

***NJ-ARP* Annual Report**

2008-2009

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President's Message

It really is about the passenger—in our realm, usually the rail rider. Heading west on a very early Saturday morning Nov. 14 to meet **NJ-ARP** members in Montclair—the first such Saturday train in nearly five decades—your President observed four passengers returning from a night on the Big Town making an across-the-platform transfer at Newark-Broad Street, destination Glen Ridge. The four made the move with ease, as if they had always had the access.

That spells success in **NJ-ARP**'s book, and that was before dedicated **NJ-ARP** volunteers cataloged the rest of New Jersey Transit's Saturday debut of service on at least a portion of the Montclair Branch. Sure, the “numbers” were from Montclair to Midtown Manhattan (making that oh-so-supposedly difficult transfer), or to a lesser degree to and from Hoboken. But riders now had another transport choice, or more accurately a series of choices. Passenger rail offers that. Residents of Montclair, Glen Ridge, and Bloomfield—and other seeking to access those places—have responded.

Victories such as that during in 2009—three major ones, with two in quick succession—were all the sweeter, given that **NJ-ARP** continued to take its political lumps as well. **NJ-ARP**'s critics thought they had our organization on the mat as 2009 began, reveling in our supposed “irrelevance” and our lack of success (sometimes all too true!) in this advocacy battle or that. If nothing else, 2009 proved the old adage that “showing up” sometimes matters more than brilliant insights or dazzling political swordsmanship.

Sure, we continue to struggle with two huge issues—MOM and Access to the Region's Core Mass Transit Tunnel. The lengthy and detailed entries entered on both issues by **NJ-ARP** Ocean Liaison Dan Green and **NJ-ARP** Director Albert L. Papp, Jr., respectively, reflect **NJ-ARP**'s determination (and frustration, yes, that too). For argument's sake, for the moment let's call them **NJ-ARP** “defeats”—though in real life we're not yet done with either. We still hold our positions, not as intransigents but as an organization with a *consistent* approach. We've been forthright and honest and, in our view, honorable in so doing. We won't apologize for that. ***We've held to the higher standard.***

That still leaves **NJ-ARP** with three new feathers in our figurative hat this year: light rail as the candidate of choice for Bergen County's Northern Valley; rail passenger service (exact mode still in flux) to Woodbury in Gloucester County; and weekend service to at least a portion of the Montclair/Boonton Branch. Irrelevant? **NJ-ARP** helped nudge all three forward, though work remains. Intransigent? Our flexibility in all three arenas says otherwise.

The success continues to be less glamorous, if just as important, elsewhere: Rail service on the Cape May Branch now once more includes service to Cape May City proper, thanks to **NJ-ARP** Cape May Liaison Paul Mulligan, working against hostile local

officials, a seemingly clueless press, and an at-best indifferent metropolitan planning organization.

Spectacular results or dogged determined staying power, we'll repeat the vow we offered last year, with gusto: We don't seek confrontation, but we've seldom shied from a fight, be it with NJT or anyone else, over what rail and transit riders need versus what "experts" and "planners" tell us they should have.

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 (still! And blatantly!) to advance rail on the Cape May Branch, if it's counterproductive to passenger rail, *NJ-ARP* can and will speak out. Your membership dollars, our membership efforts, deserve no less.

–Douglas John Bowen

Treasurer's Report

Through a significant "belt-tightening," *NJ-ARP* turned last year's significant deficit of \$2,817 to a surplus in fiscal year 10/1/08 to 10/1/09 of \$2,535. Despite this surplus, we have been deeply affected by the economic downturn in our country. Our total treasury balance last year was \$2,555; 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 \$5,699 as of 10/1/09.

Organizations tend to lose up to 10% of its membership during tough economic times. *NJ-ARP* was not immune to this trend as we lost 8% membership, down 25 members (270 versus 295 last year). Other members renewed at levels below where they were last year due to the economy. Our income decreased by \$2,000 over last year making our cost containment measures that much more urgent. Of concern is that the membership has been declining over the past 4 years from a high of 335 to our present 270. We will be taking steps with improvements to our website during 2010 in an effort to begin reversing the slide in membership.

On the expense side, we had made the tough decision last year to forgo a paid Governmental Affairs Director and that generated the bulk of our savings in expenses. With kudos to Les Wolff, we began making the *NEWSLETTER* and *NEWSLETTER PLUS!* available electronically thus cutting our printing and postage expenses by 32% over last year.

