

# ***NJ-ARP***

**Annual Report 2009-2010**

November 6, 2010

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## **President's Message**

It's a time when the Garden State and the nation know it's painfully addicted and hobbled ... and still wants to return to a glorified past that probably never was, and certainly can never truly be. That is clearly the case with New Jersey's transportation priorities. Rail and transit riders were the first – the very first! – to see their costs increase under the guise of “no new taxes” as 2011 arrived and a new governor took office. Speculation abounds over using state transit monies to plug the Transportation Trust Fund's highway needs. The addiction is painful, almost stupefyingly so.

And yet ***NJ-ARP*** volunteers soldier on and, in the process, fought with honor—I use the term deliberately—to stymie a rail project, Access to the Region's Core, which bore little resemblance any more to its name. The project was terminated, leaving all of New Jersey (not just the rail advocates) to notice how little transit planning is left to pursue. ARC's stripping of clothes reveals that no other plans are in the offing.

Many citizen advocates will insist ***NJ-ARP*** is the dark evil in this – after calling us “irrelevant” and “misguided” for years previous. They can think and believe that. ***We've held to the higher standard.***

And though ARC sapped much of our ability to deal with other issues (as reflected by the content of this annual report), we did strive to address other issues and needs. We're still maneuvering to push forward the extension of HBLRT into Bergen County's Northern Valley. HBLRT will shortly reach Bayonne's 8th Street Station – continued progress even as New Jersey Transit cutbacks curtail effective weekend service.

Rail passenger service (exact mode still in flux) to Woodbury in Gloucester County is being bumped from one unwanted foster parent (DRPA) to another (NJT), but the idea lives. Led as always by ***NJ-ARP*** Cape May Liaison Paul Mulligan, rail service on the Cape May Branch is garnering the attention (and ridership) it deserves. Back in the Princeton area, pro-rail local citizens determined to “Save the Dinky” and block Bus Rapid Transit (“just like light rail, but cheaper!” the claim continues to be made) are getting support, and advice, from ***NJ-ARP***, led by Director Jack May.

Whether it was “interim busways” during the 1990s or “Bus Rapid Transit” today, whether it's undercounting ridership for the Lackawanna Cut-Off or undermining efforts to advance rail on the Cape May Branch or Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex rail passenger service, if it's counterproductive to passenger rail, ***NJ-ARP*** can, has, and will speak out. Your membership dollars, our membership efforts, deserve no less.

—Douglas John Bowen

## **Treasurer's Report**

Despite a healthy surplus for fiscal year 2010, we have been deeply affected by the economic downturn in our country. Our total treasury balance last year was \$2,535; thus, our fiscal reality forced us to make some painful decisions in order to contain costs. Those decisions have resulted in a bank balance today of \$8,570 as of 9/30/10.

Our income decreased by \$575 over last year making our cost containment measures that much more urgent. The membership decrease is tied to the current economy. The economy has caused some members to not renew. Other members have retained their membership in *NJ-ARP*, but at a reduced level.

On the expense side, we had made the tough decision to forego the annual TransAction Conference in Atlantic City and we virtually cut all street festivals this year with the exception of the Chatham Green Fair. With kudos to Les Wolff, we continued making the *NEWSLETTER REPORT* and *NEWSLETTER PLUS!* available electronically thus cutting our printing and postage expenses by 12% over last year.

We incurred no cost for the annual Patron's Luncheon as food and drink were donated by our host as well as *NJ-ARP* members who wish to remain anonymous.

As always, I would like to thank our members for their generosity. This year, especially, to those who donated a total of \$250 in memory of the late Al Cafiero. Those donations have been put to good use. In addition, *NJ-ARP* is, indeed, very grateful for its various Directors, Officers and other members who incur expenses out of their own pocket without ever requesting reimbursement. Thank you all for your contributions.

—Len Resto

## Membership

Between November 2009 and August 2010, eight batches of renewal notices were sent. In comparison to the identical period a year ago, our membership has gone down from 265 to 245, but the renewal rate increased from 80% to 85%. The net loss of 20 members includes 2 deaths and 12 new members. Most new members come via the Internet. Of the 245 members, 78% reside in New Jersey, which has been a relatively constant percentage over the years, so the net loss of membership is proportionate to both in and out-of-state members.

