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Comments from the de Blasio Administration on the PABT Replacement Project Scoping hearing, July 10, 2019

OneNYC, the Mayor's long-term plan for the sustainable and equitable growth of New York City, highlights the urgent need for multiple regional strategies to address the growing number of commuters arriving to New York City from across the Hudson River. Just as the ability to access NYC is fundamental to the economic success of New Jersey, the ability to draw workers from across the city and region has long contributed to NYC's success.

As the region grows, new housing in New Jersey suburbs is playing a critical role in meeting the regional need for housing—and as we look forward, the population on the West side of the Hudson is forecast to eclipse that on the east side by 2040. The result of this growing population is that more and more commuters are looking to cross the river, by PATH, by rail, but especially by bus, which primarily services fast growing areas of North Hudson and East Bergen counties.

The increasing number of commuters provides economic benefits to New Jersey communities and to the city as well. But without the necessary investment to support these volumes, it results in increased burdens on the city's transportation infrastructure, particularly in the neighborhoods where these transportation facilities are concentrated, which experience clogged streets and decreased quality of life.

The city has been setting ambitious targets for transportation to create a more sustainable, more mobile, less congested future.

We believe this PABT replacement, which may well be the first mega-investment in trans Hudson travel in our generation, can and should be a significant step in the right direction – moving towards a path of improved sustainable and quality connectivity with the region, and an asset for Manhattan’s west side and the whole city.

We believe this project presents an opportunity not only to address transportation needs, but to create a civic identity at a major gateway into the city, one that utilizes world-class design while remaining mindful of the surrounding neighborhoods. This is an enormously complex project, and while progress has been made, there is also much more work to do to make sure that this project can meet that potential.

First, we believe the Port Authority must plan for all intercity buses – not just those currently housed in the terminal. The original bus terminal was built just after World War II to free midtown’s streets from bus congestion, but a half century and two expansions later, many buses are once again parked on street due to an obsolete and over-capacity facility. We urge the Port to plan for the full universe of customers and not just those that have gate space today.

Second, the Port Authority must ensure no additional harm to air quality in Midtown. Manhattan has long been in a non-attainment zone for emissions, with areas of Hell’s Kitchen and Midtown being particularly sensitive zones in part due to the bus and road infrastructure around the Lincoln tunnel. As the city seeks to have the best air quality among all large U.S. cities by

2030, it will require significant reductions in air pollutant emissions, and we look forward to continuing to investigate how this project can contribute to that goal.

Third, the Port Authority must commit to working with city and local stakeholders throughout the process to design a terminal befitting a global gateway. Recent projects like the Transbay terminal in San Francisco or the redevelopment of DC's Union Station show us that terminal facilities can be attractive, active, can incorporate space for the public, can add value to their neighborhoods, can integrate multiple transportation modes including subway, bus, and bike facilities and pedestrian networks together.

A large component of this integration includes the potential for inclusion of mixed use developments on Port Authority owned property, and we are pleased to see evidence of this option included in the scoping document. We believe a mix of uses on the Port Authority property, combined with new open space and an improved pedestrian and multimodal transportation network, can help to make the terminal a good neighbor, and we look forward to working with the Port to better understand and shaping the development consistent with the planning framework for Hudson Yards, Clinton and Midtown.

Finally, we believe the Port Authority must continue to engage New Yorkers and New Jerseyans in a long-term commitment to trans-Hudson planning. The problem of insufficient bus capacity did not arrive overnight, but like so many transportation challenges, lack of attention and investment over decades had now created a planning challenge under the extraordinary time pressure of a deteriorating and over-capacity building. We understand the facility, in best case scenarios will be completed by the late 2020s, and

may be full on day one. With no timeline from the Federal government for funding the Gateway program, it is imperative that the Port Authority continue to study other options for moving increased flows of people across the river, and we will continue to be a partner in looking at new, sustainable and efficient modes.

We appreciate your continued consideration of all of these issues, and we look forward to working with you to advance them, throughout the scoping process and as this project evolves.