We incurred no cost for the annual Patron's Luncheon; food and drink were donated by our host as well as *NJ-ARP* members who wish to remain anonymous. By deciding to forgo this year's street festivals in MOM Country, we cut that expense from \$350 to \$75.

As always, I would like to thank our members for their generosity. This year, especially, to those who donated a total of \$400 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 Report

Between November 2008 and August 2009, 8 batches of renewal notices were sent. In comparison to the identical period a year ago, our membership has gone down from 295 to 265 and the renewal rate has declined from 83% to 80%. The late August renewals are still coming in, so the rate excludes this last batch, though we have only 35% of those. The net loss of 30 members includes 3 deaths and 12 new members. Of those, half signed up via the Internet and half came randomly via USPS from sources such as brochure distribution or membership forms on the Web site. Of the 265 members, 210 (79%) reside in New Jersey. The net loss of membership is exactly proportionate between in-state and out-of-state members.

Renewals are not only coming in at a lower rate, they are coming in far more slowly, necessitating a third renewal notice to be sent at an additional, unrecoverable expense.

Initial annual renewal notices are sent within two 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 second 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 the 3rd renewal notice. 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 nonproductive for *NJ-ARP* 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 yourself \$5 to \$10 per year. We have 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 *NEWSLETTER PLUS!*, 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

‘Mass Transit Tunnel’ [formerly known as the ‘Trans-Hudson Express (T.H.E.) Tunnel’ and ‘Access to the Region's Core (ARC)’ project]:

Throughout the latter part of 2008 and continuing through 2009 to date, *NJ-ARP*, the Empire State Passengers Association (ESPA), the Lackawanna Coalition, the Regional Rail Working Group (RRWG) - joined by the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) - accelerated their involvement to attempt to restore vital elements of New Jersey Transit's (NJT) Mass Transit Tunnel as it is now called. The groups have continued to press for a regional Manhattan rail connection between New York's Penn Station (NYP) and Grand Central Terminal (GCT), as well as for “through running” of trains between the three regional rail operators - NJT, Metro-North Railroad (MN) and the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR). This involved continuing opposition to the configuration adopted by NJT for its \$8.7 billion Mass Transit Tunnel, which now consists of a 6-track (3 track-over-3 track) pancaked, “deep cavern,” stub-end terminal 175 feet below Manhattan's 34th Street for that transit's agency's sole use. By “Putting Penn Station First,” and eliminating the “deep cavern” and restoring the deleted connection between the new tunnel bores and the existing platforms at Penn Station, not only would operating flexibility be restored, Amtrak would achieve access to the new tunnel and time would be gained to revisit the much desired rail link between NYP and GCT.

Because of changes adopted in June 2007, Amtrak intercity trains and about half of NJT trains will be permanently bared from accessing the new tunnels and be restricted to the original 1910 Pennsylvania Railroad bores thereby inhibiting operational flexibility. NJT trains using that agency's exclusive nine-mile new right-of-way will only be able to access the “deep cavern” 34th Street terminal. Tail tracks on both levels have now been pared back to 6th Avenue because of close proximity to New York City Water Tunnel #1. According to NJT, this project shortcoming will only be an impediment until the new NYC Water Tunnel #3 is finished, after which time #1 will be decommissioned and the likelihood of an eastward extension to midtown again becomes a real possibility. Most advocate groups think this is a lame excuse; in this age of terrorism, the more likely outcome is that #1 will be stored serviceable as a backup water facility. With 25 trains scheduled into 6 tracks in the peak hour (or one train per track every 15 minutes) serious concerns have been expressed as to whether NJT can reliably maintain such a service pattern on a day-to-day basis.

Let's examine the year's activities...

As 2008 near its end, the Federal Transit Administrator for Region 2, Ms. Brigid Hynes-Cherin, approved the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the tunnel project. Exceptions to that FEIS were filed by all involved advocacy organizations as well as the minority leader of the New Jersey state Senate, Thomas Kean, Jr. The minority leader also requested of the then Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters, in a letter dated December 8, 2008, that she use her good offices to secure the 2003 Major

Investment Study (MIS) 1,600 page background study that NJT has steadfastly refused to release. NARP President Capon wrote to Secretary Peters on November 21st saying, “Further, we ask you to oppose—and urge your successor to oppose—federal funding for this project so long as NJT keeps secret the documentation underlying the 31-page “Executive Summary” of the 2003 Major Investment Study. The public is entitled to all 1,600 pages of the analysis that led to the rejection of constructing a link between NYP and Grand Central Terminal and the decision to build a separate, dead-end terminal on Manhattan's west side, which many advocates believe is a waste of scarce resources.” Notwithstanding this and other comments, Hynes-Cherin signed the Record of Decision (ROD) on January 14, 2009 just 6 days before the Bush administration left office. Senator Kean's request was also denied.