Initial annual renewal notices are sent within a couple of weeks of when the last such notice was sent in the prior year, or when a new member joined, not when we received the last check. A 2nd renewal notice is sent from the Treasurer two months after the initial notice to those who have not renewed, and now we have had to add a third renewal notice at an additional expense for those who have not opted to get the newsletters via the Internet. The member will be dropped a month after that. If someone wants to renew at a different time of year, we must be notified explicitly in writing. We will not “take the hint” by receiving the renewal months late. It is also a waste of our volunteers’ time and *NJ-ARP*’s treasury money to send out additional renewal notices. We encourage those with e-mail access to get the newsletters as a PDF document to save us printing and postage effort and expenses and to save themselves \$5 to \$10 per year.

We still maintain a \$10-\$15 membership category for seniors and students, and can handle an annual waiver on a case-by-case basis for financial or personal hardships.

Membership benefits are cumulative as status is upgraded. Patron as well as Sustaining members get the *PLUS* newsletter too. Since Family memberships can be of two or three interested parties in the household, Sustaining and Patron members can be double- or triple-counted, but only if the renewals invoice slip says so in the name area.

—Joe Versaggi

## **Access to the Region's Core (ARC)**

### **ARC ends a 17-year journey**

As October 2010 progressed, conventional wisdom was that New Jersey's Governor Chris Christie would pull the plug and sink New Jersey Transit's (NJT) "Access to the Region's Core" (ARC) \$8.7 billion tunnel and 34th Street Manhattan terminal project once and for all on Monday, October 25th, and bid adieu to a costly endeavor. As configured in the end, it seemed to satisfy no one except, perhaps, Senator Frank Lautenberg (D - NJ), certain democratic members of the state Senate and Assembly, some planners at the *Regional Plan Association* (RPA) and the *Tri-State Transportation Campaign* (TSTC), project managers at NJT, and a few New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) bureaucrats— but in *NJ-ARP*'s opinion probably not most of the riders for whom, ostensibly, this undertaking was taking place. RPA and TSTC, so-called transit advocacy groups, receive their principal funding from the consultants, construction unions and other such fellow traveling organizations. However, if New Jersey newspaper columnists, such as Paul Mulshine of the *Star-Ledger*, and Larry Higgs and Bob Ingle of the *Asbury Park Press*, can be relied upon, it would seem that the taxpaying public, especially once they understand that the final due bill could add any where from \$2 billion to \$5 billion in additional outlays to this project and, worse, that the state's taxpayers would be forced to absorb this excess, became less enamored with the trans-Hudson River rail project. (This cost overrun estimate takes into consideration the Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project [\$775 million for NJT's two-track bridge share of the \$1.7 billion two-bridge total], the Hunter flyover—where NJT's Raritan Valley line joins the Northeast Corridor—and other south of Newark, N.J. improvements) .

### **Is/was the ARC tunnel even needed?**

As usual over these last many years, transit "planners" seem to have lost their complete and entire focus on the reasons—the "why"—such a project was initiated in the first place and this has resulted in the riding public being included almost as an incidental afterthought. ARC was conceived in a time of economic ebullience, when each real estate sale saw prices escalating exorbitantly and job growth in Manhattan— the "region's core"— was ever increasing. As you will read in a quote from a recent *Weekend Wall Street Journal* article below, net job growth in Manhattan has been static for the last 40 years, with new positions balancing off job losses. Worse yet for New Jerseyans, that state's residents only hold 12% of the island's employment. So the real question is (or was) WHY is this project being advanced in the first place, given the recession and employment? But if you read and listen to the wails, moans and groans of the

project's backers, one would be apprised that 6,000 construction-related jobs and 45,000 permanent ones will be created, 22,000 cars will be removed from the highways and New Jersey's real estate values will rise. It's all mere hypothecation and projection, absent of any factual data that would give it any credibility.

ARC began some 17 years ago when the *Port Authority of New York and New Jersey* (PANYNJ), NJT, New York's *Metropolitan Transportation Authority* (MTA), consisting of Metro-North and the Long Island Rail Road, collaborated on a comprehensive proposal, embodied in a Scoping Document, to connect the area's three states and regional rail operators into a seamless entity involving through running between any two points on the region's vast mass transit commuter rail network. It all sounded too good, and as history will judge, it was. As presently configured, ARC is nothing more than a three track over three track "deep cavern" dead-end, stub terminal below Manhattan's 34th Street for NJT use only without any intercity rail (Amtrak) component. And to make it worse, because of the 34th Street cavern's depth, there is no guarantee that the tracks will EVER be extended to, or in the vicinity of, Grand Central Terminal. To add insult to injury, Amtrak has responded and is proposing its own Hudson River tubes for its use only - thereby reinforcing the narrow parochialism that has infected the transit operating agencies in the New York metropolitan area.

