project Labor Agreement (“PLA”) for the New Jersey Surface Alignment Project.</p> <p>Following the Commission’s July 28 resolution authorizing Chief Executive Officer Thomas Prendergast to negotiate a PLA for the Project, the USW wrote to Mr. Prendergast on August 8 to ask to negotiate its inclusion in the PLA. A copy of this correspondence is attached.</p> <p>Unfortunately, we have received no reply. Notwithstanding our public comment at the July 20 meeting, and notwithstanding USW’s correspondence to Mr. Prendergast, no representative of the Commission has responded.</p> <p>It appears that the Commission is poised to approve a PLA that would require a successful bidder and subcontractors to source workers through the hiring halls of Hudson County Building Trades, excluding skilled USW members from working on the Project, and that would require a successful bidder and subcontractors to agree that the Hudson County Building Trades will represent all its employees working on the Project. This would prevent employers with agreements with the USW from bidding on the Project, or from accepting subcontracts, as those employers have agreed that the USW will represent their employees working on all their projects in New Jersey.</p> <p>I wish to emphasize that there is no rational basis for excluding the USW from participating in the PLA and preventing USW members from working on the Project. To the contrary, such a course is inimical to labor peace. In contrast, permitting the USW to participate in the PLA would serve the Commission’s goal of minimizing labor disruption. Since 1994, the USW and North America’s Building Trades Unions (NABTU) and their local union affiliates have operated under a “Harmony Agreement” permitting workers represented by NABTU and the USW to work side by side on the same work projects in New Jersey and to obviate jurisdictional disputes between them. As PLAs have become more prevalent, both organizations have been included as signatories to PLAs for significant projects. The USW respectfully urges the Commission not to approve any PLA that arbitrarily excludes the USW as a union signatory or that would prohibit USW contractors from using their USW workforce under their existing labor agreements with the USW.</p>	



District 4

August 8, 2025

David M. Wasiura
District Director
Stephen J. Finnigan
Assistant to the Director

Thomas Prendergast
Chief Executive Officer
Gateway Development Commission
22 Cortlandt Street, 16th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Negotiation of Project Labor Agreement with USW

Dear Mr. Prendergast:

I was disappointed to see that you declined to respond personally to USW President David McCall's correspondence regarding the Gateway Development Commission's potential use of a Project Labor Agreement ("PLA") for the New Jersey Surface Alignment (Package 3) ("Project"). Your counsel's July 22 response makes it appear that the Commission has pre-determined to exclude the USW from any PLA for the Project. I hope that this is not the case.

As President McCall's prior correspondence explained, there is no legitimate, non-arbitrary basis for excluding the USW from participating in a PLA, as USW participation would not increase the risk of labor disruption on the Project. Since 1994, the USW and North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU) and their local union affiliates have operated under a "Harmony Agreement" permitting workers represented by NABTU and the USW to work side by side on the same work projects in New Jersey and to obviate jurisdictional disputes between them. As PLAs have become more prevalent, both organizations have been included as signatories to PLAs for significant projects.

In light of the Commission's July 28 vote authorizing you to negotiate a PLA for the Project, and in light of the Commission's reservation of authority to approve or disapprove such a PLA, I wish to reach out to initiate discussions regarding the USW's participation in a PLA. Please let me know whether you or a representative would be willing to speak for this purpose. Alternatively, if you have a draft PLA already in mind, I would be happy to review it. Kindly advise as to how you wish to proceed in this matter.

Sincerely,

David M. Wasiura, Director
United Steelworkers, District 4

Cc: M. Fisher, Sub Director Edison Office

Name	Samuel Turvey
Organization	ReThinkNYC, Empire Station Coalition, Penn Community Defense Fund
Comment Topic	Through-running as a reason the Gateway Tunnels should be built, Fact Check on RPA
<p>Please see attached PDF which includes my written statement for consideration at the August 20th, 2025 meeting which I will not be able to attend in person.</p> <p>On behalf of ReThinkNYC, the Empire Station Coalition and the Penn Community Defense Fund, I am writing to express our continued strong support for the successful completion of the Gateway Tunnels project.</p> <p>In addition, I am writing to call attention to two “campaigns” being waged against through-running by the relatively few who oppose it in the hope of dispelling their ill effects.</p>	

Written Statement of Samuel A. Turvey
Gateway Development Commission Board
August 20, 2025

On behalf of ReThink NYC, the Empire Station Coalition and the Penn Community Defense Fund, I am writing to express our continued strong support for the successful completion of the Gateway Tunnels project.