As the New Year began, *NJ-ARP* Director Albert L. Papp, Jr. and Lackawanna Coalition Chair David Peter Alan addressed a high-speed rail conference in New London, Connecticut sponsored by National Corridors Initiative (NCI). Papp had an opportunity to meet with U.S. Senator Christopher Dodd who was unaware of the scaling back of NJT's tunnel project. Conference sponsor, and NCI founder, Jim RePass also put Papp in contact with form Massachusetts Governor Mike Dukakis to explain the shortcomings of the Hudson River rail project. NARP's President Capon and Professor Vuchan Vuchic penned an Op-Ed article for the Sunday February 1st Newark Star-Ledger entitled “Rail Tunnel Plan to New York is a Dead-End.” *NJ-ARP* Director Albert L. Papp, Jr. spent the entire week of February 9th to 13th in Washington, D.C. lobbying northeast legislators and their staffs in 36 meetings to inform them on the shortcomings of NJT's Hudson River tunnel project. A meeting with Anne Witt, Amtrak's strategic planning Vice President also occurred. On February 11th, Amtrak and NJT signed a letter of agreement whereby the intercity rail carrier would be permitted to increase the number of train slots from 4 to 6 per hour in the existing 1910 Hudson River tunnel in 2017 after the new NJT-only bores are completed.

An important meeting occurred on Thursday, April 30th when NARP's Capon, *NJ-ARP*'s Papp, RRWG's Haikalis, Clift, and Raleigh met with the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Roy Kienitz, Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy, David Matsuda, Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy and Beth Osbourne, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy. With an explanatory handout derived from a PowerPoint presentation, the advocacy groups detailed how the ARC project devolved from the original concept of a regional tri-state undertaking to nothing more than 6 additional stub-end tracks for NJT operations in New York City. The advocate participants explained several options to enhance the tunnel project to include, among other things; 1.) elimination of the “deep cavern” 34th Street terminal, 2.) the moving of NYC's #7 subway extension by 5 to 12 feet (as noted in the FEIS) so as to permit Amtrak and NJT trains to use either the 1910 existing trans-Hudson tunnel or the proposed new bores; 3.) the provision for an extension of tracks from Penn Station to Grand Central Terminal; and 4.) the initiation of “through running” trains to increase the capacity of Penn Station by 25%.

The previous day, the New Jersey *Sierra Club* released a press release roundly criticizing the rail tunnel project for failing to provide the promised mobility benefits for both regional and intercity rail riders. The Club noted that reliance on a century old tunnel for all Amtrak trains was not in the best interest of the riding public and the failure to connect the new tunnels to existing trackage at Penn Station would inhibit operator flexibility.

With the onset of the summer season, the Obama administration awarded \$200 million in the federal FY 2010 budget while \$48 million was provided in the FY 2009 appropriations bill. A groundbreaking ceremony was held on June 8th where it was announced that \$130 million in stimulus funding had been awarded for the project. On July 29th, the New York City Council approved the ARC Mass Transit Tunnel land use application under the City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) by a vote of 47 to 0. This had the effect of allowing construction work to begin on both sides of the Hudson River.

On Friday, August 21, ***NJ-ARP*** Director Papp, ***NJ-ARP*** member George Haikalis, and NARP Director of Communications Sean Jeans-Gail met with Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff in his offices in Washington, D.C. NARP subsequently sent a letter to Administrator Rogoff on October 1st summarizing the important points of contention; this letter was signed by NARP Chairman Chilson and President Capon along with eighteen other organizations. The letter states:

“In its decision to eliminate the connection at Penn Station, NJT has put the entire region at risk. NJT’s revised project has

- Gambled that the two existing tunnels – engineered and constructed more than a century ago – will last for another century. That is far from certain. It is certain that a catastrophic failure of either tunnel would inflict incalculable damage on the Northeast and the nation.
- Made significant expansion of regional, intercity and high speed services along the Northeast Corridor enormously – and needlessly – more expensive.
- Reduced the value of the new tunnels even to its own customers. They will not double trans-Hudson capacity as one would expect because they dead end at a limited capacity station, buried 175 feet below 34th Street that lacks convenient connectivity with other regional services.”

