

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 13, 2017

## **Construction on Portal North Bridge Project Gets Underway** *Local, State and Federal partners celebrate start of first New Jersey project in Gateway Program with Groundbreaking Ceremony*

Kearny, NJ – Construction of a new, more reliable Portal North Bridge is now underway, as the Gateway Program partners broke ground today on \$20 million worth of early work activities. The higher clearance, fixed-span Portal North Bridge will permit faster speeds, allow for an increase in NJ TRANSIT train capacity and eliminate a single point of failure on the busiest section of Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor (NEC).

The Portal North Bridge Project is a critical component of the Gateway Program – a comprehensive rail investment program designed to add critical resiliency and create new capacity on the 10-mile stretch of the NEC between Newark, NJ and Penn Station New York. This is the busiest section of railroad in North America, supporting 450 daily and commuter intercity trains and some 200,000 passenger trips.



“The Gateway Program is the most urgent infrastructure program in America,” **said Gateway Program Development Corporation Chairman Rich Bagger**. “Eliminating single points of failure like the Portal Bridge and Hudson River tunnel that put 10% of America’s Gross Domestic Product at increased risk must be one of our highest infrastructure priorities.”

“The start of construction on the Portal North Bridge demonstrates the commitment of the Gateway partners to this important project of national significance,” **said Amtrak Board Chairman Tony Coscia**. “A new Portal Bridge will improve reliability on the Northeast Corridor, benefiting both New York and New Jersey, as well as the region and nation as a whole.”

“The replacement of the aging Portal Bridge is the first step toward ensuring a sound and efficient rail transportation system that will serve millions of riders now and well into the future,” **said New Jersey Governor Chris Christie**. “This project is vital to our economy and the safety of millions of local commuters and people from around the world who use mass transportation along the Northeast Corridor. By working cooperatively with New York and

federal lawmakers and officials, we hope to identify funding for this and the Hudson River tunnel projects that is fair and equitable for New Jersey taxpayers.”

“The Gateway Program, specifically the Gateway Tunnel and Portal Bridge, are vital to our New York-New Jersey region and the national economy - representing 10 percent of the nation's GDP,” **said U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer.** “Starting early work on Portal Bridge is a welcome first step and we must maintain a laser focus on finalizing and delivering a federal and local funding and financing plan to aggressively complete both Portal Bridge and the Gateway Tunnel.”

The early construction work, a necessary step toward major construction of the bridge approaches and span, includes realignment of a 138kV transmission pole, installation of new fiber optic cable poles, construction of a finger pier, construction of a steel bridge structure over the Jersey City Municipal Utility Authority water main, and construction of a retaining wall just west of the Frank R. Lautenberg Station at Secaucus Junction.

Funding was provided through the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) discretionary grant program. A \$16 million grant was matched by \$4 million from the New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund.

The new Portal North Bridge is fully designed and fully permitted, having received a Record-of-Decision from the Federal Railroad Administration in 2013, which was adopted by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in August 2017.

In July 2016 the project was accepted into the FTA’s Capital Investment Grant (CIG) project development pipeline. A rating package submitted by the project partners in September 2016 received a “medium-high” rating and was updated in September 2017 with a more detailed financial plan. To supplement financial commitments by the local partners, including \$284 million by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey and approximately \$300 million from the State of New Jersey and NJ TRANSIT, the project partners are seeking approximately \$750 million of the estimated \$1.5 billion project cost in Core Capacity/CIG funds.

“Today’s groundbreaking is the first step in the Gateway project’s broader mission to remake the Northeast Corridor,” **said U.S. Senator Bob Menendez, the ranking Democrat of the Senate’s mass transit subcommittee.** “We make public investments in infrastructure for a reason: they benefit the public. Families, workers, businesses – all of us reap the gains. Thanks to language that we included in the most recent transportation bill, Gateway will be eligible for billions in future funding from the New Starts program, a federal commitment towards building a 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure.”

