

BRAD HOYLMAN
27TH SENATE DISTRICT

DISTRICT OFFICE
322 EIGHTH AVENUE, SUITE 1700
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001
PHONE: (212) 633-8052
FAX: (212) 633-8096

ALBANY OFFICE
ROOM 413
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BLDG
ALBANY, NY 12247
PHONE: (518) 455-2451
FAX: (518) 426-6846

EMAIL: HOYLMAN@NYSenate.GOV
WEBSITE: HOYLMAN.NYSenate.GOV



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**Testimony of New York State Senator Brad Hoylman to
the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
and the Federal Highway Administration
Regarding the Cross Harbor Freight Program**

January 23, 2015

Thank you to the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey and the Federal Highway Administration for the opportunity to present testimony on the Draft Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Cross Harbor Freight Program. I first want to commend my colleague, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, for his historic leadership on advocating for the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel and working to restore the New York metropolitan region's freight transportation system for nearly thirty years. It is a testament to his effectiveness that these efforts are bearing fruit.

This project recognizes the strong need for more efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable movement of goods across our region. It is clear that of the ten "build" alternatives, the best long-term strategy is to construct a double-stack, double-track rail tunnel under New York Harbor, known as the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel. I encourage you to move this option forward for the Tier II EIS, along with a water-based alternative that increases the current rail share as a near-term improvement.

The Cross Harbor Freight Program is a timely investment that is greatly needed to reduce truck congestion in our region. The New York metropolitan region has one of the highest rates of highway congestion in the country. This contributes to a litany of problems such as infrastructure damage, poor air quality, and lost productivity. According to the DEIS, freight tonnage in the region is expected to increase 37% over the next 20 years, which will clog our streets and restrict local economic growth even further. Clearly, continuing to build highway infrastructure to expand freight capacity is unsustainable and impractical.

New York City is home to the country's largest mass transit and subway system. However, New York is the only major city in the country that is not connected to the national freight rail network. For freight rail to enter the city, it must cross a bridge in Selkirk, New York, located 140 miles north of the city. In fact, by rail, it costs as much to move goods from New Jersey to Manhattan as it does to transport those same goods 500 miles or more in some other

areas of the country. As a result, rail handles a much smaller share of the city's freight load than it does in other major US cities. The majority of our region's freight travels via truck, primarily via the George Washington Bridge.

The Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel is envisioned as a two-mile, double-track rail tunnel under New York Harbor that would connect existing freight rail lines in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn with the nation's freight system in Greenville Yards, New Jersey. The rail tunnel is a strong long-term strategy that will contribute to economic savings and regional competitiveness. According to the DEIS, the Cross Harbor Rail Freight Tunnel has one of the highest benefit-to-cost ratios (1.1 to 1) of any major transportation project currently under consideration in New York. It will increase freight capacity and quicken the movement of goods, thus allowing for economic growth rather than stagnation that the status quo promises. In addition, the rail tunnel is expected to create as many as 30,000 regional long-term jobs in addition to 1,000 construction jobs.

The DEIS notes that the rail tunnel would eliminate 500,000 trucks from our roads each year, amounting to a reduction of 47 million vehicle miles traveled. This means more than simply clearing out our roads for smoother vehicular traffic. One 80,000 pound tractor-trailer causes the same damage to roadways as approximately 10,000 cars. Fewer trucks on the road means highway infrastructure will see less damage, thus cutting down on the costs of road repair projects. Trucks are also a major cause of vehicular crashes, demonstrating a public safety impetus for removing trucks from the roads.

Removing trucks has an environmental immediacy. The rail tunnel is estimated to remove 120,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year, contributing to improved air quality. This has a direct bearing on public health. New York City has one of the highest asthma rates in the nation, and studies show that these rates are particularly high in low-income communities where there is high truck traffic. Exposure to this truck pollution has also been demonstrated to contribute to lower birth weight, cardiovascular and respiratory problems, stroke, and heart attacks.

Finally, building a rail tunnel adds critical redundancy to the movement of goods in our region, which is important in considering potential National Security concerns. Should an emergency arise that forces the closure of our region's major bridges, we must ensure that there are secure options to bring goods and supplies into our city.

With its large scale and high capacity for freight, the long-term benefits of a freight rail tunnel cannot be overstated. However, I recognize that building additional rail capacity is a long-term solution, and that more immediate action may be necessary. Therefore, for the Tier II EIS, I recommend studying the freight rail tunnel in conjunction with a water-based float option which increases the current rail share, the latter which can provide a stop-gap freight solution for the near-term while planning and construction are underway for the rail tunnel.

Thank you for your consideration of my remarks.