As is well known, we believe Penn Station should be restored as a through-running facility because through-running is the global standard in commuter railroading and is vitally important to the future of metropolitan New York. While we fully support the Gateway Tunnels we recommend through-running and other alternatives west of Tenth Avenue as explained in our [rail plan flyover video](#).

In addition, I am writing to call attention to two “campaigns” being waged against through-running by the relatively few who oppose it in the hope of dispelling their ill effects. We find these campaigns disturbing.

First: We are hearing the odd and inverted suggestion that if you support through-running, or even a *bona fide* review of it within the footprint of Penn Station as it now is, you are putting the Gateway Tunnels project at risk of being defunded just as funding of the trans-Hudson tunnels (aka Access to the Region’s Core) was cancelled by then-NJ Governor Chris Christie.

This is patently ridiculous. It amounts to a scare tactic.

Through-running at least doubles or triples the reasons to fund and complete the Gateway Tunnels. The combination of a through-running conversion at Penn Station made possible by the creation of two additional Hudson River tunnels represents the best opportunity we will have this century to vastly improve the economy (including housing starts), the environment and the quality of life of the more than 20 million residents of metropolitan New York. The symmetry created by having four Hudson River tunnels and four East River tunnels will enable through-running and all the benefits that flow from it.

It is thus bizarre to suggest—as through-running “deniers” are prone to do—that open public debate about through-running could undermine funding for Gateway. Quite the opposite is the case. At any rate, the conversion of Penn Station to through-running is more cost-effective than other proposals that have been put forward that would demolish the neighborhood south of the station in order to build new stub-end terminal tracks that connect to nothing.

Through-running is the only option being considered for Penn Station that will dramatically transform the New York region for the better. It is fundamental to unifying our regional commuter rail network. Among its other positive repercussions, it will enhance affordability throughout the region, including in - as we mentioned earlier -the critically important housing market.

Second: We are hearing and reading the absolutely false assertion that ReThinkNYC’s plan for a through-running conversion at Penn Station will require the removal of more than 1,045 support columns and a 30% service reduction over ten years. Even WSP, a critic of our through-running plan, acknowledges that the ReThinkNYC plan will only require the removal of 146 columns and will *not* require a 30% service reduction over ten years.

This whole mirage stems from the confusion generated by WSP’s “big reveal” of [August 2024](#) in which it proposed a 17-track through-running plan for Penn Station as an alternative variant of ReThinkNYC’s 12-track plan. WSP’s proposal would require the removal of more than 1,000 columns and a 30% service reduction over ten years.

Regrettably, WSP chose not to divulge how many columns would have to be removed to implement ReThinkNYC’s 12-track plan at the time of its report” but did so months later. The hiatus only invited others to conflate the column-removal numbers for WSP’s plan and ours.

Predictably, enthusiastic opponents of ReThinkNYC, including the RPA, moved quickly to exploit the erroneous impression left by WSP. Specifically, the RPA issued a [RPA Lab report](#) on September 17, 2024 entitled “Expanding Capacity and Improving Penn Station” in which it falsely states the following:

“In order to execute ReThink’s proposal of widening platforms and creating 12 station tracks, expensive and disruptive structural work would be necessary. It would require over 1,000 columns which support MSG, Moynihan Train Hall, Penn 2 and other structures, to be removed, relocated or strengthened. Nichols [ed., Foster Nichols, senior vice president at WSP] estimated that this would cause a 30% reduction in service for 10+ years as tracks were removed from service to construct new tracks and platforms.”

