

Governor Phil Murphy

ICYMI: NJ TRANSIT Applauds USDOT Improved Rating For New Portal Bridge

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The 109-year-old swing span over the Hackensack River, and its history of mechanical breakdowns, has long been a chokepoint for rail customers travelling the Northeast Corridor (NEC) between New Jersey and New York City.

From NJ TRANSIT

Measure Brings the Project a Step Closer to Full Funding Grant Agreement for Replacement of 109-Year-Old Bridge

NEWARK — NJ TRANSIT is commending the U.S. Department of Transportation’s (USDOT) decision to give an improved project rating to a proposed replacement of the Portal Bridge. The 109-year-old swing span over the Hackensack River, and its history of mechanical breakdowns, has long been a chokepoint for rail customers travelling the Northeast Corridor (NEC) between New Jersey and New York City.

“From day one, my administration has worked closely with our congressional delegation and Secretary Chao’s team to enhance this critical project that cannot wait another day – we have committed the entirety of New Jersey’s local share in the form of \$600 million in EDA bonds, completed critical early construction work and developed shovel-ready plans for major construction. Today’s decision by USDOT puts us one step closer toward our ultimate goal; replacing this unreliable, century-old bridge and reducing delays for NJ TRANSIT customers,” **said New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy**. “New Jersey remains ready and willing to work cooperatively as a full partner to ensure that this project, which affects the commutes of tens of thousands of our residents daily, is completed as expeditiously as possible.”

“We are very thankful that the FTA has improved its rating of the critical Portal North Bridge project,” **said Amtrak Board Chair Tony Coscia**. “A new bridge will significantly increase reliability for the 200,000 daily Amtrak and NJ TRANSIT customers that cross the Hackensack River each day. We thank our partners at NJ TRANSIT for their leadership, FTA and DOT for their cooperation, and all of our federal and state champions in New Jersey, New York and across the country for their continued support as we look forward to progressing this critical element of the Gateway Program.”

“Any rail customer that commutes between New Jersey and New York City will attest to the importance of the reliability this bridge has on the quality of their daily lives,” **said New Jersey Department of Transportation Commissioner and NJ TRANSIT Chair Diane Gutierrez- Scaccetti**. “This antiquated bridge remains a single point of failure on the NEC, which makes its replacement a top priority. We’re grateful that the USDOT recognizes how critical this link is to the economic viability of this region and look forward to getting construction underway as soon as possible.”

“We are extremely pleased with the USDOT’s decision to advance the Portal North Project closer to a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA). This critical project can’t wait any longer as this nearly 110-year-old bridge is a frequent source for delays and frustration for our nearly 90,000 customers who travel to and from **Perth Amoy**.”

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Station New York every day,” **said NJ TRANSIT President & CEO Kevin Corbett**. “We thank the USDOT, and our partners at the FTA and FRA, for their support of this shovel-ready project that will increase capacity and ensure reliability for the more than 450 NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak trains a day that cross the Portal Bridge.”

In September 2019, NJ TRANSIT, as the Project Sponsor in partnership with Amtrak, submitted a revised financial plan to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The revised plan was adjusted to reflect FTA and USDOT feedback on a previous submissions, making more local money available for the project while keeping costs in check. NJ TRANSIT and the state of New Jersey doubled the share of local funding toward the project, increasing the state’s contribution from \$300 million to \$600 million dollars.

Advancing the Portal North Bridge Project towards construction is critical to eliminating the major disruptions to train service on the NEC between Newark, New Jersey and New York Penn Station. The NEC is the busiest passenger rail line in the United States, and a long-term outage of the Portal Bridge over the Hackensack River would result in catastrophic delays from Boston to the nation’s capital.

Between NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak, more than 450 trains a day cross the current Portal Bridge carrying passengers making almost 200,000 daily trips. NJ TRANSIT alone carries approximately 90,000 customers (180,000 passenger trips) between New Jersey and New York City on an average weekday. The bridge regularly opens to allow for marine traffic to pass, and each opening causes delays on both lines. When the 109-year-old bridge fails to properly close, the delays cascade to affect tens of thousands of customers and their families.

The replacement Portal North Bridge is designed as a high-level, fixed span bridge that will allow marine traffic to pass underneath without interrupting rail traffic. The project is one hundred percent designed, fully permitted, and has seen early work completed on time and under budget. These successes make it especially well-positioned to begin construction to provide increased reliability and capacity to rail passengers throughout the region and nation in the near-term.

Once full construction begins, the remainder of the Portal North Bridge Project is estimated to take approximately five years.

Governor Phil Murphy

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