

Testimony
Congressman Josh Gottheimer (NJ-5)
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Members' Day Hearing – May 1, 2019

Thank you, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and members of the Committee, for hosting this important for hearing and for having me here today. I am here to discuss the most pressing infrastructure need in the country, Gateway, which is the literal passage to nearly the entire Northeast Regional economy.

Currently, the North River Tunnel, which is more than a century old, is the only way in and out of Manhattan for the 200,000 daily passengers that commute between New Jersey and New York City. This tunnel connects a region that makes up 20% of America's GDP.

But here's the problem: the 110-year-old tunnels into New York City are literally crumbling. There is one track in and one track out. The Chairman of Amtrak said himself that one of the tunnels would likely have to be shut down within the next 5 years.

If the tunnels shut down, America would lose \$100 million every day, according to the Northeast Corridor Commission. According to the Regional Plan Association, the national economy would lose \$16 billion over a four-year span, equivalent to the loss of 33,000 jobs. If you are a New Jersey homeowner, a tunnel failure will cost our state \$22 billion in property values.

If just one of the tubes in the tunnel goes down, we would immediately go from 24 trains an hour to six, grinding our busiest national center of commerce to a halt. This goes without saying: our trains are critical to New Jersey's economy, to our region's economy, and to the national economy.

That's why I introduced my bipartisan legislation with Representative Peter King from New York requiring the US Department of Transportation to outline their plan for a "Doomsday" contingency scenario if one of the tunnels under the Hudson shuts down. I hope the Committee will have a hearing on H.R. 1667 so it can hear from the Department of Transportation on whether it even has a plan to minimize economic and national security impacts to the Northeast region by keeping the Gateway Project on track.

Part-time fixes – scotch tape and band-aids – are not enough. It's time we consider seriously what will happen if we fail to fix them.

I recently had a front-row seat to this problem when touring the North River Tunnels. I could see every crack and exposed wire. Every effect of Hurricane Sandy. And there were plenty.

So, here's what I want to know from the DOT, which somehow downgraded this project to a moderate-to-low priority: What's their contingency plan when we have to shut one or both tunnels down? It's likely that the Gateway project won't be built by then, despite our pleading with the Administration to help get it under way. If the tunnels are shuttered, how will we deal

with this blow to our region's – and America's – economy? How will people get to work and home?

When 200,000 people move from trains to roads and planes – what will happen to the transit options which are already congested, overtaxed, and crumbling.

The RPA anticipates 38,000 additional crashes, and – with increased smog and pollutants from cars parked on the bridges – 100 additional deaths.

This is a grim picture. America must avoid this Doomsday, and, here in the greatest country in the world, we all have a responsibility, and the ability, to do whatever we can, at all levels of government to fix this tunnel and our crumbling infrastructure. We can't afford delay a day longer.

Today, I respectfully call on you, the Members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, to do everything in your power to address this pressing issue, and ensure that our economy stays on track.