

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:**

George Musser: (201) 936-0396 (973) 746-0757

### **OFFICIALS AND RESIDENTS CALL FOR WEEKEND TRAIN SERVICE ON MONTCLAIR-BOONTON LINE**

NEWARK, June 10 — Montclair Mayor Jerry Fried spoke before the NJ Transit Board of Directors this morning to advocate weekend train service on the Montclair-Boonton train line to serve the communities of Newark, Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, Montclair and Little Falls. He presented letters in support of weekend service from the local congressional delegation, state legislators, and mayors of towns along the line.

Among the supporters are U. S. Senators Frank Lautenberg and Robert Menendez; Congressional Representatives William Pascrell and Donald Payne; State Senator Nia Gill; Assembly Representatives Sheila Oliver and Thomas Giblin; Essex County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo; Bloomfield Mayor Raymond McCarthy; Glen Ridge Mayor Peter Hughes; Little Falls Mayor Mike DeFrancisci; and Montclair State University President Susan Cole. Newark Mayor Cory Booker has also provided verbal support.

“This important step has been ‘coming soon’ for over a decade and the time for it is right now,” Fried says. “We have many residents who work on weekends, students who would use the service, and others who would love the convenience and cost savings of leaving their cars at home to travel into New York and Newark.”

The Montclair-Boonton line is the only train line in the New York Metropolitan Area that does not operate on Saturdays and Sundays, causing widespread inconvenience. NJ Transit initially promised to begin weekend service in 2007 but, citing a shifting set of reasons, has continually pushed back the initiation of service.

Fried presented a proposal that calls for the inauguration of hourly weekend service between Montclair State University and Hoboken using diesel trains, thereby circumventing all of NJ Transit’s stated reasons for indefinite postponement of the service. To address the concern that electrical power has to be shut off on the line on weekends during upcoming work to replace the Bloomfield Avenue rail bridge, he proposed that weekend service would initially use diesel locomotives. In addressing the concern that Hudson River Tunnel capacity is limited on weekends because of an ongoing reconstruction project, the proposed service would initially operate to Hoboken with timed connections at Newark Broad Street station so that riders could easily transfer to Manhattan-bound Midtown Direct trains.

In a letter to Richard A. Sarles, Executive Director of NJ Transit, Senator Lautenberg urges that the operator of New Jersey’s rail passenger service “positively consider requests to institute [weekend] service.” He notes that “this service would offer important options for area residents to utilize mass

transit for various activities such as work or entertainment and help us meet our goals of getting cars off the road.”

The lack of weekend service has proved to be a major nuisance for commuters working on the weekend; residents visiting cultural attractions in Manhattan and Newark; Montclair State University students; and city residents doing the reverse trip to visit friends, family or attractions in area towns. And by encouraging driving, it is more difficult for the state to meet its environmental goals.

“My work often necessitates me to meet with clients on weekends in the city,” says Kevin Allen, a graphic designer living in Montclair. “It would dramatically increase my productivity if I could commute in on NJ Transit on weekends.”

Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. writes: “Having the service will be of benefit in plethora of ways – from allowing visitors easy access to the communities to visit friends or family, to attend a Montclair event or sample a Township restaurant.” He adds: “The ongoing delays of weekend service must be addressed, for it also impacts the overall value of the Townships’ real estate – especially when other County towns do have these upgrades.”

In her supporting letter, Oliver writes: “I am besieged by correspondences and calls from constituents urging me, as their legislative representative, to strongly urge NJ Transit to institute a limited form of weekend service on the Boonton line as soon as possible.”

Summarizing the proposal, Donald Payne, who represents the Tenth District in the U. S. Congress writes, “Everyone wins with the expansion of service and this plan should move from discussion to action.”

**[Attached is the proposal in detail and a comprehensive discussion of the issue. Permission can be given for it to be used as an op-ed article.]**

## **WEEKEND SERVICE ON THE MONTCLAIR-BOONTON LINE**

**Mayor Fried's Proposal for the Implementation of Weekend Rail Service:** New Jersey Transit to begin operating trains between Hoboken and Montclair State University every hour on Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays. This service would be operated using diesel locomotives and push-pull trains, and would make convenient connections with Midtown Direct electric trains at Newark Broad Street station.

**Background:** For the last five years the public in our towns have been awaiting the start of weekend rail service. During that period New Jersey Transit has told us to be patient, saying (to paraphrase) that "service will begin next year as soon as construction projects, like Newark Broad Street, are completed." The latest excuses are (1) the lack of slots in Amtrak's Hudson River tunnels because of ongoing weekend maintenance, and (2) the dangers involved with electrified catenary during the forthcoming construction project on the Bloomfield Avenue bridge.

We have developed a proposal that obviates each of these objections, as the weekend service we propose NJT operate will not run through Amtrak's tunnels, and would use diesel locomotives, allowing power to be shut off during construction. Thus the weekend bridge construction will be no different than many other DOT bridge projects, for example, the reconstruction of the Route 46 bridge over NJT's mainline to Paterson, where frequent weekend service is maintained.

