

Governor Phil Murphy

# ICYMI: NJ TRANSIT Makes Major Advancement in Positive Train Control Project

02/18/2020

*FRA Gives Approval for Revenue Service Demonstration to Begin*

**NEWARK** – The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has given NJ TRANSIT approval to begin Revenue Service Demonstration (RSD) of its Positive Train Control (PTC) system, moving NJ TRANSIT one-step closer to meeting the federally mandated deadline of PTC certification by December 31, 2020.

“Entering the RSD phase of PTC is a major milestone and a testament to the incredible work by our employees working around the clock with our contractors to ensure this important safety technology implementation remains on schedule,” **said NJ TRANSIT President & CEO Kevin Corbett**. “Two years ago, we had just 10 months to take the project from only 12-percent to 100-percent complete toward the December 31, 2018 federally mandated interim milestone for installation – we were successful. With this announcement, and the continued support from the FRA, I’m confident we will meet the December 31, 2020 federal deadline for full implementation of PTC.”

The FRA’s approval allows NJ TRANSIT to initiate RSD on the Morristown Line between Summit and Denville. Previously, field testing has been conducted on test trains that did not carry customers. During RSD, NJ TRANSIT’s current safety technology called Automatic Train Control (ATC) will remain active and will not be affected by the testing.

NJ TRANSIT continues to conduct and expand its non-revenue testing on its other rail lines and is working collaboratively with Amtrak and freight operators to ensure interoperability of all PTC systems.

In December 2018, NJ TRANSIT marked 100-percent completion of the FRA’s 2018 year-end milestone for PTC that included installation on 282 locomotives and cab cars, 326 miles of wayside infrastructure such as poles and antennas and trained 1,745 employees.

*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 Penn 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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