What makes the ARC project more desultory is the way the politicians have painted themselves into a politically divisive corner with little (or no) way out. This is emblematic of the way that Washington is working - and a definite disgrace and insult to the vast amount of citizenry who only want to be left alone to live their lives in peaceful harmony without intrusion from "Big Brother" in Washington or any of the other state capitals. The trans-Hudson River Rail Project is now supported by most (if not all) Democrats and opposed by most (if not all) Republicans. How was this once all encompassing project thrust into the limelight and made so confrontational? Up until the gubernatorial election of 2009 in New Jersey, both the state's Democratic and Republican leadership gave their unqualified support to ARC. At a meeting as recent as March 2010, which I arranged for NARP, *NJ-ARP*, the Lackawanna Coalition, and ESPA, newly appointed NJT Executive Director Jim Weinstein offered that the recently seated Christie administration supported the ARC project as approved by the Federal Transit Administration in its Record of Decision (ROD). (Ironically, in a meeting held in Washington, D.C. in August 2009 that I arranged and attended along with Regional Rail Working Group Chair George Haikalis and NARP Director of Communication Sean-

Jeans Gail, FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff told us that only one of the two state's Governor's— N.J.'s Corzine [at the time] and New York's Paterson— could influence the ARC plan.) But then New Jersey's newly minted, "Young Turk" Governor examined the state's finances and was appalled by what he saw. Out came the meat cleaver and nothing was sacrosanct. State pensions, teachers' salaries and benefits, all came under the microscope for critical examination. And the results were not happy ones.

### **The Governor says No (twice).**

So, some might say that the ARC tunnel was in line for its comeuppance. And so it came to pass that NJT Executive Director Weinstein issued a 30-day stop-work order on Saturday, September 11, followed by a press conference on Tuesday, September 14 at which Governor Christie admitted that he was the individual that ordered the project be temporarily be halted. The Governor said, "It went from \$5 billion to \$8.7 billion in what was clearly a rush by the Corzine administration to have gold shovels and put them in the ground and try to get Corzine re-elected." "And I'm concerned that their evaluations of the price of this project was a successful as his re-election campaign was." Then on Thursday, October 7, Governor Christie announced that, "“The ARC project will be terminated and staff will immediately begin an expeditious and orderly shutdown of the project.” His press release continued saying that, "Based on calculations by the Federal Transit Administration and New Jersey Transit [NJT], the final budget is expect to top \$11 billion and could exceed as much as \$14 billion, compared to the project's current budget of \$8.7 billion. [All] costs above \$8.7 billion must be absorbed by the State of New Jersey..." Of some immediate concern is that the state will have to reimburse Washington some \$300 million of the \$478 million that the transit agency has already spent on preliminary engineering and construction.

### **LaHood, Lautenberg attempt a rescue mission**

So serious does the Washington establishment take this project, the largest infrastructure undertaking in the country and the largest in New Jersey's history, that U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, a Republican in the Obama administration's cabinet, immediately called Governor Christie and asked if the Governor could meet with Secretary LaHood in Washington the very next day, Friday. Christie is reported to have told LaHood that he could come to Trenton. And that's exactly what happened. USDOT Secretary Lahood flew in his Gulfstream IV private jet to Trenton for a 2:30 p.m. meeting on Friday, October 8. An excellent account of that meeting was described in a *Newark Star-Ledger* article and just shows how the game of politics is played. While no hard details were leaked from the meeting, nothing really was changed by the get together —

the Governor's statement reinforced his previous comments that the ARC plan was too expensive and not financially doable. (Press reports suggested that LaHood told Christie that the total outlay for the ARC project would be in the range of \$10.6 billion to \$13.5 billion, which includes the NJT share of the Portal Bridge project—a two-track high level structure. The remaining three-track bridge is to be on Amtrak's account.) But he did agree to take a second look. The ink was barely dry on the press releases before senior New Jersey Sen. Lautenberg rose to the challenge and asked the Port Authority for more money to keep ARC on track. In a letter to Executive Director Baroni and Chairman Coscia, the Senator said, "It is essential for the Port Authority to indicate its willingness to make the investments necessary to complete this project." "As one of the two local partners on the project, the Port Authority promised to contribute to cost overruns in a March 2009 Project Work Agreement between it and NJ Transit that read: 'Should the Tunnel Project's cost exceed \$8.7 billion or should the parties secure less than \$3 billion in New Starts, both parties agree to work together in good faith to secure additional funding sources for the tunnel project'"

