

Governor Phil Murphy

President Biden and Governor Murphy Break Ground on the Portal North Bridge

10/25/2021

Groundbreaking under Murphy Administration Marks Official Start of the Largest Critical Infrastructure Project in the United States

New Portal North Bridge Will Improve Reliability, Capacity and Spur Economic Growth throughout New Jersey and Beyond

KEARNY – President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Governor Phil Murphy, and federal, state, and local officials today broke ground on the critical Portal North Bridge. The project is finally moving forward after a collaborative effort by the Murphy Administration, the Biden Administration, New Jersey's Congressional members and Senators, and other key partners, after many years of delays. The Portal North Bridge, which is part of the larger Gateway Program, will greatly reduce gridlock caused by critical operation and maintenance issues of the existing 110-year-old swing bridge and improve service, reliability and capacity for rail travel between New Jersey and New York City.

"Governor Murphy, so many of the national challenges we are confronting, are areas where you are already leading. The infrastructure bill is about rebuilding the arteries of America, and the Portal Bridge Project is showing why investments like this are so important. When the Portal Bridge was built, it was state-of-the-art, and it was, 110 years ago," **said President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.** "Today, it's been called something different, a chokepoint, a bottleneck, an Achilles' Heel to the Northeast Corridor. Since the Portal Bridge was built, it has become the busiest rail span in the entire Western Hemisphere. Today, we are moving forward on a new bridge so that it will be higher over the water, so it won't need to open and close, and allow us to increase speed, safety, efficiency, and capacity. It's going to make life a lot better for New Jersey's commuters."

"Today is a great day for New Jersey and the entirety of the Northeast Corridor," **said Governor Murphy.** "This momentous groundbreaking is the culmination of years of hard work, planning, and relentless lobbying undertaken by our Administration, our federal delegation, and so many dedicated partners across government. The Portal North Bridge is the beginning of the largest critical infrastructure project in our nation, and with President Biden's leadership, we are embarking on the path to completion of the Gateway Program. I am honored to have President Biden here today for this historic event and I look forward to continuing our work with his Administration on rebuilding our regional infrastructure to serve New Jersey residents and commuters."

"It has been a remarkable year of progress for the Gateway program with a new president and administration committed to getting the project funded and built," **said U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.** "I have prioritized directing billions to USDOT grant programs that will actually fund the construction of Portal North Bridge, the Hudson Tunnels, and the rest of the Gateway program, and will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress to deliver more. Once the infrastructure bill is enacted, we will have more than enough money to fully fund these projects. I applaud President Biden and Gov. Murphy on highlighting this project that is key to the future of our states, our region, and the entire country's economic well-being."

"After years of fighting for federal funding, I'm happy to see that we are well on our way towards replacing the century-old Portal Bridge," **said U.S. Senator Bob Menendez**. "I appreciate having a partner in the state like Governor Murphy who recognizes the importance of the Gateway Project and who has worked tirelessly to ensure we get the job done. Thanks to the support and determination of the Biden-Harris Administration, I'm confident that we'll get Gateway completed and keep our commuters, economy, and state moving forward."

"After years of work alongside our partners, I am proud to see the groundbreaking of the Portal Bridge, a vital project that will provide much-needed relief to New Jersey commuters by enhancing the safety and reliability of the Northeast Corridor," **said U.S. Senator Cory Booker**. "I am especially grateful for the sustained efforts and partnership of federal and state officials, including the leadership of President Biden and Governor Murphy to further the progress of Portal Bridge. This project demonstrates that investing in our nation's infrastructure not only creates jobs and enhances our quality of life, but also grows the economy. I look forward to continuing to work with President Biden to advance the Gateway Program and other critical New Jersey infrastructure priorities."

"Improving and modernizing our infrastructure is critical to our vitality as we emerge from the pandemic. Replacing the Portal North Bridge is a significant milestone for the region's efforts to improve and expand rail service," **said New York Governor Kathy Hochul**. "In addition to the Gateway Hudson Tunnel project, this bridge will provide safe and reliable access to New York and will help support our economic recovery."

"The Portal North Bridge will make life easier for millions of commuters in New Jersey and throughout the Northeast Corridor," **said Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr.** "It is a critical project to me because I have been an outspoken advocate for the entire Gateway Program and worked tirelessly to support the bridge. I helped secure \$900 million in federal funding for the bridge from the very beginning. In addition, I have written letters to President Biden, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, and House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Peter DeFazio to prioritize approval processes for the bridge several times this year. I have spoken with Secretary Buttigieg about the entire Gateway Program several times and even visited the Hudson River Tunnel with him to show the immediate need for a new tunnel and repairs to the current one. As always, it is an honor to work with Governor Murphy and New Jersey officials to complete the new Portal North Bridge. Now, we need to shift our focus to funding and approvals for the Hudson River Tunnel project."