### **Summary of Arguments in Favor of Weekend Service:**

#### **Need and Desire of Residents and Communities**

- It is more than a convenience
- Many commute to jobs on the weekend
- Equity: Monthly commuters already pay for it
- Easier to host family members and visitors from other communities
- Better to have teenagers take the train rather than drive
- Allows pre-teens to go to New York safely
- Access to Newark Airport and both Amtrak and other New Jersey Transit trains
- Access to Meadowlands events and commercial offerings
- Access to Newark attractions: e.g. PAC, Bears & Eagles Stadium, Library, Prudential Center

#### **Health of Community as a place to live (Quality of Life)**

- Increase in Home Values
- Environmental Benefits
- Retain Empty Nesters and Seniors who need easy access to New York and other venues
- Mobility for Senior Citizens
- Mobility for people who cannot drive or afford autos
- Reduce traffic on local roads and highways leading to New York
- Increase safety for visitors returning home after meals and drinks

## **Promotes the health of Community's tax base (restaurants, entertainment, retail businesses)**

Convenient access by patrons from other towns and cities  
Encourages residents of New York to come out  
Encourages students at Montclair State to utilize offerings of nearby communities  
Supports Bloomfield Center Redevelopment  
Among the venues accessible by rail  
    Montclair Art Museum  
    Farmers Market  
    Wellmont Theatre  
    Montclair State theatres and stadiums  
    Bloomfield entertainment venue  
    Large number of restaurants and clubs

### **Equity**

Monthly ticketholders already pay for it  
It's the only line in the entire New York Metropolitan area that lacks weekend service  
We were promised that weekend service will begin 7 years after the Montclair Connection built

### **Miscellaneous Points**

Increase use of MSU and Bay St. parking lots  
NJT currently moves equipment along the line on weekends

### **Detailed Expansion of Certain of these Items:**

#### ***The regular commuters from our towns want it.***

**Many do not work only from Mondays to Fridays.** Many work on weekends. Many of our residents who are employed in New York, Newark or on the Hudson River waterfront do not work on traditional Monday-to-Friday schedules, for example, Saturday to Wednesday. And many of those who work on a traditional schedule have to go to their offices on a Saturday or Sunday.

**Many want to use their Monthly tickets more than five days per week.** Commuter tickets are expensive. Many of our residents want to use them to travel on weekends at no extra cost, just like their compatriots who live in adjacent communities, like Clifton, Passaic, East Orange and Orange, as well as in the rest of the state. On occasion, workers have to go to their offices on a Saturday or Sunday.

**Many would like alternatives to expensive airport taxis.** Weekend train service would provide convenient access to Newark Airport and Amtrak trains on Saturdays and Sundays.

**Many people reverse-commute from Newark and New York on weekends.** Note how crowded the buses are on Saturdays and Sundays.

#### ***The viability of our towns require it.***

**Equity.** Many people in our towns believe they are being discriminating against, as ALL other New Jersey rail lines (and indeed all other rail lines in the Tri-State area) offer weekend service. They feel they are just as entitled to weekend service as other people in New Jersey.

**Real Estate Values.** Real Estate Brokers in our towns believe they can sell homes and rent apartments more easily if 7-day-per-week rail service is offered.

### ***Environmental Benefits.***

**Traffic.** Weekend service will remove automobiles from our streets on Saturdays and Sundays, when people are outside. The reduction in polluting automobiles will allow for a greener atmosphere, as well as provide more safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.

**State environmental goals.** Our towns would like to contribute to New Jersey's goals for reducing our carbon footprint, and mass transit provides one solution.

### ***Improved Quality of Life.***

**Leisure Time travel.** Not only do our residents want to avail themselves of leisure opportunities in New York and Newark, they have friends and relatives who live in New York City or along the Hudson River waterfront who would like to visit them. Weekend service will make it easier for travel to and from these venues without the bother and danger of using automobiles.

**Spur of the moment traveling.** Trips that could be made as opportunities present themselves. When residents have to worry about automobile congestion or parking, they become limited in their opportunities to make the best use of their time.

**Access to Meadowlands.** NJT has announced service to the Meadowlands from Connecticut on certain Sundays. This rail service will operate directly to the Meadowlands from Hoboken or Secaucus. Why should train riders from Connecticut, who will change trains at Secaucus, be able to ride to the Meadowlands for Sunday events, while residents of Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, Montclair, and Little Falls cannot?

**Access to Newark cultural institutions.** Many people would like to patronize Bears games, Prudential Center, NJ-PAC, and the Newark Museum without driving.

**Travel by teenagers.** Local parents would be grateful if their teenage children had good travel options other than driving. Weekend trains at night on other lines are frequently crowded with young people.

***Business Benefits for Local Merchants.*** Weekend service will attract more people to shopping and entertainment locations in our towns, including restaurants, theatres and retail stores. Venues such as the Wellmont Theatre and its surrounding services, as well as the emerging businesses in the downtown Bloomfield redevelopment district, would benefit from weekend service. This would also benefit those without automobiles, which include many who reside at schools, colleges and universities in the area.

***Benefits for Montclair State University.*** The appeal of Montclair State University would be enhanced if it could indicate that it has full time access by rail to New York City, Newark Airport and other locales throughout the State. Many Montclair State students live in dormitories near the line and would like to leave the campus on weekends, both for entertainment and for family visits. This is especially important on Sundays, when those who go home for the weekend return to their student housing.