### **Divert state matching dollar portion of ARC?**

While I was in attendance at the NARP midyear meeting in Grand Rapids, Mich., a *Weekend Wall Street Journal* article on October 16-17 entitled, "Christie is Right About the Hudson River Big Dig", authored by Steve Malanga, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute. He explains that any cost overruns above the \$6 billion in dollar commitments by the Port Authority (\$3 billion) and the FTA (\$3 billion) would have to be absorbed by "Jersey taxpayers," that the Transportation Trust Fund "... is already entirely devoted to servicing previous debt," and that the FTA "...estimated the final price tag would actually be nearer \$14 billion." Of the \$8.7 billion, N.J. is (was?) to contribute \$2.7 billion. But with the price at \$14 billion, the Garden State is on the hook for \$8 billion and that's why Governor Christie was worried.

Malanga compares the NJ Transit effort to Boston's "Big Dig" where the cost escalated from \$2.8 billion in 1982 to nearly \$15 billion and that "Bay State taxpayers had to pony up half of that because, as in New Jersey, the state was responsible for most cost overruns." "The Big Dig, completed in 2005, remains controversial because it drained away money that might have gone to other more modest road projects. Mr. Christie fears that would happen in New Jersey, where roads are already rated by the Reason Foundation's Performance of State Highway Systems as among the worst in the nation. Improving them might be a better way to spend the money." And, maybe not.

NARP saw Christie's efforts at possibly diverting former rail allocated funds to roads as a dangerous precedent if the ARC is ditched. In response, President Ross Capon sent a letter to Governor Christie saying, "We oppose use of funds designated for the rail tunnels to help address the state's ongoing Transportation Trust Fund problem. Transfer of tunnel funds could provide only a temporary TTF 'solution' but would jeopardize the entire tunnel project. Also, transfer of investment from rail to road is at odds with the quality-of-life, environmental, energy, economic and security needs of New Jerseyans and all Americans."

Capon also explained that restoring the connection between the new tunnels and the existing tracks and platforms at Penn Station could make the project eligible for federal high speed rail funding. NARP has been a continuing and strong advocate for expanding rail capacity in the region - and part of the reason the Association's leadership has been so adamant about including an intercity Amtrak link to Moynihan/Penn Station.

The *WSJ* article concluded saying that, "The Christie administration is still reviewing the project, and it may yet find that the tunnel is worth doing if the state can protect taxpayers against cost overruns and make a more realistic determination of the tunnel's benefits. The governor understands the need to invest in the future through smart public works. But given the track record of mega-infrastructure spending and the profligate political structure under which this tunnel was conceived, Mr. Christie is right to take a hard second look."

And so he did. While the governor's motivations were not those of *NJ-ARP*—and should not be mistaken as the same--the outcome leaves room for *NJ-ARP* to begin again to bridge the "Hudson Ocean" with a far better, far more cohesive project.

—Albert L. Papp, Jr.

## **Bergen County Developments**

### **Pascack Valley Line**

New Jersey Transit has made additional service cuts on weekends due to “lack of riders.” Much to its credit, New York’s *Metropolitan Transportation Authority* (MTA), is still picking up the cost of some weekend trains and (justifiably) making them MTA expresses that do not stop at any New Jersey stations except the Secaucus Junction transfer and the line’s eastern end-point, Hoboken. *NJ-ARP* is discouraged by this and additional service cuts that NJT has made throughout the state without the benefit of public hearings. There have been no developments regarding additional service as NJT seems to be solely focused on the ARC project to the exclusion of all others.

### **Meadowlands Sports Complex**

NJT continues to provide service for NFL football games and other special sports events and concerts at the Meadowlands Sports Complex. The new service will come in handy as all parking for NFL games is now pre-sold with season tickets. (at least until the old stadium is completely demolished). Those without pre-paid parking *must* use remote lots and shuttle buses.

