

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy, U.S. Senators Menendez, Booker, NJ Transit And Amtrak Challenge Recommendations In Independent Report To Rehabilitate North River Tunnels

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Proposals Included in a Draft Report Authored by London Bridge Associates Could Impact the Commutes of Thousands of Daily NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak Riders

NEWARK – Governor Phil Murphy, U.S. Senators Bob Menendez and Cory Booker, NJ TRANSIT, and Amtrak have strong reservations about the feasibility of proposals in an independent report prepared by London Bridge Associates (LBA) and released today by the Gateway Program Development Corporation (GDC). Specifically, many of the proposed activities present very significant engineering and operational challenges, which have not yet been validated. They must be carefully considered and evaluated to ensure existing service is not compromised in any way. NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak have noted these concerns to LBA and the other Hudson Tunnel project stakeholders during the time this report was being prepared. While all the project stakeholders are interested in exploring solutions that could expedite the rehabilitation and improve the customer experience as soon as possible, these recommendations require significant further study before they can be characterized as feasible.

A primary concern of the report's recommendations is the impact to service and how this approach will significantly disrupt the NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak customer experience. Single track operations and daily startup/shutdown of construction activities have the potential to significantly impact rail operations and, consequently, customers who depend on the rail service. Additional proposed modifications to weeknight train service will also impact customers by creating gaps in service frequency – meaning longer wait times between scheduled trains. This recommendation in the LBA report is purely conceptual at this time. Any degradation in service delivery would be unacceptable to NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak.

"The Hudson Tunnel Project is the single most important infrastructure project in the nation," **said Governor Murphy**. "The plan for this resilience project has always been to build a new tunnel, and once a new tunnel is complete to shut down the 110-year old North River Tunnel for a comprehensive rehab. While all project partners agree that certain rehab work can be completed on the North River Tunnel in the meantime, I am greatly concerned by proposals in this report that suggest more extensive rehab measures that could potentially interrupt the daily operations of NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak. Make no mistake – I am opposed to any rehab proposals that could negatively impact the reliability of service for thousands of New Jersey commuters who cross the Hudson each day."

"I have been clear from the beginning that we need to both build a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River, in addition to rehabilitating the existing tunnel. While we all recognize that ongoing maintenance is necessary to ensure the safety and reliability of the existing tunnel, this work must be done so that it does not result in

major, unavoidable service disruptions for NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak customers that use the tunnel every day. This could leave thousands of New Jerseyans stranded and cause significant economic harm to our region” said **U.S. Senator Bob Menendez, ranking member of the Senate’s transit subcommittee**. “We are so close to having a president in the White House who understands the importance of Gateway, and we must stay fully committed and focused on completing the nation’s most important infrastructure project.”

“We know that the best path to providing relief for New Jersey commuters is to build a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River and then rehabilitate the existing tunnels,” said **U.S. Senator Cory Booker**. “Since the early meetings of the stakeholders for this project, we affirmed long-term commitments to updating this outdated infrastructure and putting the Gateway Program back on track. We must remain committed to ensuring that this work be completed with minimal impact to New Jersey commuters, who for years have experienced far too many service disruptions as a result of aging transit networks and failed public policy decisions. Gateway is the most viable solution to addressing our region’s infrastructure needs, and I am confident that vital projects like this will be prioritized in the Biden Administration.”

“The recommendations in this report are highly speculative and require a much more detailed evaluation before declaring them practicable,” said **NJ TRANSIT President & CEO Kevin Corbett**. “NJ TRANSIT will not consider any solution that adversely impacts service reliability or our ability to maintain current rail service levels to and from Penn Station New York. The one thing we are unwilling to compromise on is our customers’ experience.”

“While LBA’s analysis confirms all elements of the rehabilitation scope included in the Hudson Tunnel Project are required, it makes extraordinary assumptions about the feasibility, costs and inherent risks of performing the rehab work entirely on night and weekend outages,” said **Amtrak Chairman and Gateway Program Development Corporation Trustee Vice Chair Tony Coscia**. “The long list of repairs and improvements needed in our century-old tunnel includes certain tasks that will require a full closure of the tubes for some period of time. The sooner we build a new tunnel and can move rail traffic out of the 110-year-old tubes, the sooner we can comprehensively rebuild them and deliver the modern, reliable, four-track system the region and the nation need to remain competitive in the 21st century.”

“I have been opposed to the release of the LBA report all along because I don’t find elements of it to be credible. It proposes very simple, unproven solutions to very complex problems which have been 110 years in the making,” said **Gateway Program Development Corporation Trustee (New Jersey) Jerry Zaro**. “I find it utterly fantastical that the report suggests we can tear up old track in the middle of the night, change the grade of the track bed, lay new track, connect that back into the old track, clean up the mess and be ready for 200,000 rush hour commuters the next morning. Based on the opposition to this program by the experts at NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak, I’m not prepared to play “Transit Roulette” with the commute times of New Jersey commuters on the risky proposition suggested in the LBA report.”

NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak agree that it’s essential to maintain reliable service in the existing tunnels. Closure of just one of the two tubes would result in as much as a 75% reduction in weekday train service and have catastrophic impacts on the region’s economy. Because of delays to the Hudson Tunnel Project, Amtrak has launched a program to identify and prioritize work that can be done on limited night and weekend outages now, to improve reliability of the century-old tunnel for passengers today while we continue to work toward construction of a new trans-Hudson tunnel. Once the new tunnel is in place the existing tunnel can be closed for full rehabilitation.

NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak cannot support the LBA report’s proposals in their current format but will continue to examine any solution that can achieve our goal of expediting rehabilitation work, while maintaining uninterrupted train service for our customers.

Governor Phil Murphy

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