



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT

Liam Blank, Policy & Communications Manager

liam@tstc.org

Janna Chernetz, Deputy Director & Director of NJ Policy

janna@tstc.org

Felicia Park-Rogers, Director of Regional Infrastructure Projects

felicia@tstc.org

Tri-State Transportation Campaign Statement on Port Authority Bus Terminal Replacement

On Thursday, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey will hold the first monthly board meeting since the Authority released a [scoping document](#) for replacing the Midtown bus terminal. The need for a new and expanded terminal is clear; on an average day before the pandemic, the Port Authority Bus Terminal handled over 200,000 commuters and 7,000 buses, and will need to handle 30% more capacity by 2040. As the project moves forward, we call on the Port Authority to end siloed planning and to work with Amtrak, NJ TRANSIT, and the MTA, to develop a short and long-term regional transportation and economic development plan.

Below are public comments offered by Liam Blank, Policy & Communications Manager for Tri-State Transportation Campaign, at the Port Authority Board Meeting, which will be held on February 11, 2021:

“Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Liam Blank, I am the Policy & Communications Manager for Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a 27-year old non-profit, non-partisan transportation policy and advocacy organization.

“The Port Authority recently unveiled a scoping document for a new bus terminal in Midtown Manhattan, the third such major expansion project since the terminal opened over 70 years ago. We strongly agree that the existing terminal needs a replacement, but we are very concerned with the insular nature of the Port Authority’s planning process. However, it’s not too late to do something about this.

“When projects with great regional significance are addressed purely on engineering grounds--without regard for the urban context, connecting modes of transportation, and regional development--we end up with partial solutions that don’t address the long-term needs for transit service and quality of life. Even worse, we can risk cementing a legacy of car dependency for another generation.



“Before the pandemic, there was unbalanced growth and inadequate transit between New York City--the portion of the region gaining the most jobs, by far--and the northern New Jersey suburbs, which have substantial housing growth but are gaining relatively few jobs. In other words, New Jersey needs NYC for jobs, and NYC needs New Jersey for housing and workers. This mutual dependency gives the city and state of NY, and the state of NJ, a community of interest in ensuring reliable and fast commuter transportation across the Hudson. Additionally, it places the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, a bi-state authority, in a unique role for creating solutions to these problems.

“The existing terminal is obsolete and needs significantly more room to handle more people and buses--there’s no arguing that. But we cannot address regional transportation issues in a vacuum. Replacing the terminal in isolation will not solve what is the root of the Port Authority’s commuter bus problem: the Lincoln Tunnel (an issue that TSTC has highlighted since 2008). In a 2015 ranking of the 50 worst highway bottlenecks in the country, the Lincoln Tunnel placed eighth on the list, with an annual average of 3.4 million hours of delay and \$87 million in lost value of time.

“With nearly all New Jersey bus commuters accessing the PABT via the Lincoln Tunnel, this issue cannot continue to be ignored. Autonomous vehicle technology, which the Port Authority is testing to expand XBL capacity by 30%, will only get us so far before demand exceeds capacity again. Assuming the technology works, it still will not solve the problem of the Lincoln Tunnel being a single point of failure, where one traffic collision, or another major delay, can effectively paralyze the entire bus network and thereby halt the travel of thousands of workers.

“In reality, a bus operation at this scale makes little sense. No other city of comparable size has such a facility. So instead of doubling down on antiquated planning assumptions, the Port Authority should be working with NJ TRANSIT, Amtrak, and the MTA to develop a sensible long-term solution for creating a balanced transportation network the can handle future capacity demand, especially as Amtrak moves forward with the Gateway Program and NJ TRANSIT makes plans for a new Bergen-Passaic rail line.

“This can be done by maximizing rail-transit capacity in densely populated west-of-Hudson bus-dependent communities--many of which currently have no rail option. Building new rail infrastructure is not a cheap solution, but it does have the advantage of being the least disruptive to Midtown residents, providing far more adequate and efficient cross-Hudson transit service, and stimulating economic growth outside of the Manhattan core.

“If we fail to match the scale of the region with our solutions for trans-Hudson commuting issues, we risk strangling future mobility and losing some of the region’s most competitive advantages. As many difficulties as the Coronavirus has presented, this time offers us an opportunity to look ahead on a 50 year timeline instead of merely fixing the problems of 50 years ago. As Joshua



Schank, Chief Innovation Officer of LA Metro, recently stated on the Transit Unplugged podcast, 'Now is the time to do the new stuff because now people are open to change.'"

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a 27-year old advocacy organization that fights for an equitable, safe, multi-modal transportation network that provides options and supports the economies of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. TSTC works to fix our commutes, meet our climate goals, stop traffic deaths, and make transportation fair.