### **Parking**

NJT's Park & Ride Ramsey-Route 17 Station with 1,251 spaces is still being underutilized. NJT is actively trying to market its use as a remote lot for Meadowlands Sports Complex events. The \$4.00 daily charge (\$2.00 after 10:00 a.m. and weekends) remains in effect.

The Secaucus Junction Park-Ride lot operated by Edison Parking has increased its daily rates to as much as \$16.00 per 12-hour period or \$18.00 for 24-hours. The \$5.00 charge for parking after 4:00 p.m. and on Saturdays remains, but it is now only for a maximum of 12 hours. Sundays are now charged at the weekday rates except during special events (i.e. NFL football games and Meadowlands concerts) when the rate goes to \$20.00 per 12-hour period. In other words: read the signs *very* carefully *before* entering the lot.

—Lester W. Wolff

## **Morris & Essex Lines**

Service reductions in conjunction with unreasonable fare increases have continued incessantly. This has had a significant downward effect on ridership, more severely affecting off-peak ridership. However, New Jersey Transit has chosen to not break out ridership in a way that this becomes visible, thus claiming total ridership loss of only a shade over 2%.

Morristown and Chatham stations continue to see significant restoration work. Millburn and Short Hills are scheduled to get some attention in the near future.

More capable ALP-46As have been deployed in service and this has slightly alleviated the performance problems of multilevel vehicle (MLV) trains on the M&E. In addition more of the trains appear to be operating with single level equipment but with ALP-46 power thus alleviating some more of the problems of keeping up with schedules.

The Gladstone Branch was again subject to summer weekends “bustitution.” This was for continuing repair and upgrade of the track and electrification system on the line.

Track replacement between Summit and Denville continued apace through the summer with the laying of new concrete ties to replace the old wood ties. Work on the westbound track has been completed and it appears that the work on eastbound track has been put in abeyance, with just wooden tie replacements being carried out for now, perhaps a reflection for the current budgetary atmosphere.

In addition the Stimulus Package funded upgrade of the signaling system on the Morristown Line allowing bi-directional operation on both tracks all the way between Summit and Dover is mostly complete. A new crossover interlocking named “Drew” has been put into service between Chatham and Madison. This will reduce delays considerably when one track needs to be taken out of service for maintenance.

The possibility of transferring from M&E to NEC using the Newark LRT has all but been negated by service reduction on the LRT line, to make it virtually unusable. So now the only real option is to do the transfer at Secaucus after paying the New York City fare, and that, using a schedule that is mostly New York oriented, is not really serving those that want to travel intra-state using such transfers.

—*Albert L. Papp, Jr.*

## Amtrak and New Jersey

Amtrak on the NEC saw the completion of one year of service to Lynchburg, Va., on a Regional, and reportedly the train is doing so well that it has not needed any of the subsidy that was planned for and funded by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The *Keystone Services* to Harrisburg continue to do well. Unfortunately most of them do not stop at Metropark, which would be a very useful stop to add to this service considering that it also fulfills the role of the Clockers in providing New Jersey to Philadelphia service.

Regional Service trains are now running with 8 cars on most trains and occasionally even with 9 or 10 cars. *Acela Express* service remains ever popular and ridership on both have been on the upswing, except for a brief downturn due to the recession.

Amtrak has just ordered 70 new electric motors from Siemens based on the Vectron platform, though the current photos show them in the body of EuroSprinters. These motors will replace all existing Amtrak motors, the AEM-7 DCs first, followed by AEM-7 ACs and then the HHP-8s. The transition to all new fleet will take place over a 3 to 4 year period starting in 2013. This is expected to increase reliability of Amtrak electric service and will likely reduce the need for changing power to diesel on certain long distance trains in Philadelphia due to shortage of serviceable electric motors.

On the long-distance front, Amtrak has placed an order for 130 new single level cars, which will be used in trains to Florida, New Orleans, and Chicago, most of which run through New Jersey.

In addition, there is a proposal to reinstate what used to be *Broadway Limited* and later *Three Rivers* through service from New Jersey to Chicago in the form of the transfer of 4 cars – 2 Coaches, 1 Food Service car and one Sleeper from the *Pennsylvanian* to the *Capitol Limited* in Pittsburgh. This will eliminate the need for the unpleasant change of trains at Pittsburgh for those who are traveling from New Jersey to Chicago by that route.

