

**Written Testimony to the
U.S. House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous
Materials
Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 10 a.m.**

- Good morning, **Chairman Payne, Vice Chair Strickland, Ranking Member Crawford**, and members of the Committee.
- Thank you for inviting me to discuss the far-reaching significance of President Biden's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, especially as it relates to the critical infrastructure along the Northeast Corridor between Washington D.C. and Boston.
- I serve as President & CEO of NJ TRANSIT, but today I'll be speaking mostly in my capacity as co-chair of the Northeast Corridor Commission, where I serve alongside my fellow co-chair, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Deputy Administrator, **Amit Bose**, and vice chair **Stephen Gardner**, President of Amtrak.
- It's almost impossible to overstate the importance of this stretch of transportation infrastructure – not only to the millions of commuter and intercity rail customers who rely on it, but to our national economy.
- As one of the largest economic markets in the world, the Northeast is key to U.S. international competitiveness.
- Every year, the region served by the NEC provides more than 24 million jobs and produces about 20 percent of the nation's GDP.
- Unfortunately, this stretch of infrastructure has been tragically underfunded for decades.
- Thanks to President Biden's leadership and the bipartisan work in Congress, those days are hopefully behind us.

- This historic investment provides a sizable down payment to allow Commission members to rebuild and modernize the Northeast Corridor to provide better, faster, more frequent, and more reliable service to the millions of commuters and intercity travelers who depend on it every year.
- And to be clear: The NEC Commission is ready to put these investments to work.
- As some of you may know, Congress authorized the creation of the NEC Commission in 2008.
- The Commission is comprised of one member from each of the nine NEC states, including the District of Columbia; four members from Amtrak; and five members from the U.S. Department of Transportation.
- My fellow witness on this panel, **Stephen Gardner**, is an original Commission member.
- The Commission also includes non-voting representatives from freight railroads, states with connecting corridors, and several commuter operators.
- It was chartered in 2010 to stabilize the Corridor, establish a foundation for future growth through unified regional action, and develop and implement an effective modernization program.
- This summer, we took a significant step forward toward achieving this goal, through the launch of an innovative new plan – CONNECT NEC 2035, also known as C35.
- The overall goal of this new plan is simple: Transform and modernize the busiest and most vital stretch of infrastructure in our nation.

- And now, through the bipartisan Infrastructure bill, we will do just that.
- C35 is our roadmap for how this generational investment for rail should be spent along the Corridor, and it represents the most ambitious reinvestment program in the NEC's history.
- It was collaboratively developed and unanimously approved by the NEC Commission's eighteen members, representing federal and state government, commuter railroads, and Amtrak.
- Among many other benefits, C35 established a detailed and efficient sequencing of infrastructure investments covering 150 projects, along with a comprehensive renewal program for state of good repair projects, including track, signal, and power systems.
- The total cost of C35 is currently estimated to be \$117 billion over 15 years, with a \$100 billion-dollar funding gap.
- This gap will need to be filled with federal, state, and local funds, and the infrastructure bill provides a significant down payment to begin to make progress on this imperative work up and down the Corridor.
- The plan will allow NEC members to rebuild the Corridor and improve reliability, balancing the need to advance construction with the recognition that our passengers' time is precious.
- But C35 won't simply rebuild the existing NEC – it will Build Back Better, with investments that translate to faster, more frequent, and more reliable commuter and intercity rail service.
- C35 will allow for daily NEC Amtrak trains to grow by a third and in the case of NJ TRANSIT, allow us to more than double our peak-hour service.

- When fully implemented, the C35 program calls for new express service patterns to speed up select commuter rail trips in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland.
- More specifically, travel time will be nearly 30 minutes shorter for Acela riders traveling from Washington to New York, and New York to Boston.
- Stations in new markets and new express services will connect underserved communities to our region's fastest growing economic centers.
- And NJ TRANSIT will be at the forefront of delivering a number of the projects now being prioritized with investments made possible by this landmark legislation.
- At the top of the list is the Hudson Tunnel Project, a key element of the overall Gateway Program.
- This year in August, NJ TRANSIT – along with our project partners at Amtrak, the Port Authority, and the Gateway Development Commission – successfully submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) the new financial plan for this project.
- We are optimistic about the outcome of our submission.
- Other critical projects we expect to prioritize with this investment include:
 - a rail capacity project known as the Hunter Flyover, which will allow eastbound trains on the Raritan Valley Line a grade-separated route to the NEC;
 - the Midline Loop, which will allow eastbound NEC middle zone trains to access the NEC directly;

- replacement of the Sawtooth Bridges – which carry Amtrak and NJ TRANSIT’s NEC services above the heavily utilized PATH and NJ TRANSIT Morris & Essex rail lines and are in urgent need of replacement and expansion;
 - A new, three-track Portal South Bridge, which will double train capacity along this critical length of the NEC;
 - and state of good repair projects up and down the Corridor, including rail infrastructure and routine undergrade bridge replacements.
- Before I move on – although it requires no additional federal funding – I’d be remiss without mentioning NJ TRANSIT’s Portal North Bridge Replacement Project, which is vital to the future of the NEC.
 - NJ TRANSIT recently awarded a \$1.6 billion-dollar construction contract for Portal North – the largest in our agency’s history – and we expect to begin construction early next year.
 - Although all of these critical projects are advancing today, it’s fair to say that no one knows more painfully than New Jersey about the far-reaching negative impacts that prolonged disinvestment can have on a transit system.
 - And similar to what **Governor Murphy’s** unprecedented investment has done for New Jersey and NJ TRANSIT over the past four years, President Biden’s historic investment will do the same for the nation’s transportation network, including the entire Northeast Corridor.
 - Beyond New Jersey and NJ TRANSIT, projects up and down the NEC will benefit from this new federal funding.

