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## **Statement of MNRCC Chair Randy Glucksman Before the MTA Board Metro-North Committee July 20, 2015**

Good Morning. I am William Henderson, Executive Director of the PCAC speaking on behalf of Randy Glucksman, Chair of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council and the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA. He has asked me to deliver this statement because he is out of town.

When I last addressed you on April 28, I said that I was very concerned about the proposal of NJ Transit to implement several rail and bus service cuts, one of them affecting Pascack Valley Line riders, and requested that you pursue all means to preserve Pascack Valley Line Train #1601, the 12:45 AM departure from Hoboken. I also stated that the other Metro-North lines (east and west of the Hudson) all have service until nearly 2 AM, and with the NJ Transit proposal, Pascack Valley Line service would end with the 10:42 PM departure from Hoboken. How can be this fair to riders who pay nearly \$300 for a monthly rail pass?

In the past week I had discussions with senior Metro-North staff people and Rockland County's board member, and I came to the realization that the concept of Metro-North continuing this train was not going to happen. I attended the July 15, NJ Transit board meeting and spoke again about retaining this train. Nearly two-dozen other speakers also testified against the service cuts and 9% fare increase, but this was all to no avail because the NJ Transit board voted to approve the package unanimously.

So what can be done for Rockland County riders who because of employment, attending a game at Madison Square Garden, seeing a Broadway show, or simply dining out or visiting friends prevents them from being at Secaucus Jct. at 10:55 PM? My solution, as detailed below, is to use the money that Metro-North pays toward this train and must be refunded by NJ Transit for canceling Train #1601. These monies would be used to institute a special express bus departing from Secaucus Jct. several minutes after the arrival of the connecting trains from NY Penn Station and Hoboken.

This express bus would operate directly to Pearl River, NY, entering the NJ Turnpike at Exit 15X, which is adjacent to the Secaucus Jct. station and continue via the NJ Turnpike to I-80 and the Garden State Parkway up to Exit 172 (Grand Ave. Montvale) and eastward to Kinderkamack Road, which becomes NYS Route 304. The Pearl River station just is one block away. Other local roads will bring this bus to the Nanuet and Spring Valley stations. Because this bus would also pass by the Montvale station, NJ Transit could be asked if they would like the bus to make a stop, and of course, they would have to pay for this privilege.

In order to implement the service, I suggest that the MTA Bus Company be given this task and in turn contract it to Transport of Rockland. There is many precedents of MTA contracting work to other bus operators. The present Tappan Zee Express operator Brega Bus is based in Rockland County, and due to the late hour, there is equipment in the form of Tappan Zee Express buses available for this work, which would keep the costs of providing this service to a minimum.

Because NJ Transit has stated that the last day that Train #1601 would operate is September 30, I took the liberty of speaking with the Rockland County Acting Transit Director and one of his staff last week and briefed them on my proposal. If implemented, and I sincerely hope that it is, because time is of the essence, so I asked them to approach Brega Bus and start a dialogue about costs and other related issues.

In my discussions with Metro-North staff, another option was proposed, which I found to be a non-starter. However, I applaud their efforts. Under this option, displaced riders would use Hudson Line service to Tarrytown and transfer to a Tappan Zee Express bus. Using the current schedule, the last connection would be via the 11:47 PM train from Grand Central Terminal, which arrives at Tarrytown at 12:32 AM. There is an exceptionally long wait of 20 minutes for the bus and there is no shelter available during cold or inclement weather. Would any of you like to do this?

That does not in any way equal the soon-to-be-canceled 12:45 AM train from Hoboken. An additional Tappan Zee Express run would be required to accommodate those riders. This proposal also does not consider the additional expense and time that a rider who works in New Jersey would have in order to get to Grand Central Terminal. The fare structure poses yet an additional problem. Riders with monthly or weekly west of Hudson tickets are permitted to ride the Hudson Line at no extra charge if they have a NY Penn ticket. Hoboken ticketholders would have to pay a step-up fee but what would be done for those who use one-way or reduced fare tickets?

Another reason this is a non-starter is the current TZX routing only serves one of the three stations – Spring Valley. How would riders be returned to Pearl River and Nanuet to get their cars to go home? Although Nanuet is listed as a “stop” for the TZX, it is located 1.5 miles away, I drove it last week and in daytime I would not walk that distance, never mind doing this past midnight. The Pearl River station is several miles away. Some accommodation would have to be made for these riders.

Having been employed in the transit field for over 40 years, I am not in favor of replacing rail service with a bus; but in this case clearly there is no other economic alternative.

With just 18 inbound trains and 19 outbound trains (soon to be 18), Rockland County is already underserved by rail service and my request to you is that you act on my Secaucus Rockland Express proposal expeditiously, because it's the right thing to do.

Thank you.