There is also a proposal to make the *Cardinal* daily thus providing an additional daily, though slow, service to Chicago from New Jersey. Eventually a section might split off from the *Cardinal* at Indianapolis and continue on to St. Louis thus providing direct service to St. Louis from New Jersey, a service that disappeared with the discontinuance of the *National Limited* many moons ago.

—Jishnu Murkerji

## **Northeast Corridor Line**

Like all other lines the Northeast Corridor (NEC) Line has also seen reduction in service, and trains are distinctly less crowded, especially off-peak, caused presumably by the dramatic rise in effective fares.

Notwithstanding the trials and tribulations of financial problems there have been a couple of positive developments on the NEC. Union Interlocking has been upgraded with new moving frog switches, and the extended connection from track 1 to A has been put into service thus making it possible for more cars of eastbound NEC trains to platform at Rahway. Union Tower has also been taken out of service and everything that it controlled transferred to CETC.

This just leaves Dock and its subsidiary control points yet to be moved to centralized control. Work on making that move happen is quite advanced. In preparation what used to be controlled by Hudson and hence remotely by Dock has been split into Hudson and Rea. This took place last year. Dock itself is being split into Dock East and Dock West. The final closure of Dock is expected within a year, thus bringing down the curtains on tower control on the NEC.

Power and Movable Bridge problems have dogged this line throughout the year. In addition to those there was an incident of a train passing a signal at danger at Portal and destroying a switch, thus bringing considerable delay on the corridor last month. And then of course there was the NJ Transit derailment within Penn Station's A interlocking thus shutting half the station and all of Empire Corridor down for half a day.

Fares for traveling from New York City to Newark Airport were reduced from the exorbitant levels that they were raised to in the last fare increase. Apparently the drop in ridership caught someone's attention where New York City was involved. But residents of New Jersey who mostly fund the service get to pay the exorbitant fares anyway. No fare reductions for them.

The new Trenton Transportation Center is finally up in service with retail food outlets fully operational. However, the problems of poorly timed connections between NEC and the River LINE have not yet been adequately addressed by NJ Transit. Matters regarding the ARC project and associated Portal Bridge replacement are discussed elsewhere.

—*Jishnu Mukerji*

## Hudson-Bergen Light Rail

Overlooked amidst other larger and louder rail issues during 2010, Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit was actually growing, as a one-mile extension, begun during 2008, took shape south of Bayonne's 22<sup>nd</sup> Street to a new 8<sup>th</sup> Street Station, returning passenger rail to the site of long-gone predecessor Central Railroad of New Jersey. Projections of the extension's opening in December 2010 now appear to be premature, but it's likely the extension will see revenue service sometime in 2011.

Beyond the symbolic value of New Jersey rail growth at a time when state officials appear uninterested in such matters, the extension offers true "walk to station" access for a key portion of Bayonne, itself already the most pro-LRT municipality in New Jersey. And, conventional-wisdom doubts notwithstanding, it sets up the infrastructure for a day – perhaps way in the future – when HBLRT might cross the (new) Bayonne Bridge into Staten Island.

As noted last year, ridership on the X89 bus, operated by New York's *Metropolitan Transportation Authority* from Staten Island and linking directly to HBLRT at Bayonne's 34<sup>th</sup> Street Station, continues to hold its ridership levels, offering transfer options for New York residents working on New Jersey's Gold Coast (as well as to Manhattan points). The bus/rail link has encouraged Staten Island officials to identify study funds (state and federal) for exploring, in the borough's own words and vision, "an HBLRT extension to Staten Island." Not "LRT," but specifically "HBLRT" – in effect, a bi-state HBLRT extension – over whatever replaces or augments the Bayonne Bridge in the future. Its plans and ideas may need tailoring and tweaking, but Staten Island has a vision, and it includes Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit.

During early 2010 New Jersey Transit, albeit quietly, also pursued interest in the proposed extension of the West Side Avenue Branch in Jersey City, which would grow to reach state Highway 440 and a 100-acre redevelopment site. *NJ-ARP*, led by Treasurer Leonard Resto, kept this growth option open even when New Jersey City University – heeding advice from "experts"— – asserted more HBLRT wasn't needed.