- For example, the Baltimore and Potomac Tunnel, just south of Baltimore's Penn Station, has been in continuous use since 1873.
- It is Amtrak's oldest tunnel. Its aging components require constant monitoring and maintenance, and it represents a significant risk of failure that could sever service between Washington and New York.
- Amtrak and its project partner, Maryland DOT, are actively working on plans to replace the tunnel with two new tubes that will increase service reliability, capacity, and speed.
- Capacity will triple, and instead of 30 miles per hour, trains will reach over 100 miles per hour in the new tunnel.
- Another example is in Connecticut, where Amtrak and its project partner, Connecticut DOT, are working to replace the Connecticut River Bridge between Old Saybrook and Old Lyme, which carries Amtrak and Shore Line East trains.
- Completed in 1907, a century of operation in a marine environment, coupled with the age of the structure, has taken its toll and speeds are restricted to 45 miles per hour.
- Many key elements of the bridge have reached the end of their design life and require extensive maintenance to remain in operable condition.
- The frequent opening and closing of the bridge – over 3,000 times per year – puts high demands on its aging components, increasing maintenance costs for Amtrak and reducing reliability for both railway and marine traffic.
- A full replacement of the existing bridge will increase reliability and allow for increased speeds.

- All of these projects – and many, many more – will create more than one million jobs and generate billions in economic activity.
- Portal North alone will support approximately 15,000 jobs, with a one-time total economic impact on New Jersey’s economy of about \$3 billion.
- Overall, C35 is expected to generate 1.7 million jobs over the 15-year plan.
- This includes nearly 1 million new jobs in the Northeast. These new public and private sector jobs will in turn generate \$60 billion in earnings.
- An additional 700,000 jobs and \$34 billion in earnings are estimated to be generated in the U.S. beyond the Northeast, in industries providing materials and equipment for the C35 plan.
- We can seize on this opportunity to advance social equity by ensuring that these jobs – with skills training, good pay, good benefits, and worker protections – are made available to a diverse pool of new workers.
- In fact, NEC Commission policy specifically states that, quote, “All Commission members share the goal of enhancing the participation of DBEs and similar entities.”
- Speaking for NJ TRANSIT, our agency boasts the highest DBE goal in the region, at nearly 22 percent, and as co-chair of the NEC Commission, I want to assure you that the Commission plans to likewise maximize contracting opportunities for DBEs through this investment.
- To be sure, this is an exciting time for the NEC, but we must be clear-eyed and realistic about the road in front of us.

- NEC agencies, including NJ TRANSIT, will need time to build out the organizational capacity to advance the project pipeline and deliver projects.
- C35's sequencing plan must undergo detailed planning and project engineering.
- We must work closely with our partners in labor and the private sector to advance new and innovative workforce development and project delivery strategies.
- And, we must continue the hard work of building bridges across our organizations and partnering effectively.
- We are currently working to update C35 to inform U.S. DOT's development of an NEC Project Inventory, as called for in the revamped Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant program.
- We are also coordinating with U.S. DOT on potential steps to harmonize the requirements that come with the use of federal dollars from different federal programs.
- Such harmonization is necessary due to the different treatment of commuter and intercity rail under federal law, resulting in no single set of rules or point of contact at the federal level when NEC projects involve multiple participants.
- We would welcome the cooperation of this committee to help advance such changes.
- Despite the many challenges in front of us, this is an historic, long-overdue investment that will help ensure the United States remains globally competitive long into the future.

- The NEC's commuter and intercity rail system, serving the center of major and mid-size cities and towns, has been a cornerstone of the Northeast's development and a driver of its economic success for over a century.
- And for the first time, we have a strong regional plan and significant new funding from the federal government.
- The bipartisan infrastructure bill is transformational for the Northeast Corridor and will lead to vastly improved commuter and intercity rail service, create more than a million new jobs, enhance the region's economic competitiveness, and reduce air pollution and carbon emissions.
- These changes won't happen overnight, but for the first time in generations, the future of the Northeast Corridor is looking bright.
- To wrap up, I want to thank **President Biden** for his commitment to investing in the nation's transportation infrastructure, particularly the Northeast Corridor, and **New Jersey's entire Congressional Delegation** for their leadership, support and continued advocacy for New Jersey and for NJ TRANSIT.
- I would like to thank **Chair DeFazio**, for your long support for rail and transit in the Northeast and throughout our entire nation. Good luck in your retirement. You will be missed.
- Finally, let me once again thank you, **Chairman Payne, Vice Chair Strickland**, and **Ranking Member Crawford**, and all the committee members for giving me the opportunity to join you today.