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Moving Midtown West

New York Building Congress Report Urges Implementation of Four Key Projects to Modernize, Expand and Transform Moynihan Station Area

In **Moving Midtown West**, a new report released today, the New York Building Congress urges New York City, State and federal officials to work together on a coordinated plan to design, finance and implement a series of interrelated transportation projects that would transform Midtown Manhattan around Penn and Moynihan Stations.

According to the Building Congress, the four projects – Moynihan Station, Amtrak’s Gateway initiative, creating access for Metro-North Railroad into Penn Station, and reconfiguring Penn Station – would reestablish the region’s most important entryway to New York City and unlock the full potential of Far West Side development. In addition, these projects would alleviate the stress of an overtaxed rail system, address the overcrowding and confusion of Penn Station, and build much-needed capacity and redundancy with the first new rail link between Manhattan and New Jersey in 100 years.

“The business community, along with the design, construction and real estate industry, understands the urgency of the situation and is ready to support the major investments that will be necessary to upgrade an antiquated transit network, which is ill-equipped to transport the hundreds of thousands of commuters whose daily trips through Penn Station rank among the longest in the nation,” said Building Congress President **Richard T. Anderson**. “Chokepoints in the system, such as the pair of hundred-year-old tunnels under the Hudson, constrain growth. In addition, three major independent rail operators – Amtrak, New Jersey Transit, and the Long Island Rail Road – all use Penn Station as a key station, operating at full capacity during rush hours, with no flexibility to expand.”

While these conditions are reason enough to expand rail transportation on the West Side, the Building Congress points to two transformative events that now make it imperative. First is the rezoned Hudson Yards district, which is expected to produce up to 26 million square feet of new commercial space, tens of thousands of new housing units, and millions more square feet of new retail and hotels.

Second, Superstorm Sandy demonstrated the weaknesses of the City's aging transportation network. With just two single-track tunnels connecting the commuter rail network to points west of Manhattan, the entire system would grind to a halt if these tunnels were to fail. While the Hudson River lines into Penn Station did not suffer severe damage from Sandy, other storm-related tunnel closures highlighted the urgent need to build new capacity and redundancy in the system.

"Transportation is the lifeblood of the metropolitan area and the just-released Moving Midtown West report calls attention to the need for new investments in New York's rail infrastructure," said Senator **Charles E. Schumer**. "I champion projects like Amtrak's Gateway and New York City's future transportation hub, Moynihan Station, because they lay the track for rail expansion and economic growth in the New York tri-state area. The Moving Midtown West report is an important and timely reminder that expanding our rail capacity and relieving bottlenecks in our intercity passenger rail system are critical for the future of New York City. I applaud the New York Building Congress for focusing their attention on these vital growth projects."

"Developing Moynihan Station into a world-class train hall is the first step to tackling the current capacity issues at Penn Station and creating the environment to handle increased rail growth in the coming decades," said Port Authority Executive Director Pat Foye. "Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, Phase I of Moynihan Station is well underway and the momentum continues to build as we strive to achieve late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's grand vision of transforming the historic Farley Building and a revitalized Penn Station into a major transit hub for New York State and the region."

In its report, the Building Congress makes the following recommendations:

COMPLETE MOYNIHAN STATION

A new Moynihan Station, directly across the street from Penn Station in the old Farley Post Office building, will be the home of Amtrak. Phase 1, now underway, creates access to the West Side through Moynihan Station, modernizes passenger concourses beneath Moynihan, and adds new exterior entrances drawing passengers directly into Moynihan.

However, in order to relocate Amtrak and its passengers, New York State and the Port Authority, which own and operate Moynihan Station, respectively, need to complete Phase 2, which would transform large portions of the old Post Office building into a grand public concourse with new commercial spaces and other amenities for intercity passengers. Phase 2 can be completed at a cost of \$700 million in three years using design-build contracting.

IMPLEMENT AMTRAK'S GATEWAY PROJECT

Amtrak's Gateway project will create the first new rail connection between Manhattan's West Side and New Jersey in more than a century, relieving some of the stress on Penn Station. Demand along this corridor is forecast to grow by up to fifty percent – if the necessary infrastructure is in place.

Equally important, Gateway creates only the second train route through two new tunnels under the Hudson River, adding redundancy to a rail network brought to the brink during Superstorm Sandy, and making it possible to temporarily close and modernize the existing tubes.

CREATE WEST SIDE ACCESS FOR METRO-NORTH RAILROAD

Bringing Metro-North commuters directly into Penn Station creates essential redundancy in the region's commuter rail network. What's more, the new connection makes strong economic sense, linking New York's suburbs north of the City, Connecticut and the Bronx to Midtown West, and streamlining connections between Metro-North, LIRR, NJ Transit, and Amtrak.

When Penn Station Access for Metro-North and East Side Access for LIRR are both operational, both services will have a second terminal to use in the event that service to one is impaired. However, Metro-North cannot begin Penn Station service until Moynihan Station is operational and LIRR commences service to Grand Central. But work on this project should begin as soon as possible. If the MTA provides initial funding for this \$1.2 billion project, work could start as soon as 2015 and be completed in tandem with the grand opening of the MTA's East Side Access project at the end of this decade.

This initiative got a major boost when Governor Cuomo proposed, in his State of the State Address, using federal Sandy recovery money to create four new Metro-North stations in the Bronx while also connecting the New Haven line to Penn Station.

TRANSFORM PENN STATION

A host of challenges face Penn Station, most notably the physical constraints posed by its location beneath a major entertainment and commercial complex, lack of capacity, and the logistical issues inherent in hosting the operations of three major transportation agencies.

Amtrak, the MTA, and NJ Transit are currently working together on a Penn Station Vision Study, with the intent of devising major improvements to improve circulation, reduce overcrowding, and facilitate seamless travel throughout the region. This project would be facilitated by a new Gateway station located south of Penn Station and the new Moynihan Station.

"Moving ahead on these four core projects will require an unprecedented level of collaboration and financial support at all levels of government," said Building Congress Chairman Thomas Z. Scarangelo. "Fortunately, Governor Cuomo, in particular, has demonstrated a commitment to major projects, such as the Tappan Zee Bridge, that requires buy-in from and coordination between local, State and federal entities on a wide range of complex issues, including funding shares, ownership, and ongoing operating costs."

The Building Congress recommends that an intergovernmental working group be

convened in order to establish priorities, advance concrete work plans for each project, and ensure that each investment is coordinated and leveraged to ensure the greatest possible impact for the riding public.

The full report is available at
<http://www.buildingcongress.com/research/moving/01.html>