

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 6, 2020

The Honorable Ronald Batory
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, Southeast
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Administrator Batory:

We write to express our deep disappointment that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has neither finalized and approved the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), nor issued a Record of Decision (ROD) to build a new rail tunnel beneath the Hudson River and provide essential repairs to the existing North River Tunnel. Many of us have written you about this issue in the past or raised the issue with you directly when you testified before Congress. It is unacceptable that we have yet to receive a definite timeline for completion of the environmental review. We implore you to provide an update on when we can expect a final EIS and ROD for the Hudson Tunnel Project – including confirmation of the remaining steps necessary to move the project into the design and construction phases.

As you know well, the current North River Tunnel tubes are a vital artery for the movement of passengers and services throughout the Northeast Corridor – the most heavily used passenger rail line in the country. Originally constructed in 1910, the already-aging tunnels suffered significant damage following Superstorm Sandy in October 2012. These tubes are old and in need of significant rehabilitation. If they are forced to close, the region would grind to a standstill, and the nation’s economy would suffer immensely. According to a 2019 report by the Regional Plan Association, closure of even one of the two tubes “would cost the national economy \$16 billion, reduce home values by \$22 billion, and lead to decreased economic productivity; job losses; increased congestion and crashes across the northeastern United States.”¹ Inaction to address this looming catastrophe is indefensible and these devastating outcomes are avoidable. The FRA must take immediate action to move the Hudson Tunnel Project forward.

At a hearing before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on June 19, 2019, you confirmed that the FRA has completed 95 processing steps related to the environmental review for the Hudson Tunnel Project. At that time, you said that there were

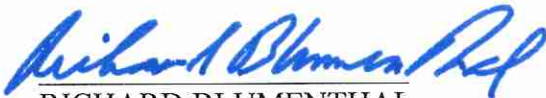
¹ “Regional Plan Association Issues Reports on the Impacts of a Partial Shutdown of the Trans-Hudson Tunnel”, *Regional Plan Association* (New York, New York), February 26, 2019. <http://www.rpa.org/article/regional-plan-association-issues-report-on-impacts-of-partial-shutdown-of-trans-hudson>.

another 27 steps yet to be completed, but provided your assurance that the review was “actively being worked on.”² Over seven months later, we have yet to receive a more specific answer as to when we can expect a final decision. The completion of the EIS is critical to preventing costly delays and ensuring that the project moves quickly toward construction. Further delays risk the shutdown of one or both of the existing 110-year-old tunnels – which would be devastating to our constituents, threaten public safety, and cause potentially irreversible damage to our regional and national economies.

Please provide a detailed explanation of the remaining steps for completing the FRA’s review of the draft EIS for the Hudson Tunnel Project. Additionally, please confirm the estimated timeline for completing each step – including confirmation of when we can expect a final ROD.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter. We look forward to your timely and unabridged response to our request.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



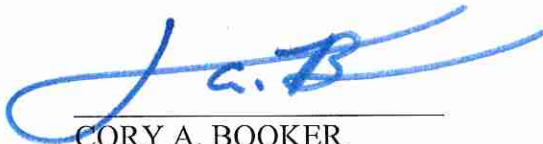
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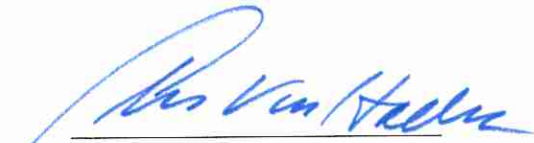



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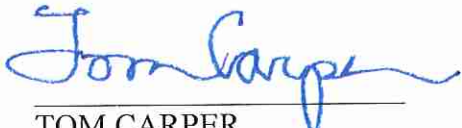



JACK REED
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² U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, *FAST Act Reauthorization: Transportation and Safety Issues*, 116th Congress, 1st Session, 2019.
<https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2019/6/fast-act-reauthorization-transportation-and-safety-issues>.

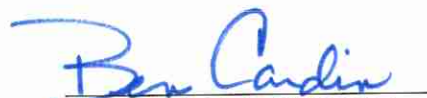

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