On September 24, ***NJ-ARP*** member and NARP Council member George Haikalis had the opportunity to talk about the tunnel project with U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood at a New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) meeting and followed it up with a letter on October 21st. In it, Haikalis states that, “Rather than uniting the region, and making it easier for travelers to choose public transit instead of crowded highways, NJ Transit’s tunnel plan is driven by that agency’s need to have a separate, disconnected terminal that is fully under their control. This makes no sense at all, and should not be funded by the Federal government.”

On October 29th, NARP President Capon wrote a letter to Vice president Joseph R. Biden requesting a meeting on three important matters, the first of which pertained to the ARC tunnel project. Capon wants the Vice President to consider advocating “The elimination of fatal flaws in New Jersey Transit’s design for two new tunnels under the Hudson River before the Administration approves additional funding and before work begins that is specific to the flaws – possibly later this year...”

On November 2nd, FTA Administrator Rogoff replied to the NARP letter by saying that, “...the Federal Government relies on the local planning process to identify the need for transportation investment in an area and gives deference to that decision. Should local decision makers wish to address the issues, they are most welcome to do so. At this time no project sponsor has approached FTA with a request to study a connection to Grand Central either from the existing Penn Station or from the ARC project to the east and north. If and when this were to occur, FTA would participate consistent with all applicable federal requirements.”

On November 3rd, New Jersey elected a new Governor, Chris Christie, a Republican, who vowed to cut back state spending. The state faces an \$8 billion shortfall in FY 2011 and by law that deficit needs to be closed. Contacts have been made with the incoming administration advising them that the state's \$2.7 billion contribution to the \$8.7 billion ARC tunnel could be completely eliminated by removing the 34th Street “deep cavern” terminal from the rail plan and revert to the February 2007 DEIS that provided access from the proposed new tunnel to the existing platforms at Penn Station. This would permit ample opportunity to review the previously discarded options including a fixed track link between Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal. *NJ-ARP* has also asked the incoming administration to “demand” that NJT provide the 1,600 page backup documentation to the 2003 Major Investment Study (MIS), a study that was funded with taxpayer monies.

A frequently asked question is the status of funding for the ARC Mass Transit Tunnel. According to NARP, an Early Systems Work Agreement (ESWA) comprises \$1.35 billion (of which half is from federal sources including the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act - ARRA). The ESWA includes a down payment of \$400 million of funding from the Federal Transit Administration (towards a \$3 billion FTA commitment), \$130 million in federal stimulus funds (mentioned above), and \$125 million in Federal Highway congestion mitigation funds. The \$400 million + \$130 million + \$125 million total \$655 million. Unidentified is the remaining \$695 million of the \$1.35 billion ESWA. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$8.7 billion; NJT has requested \$3 billion in federal dollars through the awarding of a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA), which has not yet been finalized. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has indicated it will contribute \$3 billion with the remaining \$2.7 billion to be arranged by the state of New Jersey. Of NJ's \$2.7 billion, \$1.25 is to be sourced from the New Jersey Turnpike Authority through toll hikes on the Turnpike and Garden State Parkway.

The first (minor) contract for the \$13.6 million Tonelle Avenue underpass was awarded on June 5th. The contract for the “Final Design & Construction of Manhattan Tunnels” has yet to be awarded but the three pre-qualified firms have submitted bids of between \$583 million and \$598,148,672. ***NJ-ARP*** has requested that the Christie administration notify NJT that any contract award be subject to gubernatorial oversight given the fragile state of the state's finances and our contention that the project can be “Right Sized” and still serve the needs of the riding public as detailed above.

–Albert L. Papp, Jr.

Bergen County Developments

Pascack Valley Line

New Jersey Transit, after trumpeting the return of full time, 7-day a week bi-directional service on the Pascack Valley Line, has cut service on weekends due to “lack of riders.” Much to its credit, New York’s *Metropolitan Transportation Authority* (MTA), picked up the cost of those cut trains and (justifiably) made 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. On the positive side, political and business community activists along the northern New Jersey portion of the PVL are clamoring for more trains for reverse commuters and may make some overtures to NJT to do a bit of “horse-trading” to facilitate increased service.