“We need to look no further than the century-old Portal Bridge to get a clear picture of the infrastructure crisis facing our nation,” **said Senator Cory Booker, the top-ranking Democrat on the Senate subcommittee overseeing America's rail infrastructure.** “For decades, the Portal Bridge has been a bottleneck for the entire Northeast Corridor, causing service delays that

impact New Jerseyans and extend well beyond our region. Today marks a critical next step to moving the Gateway Program forward by providing New Jersey commuters much-needed relief, creating jobs, and laying the foundation for future economic growth.”

Built in 1910, the existing Portal Bridge is a two-track moveable swing-span bridge that opens for marine traffic, halting rail service on the NEC. The new bridge will have twice the clearance over the river, eliminating the need for a moveable span, permitting higher speeds and facilitating an increase in capacity.

The Gateway Program also proposes a second, two-track Portal South Bridge to support an approximate doubling of rail capacity between Newark and New York.



**CONTACT:**

[press@gatewayprogram.org](mailto:press@gatewayprogram.org)

###

## PORTAL NORTH BRIDGE PROJECT



A passenger train crosses the Portal Bridge

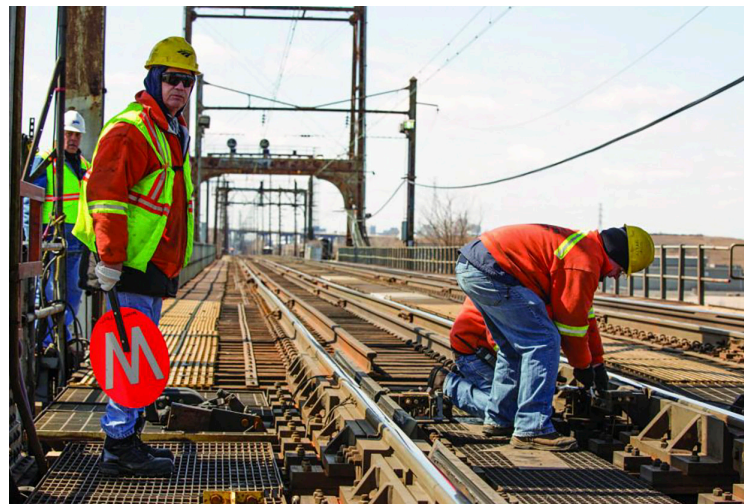
Built in 1910, the existing Portal Bridge is a two-track moveable swing-span bridge between the towns of Kearny and Secaucus in Hudson County, New Jersey. A critical Northeast Corridor link for New Jersey commuters and intercity rail customers to New York City, the century-old bridge is in need of replacement.

### *Project Need*

The century-old Portal Bridge is a two-track swing bridge over the Hackensack River in New Jersey that rotates open for maritime traffic several times per month. 450 trains cross the bridge as they travel between Newark, N.J., and Penn Station New York every day. **The bridge is a major bottleneck and source of delay for Amtrak and NJ TRANSIT trains – the aging mechanical & electrical components sometimes malfunction while opening and closing, causing a cascade of delays.**

### *Infrastructure Background*

Portal Bridge was constructed by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1907 and began revenue operations in November 1910. The bridge earned the name “Portal,” because it leads the Northeast Corridor (NEC) rail line to the “portal” of the North River Tunnel, located just three miles away. It consists of seven spans and totals 960 feet in length. The middle span is 300 feet long and pivots to open for marine traffic. The swing span and special “miter rail” configuration pose maintenance and operational challenges. Due to age and fragility, trains are restricted to a maximum of 60 miles per hour over the bridge. Only 23 feet of clearance separate the Hackensack River and the bottom of the bridge.



