



New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers

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<http://www.nj-arp.org/>

An open letter to New Jersey Senators Robert Menendez and Cory Booker

July 15, 2015

Hon. Senator Robert Menendez
578 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Senator Cory Booker
359 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Secaucus Junction Rail Station, Secaucus, NJ

Dear Senators Menendez and Booker:

On July 10, 2015 a story ran in the *New London Day* that Connecticut Senator Richard Blumenthal convinced Amtrak to continue accepting Shore Line monthly tickets on Acela Train #2151 between New London and New Haven without any reimbursement from the state of Connecticut. (<http://www.theday.com/article/20150710/NWS01/150719950>). That concession translates into a \$55 per trip fare being offered to those who buy a \$204 monthly Shore Line ticket. Assuming that monthly ticket is used for 20 one-way trips, that \$204 monthly ticket is worth \$4,400 in Acela fares.

We are the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (**NJ-ARP**), an independent rail advocacy organization established in 1980, and we have been asking Amtrak for almost five years to please stop at least a few of its trains at an imposing railroad station right here in New Jersey, that was built at considerable cost: – the **Senator Frank R. Lautenberg Rail Station at Secaucus Junction**. To date, the only Amtrak revenue trains that have ever stopped at Secaucus were a few trains on Superbowl Sunday in 2014. Surely, an edifice named after one of Amtrak's staunchest supporters should have an Amtrak Quik-Trak ticketing kiosk and several trains in each direction on the Northeast Corridor stopping at this magnificent station to serve passengers on America's national rail network. In 2013 we ran an editorial in one of our own publications – supported by 2010 census figures – that stated Amtrak was ignoring 1,413,981 potential customers in 64 New Jersey and 12 New York communities that have direct rail access provided from 87 New Jersey Transit and 12 New York MTA stations to the Secaucus Junction station. Those citizens are federal taxpayers whose taxes are used to fund Amtrak, and they deserve better.

Please understand that the purpose of this letter is **not** to have the Amtrak concession to Connecticut rescinded. **NJ-ARP** has no qualms about Amtrak doing a good deed for the small number of passengers that take advantage of that offer. While we applaud Senator Blumenthal for being able to extract a concession from Amtrak, **NJ-ARP** is extraordinarily vexed that we have been unable to get any traction with Amtrak whatsoever, and all we have heard are excuses stating that **one** additional stop by just a few Regional and Keystone trains per day in each direction would take up more slots and bollix up the Northeast Corridor. It's time that Amtrak stop considering New Jersey as "flyover country" while at the same time asking more and more from us financially. We would note that **NJ-ARP** has not asked for **Acela** trains to stop at Secaucus, but surely, three or four Regional Amtrak trains in each direction could stop at Secaucus Junction. Amtrak is already quite lenient about stopping at Bridgeport, CT and New Rochelle, NY where there is plenty of service provided by Metro-North. Stopping at Secaucus Junction would save potential passengers from the aforementioned 76 markets the inconvenience of having to travel into New York City to catch an Amtrak train when that same Amtrak train will run right through Secaucus Junction. Having Amtrak stop some trains at Secaucus may turn out to be a revenue-positive move for Amtrak.

Since on-line ticketing is readily available on Amtrak's Web site, an Amtrak Quik-Trak ticketing kiosk on the central concourse level would readily suffice. The cost to provide service at Secaucus Junction would be absolutely negligible, and marketing the availability of through-service via Secaucus Junction within those 76 communities on local media, social media or even on in-station billboards would most likely create new customers for Amtrak as well as New Jersey Transit and New York MTA's West-of-Hudson division.

We therefore respectfully urge you to join our cause and to use your considerable influence on Capitol Hill to lobby Amtrak to finally do what is right for the citizens and taxpayers of New Jersey and adjacent Orange and Rockland Counties in New York, and convince Amtrak to provide service at the Secaucus Junction station as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Lester W. Wolff, Director
New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers
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