Meadowlands Sports Complex

After 30-plus years, rail has finally arrived at the Meadowlands Sports Complex. The new service was well received by the “football” public, but that was nothing compared to the 20,000+ that overwhelmed New Jersey Transit for a series of concerts at Giants Stadium. The public relations debacle from the first of these concerts probably hurt NJT. To its credit, NJT did change its tune after being excoriated in the press and on television and said that they will do better. Subsequent performances were handled by an influx of NJT customer service personnel at the new station as well as at Secaucus Junction, Hoboken, and New York-Penn Station.

Parking

NJT's Park & Ride Ramsey-Route 17 Station with 1,251 spaces is still being underutilized. Perhaps it is the \$4.00 daily charge that is putting people off. It would behoove NJT to experiment with some sort of discount offers, including time-of-day variants, to see if it encourages additional use.

A parking lot has been opened at Secaucus Junction. It is charging \$10.00 daily and offers a special night and weekend rate of \$5.00. Those rates, however, do not apply on days when there are football games or special events that NJT runs trains to the Meadowlands Sports Complex. On those days, the charge increases to \$20.00. *NJ-ARP* still believes that this lot encourages many NJT customers to abandon using the train at outer stations for a car ride to Secaucus and then a short rail trip into NY-Penn.

–Lester W. Wolff

Gloucester County Developments

With lots of *NJ-ARP* members helping in the background, but with much of the effort driven by official organizations such as Rowan University, in early 2009 the DRPA announced its decision for “NJ-3,” one of three rights-of-way in competition to serve Gloucester County by “PATCO-type” rail, and the only one of three options using an existing (and active!) rail right-of-way.

Better still, despite a cash-strapped budget, somehow \$500 million in New Jersey state funding has been identified for Phase 1 of the project, which would extend passenger rail service to Woodbury, the Gloucester County seat. Pennsylvania, notably, is not a factor in this ostensible “bistate” effort, and with its own streetcar and PATCO extension plans in play within Philadelphia proper, DRPA’s role in advancing Glouco rail, at best, will be in partnership with some other entity.

On June 11, *NJ-ARP* Vice President James Ciacciarelli attended one of several PATCO Public Session Meetings, with Ciacciarelli choosing an early meeting in Camden. “The format was casual with plenty of placards portraying the project; there also was a continuous-running recorded loop,” he noted. “The gathering, for the most part, was sparse but there were approximately 20+ people there from the public; many were students.”

Ciacciarelli filled out a questionnaire, then discussed matters with Envision Consultants representatives who were on hand. “Surprisingly, there were no press people, just a photographer for Envision Consultants taking pictures. I talked to [DRPA CEO] John Matheussen one-on-one. I pressed the point that the RiverLINE was a good template for use of the existing rail line in conjunction with economic revitalization of the existing municipal CBD’s. He agreed, stating that the chosen route utilizing the existing Conrail line made the most sense. Also that the [Delaware River] Port Authority had more leeway this time around as compared to 15 years ago when the state was dictating what they were to do and how to do it.”

As presented that night, the timetable for implementing Glouco rail is as follows: Planning/Engineering: 3-to-4 years; Construction: 2-to-4 years; Startup: 5-to-8 years.

The *Gloucester County Times*, in an editorial May 13, claimed “it was a bit of a shock to learn that the line won’t run as far as Glassboro at this time. The advantages are time and money. With the shorter route, and the less expensive light-rail technology, the project can be up and running in five years, officials say. There won’t be a wait for first-phase funding from the federal government, though it may be needed to extend the line to Glassboro. Officials are hopeful that can happen within 10 years.”

The newspaper, along with other local pro-rail voices, seems disturbed but resigned to the likelihood that “the new line won’t be compatible with the existing PATCO Lindenwold line, [so] Woodbury-area commuters will have to change trains to get to Philadelphia. The trip will be slower than with PATCO-like rapid transit.” But if a Glouco line can

truly tap the vast local, intrastate travel market outlined for *NJ-ARP* in 2008 by Rowan University professor John Hasse, “slow” travel times may be a nearly irrelevant point.

