



## **New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers**

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### **PRESS ADVISORY: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **U.S. Surface Transportation Board petitioned to halt plans to curtail Princeton Branch (Dinky) rail service.**

The New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (**NJ-ARP**) and the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) jointly filed a petition today with the United States Surface Transportation Board (STB) to halt New Jersey Transit (NJT) and Princeton University from cutting back the Princeton Branch from its current in-town terminal. **NJ-ARP** and NARP contend that the proposed action usurps the jurisdiction of the federal agency over abandonments of railroad lines in interstate commerce. The petition asks the STB to declare its jurisdiction over the Princeton Branch, known locally as the Dinky, and to require that any reduction in its length be undertaken only with its express approval.

The proposed curtailment of the Princeton Branch, which will move the Princeton Station further away from the Borough of Princeton's commercial center, while ostensibly to facilitate the development of an arts & entertainment complex on railroad land, is also designed to provide unimpeded access to a University parking lot at the expense of the over 2,000 daily riders of the Dinky. Relocation of the station stop and abandonment of the historic station will inconvenience rail passengers by adding a further 700 feet to the distance they must navigate from Nassau Street and, in the case of disabled passengers, a further 1,100 feet.

According to Phil Craig, a Director of **NJ-ARP**, "Much more is involved than cutting back the track by 460 feet, which is what the University has asked the public to believe." The current station is approximately 1,300 feet from downtown Princeton; the new location would be 2,000 feet by foot from Nassau Street and a half-mile from Palmer Square, Princeton's focal point. "Moving the Princeton Station downhill and away from the population center," said Craig, "would be to the detriment of NJ Transit's passengers, most particularly the disabled, senior citizens and – because of isolation of the proposed new station location – women (and men) who use the train at night. The longer uphill walk will be especially difficult during inclement weather, when many passengers have to slog through snow, ice or rain." The effect of moving the Princeton station to a less convenient location will most assuredly result in a loss of passengers, which will reduce the economic viability of the rail service and would also inhibit its future extension directly to Princeton's Central Business District.

The Princeton Branch is an integral part of the national railroad system. NJ Transit operates 84 trains on weekdays (58 on weekends) on the Princeton Branch. Tickets for these trains are sold at Princeton and other points to New York City, Philadelphia and other out-of-state locations. The Dinky connects at Princeton Junction with NJT trains to New York City, Newark Airport and Trenton, as well as to Amtrak trains serving the Northeast Corridor and other communities throughout the United States.

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Jack May, Vice President of **NJ-ARP**, said that one of the STB's functions is to protect the public interest in preserving valuable transportation assets. "The University and the railroad grew up together," he said, and "there is no reason why the University cannot accomplish its goals while preserving the Princeton Station in its current, accessible location." "NJ Transit is the guardian of the interests of New Jersey's traveling public," he observed, and "it should not be attempting to hand Princeton University this valuable public transportation asset." The public's right to safe and convenient mass transit is at stake.

The STB petition asks New Jersey Transit and Princeton University to immediately cease all actions related to the abandonment of a portion of the Princeton Branch until they have obtained authority from the Surface Transportation Board and all litigation is settled.

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The New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers is a statewide consumer rail passenger organization devoted to the improvement of transit service. It was established in 1980 by concerned New Jersey residents who wanted a greater voice in deciding the future of transportation in the state.

It is joined in the STB petition by the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), because the proposed curtailment of service will have a deleterious effect on rail passenger travel throughout the United States due to the connections between the Dinky and Amtrak.

NARP is the only national organization speaking for the users of passenger trains and rail transit. It has worked since 1967 to expand the quality and quantity of passenger rail service in the U.S. Its mission is to work towards a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice Americans want. Its work is supported by over 22,000 individual members.

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