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## **Metro-North and Long Island Railroad Committee Meeting March 21, 2015**

Good morning. Last week commuters in the metropolitan area, including our Port Jervis and Pascack Valley Line riders were spared from an NJ Transit strike. I appreciate the efforts that Metro-North's staff made to provide alternate services and to also accept all tickets from West of Hudson Metro-North stations.

On Wednesday March 16, four days ahead of the strike deadline, I addressed the NJ Transit Board of Directors on behalf of our riders and stated that in case they did not know, commuting is stressful, and urged them to reach a settlement sooner rather than later.

To say that the region's riders dodged a bullet would be an understatement because NJ Transit admitted that only about 40% of their daily ridership would have been able to be accommodated by the alternative services. You may recall that in October 2014, Amtrak reported that the then-104 year-old North River Tunnels connecting NY Penn Station with the Secaucus Jct. Station would require major repairs due to Superstorm Sandy damage from 2012. Although there is no immediate date for undertaking this work, there needs to be a high-level conversation on this side of the Hudson River about what would happen if one or both tunnels were to be suddenly removed from service. Our West of Hudson riders using NJ Transit and Amtrak riders would be in a very similar situation as they would have been if a strike had taken place last week.

To provide redundancy in cross-Hudson rail travel, serious consideration must be given to an extension of the A Line to Secaucus Jct. Please think of the planning that went into your strike contingency plans and the huge economic impact the loss of travel across the Hudson River would have on the region and the entire northeastern United States.

Thank you.