NJ-ARP was most encouraged to read the newspaper’s acknowledgement that something other than a “one-seat ride” still beats a NO-seat ride. “County leaders blew it in the '90s, when they caved to protesters who live near the tracks and let the state take its light rail money and put a line in Burlington County instead. Rail service is too important to our growth, too vital to helping solve another decade-plus worth of congestion, to let that happen again.” Though *NJ-ARP* exults in the success of the RiverLINE, we agree that Glouco’s chance has come again, and we hope to help it land the rail it needs this time around.

In 2010, Vice President Ciacciarelli will head up an *NJ-ARP* panel (or task force) dedicated to securing Glouco rail passenger service, with *NJ-ARP* Director Carol Ann Thomas assisting in a background role. Ciacciarelli seeks volunteers for the effort, to be patterned after *NJ-ARP*’s successful approach, which netted results during 2009 for both HBLRT-Tenafly and Montclair/Boonton weekend service.

–Douglas John Bowen, James D. Ciacciarelli

Hudson-Bergen Light Rail

How to keep growing HBLRT, and to where? That two-part question rose to the surface throughout 2009 in numerous areas adjacent to the current reach of Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit. **NJ-ARP** played a key role in advancing one opportunity, to Bergen County via the Northern Branch (*see* separate report immediately following). But other options popped up, sometimes with **NJ-ARP** assistance, sometimes ahead of us, and sometimes (as in Staten Island) outside our political sphere of influence altogether.

Meanwhile, HBLRT expansion is ongoing, begun during 2008 as a one-mile extension is under way south of 22nd Street, in Bayonne, to a new 8th Street Station, returning passenger rail to the site of long-gone predecessor Central Railroad of New Jersey. Ridership on the X89 bus, operated by New York's *Metropolitan Transportation Authority* from Staten Island and linking directly to HBLRT at Bayonne's 34th 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).

That 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," bus specifically "HBLRT"—in effect, a bistate 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.

Less certain is the status of a \$1 billion-plus plan to extend HBLRT three miles west to the Meadowlands Sportsplex via Harmon Meadow (Secaucus), cutting across wetlands on brand-new right of-way. It's still not clear to **NJ-ARP** whether the improving fortunes of a Tenafly extension are in any way linked to that. As long as the Tenafly extension is made secure, **NJ-ARP** remains ready to help with any LRT proposal, including to or from Xanadu (and we think we'll be needed, given the admittedly sketchy "plans" we've seen so far. **NJ-ARP**, pointing to the twin branch of HBLRT in the south, believes two branches of HBLRT to the north can work with the same success.

More tangible is 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. New Jersey Transit in 2009 issued a request for proposals. **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.

Also offered as potential extensions: a route departing from near Harsimus Cove Station, 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 16th Street and Park/Willow streets in Hoboken.

Streetcar links may be back in the HBLRT mix, as well. Well-known New Jersey rail authority William Vigrass unveiled a “Feasibility of Rail Access to Liberty State Park” last December, aimed at finding a way to reactivate rail access to the beautifully restored – but “dead history” hobbled – ex-CNJ Terminal on the park’s waterfront. Such an effort is worth *NJ-ARP*’s support (and we so endorse any such effort), even if just to offer a permanent home for the state’s historic railcars and engines owned by the *United Railway Historical Society* of New Jersey.

But *NJ-ARP*’s interest was piqued by an adjunct of the study, which seeks a “means to provide 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.”

Former *NJ-ARP* Legislative Agent Phyllis Elston, a primary force in the battle to secure HBLRT during the 1980s and 1990s, predicted that someday the powerful force of “galloping me-tooism” would propel HBLRT to places one could only hope for. Even allowing for the likelihood that many, maybe most, of the proposed HBLRT extensions aren’t secured, it still holds that the interest has ballooned, and it becomes increasingly unlikely that anti-rail forces and NIMBYs can succeed in thwarting them all.

–Douglas John Bowen

Hudson-Bergen Light Rail—Northern Branch

At a press conference in Ridgefield, Bergen County, on July 18, Gov. Jon Corzine and House Rep. Steve Rothman (D-9) announced that the Northern Branch will be an electrified light rail extension of the Hudson Bergen Light Rail system from Tonnelle Avenue in North Bergen to Tenafly North. *NJ-ARP* had won a major battle.

Rose Heck and Phil Craig, who were present at the event, quickly passed on the good news to Jack May and Frank Miklos, the other two members of *NJ-ARP*'s Light Rail Panel, as well as to those working behind the scenes with them, and to the *NJ-ARP* Board of Directors. Everyone was delighted over this turn of events.