*The aging Portal Bridge requires regular repairs to address malfunctions caused by outdated mechanical and electrical systems, often resulting in a cascade of delays.*

# 1910

Over a century old, the bridge is a major bottleneck for New Jersey and New York travelers

# 450

Passenger trains cross the bridge every day

# 60mph

Reduced speed limit required to cross the bridge

## Project Benefits

- Higher clearance for maritime traffic eliminates opening and closing
- Expansion of horizontal clearance across the river channel to 300 feet
- More reliable fixed-span reduces maintenance cost
- Increased track speeds and NJ TRANSIT capacity

The Portal North Bridge Project will replace this outdated and increasingly unreliable structure with a modern, more reliable fixed-span bridge that is much higher over the water, allowing boats to pass underneath without the need to open and close. A new bridge will also permit higher track speeds and increased capacity and save millions of dollars in maintenance costs.

The Portal North Bridge Project is a key component of Phase I of the Gateway Program, a comprehensive set of strategic rail infrastructure improvements designed to improve current services and create new capacity that will allow the doubling of passenger trains running under the Hudson River.

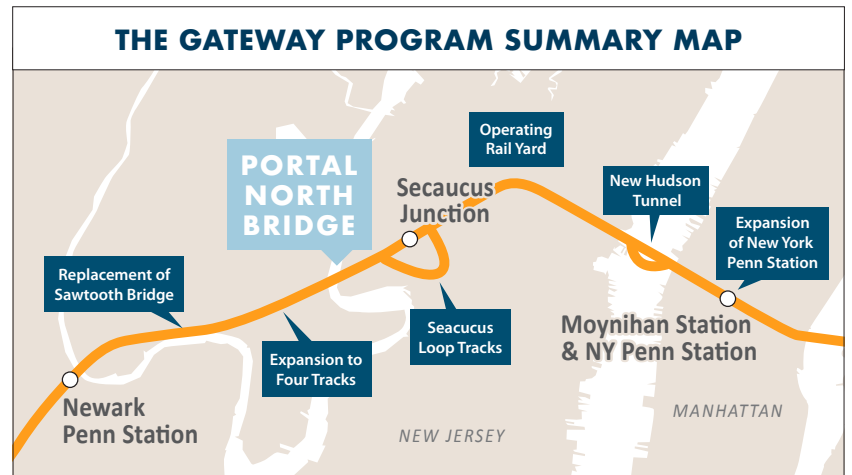


Rendering of future Portal North Bridge.

## Project Status

Fully designed and permitted, early construction work on this project began in the summer of 2017. This work is funded by a TIGER grant to NJ TRANSIT and includes the realignment of a 138kV transmission pole, the installation of new fiber optic cable poles, the construction of a construction access structure known as a finger pier, the steel bridge structure over the Jersey City Municipal Utility Authority water main, and a retaining wall just west of the Frank R. Lautenberg Station at Secaucus Junction.

Funding for approximately 50% of the estimated project cost has been committed by funding partners Amtrak, NJ TRANSIT and the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PANYNJ). The project was accepted into the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grant Project Development pipeline in July 2016. Construction of this nationally significant project can start as soon as a federal financial commitment is in place. The new Portal North Bridge is estimated to cost approximately \$1.5 billion. Partners including the PANYNJ, NJ TRANSIT, Amtrak, Gateway Program Development Corporation and the U.S. Department of Transportation are developing a funding and financing plan so construction can proceed as soon as possible.



The Portal North Bridge Project is a key component of The Gateway Program, a comprehensive set of strategic rail infrastructure improvements designed to improve current services and create new capacity that will allow the doubling of passenger trains running under the Hudson River. The program will increase track, tunnel, bridge and station capacity, eventually creating four mainline tracks between Newark, N.J., and New York Penn Station, including a new, two-track Hudson River Tunnel.

## NEC FUTURE Investment Plan: 2040 and Beyond

NEC FUTURE is the FRA's investment plan to improve the reliability, capacity, connectivity, performance and resiliency of passenger rail service throughout the NEC. By replacing a century-old swing bridge with a modern fixed span, the Portal North Bridge Project is instrumental to realizing these goals and is identified in NEC FUTURE as fundamental to implementing the plan's full potential.

**READY TO BUILD**

LEARN MORE AT  
**NEC.AMTRAK.COM**