

NJ Transit rail projects on drawing board but questions remain on money



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The **proposed Gateway Tunnel under the Hudson River**

[\[http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2014/10/new_hudson_river_rail_tunnels_needed_so_old_tunnels_can_be_repaired.html\]](http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2014/10/new_hudson_river_rail_tunnels_needed_so_old_tunnels_can_be_repaired.html)

has been called the most important transit project in the region, but does the magnitude of that project mean other projects are off the table?

Not necessarily, said Steve Santoro, NJ Transit's director of capital planning and projects, who named several light rail projects are on the drawing board in various stages of design. Santoro made the statement during an **Urban Land Institute** [\[http://uli.org/\]](http://uli.org/) panel discussion Thursday on transportation projects and how to fund them.

"There are a fair amount of infrastructure and expansion projects available for when capital becomes available," Santoro said.

Two different extensions of Hudson-Bergen Light Rail are on the drawing board, the Northern Branch extension into Bergen County and extending it westward to the Hackensack River water front in Jersey City to serve a "significant"  proposed development, he said.

Camden-Glassboro light rail is project that is advancing through the planning and design process, and is awaiting a funding source, he said.

"We have several others that haven't been in the headlines, but are on the shelf," Santoro said. "MOM (Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex rail line) has gone through conceptualization."

And on the other side of the Delaware River, Pennsylvania officials are reviving the concept of running passenger train on the Lackawanna cut-off, a line that NJ Transit is in the process of restoring in Sussex County.

But how to pay for them and speed up the process remains the biggest challenge for officials.

Public private partnerships or P3's are one of the tools that have been suggested as a way to help fund large transportation projects, such as the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's **project to replace the Goethals Bridge** [\[http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2015/10/first_gargantuan_girder_to_be_installed_at_new_goe.html\]](http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2015/10/first_gargantuan_girder_to_be_installed_at_new_goe.html) .

"P3's are not free money," said Karen Hedlund, National P3 Advisor, Parsons Brinckerhoff . "The private sector puts money received from the value of the project into the project."

One of those tangible values to the private sector is the value a transit line adds to real estate.

GOT QUESTIONS?

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In the case of a Los Angeles streetcar-light rail project, property owners along the line are paying a special assessment toward construction, she said. Those who's land fronts the property pay the most and the assessment is lower for property owners several blocks away, Hedland said. The benefit is higher rents and selling prices for property along the line, because it is considered an amenity.

questions to **NJ.com's transportation expert Larry Higgs**. He'll answer your questions on Tuesdays and Thursdays on NJ.com. You can also Tweet

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Could a P3 help fund the Gateway project, which would build two new Hudson River rail tunnels and for the allow repair of 105-year old tunnels damaged by Hurricane Sandy?

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[http://www.nj.com/traffic/index.ssf/2015/06/the_nightmare_that_awaits_nj_if_a_hudson_rail_tunnel_is_forced_to_close.h]

"Everything is on the table for how Gateway could be financed, clearly P3 is an option," Hedlund said, who declined to elaborate how a P3 would work for the tunnel. "It is something we have to look at for the project."

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