"The Portal Bridge was built when William Howard Taft was sitting in the Oval Office," **said Congressman Bill Pascrell**. "But thanks to our federal-state partnership, transit commuters and Amtrak passengers will no longer be reliant on this relic. This is no hyperbole: The Portal bridge project will ease millions of lives. New Jerseyans waited a long time for this day. Today's announcement is a testament that leadership matters. Prior administrations here in New Jersey and Washington derailed our progress. They let the Portal and Gateway projects languish. But thanks to President Biden, Governor Murphy, and our united congressional team, we are finally moving forward."

"I applaud President Biden, Governor Murphy, and NJ Transit on the groundbreaking of the Portal North Bridge, which is a huge step towards reducing gridlock and improving safety for rail commuters between New Jersey and New York City," **said Congressman Albio Sires**. "As a senior member of the House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I have long advocated for funding to replace the bridge and to complete the other parts of the Gateway Program, and I am committed to working with my federal and state partners to get this project over the finish line."

"Thanks to President Biden, Governor Murphy, and Congressional Democrats, plans to rebuild the Gateway Tunnel and Portal North Bridge are no longer just empty promises," **said Congressman Frank Pallone**. "The time to build back better is now and will help the thousands of commuters traveling between New Jersey and New York each day. This project will ensure the long-term growth of our region's economy as well as safe and efficient transportation for New Jersey commuters."

"The Portal North Bridge is an instrumental part of the larger Gateway Project, which is the most crucial infrastructure project in the nation. I'm thrilled to be here for today's event and to see the incredible support for this project from President Joe Biden, Governor Phil Murphy, and my Congressional colleagues," **said**

Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill. "I've fought tooth and nail to ensure this project moves forward alongside many of the federal and state officials here this afternoon. Today, we're closer than ever to delivering this badly needed investment to the people of New Jersey and the entire nation."

"With the Gateway Tunnel, SALT, accessible child care, climate provisions and two million jobs a year on the line, it is great to join President Biden and Governor Murphy today to highlight the importance of getting both the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill and a smart reconciliation bill across the finish line," **said Congressman Josh Gottheimer.** "I am optimistic that we will see all these critical Jersey priorities move forward this week, helping to get shovels in the ground and people to work. For New Jersey and for the whole country, we simply can't afford to wait any longer."

"Completing a project as large and essential as Gateway and the Portal Bridge takes commitment from people at all levels from the designers, engineers and builders, to local, state and federal leaders," **said Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman.** "I'm grateful to President Biden and Governor Murphy for their focused efforts to replace this 100-year-old bridge and see this project through as we Build Back Better." "Today is a momentous day for New Jersey – we're breaking ground on a critical component of the Gateway Program by replacing a bridge that has slowed down commutes for decades, and keeping our promise to start bringing home the tax dollars we send to Washington," **said Congressman Tom Malinowski.** "I'm grateful to President Biden and Governor Murphy for their partnership on the Portal Bridge, and I look forward to working with them to get the all-important Hudson River Tunnel done quickly, too."

"This historic infrastructure project will expand rail capacity and reliability, reduce wait times and emissions, and create good-paying jobs moving New Jersey's economy forward," **said Congressman Donald Norcross.**

"I'm glad to see New Jersey investing in much needed infrastructure that will bring more jobs and more opportunity to our great state," **said Congressman Andy Kim.** "This project can help people throughout the state and I look forward to seeing the positive effects come to Burlington and Ocean Counties."

"This groundbreaking represents a monumental step forward towards improving the overall customer experience and quality of life of the many Northeast Corridor riders that rely on NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak to take them safely to their destinations each day," **said New Jersey Department of Transportation Commissioner and NJ TRANSIT Board Chair Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti.** "I would like to thank Governor Murphy, and all of our Representatives for never giving up on this critical project that is so vital for New Jersey's businesses and families."

"This is a historic day for NJ TRANSIT, for our region, and for our entire nation," **said NJ TRANSIT President & CEO Kevin S. Corbett.** "Under Governor Murphy's leadership, NJ TRANSIT has been laser-focused on advancing this project of national significance, and today, we proudly begin construction to replace this critical link between New Jersey and New York, which will improve service reliability for the millions of NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak customers who depend on it every year."

"I welcome President Biden and the federal support he brings for this vital project. The Portal North Bridge is an essential component of the larger Gateway project that will dramatically improve passenger service to and from New York City for New Jersey passengers," **said Senate President Steve Sweeney.** "Gateway will provide one-seat rides on every NJ Transit line and double commuter capacity at New York's Penn Station. Breakdowns at the existing Portal drawbridge have been the biggest source of train delays for New Jersey commuters, causing disruptions in their quality of life as well as the regional economy. That's why today's ground-breaking is so important."