Before the speakers began to make their remarks, the covers were taken off of three poster boards mounted on easels, from right to left (audience facing the lectern), and Rose and Phil could see boards with 1) a photograph of an HBLR light rail vehicle (probably at the 9th Street station in Hoboken); 2) the capital letters "BERGEN LIGHT RAIL," and 3) a map showing the HBLR extension from Tonnelle Avenue, North Bergen to Tenafly North.

In addition to the Governor and Congressman, the speakers included State Sen. Loretta Weinberg, Assemblyman Gordon Johnson, Bergen County Executive Dennis McNerney, and Ridgefield Mayor Anthony Suarez. New Jersey Transit Executive Director Richard Sarles both introduced the dignitaries and endorsed the decision as the "agency's Preferred Alternative." Numerous other political personalities were present, including Assemblyman John Rooney, Tenafly Mayor Peter Rustin, Tenafly Councilman Joseph McDermott, former Ridgefield Councilman Robert Avery, and former Bergen County Freeholder Douglas Bern. Doug Hall reported for the *Bergen News* and *Press-Journal*, while *The Record* had Karen Rouse, an assignment editor, covering the event.

All present spoke enthusiastically about the decision (whether or not they had been supporting the DMU alternative or opposing any form of rail passenger service along the Northern Branch until that morning). The decision made, all Democrats fell in line with the Governor and Congressman, while Republicans present, like Bob Avery and John Rooney, cheered the unexpected outcome. John Rooney, who was among those who stood in the VIP line to the right of the lectern, could be heard lobbying the Governor and Congressman for extending HBLR to Northvale, at the New Jersey/New York state line, as soon as the formal speeches were over.

Gov. Corzine acknowledged Rose Heck as "being in very much in favor of light rail," to which Rose responded loudly, "Governor, more than that." State Senator Weinberg also acknowledged Ms. Heck as she began her remarks. The late Al Cafiero also got favorable mention for his long advocacy of restoring rail passenger service in some form to the Northern Branch; Al lived long enough to see the decision made in his (and our!) favor.

Of course, the efforts of *NJ-ARP*'s Light Rail Panel, without mentioning *NJ-ARP* by name, were limited to an oblique comment that there were "different opinions in the community concerning technology" that were taken into account in making this decision; nevertheless, the outcome is what we sought.

After the ceremony, Rich Sarles came up to *NJ-ARP*'s representatives to shake their hands and mention that "we're on the same side now on this issue." NJT's Steve Santoro also was very gracious in his greeting, given that at times we were at loggerheads and did not make his life easy.

An explanation was offered for backing away from the DMU alternative, which was laid to the bankruptcy of Colorado Railcar, LLC, caused by the economic condition of the country [not to its own technical and economic failures that resulted in its losing money on its contracts]. Without a U.S. manufacturer of FRA-compliant DMUs immediately apparent, light rail became the only way to go, at least in some minds. In reference to DMUs, Gov. Corzine asserted, "We can no longer wait for emerging technologies that make the perfect the enemy of the good." While *NJ-ARP* might have been tempted to debate him and others about which is "perfect" for the Northern Branch and which would have been "good" in the sense of better than nothing, it is the outcome, the one we worked so hard for, that counts.

Rep. Rothman, who sits on the House Appropriations Committee, was given and took the credit for brokering the political agreement between the Governor, members of the State Legislature representing Northern Branch communities, the County Executive (who is Vice Chairman of the *New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority* and will become its Chairman in 2010), and the mayors of the communities along the line. In his speech, the Congressman said that he only found out about Colorado Railcar's bankruptcy three weeks prior and immediately called the Governor to say, "'We cannot let this drag on any longer. Let's go for light rail now.'" And Rich Sarles agreed."

Ever-astute and indefatigable Rose brought this fact to the Congressman's attention in a one-on-one meeting, setting off a chain of events that pushed over the dominoes that had been lined up politically for several years to ram through the DMU option.

NJT has submitted a revised DEIS to FTA for approval for public release, and public hearings were to be held in Northern Branch communities this fall. NJT's Sarles, in response to a question from the media, stated that preliminary engineering can begin in 2010, ground breaking in 2011, and operations about three years thereafter, i.e., in 2014 (which is at least three years before the planned opening of the Trans-Hudson Express/Mass Transit Tunnel).