This inaccurate report was no mere “September Song” from 2024, as an RPA rep chose to drop the inaccurate report into a chat during a ReThinkNYC presentation at the annual NJ Futures conference last June.

We have asked the RPA to publicly retract this inaccurate report. We have also asked WSP to make clear that their claims concerning the removal of over 1,000 support columns and a 30% service disruption applies to their 17-track Penn Station configuration—not ReThinkNYC’s.

During a subsequent, much smaller “little reveal” in [October 2024](#), WSP issued a report, which, unlike the PowerPoint presentation it had released two months earlier, gave a column-removal count of 146 for a “limited reconfiguration” plan not unlike the one proposed by ReThinkNYC. No comment was made concerning service disruptions.

Incredibly, WSP characterized that plan as “constructible.” Better late than never, or too little, too late? We can only marvel at WSP’s decision to “reveal” this information in such a staggered sequence.

The October report and the relevant Figure is 5-31, Slide 141/PDF 63) shows a column removal count of 146 for a ReThinkNYC styled plan.

In bringing these items to your attention we are hoping to avoid a repeat of the fiasco FX Collaborative and WSP unleashed with their inaccurate claim, made in 2021, that tracks 1-4 and 17-21—in other words, eight of Penn Station’s 21 tracks—were ineligible for through-running. This now-retracted claim was made

public and has continued to percolate through the public discourse as reflected in media coverage and the statements of elected officials until relatively recently. We asked for a retraction at the time but none was made until mid-2024. The matter of the column count at Penn Station is much more than a rounding error. The RPA report suggests that RethinkNYC's plan will require more than 7 times as many column removals as is accurate—146 is the accurate count not 1045. This ought to be corrected now – not years after the fact.

Closing Thoughts

It is sad to have to waste time dispelling the latest efforts of the Railroads, WSP, the RPA and such allies as they may have to discredit a through-running conversion at Penn Station and the inauguration, in this half-century, of a unified regional rail network. These parties have spared no effort over the years to discredit through-running and have done their best not to point to any of its potential benefits for the metropolitan area. They are all well-aware of through-running's record of success in major cities abroad and at home, but seem incapable of verbalizing it. They could do worse than to read the recent path-breaking [article](#) in *City Limits* by ReThinkNYC's Cezar Nicolescu and Jim Venturi on how through-running can, among its other benefits, be expected to prompt a vigorous expansion of the region's stock of *affordable* housing.

We are thankful that the Federal Railroad Administration and Andy Byford have shown themselves open to through-running and willing to evaluate it honestly and objectively. Through-running is bringing many of our peer cities into the 21st century and paving the way for them to hit the ground running when they enter the 22nd. Meanwhile, our Railroads, WSP and the RPA, at least as of now, seem content to keep New York mired in the transit paradigm of the 1950s and to spend tens of billions of dollars pursuing an operating model the FRA treats skeptically in its guidelines.

We remain cautiously optimistic that we will prevail on through-running. In order to do so, we ask all the members of the Gateway Commission, including current and former railroad representatives, to pay close attention to through-running's profound and far-reaching potential benefits and to discount the distortions,

half-truths, and inaccuracies being propagated by its opponents. While Penn Station's transformation may be Andy Byford's job and arguably beyond your specific jurisdiction, there is *nothing* in your charter that says you have to sit on the sidelines concerning a matter of such importance to the nation's leading city and regional conurbation.

In addition, in this year when we celebrate the 200th year since the opening of the Erie Canal, we ask that you support Andy Byford in the challenging task he has taken on. It is important that we all pull together if we are ever to have any hope of getting Penn Station and regional unification right. We owe it to the residents of the region and generations to come to fully leverage the dollars being spent on Gateway in ways that fully propel Greater New York into the next century.

Name	Samuel Turvey
Organization	
Comment Topic	Updated Statement
<p>I am enclosing a better copy of my statement to replace last night's submission. A reference to activities "west of tenth avenue" was changed to "east of tenth avenue" and a reference to RPA activities at a June planning conference sponsored by NJ Future was clarified to make sure it was clearer the conference took place in June 2025 not June 2024. Thanks for your patience.</p>	

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