



MNRCC

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Statement of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council to NJ Transit

May 20, 2015

Good evening. I am Randy Glucksman, appointed by the Governor of NY State to represent rail Rockland County commuters as a member of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council, which is a component of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA. At the present time I am the Chairman of both Councils. I also have also worked for more than four decades in the transit industry from my start in train service to management.

I am greatly concerned over your proposal to eliminate two trains, one being Train #1601 (12:45 AM Hoboken). As you know, there are just 18 eastbound and 19 westbound trains that serve NY State riders on the Pascack Valley Line. Only the Atlantic City Line has fewer trains.

The previous train (#1647) departs from Hoboken two hours earlier at 10:42 PM. On a few occasions I have needed to stay in Manhattan past 10:42 PM and without the 12:45 AM train I would not have had a viable transit option to get home. Riders attending sporting events use the 12:45 AM train when games run into overtime. One rider who frequently attends games at Madison Sq. Garden told me that without this later option, he would be constantly looking at his watch so as not to miss the 10:35 PM train out of Penn Station in order not to be stranded. This would take away his enjoyment of being at the game. Others spending an evening in Manhattan or elsewhere for dinner, or theater also benefit by retaining this train on the schedule. After interviewing a number of commuters, the consensus is overwhelmingly that they would not be happy if this late-night train option was taken away.

Please permit me to digress for a moment. I want to introduce another problem with the Pascack Valley Line schedules. It is the existence of additional 2+ hour service gaps in mid-morning and early afternoon, that often make the service for me and likely others, not a viable option. If anything, the Pascack Valley Line should have increased service, not decreased service.

This leads me to ridership, which has been trending up across the nation, and it is very troubling that NJ Transit is looking to reduce service. In order to keep late-evening ridership, the presently scheduled last trains must be retained. According to the latest Metro-North Committee report, ridership on the Pascack Valley Line for the year 2014, increased by 12.2% compared to the previous year. In conjunction with the previous May 2010 fare increase, the Pascack Valley Line lost several trains. Metro-North added two expresses but Train #1600 has not been returned to the schedule. Why should Bergen and Rockland Country riders be treated as second-class citizens with respect to rail service provided by NJ Transit?

The NJ Transit Board should look across the river to see what the MTA has accomplished. Also in the spring of 2010, due to financial issues, there were significant cuts in LIRR, Metro-North, subway and bus service. During the intervening years, virtually all services have been restored and new services added. **The MTA has learned that fare increases coupled with service**

cuts are a losing combination. Please let me repeat, **The MTA has learned that fare increases coupled with service cuts are a losing combination.**

We all know that it is good policy to use public transportation, so New Jersey residents need to ask their governor why he is again punishing transit users, who are doing the correct thing by using public transportation. In 2010, transit riders saw their fares rise by an average 25% but car commuters saw no such increase. Raising the tax on gasoline has support nationally among voters as reported on April 30 by Express/Metro. 71% of those polled agreed if the revenue would be dedicated to improving maintenance, while 64% were OK for safety improvements and 52% for reducing air pollution. I frequently fill up my cars in New Jersey and would not mind an increase in the gas tax.

This past Friday evening I was at GCT and saw an unbelievable number of young people arriving on trains, and I can assure you that they were not looking to leave at 10:42 PM. Every one of your northern New Jersey rail lines has departures from NY Penn or Hoboken after midnight, the latest being the 1:22 AM to Trenton, and the Pascack Valley Line should not be an exception.

In many situations, the best result is a compromise, however in the case of Train #1601, there can be no compromise, very simply put, the train must remain on the schedule. To eliminate Train #1601 would be a very egregious decision.

Thank you.