

CONGRESSMAN JOSH GOTTHEIMER
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE MEMBER DAY DRAFT TESTIMONY
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Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to discuss one of the most important issues to the Fifth District of New Jersey: the quality of our transportation infrastructure, especially the Gateway Project, school bus safety, congestion taxes, and the SALT deduction.

GATEWAY PROJECT

We desperately need the Gateway Project to move forward to replace the tunnels underneath the Hudson River that connect New Jersey with New York City.

The tunnels connect 20% of America's GDP, and the regional economy depends on 200,000 people moving every day through these tunnels. If the tunnels don't run, estimates are that America would lose \$100 million every day.

These 110-year old tunnels are literally crumbling and their condition was made worse from the severe damage during Hurricane Sandy. Amtrak has said that one of the tunnels would likely have to be shut down within 5 years. This Administration has already made progress on moving Gateway forward, with the recent news that the environmental review will be done by May 28th. But we still need to invest in the actual construction, which will be billions of dollars.

I ask the Committee in the upcoming surface reauthorization to work with the New Jersey and New York Congressional delegations, including Rail Subcommittee Chairman Payne, to create investment streams for large, transformative projects like Gateway, that can't be easily paid for through existing formula or discretionary grant projects.

We need these tunnels replaced ASAP, before they fail and wreak havoc on New Jersey and the nation.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

We also need to address school bus safety. Like many Members of Congress, I have sadly lost school teachers and students in preventable school bus crashes in my District. Last Congress, I was thrilled to be able to work with the Committee to include my two bipartisan school bus safety bills in H.R.2 and I ask the Committee to do so again.

My bipartisan SECURES Act requires seat belts on all school buses, makes three-point lap-and-shoulder seat belts the national standard, and encourages innovative measures to ensure students actually wear their seat belts while on school buses.

My second bill, Miranda's Law, named after Miranda Vargas, who was killed in a school bus crash in my district, will ensure that schools see red flags from dangerous bus drivers in real-time—to help remove dangerous school bus drivers from the road immediately.

CONGESTION PRICING

In Northern New Jersey, another major issue that could greatly harm our families is New York's proposed new congestion tax scheme — where drivers would be charged upwards of \$14 to enter their congestion pricing zone below 60th Street in midtown Manhattan. I call it the Manhattan Moocher Congestion Tax.

This is a \$3,000 dollars annual tax on every daily Jersey commuter — in addition to the nearly \$4,000 they already pay every year to cross the GWB. How will hard-working people afford that? And in my part of northern New Jersey, there are very limited public transit options.

When we work together, New Jersey and New York are a tough combination to beat. New York can easily pull back on this proposal and work with us toward a better solution for all. So I ask the Committee to help me, Representative Bill Pascrell, and other members of the New Jersey & New York City Delegation to sit down, and figure out a better solution that meets the region's transit needs while uniting the two states, not dividing them.

SALT

Lastly, we need to find a bipartisan path forward for a robust infrastructure investment package. To make that possible, some are considering altering the tax code to find ways to make those investments.

As these negotiations begin, I've been clear that, if there are alterations made to the tax code for our families in New Jersey's Fifth District: no SALT, no dice.

We absolutely need to reinstate our State and Local Tax deduction, which was disastrously capped in the 2017 Tax Hike Bill, driving up taxes for families in every county in my District and driving families out of New Jersey. Removing the SALT cap has broad bipartisan support. The House has already passed the SALT cap repeal three times, including as part of two previous COVID-19 relief packages in May and October of last year.

As Congress puts together an infrastructure package to pay for this legislation, any tax changes that affect our families must reinstate the SALT deduction

Thank you for this Committee's leadership and for having me here today to discuss North Jersey's infrastructure needs that must be addressed.