



Build Gateway Now Campaign Proposal 2024 - 2025

Summary

Over the past grant period beginning July 1, 2022, the Build Gateway Now Coalition and RPA have kept up the steady drumbeat of public support for the Hudson Tunnel Project and other Gateway Program projects. Through a range of activities, public engagement tools and events, we have highlighted the critical need for the program and put positive pressure on those responsible for advancing the project. The Gateway Program has seen momentous progress over the past year. As a result, we have continued to remind the public of what's at stake while also expanding our advocacy to focus on the enormous benefits this 21st-century transportation infrastructure will bring.

RPA, working in concert with the coalition, continued to be an established organization for honest and insightful analysis and commentary about the Gateway Program. RPA and the coalition earned 76 press hits on Gateway and Penn Station during the grant period, including mentions in the *New York Times*, *Bloomberg* and a number of TV appearances. While legislation and specific milestones drove much of the coverage, RPA was successful in garnering multiple Gateway and Penn Station mentions in every month of the grant period, often using original pitches around our created content.

In June of 2022, a few months after the last grant period closed, we published [Gateway and the Post-COVID Economy](#), a research report that examined the need for the Gateway Program in light of the profound impacts of the pandemic on our region's economy and the large uptick in remote work. This seminal research landed an exclusive in the [New York Times](#), has been cited and referenced frequently in the past year, and remains a key resource to justify the need for the added capacity unlocked by the Gateway Program in even the most conservative future economic scenarios with the highest work-from-home projections. Upon publishing our report, we held a press conference at Penn Station and partnered with ABNY to host a report debrief event for the BGN coalition at our office.

In the first half of 2023, we published three public engagement tools to explain the Gateway Program's [urgency and benefits](#), mapped out the process for the Hudson Tunnel Project to receive a [Full Funding Grant Agreement](#), and highlighted the [project status of all 11 projects](#) within the 10-mile stretch between Newark and New York Penn. To date, the short Gateway Explainer Video, published in February, has garnered over 60,000 views on social media. We received very

positive feedback from coalition members, partner organizations and reporters on all of these tools.

Once again, the Gateway Program took center stage at the RPA 2023 Assembly. We drew one of the largest audiences in RPA Assembly history by bringing all three governors on stage and securing Senior Advisor to the President Mitch Landrieu to deliver the keynote address. The governors acknowledged Gateway as the most critical infrastructure project in the country, with utmost importance to the tri-state region. Mayor Landrieu's keynote address focused heavily on the Gateway Program – not just the Hudson Tunnel Project, but the Phase 2 projects as well – and stressed that this is a priority for President Biden. We were pleased to have this important messaging be delivered to such a large and influential audience by these prominent figures.

We've continued to engage the BGN coalition by helping members draft testimony for GDC Board Meetings and keeping them informed on the latest project advancements. In May, we hosted a coalition event at RPA's office featuring the GDC co-Chairs, Commissioners Glen and Grewal-Virk, which was a great opportunity to give the coalition exclusive access to the Program's leaders and discuss ways the coalition can be more supportive.

We're currently in the middle of two new research pieces. The first will demonstrate the economic interdependence of New York and New Jersey, specifically looking at the economic benefits commuters bring to their communities through wages and income tax and how the Gateway Program will strengthen the transportation connection between the two states, which are clearly so economically intertwined. The second report, on through-running, will walk through the current conditions at Penn Station, including how the current tracks and platforms operate and connect with the station. It will discuss how the conversion of the station to a full, through-running operation is technically challenging and would lead to significant disruptions, and explain why expanding Penn Station to the south is a way to achieve a version of Penn as a through-running station – one that will lead to the greatest increase in capacity and help achieve long-term visions for a more integrated regional network. We will show this visually through a series of graphics and GIFS and promote our research on social media and through traditional media outlets.

During this grant cycle, as always, our strong working partnerships with the GDC, Amtrak, and other Gateway Program partners will inform our work, but we will continue to operate as an independent voice.

Our work for this grant cycle will be comprised of four major activities: the development of original content; coalition engagement, management, and growth; press engagement; and the creation of new research.

Original Content Development

RPA will develop public messaging and content to highlight the accomplishments of the various

Gateway Program projects and activities that the media can reference and coalition members can share. RPA proposes the related activities for this grant cycle:

- Site visits to Gateway projects currently under construction
 - We plan to launch a social media series highlighting various projects under construction to demonstrate how the Gateway Program is advancing to fruition. We will invite coalition members to join us on these site visits and create social media toolkits to make it easier for all organizations to promote.
 - Timeline: Ongoing over 18 months
 - Budget: \$10,000
- Candid rider interview series
 - We plan to hire frequent RPA collaborator [Evan Carter Films](#) to assist us in filming a documentary-style short video that captures candid interviews with riders at various stations who have been frustrated by train delays, but will benefit from the improvements to Gateway Program infrastructure. We'll capture real time footage and rider experiences, posing questions such as: what will a consistently reliable commute mean to you? When the Gateway Program is built, what will you do with the time you'll save by using the new-and-improved, 21st century transportation system?
 - Timeline: Early 2024
 - Budget: \$40,000
- We will publish 2-3 short white papers that are timely and responsive to current Gateway and Penn Station conversations. Three possible examples include:
 - Benefits of Phase 2 Projects
 - Increases in New Jersey land values as a result of the completed Gateway Program
 - Drawing the connection between Congestion Pricing and cross-Hudson transit via the Gateway Program
 - Timeline: Full grant period
 - Budget: \$140,000

Paid Advertising

Previous paid campaigns have focused on building a robust Twitter following for the @build_gateway handle, resulting in a solid 3,500 followers. These campaigns appear to have largely tapped the universe of interested followers on Twitter. This cycle will instead highlight specific articles, reports, or op-eds that drive home key advocacy points.

