

OPINION

A job for Engineer Pete: How Secretary Buttigieg should fix the Hudson tunnel

By DAILY NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD

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We and others have said it over and over again: In dealing with a pandemic, follow the science, not the politics. Likewise, in dealing with the gigantic \$30 billion proposed Gateway plan for passenger rail under the Hudson, follow the engineering, not the politics. Which means listen to the engineers.

National Engineers Week is the perfect time to hear from real tunnel builders. This is the 70th annual commemoration, tied to George Washington's birthday and honoring his surveyor days. And just as old George would want to see the evidence on the best way to solve a problem, so must young Pete Buttigieg, the secretary of transportation, and key new figure in this long-running saga involving New York, New Jersey and Amtrak.

Fix the tunnel first, then dig a new one. (Office of Gov. Cuomo)

The 1910 Hudson tubes were waterlogged by 2012's Superstorm Sandy, as Secretary Pete will see when he takes up Sen. Chuck Schumer's invite for an inspection visit from the clean inside of Amtrak's big-windowed theater car. Having walked around in that dirty tube when Gov. Cuomo made his video plea for help to President Trump, we can attest that the tunnel must be fixed.

But what's the best, most efficient, most economical and quickest way to get it done? Implement permanent repairs immediately while continuing planning to dig a new \$9.8 billion tunnel for future growth, or wait years for the new tunnel and only when it's done, rehab the 1910 structure? We know what George would do.

Columbia and Cornell engineers say that repair-in-place works, having consulted with the MTA on the L train. The MTA's engineers and their contractors proved repair in place works, having successfully done so with the L and now the F. The engineers from London Bridge Associates concluded in their thorough report that it's the world standard and would apply splendidly to the Hudson tubes and offered eight different options, none requiring that long wait for a new tunnel.

Pete, when you come up, also tour the L and read the LBA report. Then fix the tunnel. Now.

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