"Today's groundbreaking marks the advance of long-awaited Gateway Project improvements needed to bring our transportation infrastructure into the 21st century," **said Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin.** "An investment that is hugely significant in sustaining our nation's economic vitality, modernizing the Portal Bridge will keep commuters safe and create jobs that are altogether consequential for countless regional communities and the lives of thousands of New Jersey residents. It is thanks to the combined efforts of government working together at every level that brings us to this historic juncture."

"The Gateway Program is the most urgent infrastructure need in the United States, and we are incredibly fortunate to have a President and a Governor in New Jersey who recognize this and are fighting to bring 21st Century rail travel to our region and nation." **said Gateway Development Commission Co-Chair Balpreet**

Grewal-Virk. "The jobs, economic growth, and most important improved quality of life Gateway brings will pay dividends for generations to come."

"The start of construction on Portal North Bridge – the first major project of the broader Gateway Program – is a milestone decades in the making and a huge accomplishment for New Jersey, the Northeast Corridor, and the nation. Amtrak is pleased to partner with NJ TRANSIT on this important project and thanks Governor Murphy, Senators Booker and Menendez and the New Jersey Congressional delegation for their unwavering support of the project over the years," **said Amtrak Board Chairman and Gateway Development Commission Vice-Chair Tony Coscia.** "Replacing a century-old moveable bridge with a modern one that does not have to open and close will make life better for hundreds of thousands of Amtrak and NJ TRANSIT riders on the Northeast Corridor while putting Americans to work building 21st century infrastructure we can be proud of."

"I thank President Biden, Governor Murphy, and state legislators for their leadership in recognizing, and raising the money necessary for replacing the Portal Bridge over the Hackensack River, a bridge which confounds commuters' trips several times a week on the busiest rail corridor in the nation," **said Gateway Development Commission Member Janine G. Bauer.** "As a NJ TRANSIT commuter, I know what this disruption really costs, and I am ecstatic for commuters who will benefit from this improvement."

"We stand here today at the groundbreaking for the Portal North Bridge because, after a decade of dithering and divisiveness by others, Governor Phil Murphy said 'damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead,'" **said Gateway Development Commission Member Jerry Zaro.** "He courageously provided full funding for this project. Further, after four lost years under the last administration, we cannot fully express our gratitude to President Biden for his steadfast and resolute support of the Gateway tunnel project. The economic health of the entire northeast is dependent upon this vital and long overdue project. The President has truly earned the moniker 'Amtrak Joe' for his leadership on this endeavor. President Biden and Governor Murphy have shown us what true leadership looks like and we at Gateway are most grateful."

The project is being funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation, NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak. In January 2021, Governor Murphy announced the signing of a Full Funding Grant Agreement which secured \$766.5 million in Federal Transit Administration funding to support the project's construction.

NJ TRANSIT also advertised the Invitation for Bid (IFB) for the construction contract for the Portal North Bridge in January 2021. The procurement was a two-step process, the initial step being the Special Pre-Qualification of Bidders. In May, NJ TRANSIT pre-qualified four bidders and conducted a pre-bid conference and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise outreach. Two of the pre-qualified bidders submitted proposals on September 2. Skanska/Traylor Bros Joint Venture of Queens, New York was deemed the lowest responsible and responsive bidder.

Earlier this month, Governor Murphy and NJ TRANSIT Board Members announced the approval of a \$1,559,993,000 construction contract for the Portal North Bridge. The massive infrastructure investment represents the single largest construction award in NJ TRANSIT's history and further exemplifies the Murphy Administration's commitment to funding projects that will help New Jersey continue to grow and prosper for generations to come. It was Governor Murphy's commitment to invest up to \$600 million through a financing agreement with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, approved by the NJ TRANSIT Board of Directors in June 2018, that solidified New Jersey's local share of the project cost and revived this critical, yet long-stalled project.

The Portal North Bridge project spans 2.44 miles of the Northeast Corridor line and includes construction of retaining walls, deep foundations, concrete piers, structural steel bridge spans, rail systems, demolition of the existing bridge, and related incidental works. Construction is anticipated to take approximately five and a half years.

The new bridge is a modern two-track, high-level, fixed-span bridge that will improve service and capacity along this section of the Northeast Corridor. The new bridge will rise 50-feet over the Hackensack River and will allow marine traffic to pass underneath without interrupting rail traffic.

The Portal North Bridge project is an important initial element of the broader Gateway Program which will eventually double rail capacity between Newark and New York. The project will eliminate the existing 110-year-old swing bridge which has been the enduring source of major service disruptions for NJ TRANSIT and

Amtrak customers traveling on the Northeast Corridor.

Governor Phil Murphy

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