Still bandied about as potential extensions: a route departing from near Harsimus Cove Station (in Jersey City), running west along the ex-Pennsylvania Railroad viaduct to points west. And we mean west. Hudson County officials, led by the *Hudson County Improvement Authority* (HCIA), began soliciting support during 2009 to tie together

HBLRT with Newark Light Rail (Newark City Subway). HCIA has addressed various Essex County organizations to drum up interest, as well as the *Lackawanna Coalition*. HCIA envisions extending LRT from Newark's Branch Brook Park Station in north Newark east along the fallow Orange Branch (ex-Erie), connecting with the unused Boonton Line branch in Kearny (with a possible park-n-ride near Route 21 along the Passaic River). Further east the route would link with Secaucus Junction, then proceed through the Bergen Arches

Other growth visions include a new stop at 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Park/Willow streets in Hoboken.

Little was heard concerning a streetcar link, advanced in 2009 by well-known rail authority William Vigrass as the "Feasibility of Rail Access to Liberty State Park" in Jersey City. That plan would reactivate rail access to the beautifully restored – but "dead history" hobbled – ex-CNJ Terminal via "a Heritage Trolley transit service within the park to connect NJ Transit's Hudson-Bergen Light Rail line with the CNJ Terminal and the ferry landing for Ellis Island and Statue of Liberty Island boats."

**But streetcar proposals did surface in Hoboken**, as a transit-friendly mayor met unofficially with local residents and county pro-rail forces to consider a local streetcar adjunct to HBLRT, likely linking Hoboken Terminal and the proposed 16<sup>th</sup> Street Station through some eastern-side (or riverfront) route.

Such capital plans could not counterbalance the slashing of HBLRT weekend service, particularly north of Hoboken, by New Jersey Transit in its cost-cutting measures enacted in midyear, essentially eliminating meaningful rail service frequency north of Hoboken Terminal (and bypassing Hoboken Terminal entirely on runs from Tonelle Avenue).

—*Douglas John Bowen*

## **Sponsorships**

### **“Montclair Connection”**

*NJ-ARP* in 2010 continued to maintain its sponsorship of the softball team “Montclair Connection” in the belief that symbolism matters – following the establishment late last year of weekend service for the ex-Lackawanna portion of the Montclair/Boonton Line, if not yet traversing the actual Montclair Connection itself.

*NJ-ARP*’s softball sponsorship helps the organization gain access to township officials and other supporters. The team uniform incorporates *NJ-ARP*’s white logo on the green baseball cap, and black *NJ-ARP* logo against a green and white dress shirt. The shirt logo also includes the words “New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers” in small letters – large enough for the rail-curious underpinned by the slogan, “The Fastest Way Home.” Still at the helm as manager is Chris Isidore, a user of both the real Montclair Connection and competitor DeCamp bus services, and a valuable source for local “opinion” often not making it to “official” venues.

[*NJ-ARP*’s sponsorship of the “Montclair Connection” is funded by contributions from individual *NJ-ARP* members, and not from the *NJ-ARP* treasury.]

### **Adopt-A-Station (Mount Olive Station)**

*NJ-ARP* Sussex Liaison Tim Apgar continues to oversee *NJ-ARP*’s sponsorship of the Mount Olive Station, located on the Montclair-Boonton Line just across the county border in Morris County.

Apgar, at times assisted by other *NJ-ARP* volunteers, keeps the station platform and surrounding area clean, alerts NJ Transit to needed infrastructure upgrades and repair needs, and continues to add new plantings as part of *NJ-ARP*’s commitment to offer a welcome environment at the station.

—Douglas John Bowen

## **Publications**

Last year *NJ-ARP* began offering an expanded *NJ-ARP* publishing package, augmenting *NJ-ARP*'s *NEWSLETTER REPORT* with the odd-month *NEWSLETTER PLUS!*, available to *NJ-ARP* Sustaining and Patron members, mostly online (though available in print for a requisite fee).

This year, we have added another new publication, *EXTRA!* to the fold to handle the overflow from our other publications. *EXTRA* is released periodically, as warranted, as an online publication. It features reprints of articles that we feel would be of interest to members, as well as some original articles submitted by *NJ-ARP* members.

Also new this year for all of our publications, we are e-mailing an additional *printer-friendly* Portable Document File (PDF) that has shaded backgrounds and color removed at the suggestion of *NJ-ARP* Member Steve Lanset. This is environmentally friendly as it saves our members a lot of ink. Finally, we continue to migrate more of our circulation over to e-mail, thereby containing printing and mailing expenses.

—Lester W. Wolff