- Timeline: Ongoing over 18 months
- Budget: \$25,000
- Metrics to be reported for the paid advertising campaigns will include social media and email list growth, engagements, and impressions.

Coalition Management, Engagement and Growth

While the Build Gateway Now Coalition is fairly well-established and cohesive, we can strengthen its engagement through more regular contact and with fresh content. These tactics include:

- Conducting regular calls and in-person briefings to ensure stakeholders have the latest project information, particularly during key moments for the project and when new research is published. For some members, we will organize one-on-one calls to strengthen relationships with key individuals in the coalition. Further, we plan to sponsor educational presentations and briefings for partner organizations in the tri-state area and beyond to engage and grow the coalition.
- Hosting bi-monthly meetings or casual events for coalition members, including breakfasts featuring key speakers, Penn Station tours, public forums, construction site tours, et cetera.
- Updating the BuildGateway.org website. Here, we will amplify research, press releases, social media posts, and other public documents from Gateway Program partners, helping to centralize all of these key resources.
- Mobilizing the coalition to comment at GDC meetings and hearings, support the project with positive statements in the press, speak favorably about the project in public settings, and share useful information with colleagues. RPA will supply coalition members with the most relevant and up-to-date information and talking points.
- Generating op-eds and LTEs from coalition members. This gives them a chance to sign their name to written materials advocating for Gateway projects and help us reach a wider readership.
- Growing the coalition by mining attendance lists from previous panels and the RPA assembly, as well as by asking existing members (during one -on-one calls to be done later this summer and in early fall) to invite colleagues, friends and members of organizations whom they believe would be valuable assets to the coalition.
- Metrics to be reported for the coalition management, engagement and growth will include the size of the coalition and the number of members added, the number of meetings held, and the completed tasks from the list above.
- Timeline: Ongoing over 18 months
- Budget: \$135,000

Media Outreach and Engagement

- Rapid response
 - RPA and the Coalition will continue to respond quickly to relevant events and breaking news through writing timely, responsive statements and social media engagement with the freedom to be direct with those who are stalling progress – whether that's at the local, state, federal or agency level. We will also respond to key project developments or comments from key decision-makers on our website and social media channels.
- Other Media Engagement could include the following tasks.

- Proactively connect with publications for op-ed placements, earned media and editorial board engagement.
- One-on-one Penn Station and Gateway Program tours for reporters new to covering the issue.
- Pitches related to “invented” milestones, such as the Tunnel’s birthday, the anniversary of Superstorm Sandy or Penn Station’s demolition.
- Letters of support and op-eds on key topics, especially when public agencies and Government entities are slow to move or holding up progress.

Social Media

We will continue to bolster our social media pages, specifically our Twitter account. We will also re-engage with our followers on Facebook and work alongside other RPA social media channels, such as Instagram and LinkedIn. We’ll also continue to monitor the turbulent effectiveness and relevance of various social media platforms, particularly Twitter, and consider the benefits of creating new accounts on channels such as TikTok or Threads. Our current social media tactics include: thanking electeds, pointing out delays in the projects, highlighting relevant and novel research, commenting on current events that point to the need for Gateway, and celebrating program advancements and achievements.

- Metrics to be reported for media outreach, engagement and growth will include the number of news clips, social media growth and engagement, and other tasks completed from the list above.
- Timeline: Ongoing over 18 months
- Budget: Included in coalition management

Publish & Promote Original Research

Rather than focusing primarily on one large report, RPA will instead focus on easily digestible and shareable content that is timely and responsive to the public discussion and the interests of coalition members. Our upcoming research projects include:

- Updated economic impact study: we will update the unreleased 2019 Amtrak report on the economic impact of the Hudson Tunnel Project. We will coordinate with WSP to complete a REMI model for a new analysis and rewrite the report accordingly and according to present-day post-covid context. The report will also build on previous RPA research including [*A Preventable Crisis*](#), [*Gateway and the Post-COVID Economy*](#), and our forthcoming report on tri-state commuting patterns post-COVID and the interdependency of New York and New Jersey.
 - Timeline: Spring/Summer 2024
 - Budget: \$150,000

Specific report release actions will include, but are not limited to:

- Coalition press release
- In-person or virtual press event

- Editorial board engagement and associated op-eds
- Social media shares
- Calls, presentations, and engagement of third parties, both locally and nationally
- Emails and other support as needed

Metrics to be reported for research will include:

- Number of white papers and research posts completed
- Media mentions: including direct mentions, mentions via surrogates, and editorial board or op eds/LTEs generated
- Social media engagements
- Presentations completed

Total Budget

Requested from Amtrak: \$500,000 for 18 months

FY24 Jan. 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024: \$80,000

FY24 April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024: \$80,000

FY24 July 1, 2024 – Sept 30, 2024: \$80,000

FY25 Oct. 1, 2024 – Dec. 31, 2024: \$90,000

FY25 Jan. 1, 2025 – March 31, 2025: \$90,000

FY25 April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025: \$80,000

RPA Staff

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