



# Advisory Meeting Summary

## “Gateway Program: The Region’s Top Transportation Investment Priority”

Location: Virtual

Date: March 5, 2024, 5:00 to 6:00 pm

### About UpNext North Jersey

The NJTPA seeks to better understand the values and needs of North Jersey young adults between the ages of 21 and 30 regarding key transportation issues. The NJTPA provides UpNext members with unique opportunities to learn about and discuss timely topics related to regional planning and public policy, develop a network of peers who share similar interests, and engage with regional thought leaders and decision-makers.

The Public Outreach and Engagement Team (POET), part of the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, worked with the NJTPA to plan and conduct this virtual meeting March 5, 2024 on the Gateway Program. As a crucial component of the region’s Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Gateway Program stands out for its pivotal role in enhancing access, economic development, and resilience in transportation infrastructure.

### Overview of “Gateway Program: The Region’s Top Transportation Investment Priority” Virtual Meeting

This virtual advisory meeting included a short welcome by NJTPA and VTC staff. UpNext members were then joined by Beth Zall, Senior Planning Manager with the Gateway Program at Amtrak, and Vanessa Koenigkramer, the NJTPA’s Director of Capital Programming. Each gave presentations on different elements of the Gateway Program.

### Agenda

- 5:00 p.m. to 5:05 p.m. - Welcome and Introduction, NJTPA and POET staff.
- 5:05 p.m. to 5:20 p.m. - Gateway Program Overview; Beth Zall, Senior Planning Manager, Amtrak.
- 5:20 p.m. to 5:20 p.m. - The NJTPA’s TIP and how the Gateway Program Fits In; Vanessa Koenigkramer, Director of Capital Programming, NJTPA.
- 5:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. - Q&A Session

### Presentation #1: Gateway Program Overview; Beth Zall

Beth Zall provided a comprehensive overview of the Gateway Program, emphasizing its regional and national significance. She detailed the program’s aim to reinforce existing infrastructure and double the capacity of the

**UPNEXT NORTH Jersey** **ADVISORY MEETING**

### Gateway Program: The Region’s Top Transportation Investment Priority

**Tuesday March 5, 5-6 p.m. on Zoom**

Gateway is a comprehensive rail investment program that will improve reliability, resiliency, and redundancy while creating new capacity for a critical section of the Northeast Corridor (NEC) – the most heavily used passenger rail line in the country. It’s the region’s (and arguably the nation’s) most critical transportation infrastructure program. At this virtual meeting, we’ll hear more about Gateway from Amtrak, as well as the NJTPA program (known as the TIP) that’s helping to fund it.

**Presenters**  
**Vanessa Koenigkramer**, NJTPA Director of Capital Programming  
**Beth Zall**, Amtrak Senior Planning Manager

congested 10-mile stretch between Newark, NJ, and New York, NY. The presentation covered various projects within the program, including the Hudson River Ground Stabilization Project, Harrison Fourth Track, Dock Bridge Rehab, and the construction of the new Hudson Tunnel, among others. Beth highlighted the collaborative efforts and funding mechanisms in place to ensure the projects' progression.

## **Presentation #2: The Role of TIP in Supporting the Gateway Program; Vanessa Koenigkramer**

Vanessa Koenigkramer explained how the NJTPA's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) underwrites the Gateway Program with federal transportation funding. She outlined the TIP's biennial update process, its grounding in the LRTP, and its encompassing scope, which includes roadway improvements, bridge replacements, and public transit projects. Vanessa further explained the federal and state funding dynamics and the strategic prioritization of projects to align with regional goals and federal guidelines. The inclusion of the Gateway Program in the TIP is a prominent example of the NJTPA's commitment to regional transportation improvements.

## **Feedback**

The meeting prompted discussions on the broader implications of the Gateway Program and the integral role of TIP in regional transportation planning. Attendees expressed interest in the operational and speed improvements anticipated from the infrastructure upgrades. Concerns were raised regarding the potential for infill stations and the maintenance of existing tunnels, highlighting the importance of strategic planning and stakeholder coordination in addressing the region's transportation challenges.

## **Notable Comments by UpNext Members**

- Inquiries about the inclusion of future infill stations to enhance connectivity in densely populated areas.
- Discussion on the rehabilitation of the current Hudson tubes and the feasibility of concurrent repairs to minimize delays.
- Interest in the integration of the Gateway Program with broader transit networks and its implications for future regional transit development.

## **Q&A Summary**

During the Q&A session following the presentations, discussions focused on the strategic intricacies of the Gateway Program and the TIP's financial backing. Questions on the feasibility of infill stations highlighted the need for enhanced connectivity within densely populated areas, underscoring the program's commitment to regional accessibility. The conversation shifted towards the rehabilitation and future reliability of Hudson tubes, emphasizing the importance of ongoing maintenance and the potential for accelerated project timelines.

Participants inquired about the dynamics of project coordination among federal, state, and local agencies, reflecting on how electoral cycles might influence the pace and prioritization of infrastructure projects. The conversation included considerations of operational efficiencies and the anticipated benefits of increased rail speeds and reduced travel times through projects like the Secaucus Capacity Expansion and Bergen Loops.

Finally, the session touched on the broader implications of the Gateway Program for future transit developments, including the potential for a Northeast NJ Metro/rapid rail system, and how current infrastructure improvements could lay the groundwork for these ambitious visions.

In summary, this virtual meeting offered a detailed examination of the Gateway Program, its impact on regional transportation infrastructure, and the strategic role of the TIP in supporting these critical development projects within the NJTPA region.