



Build Gateway Now Campaign Proposal 2020-22

In its first two years, the *Build Gateway Now* coalition has grown from a small RPA project to an active and efficient coalition capable of quick and decisive response. Both internally among coalition members and publicly with the media, public officials and on social media platforms, *Build Gateway Now* has become an established name for honest and insightful analysis and commentary about the Gateway Program.

Over the past year, the coalition pursued a more aggressive approach and earned over 60 media hits from 7/1/19 to today. Many of those stories came from a highly successful coalition press conference in New York Penn Station in September of 2019. In addition, the RPA report, [A Preventable Crisis](#), continued to be cited regularly and allowed the coalition to strengthen ties with Congressional Offices through regular communications on the report's findings. As a result, our original research was frequently cited in submissions to the Congressional record, referenced in Congressional hearings, and cited in official correspondence, including a February 6 [letter](#) signed by 15 senators to USDOT Secretary Elaine Chao.

In support of phase two of Gateway, RPA released a report called [The Case for Penn South](#) which argued in favor of Governor Cuomo's proposal to expand Penn Station one block to the South for a new section of the terminal with new tracks and platforms. RPA is a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee for the Empire Station planning process. More recently, RPA released [Essential Service](#), which described the financial challenges facing transit agencies in the age of COVID and supported additional operating resources for GDC partners. The coalition also took on some new and inventive ways to highlight specific components of the Gateway Program and advocate for their completion, such as the Hudson Tunnel EIS "count-up" clock on the buildgateway.org website. We were very pleased to see key parts of the project, especially the positive news regarding the Portal North Bridge, moved forward during the past year.

With the current public health crisis and recession, there is a major opportunity to advance all elements of the Gateway Program as part of an overarching economic stimulus package or infrastructure agreement. Clearly identifying our needs for the various projects and pushing our case publicly to work on the plan over the coming months will be crucial, as will engaging the media and the public on why infrastructure investments like Gateway could help with economic recovery.

Given the COVID-19 crisis we anticipate a significant amount of the work to shift while other workstreams continue uninterrupted. During the grant cycle, we will remain flexible and responsive to new developments with the project and the shifting political landscape. As always, our strong working partnerships with the GDC, Amtrak, and other Gateway Program partners will guide our work, but we will continue to operate as an independent voice.

Our work for the next eighteen months (Oct. 1, 2020 - Mar. 30, 2020), will be comprised of three major activities: coalition engagement and management, the completion of a COVID-19 Gateway/regional transportation recovery report, and a paid advertising campaign.

Task 1: Build Gateway Now Coalition Engagement and Management

As a well-established and cohesive coalition, we plan to continue to build and strengthen support for the project both inside and outside New York and New Jersey, knowing the project has significant national benefits that must be considered. The coalition will achieve those goals through a variety of new and tried-and-true tactics, including building broad-based public support, engagement of potential allies and members, and direct advocacy with key decision makers.

Specific actions will include:

- Continue to build and activate the Build Gateway Coalition. At 45 members, the coalition is well-established. We will continue to add industry partners as well as nonprofit and civic groups from further afield over the coming years. We will continue to keep them updated on project progress through regular meetings and email communications
- Update the BuildGateway.org website, which has now merged into the new and improved rpa.org
- Sponsor educational presentations or briefings for partner organizations in the tri-state area and beyond
- Generate op-eds and LTEs from coalition members
- Offer public testimony from coalition members in support of the project at GDC board meetings or partner board meetings as necessary
- Build grassroots public support through social media and petitions
- Amplify research, press releases, social media posts, and other public documents from Gateway Program partners
- Mobilize the Coalition to support additional relief funding for agency operations by offering letter sign-ons, social media support, and other methods as needed
- Host a panel on Gateway and other regional infrastructure projects as a vehicle for economic recovery
- Begin "quarterly reports" on ridership for regional Gateway Program partners to highlight recovery and the need for continued support for the program.

- Continue to push for an expedited environmental review process for Gateway projects to speed up the project timeline
- Release rapid response press statements in response to key project developments or comments from key decision makers
- Build more cohesive coalition releases and press engagement around key events. Likely events to include:
 - [ARC 10 year anniversary death day](#)
 - Gateway "birthday" in late November
 - Moynihan Station opens in late December 2020

Metrics to be reported for coalition engagement and management will include:

- Coalition members added
- Media mentions: including direct mentions, mentions via surrogates, and ed board or op-eds/LTEs generated
- Social media metrics (impressions, engagements, actions), email list growth, total followers
- Panels hosted and events completed

Task 1 Budget for coalition engagement and management: \$280,000

Task 2: COVID-19 Gateway/regional transportation recovery report

RPA will conduct original research on a Gateway as a regional transportation recovery report release and launch with a press event. Report specifics are TBD but could involve new ridership projections for the Hudson Tunnel/Penn Station as the region begins to recover from COVID-19, as well as the positive local/state/federal economic and tax impacts of the recovery.

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

- Coalition press release
- In-Person or Virtual Press event
- Coalition/RPA panel for the general public
- Ed 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:

- Media mentions: including direct mentions, mentions via surrogates, and ed board or op-eds/LTEs generated
- Social media engagements
- Presentations completed

Task 2 Budget for original research: \$20,000

Task 3: Paid advertising campaign

RPA will launch a paid advertising campaign to highlight report findings or other key metrics at key NJ stations (and possibly at LI and MNR stations if the budget allows) fostering awareness and education about the Gateway Program.

Details to be determined, but potential campaign elements could include:

- Large visual ads at stations for campaign awareness
- Geo-fencing around stations to mobile devices for direct action. Potential actions could involve texting key stakeholders or signing a petition to move key project elements
- Supporting press release and coalition actions, such as in-person petitioning or press conference to be considered at a later date
- Additional unpaid support via social media, email, and coalition engagement

Metrics to be reported for the paid advertising campaign will include:

- Impressions, engagements, and actions taken via the geo-fencing portion of the campaign
- The passage of relevant legislation, appropriation of funds, or petition signatures
- Media hits for the coalition
- Social media engagement metrics, email list growth, and engagement
- Other unpaid support generated

Task 3: Budget for advertising campaign: \$50,000

Total Budget

Requested from Amtrak: \$350,000 for 18 months

\$233,000 for FY21 Oct. 1, 2020 – Sept. 30, 2021

\$117,000 for FY22 Oct. 1, 2021 – Mar. 30, 2022

RPA Staff

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