

## ***NJ-ARP VP Jack May's report on 06/24/13 NJT Board Meeting***

***NJ-ARP*** Director Phil Craig and I attended today's NJ Transit "Telephonic" Board Meeting. Four board members were physically present, including Chairman James Simpson. Executive Director Jim Weinstein also attended in person. The remaining Board members were connected by telephone.

Phil Craig and I both spoke against NJT's plan to transfer property to Princeton University in exchange for other property and cash to effectuate a curtailment of the Princeton Branch's service and facilities. My statement to NJT follows this report. Five other speakers, three of them lawyers from the Princeton area, also spoke against the project, emphasizing that because of existing litigation and yesterday's ***NJ-ARP/NARP*** petition to the Surface Transportation Board, the agenda item should either be rejected or tabled for a future discussion and vote. The WORD version of our press release also follows below.

All speakers spoke passionately and presented a large number of reasons why this "land grab" should not be approved, and some of these reasons are provided below. Not a single individual provided testimony in favor of the property transfer. After the speakers finished, Jim Weinstein presented the Agenda Item, indicating it will "enhance the customer experience." It was quickly moved and seconded, and approved unanimously by roll call (roll calls are not usually done).

It was quite obvious and apparent, from the lack of discussion, that this Board is a "rubber stamp" body, as so many items were there that should have been questioned and considered. I believe this characterization will be accepted as a credible value judgment, and it will haunt the NJT Board in the future.

After the vote the meeting was quickly adjourned. There were no smiles on the faces of the NJT Board and Executives as they quickly left the Board Room.

The only member of the press that was present was Mike Frassinelli of the *Star Ledger*, who interviewed Phil and me after talking to Joe Durso of NJT.

Here is the gist of some selected comments by the other speakers. I believe many are members of *Save The Dinky*.

**Roger Martindale** (lawyer and former Borough councilman): Because of existing disparities in appraisals, the value of the land to be exchanged needs to be examined more carefully, including on a basis of outside investor interest (specifically Railroad Development Corp.) There is no mention in the paperwork of the fact that Railroad Development has expressed interest in buying the branch. A vote is premature.

**Virginia Kerr** (officer and attorney representing *Save The Dinky*): Table the Action Item! Indicated that the Chancery Division ruled that the passengers have standing to argue the meaning of the 1984 (sale) contract. A big victory for *Save The Dinky*. She added that New Jersey Transit should hold a formal hearing on the issue to allow the public to comment and present all the facts.

**Eden Quainton** (lawyer): Adequate notice of the meeting with receipt of all referenced documents is not in compliance with statutory obligations (48-hour rule). First notice given late Friday afternoon before a summer weekend, and final documentation not sent until Tuesday. Many of the referenced documents (maps) are illegible. Four lawsuits pending in Superior Court plus **NJ-ARP/NARP** petition. The Action Item contains substantial transportation policy implications, which are not mentioned. It should not be passed.

**Yina Moore** (former Princeton Borough Mayor, alumna of Princeton University and former NJT employee): Read letter into the record by Jenny Crumiller who is a current Princeton Council member. Time is Money; the monetary value resulting from the inconvenience generated by a longer distance to be traversed by passengers from downtown should be calculated and included. Yina also stated that the proposed parking lot will be a nightmare, as its entry/exit will be totally congested and probably unsafe.

**Anne Neumann** (Princeton resident and plaintiff in many of the lawsuits): The easement NJT plans on giving up is valuable. The inconvenience of the longer walking distance is disastrous for disabled folks like her, especially the grade that has to be overcome to return from the proposed new station.

I think this is the best we could have done considering the culture of New Jersey Transit, and am quite happy over it.

Jack May

**Statement follows on next pages as does NJ-ARP press release.**

**Jack May, Vice President**  
**New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers**  
**Statement at New Jersey Transit Board Meeting**  
**June 25, 2013**  
**[Jackmay135@gmail.com](mailto:Jackmay135@gmail.com)**

Last week I was informed that NJ Transit was holding a Special Board Meeting today to discuss and vote on “Property Interest Transfers” between it and Princeton University. The first thing that came to mind was why was this so important and urgent that it could not wait for the next regularly scheduled board meeting on July 11, where it could be discussed publicly in front of the press and the usual attendees. The supporting documentation on NJT’s website does not seem to indicate why this is so urgent, so I’d like an answer to the question, “why is this so urgent that it could not wait until July 11?”

Your document indicates that this issue may be discussed in Executive Session. I also would like to know why this cannot be discussed with total public disclosure. If it is going to be in Executive Session is there something that the Board members want to hide from the public? Like the amount of money New Jersey Transit is to be paid for this valuable land? Thus I’d appreciate knowing now whether this will be discussed in Executive Session.

In the Benefits section of the Agenda Item, there is a side remark, The University also intends to relocate the existing Dinky station approximately 460 feet southeast of the current station to facilitate construction of the project. That phrase, “facilitate construction,” leaves the impression that the station will be moved for only the construction period, which we all know is patently false and misleading. No, it will be permanent.

The Benefits section also presents a list of all the good things New Jersey Transit would like the public to believe about the results of the project, but conveniently does not mention any downside, totally not acknowledging the complaints of the Dinky riders, your existing customers, and the Save The Dinky organization. You well know about their complaints, specifically that the relocation of the station will increase the amount of time and distance pedestrians will have to walk from downtown Princeton to reach the new station. It will create major inconvenience for passengers, which will inevitably result in a lower number of riders.

The inconvenience is so great that NJT has indicated it will create a shuttle bus to bring passengers to the station and take them back to Nassau Street. I’m sure these riders, who already transfer to other trains at Princeton Junction, will really enjoy a second transfer, getting on and off buses. I suspect many will say why not run the buses all the way to the Junction, which I’m afraid is exactly what New Jersey Transit and Princeton University want--to sabotage the Dinky and get rid of it forever..

The New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers exists to encourage the use of efficient rail transportation. Thus, as a result of this proposed degradation of service and abandonment of facilities. our organization, joined by the National Association of Railroad Passengers, has filed a petition with the federal Surface Transportation Board to, in effect, prevent abandonment of the inner part of the railroad without going through due process. That is, holding hearings and weighing the effects of the relocation and abandonment, especially with regard to Public Necessity and Convenience. We ask the NJT and Princeton University cease and desist from making any physical changes to the rail line until the STB makes a ruling and all litigation is settled. I’ve attached our Press Release to this statement for the record. Thank you.

# ***NJ-ARP***

**New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers**

P.O. Box 271, Raritan, N.J. 08869-0271

[njarp@nj-arp.org](mailto:njarp@nj-arp.org)

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

June 24, 2013

### **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.

(o - v - e - r)

The Princeton Branch is an integral part of the national railroad system. NJT 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.

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 are 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.

#####

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.

PRESS CONTACTS:

Jack May	(973) 746-0757	jackmay135@gmail.com
Philip G. Craig	(973) 787-4642	philgcraig204@yahoo.com
Lester Wolff	(201) 573-0146	lwjm@optonline.net