Traffic Forecast: 2035

All of us who have sat in traffic waiting to cross the George Washington Bridge can attest to the number of freight trucks surrounding them. With only a few options to get across the Hudson, this freight adds to these already congested and aging crossings and connected roadways.

If you think it's bad today, just wait until 2035! Recent data suggests that for a 54-county New York/New Jersey planning area, nearly 690 million tons of freight moved to, from, and within the region by truck and rail – and 93% was by moved by trucks. By 2035, tonnage is forecast to increase to more than 860 million tons – an increase of 26% – and 92% will still be moved by trucks.

Without needed improvements to the region's highway and freight railroad networks and systems, the region will experience even worse regional highway congestion and even greater travel delays—a trend which could threaten the economic vitality of the greater New York/New Jersey region. The worst traffic day today will be the best day is 2035.

The Cross Harbor Freight Program is an important step in helping to keep the region's surface transportation system flowing, now and through the year 2035!

How Can I Be Informed?

- Visit the project website **www.crossharborstudy.com**
- Sign up for e-news/e-alerts related to the project
- Take part in public meetings – the PANYNJ plans to reach out to communities along the possible rail alignments throughout 2011
- Participate in public hearings for Draft EIS (anticipated Fall 2011)
- Questions? Contact: Laura Shabe
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NEWSLETTER

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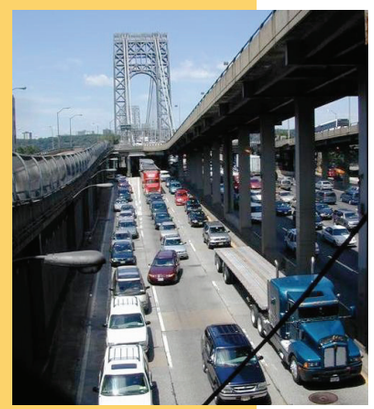

What is the Cross Harbor Freight Movement Program?

Today, it's common to experience 45 minute delays at the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels or the George Washington Bridge. The region's severe highway congestion undermines our economic prosperity and harms public health. If no action is taken the situation will worsen. Projected double-digit growth in consumer demand for goods movement and continued dependence on trucks using already overburdened roads will create additional energy consumption, air quality challenges, congestion gridlock, and safety concerns.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), are undertaking the Cross Harbor Freight Movement Program in an effort to improve the movement of goods across New York Harbor and the lower Hudson River. PANYNJ is the sponsor for a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) study that will evaluate a range of alternatives to improve the movement of goods in the region by enhancing the transportation of freight across New York Harbor. FHWA serves as the lead Federal agency.

What is a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement?

Federal agencies must comply with NEPA before they make decisions about actions that result in adverse effects on the human and natural environment. NEPA requires Federal agencies to determine if their proposed actions may have significant adverse environmental effects and to consider the environmental and related social and economic effects of their proposed actions. The NEPA process calls for the evaluation of reasonable alternatives to a proposed Federal action; solicitation of input from organizations and individuals that could potentially be affected; and the presentation of direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts.

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NEW YORK

CROSS HARBOR FREIGHT PROGRAM

NEW JERSEY

What is a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement? (cont.)

A Federal agency must prepare an EIS if it is proposing a major action significantly affecting the quality of the environment. "Tiering" refers to a staged process where general matters (such as program or policy statements) are first covered in broader environmental impact statements (referred to as Tier 1 or programmatic studies) and then subsequent narrower statements or environmental analyses (referred to as Tier 2) concentrate solely on individual site-specific projects. This approach is appropriate when the sequence of analyses is from a program, plan, or policy environmental impact statement to a program, plan, or policy statement of lesser scope or to a site- specific project. Tiering is appropriate for the Cross Harbor Freight Program to first focus on general transportation modes and alignments and regional economic and transportation effects in a Tier I EIS.

The Cross Harbor Freight Program alternatives include different modes of freight movement (rail, truck, waterborne) as well as management alternatives to maximize the utilization and efficiency of the existing freight transportation network. The Tier I process will focus on selecting the mode(s), alignment(s), and logical termini for those alternatives that best meet the stated goals and objectives. Therefore, the analyses in the Tier I EIS are mainly tailored to support corridor-level decision-making.

The Tier I EIS for the Cross Harbor Freight Program will result in a Record of Decision (ROD) which will identify the preferred alternative or alternatives that will advance and be analyzed in greater detail in Tier II. If the Tier II analyses identify significant environmental impacts, specific mitigation measures will be included.

How Will the Alternatives be Evaluated?

There are five major steps in the Cross Harbor Freight Program Tier I process before the ROD is issued. These are: scoping, fatal flaw analysis, screening analysis, detailed evaluation, and preparation of the Tier I EIS. The five steps are intended to winnow the number of alternatives through a comprehensive evaluation process in order to select the alternatives that will be further evaluated in Tier II.

During **scoping**, public information sessions are held to gather comments from the public and other agencies. This feedback helps determine the project goals and objectives, range of alternatives to be considered, and the scope of issues to be examined. The purpose and need will also be refined during this step based on input from all interested parties.

The list of alternatives identified after scoping then proceeds to the **fatal flaw analysis**. Each alternative is evaluated against criteria to determine its feasibility. Criteria include relationship to the goals, engineering and technical feasibility, institutional feasibility, and input from the public and agencies during scoping. Clearly infeasible alternatives are eliminated from further consideration.

Alternatives that are not fatally flawed advance to the **screening analysis**, where they are tested against the goals and objectives. A key component of the screening analysis for the Cross Harbor Freight Program will be the evaluation of alternatives in a mode choice model. This model will provide estimates of future freight flows by mode for each alternative—an important measure in determining a given alternative's ability to meet some of the project's key goals. Alternatives will also be screened based on other broad qualitative criteria.

The result of the screening analysis is the further reduction of alternatives, which are then carried forward for the **detailed evaluation**. The alternatives are evaluated for potential regional and localized effects based on more rigorous quantitative measures. Specifically, they will be evaluated to determine their potential effects on transportation networks (regional rail and highway networks), operational and engineering requirements (right-of-way, yard, facility, and infrastructure requirements), the environment (range of social and environmental conditions), and economic and financial conditions (cost and benefits, financial value to the railroads, various revenue streams, and funding needs).

Alternatives that are not eliminated by the fatal flaw analysis, screening analysis, or detailed evaluation will then become part of the Tier I EIS, the fifth and final step in the process. A draft of the EIS (DEIS) is first published for public review and comment. The Cross Harbor Freight Program Tier I DEIS is anticipated to be completed in summer of 2011, with public hearings in the fall of the same year. Public and agency comments and input will be evaluated and considered in drafting the Final EIS (FEIS). It is anticipated that the Tier I FEIS will be published in spring of 2012.

Lastly, a ROD will be published, with a selection of alternatives recommended for further evaluation in Tier II. The Cross Harbor Freight Program ROD is anticipated to be available in the summer of 2012.