To the effort that we collectively made, under Rose Heck's leadership as chair of *NJ-ARP*'s Light Rail Panel (which dates back to the February 2006 "Show and Tell" for DMUs held in Tenafly at the Clinton Inn), resulted in overturning the DMU alternative as a "done deal" because "light rail is too expensive."

Subsequently, we showed the Governor's office and NJT, at meetings that Rose arranged, that light rail with temporal-separation (time-sharing of track occupancy) was operationally feasible and could reduce the cost of light rail by several hundred million dollars--compared with NJT's position during the Warrington years that "if it's light rail it's got to be a separate double-tracked electric railway costing a half billion dollars more than DMUs that can share trackage with the CSX's freight train."

As it is, the DMU caper, announced in 2005 as a "done deal," cost the Northern Valley (and, indeed, much of Bergen County) at least four years in getting passenger service restored to the Northern Branch. But in the end, through *NJ-ARP*'s persistent presentation of the facts to whomever would listen to us, the "done deal" got "undone" and the correct solution adopted. For that, *NJ-ARP* can take some significant credit, even if we are the only ones to acknowledge our organization's role in the outcome.

NJ Transit and the Federal Transit Administration are working currently on the final details of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) mandated under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. It is possible that this document will be released by the end of this year, commencing a minimum 45-day review and comment period. If this schedule is met, public hearings may occur as early as February 2010.

The current plan calls for Hudson Bergen Light Rail to be extended from its current northern terminal at Tonelle Avenue in North Bergen, for a distance of approximately 11 miles to a new Park-and-Ride station north of downtown Tenafly, near the Cresskill border, to be called Tenafly North. The inner portion of the former Erie Railroad Northern Branch, which runs through the communities of North Bergen, Fairview, Ridgefield, Palisades Park, Leonia, Englewood and Tenafly and last saw passenger service in 1966, would be electrified and completely renovated. Double track will be installed throughout, except through the downtown areas of Englewood and Tenafly, where light rail trains will operate over single track. Nine new stations are planned as part of the HBLR extension.

The plans for light rail along this line date back to 2002, when NJT sagely dropped its original proposal for the HBLR to terminate at the Vince Lombardi Park-and-Ride lot along the New Jersey Turnpike in favor of extending it further into Bergen County over the Northern Branch—as advocated for years by *NJ-ARP* members Cafiero and Art Adams. As mentioned, *NJ-ARP* organized its Light Rail Panel in 2006, when NJT was proposing to operate FRA-compliant diesel multiple unit (DMU) shuttle trains between North Bergen and Tenafly North instead of through light rail trains from Jersey City and Hoboken. Through the Panel's efforts, NJT agreed to add two light rail alternatives to the two DMU shuttle plans in the DEIS mandated by federal regulations. (The two plans differ with regard to the end points, Englewood-Route 4 or Tenafly North.)

As suggested by *NJ-ARP* in comments submitted to NJT and FTA in October 2007 in response to the Draft Scoping Document for the Northern Branch DEIS, a light maintenance and overnight storage facility is now planned in an industrial area of North Bergen south of Tonnelle Avenue. NJT's original concept was to locate a DMU facility in North Bergen but build one for an HBLR extension adjacent to the Tenafly North station. *NJ-ARP* asked, "Why cannot the light rail shop and yard also be built in North Bergen?" Our goal was to remove nighttime floodlighting, noise and security issues from the list of potentially adverse environmental impacts on Tenafly. At a subsequent meeting, NJT responded verbally to members of our panel, saying, "We looked at your suggestion, concluded that it made the most sense and have adopted it."

During the preparation of the DEIS, NJT released a certain amount of data, including the projected ridership numbers: 8,100 for DMU shuttle trains to Tenafly North vs. 24,000 for through electric Light Rail Service. Capital costs are currently estimated to be \$690 million for the DMUs and \$865 million for light rail. Thus three times as many passengers would be carried if *NJ-ARP*'s proposal were adopted, at a one-time capital cost of only 25 percent more. One of the panel's members quipped: "Which would you prefer, one banana for a dollar or three for \$1.25?" Later, at the behest of our panel, NJT released operating costs, which showed the annual outlay for both to be approximately the same, \$15 million. This means that the yearly subsidy per passenger would be three times higher if the DMU shuttle plan were adopted instead of the HBLR extension.

The evidence was overwhelmingly in favor of our plan, but for what may have been face-saving reasons, elected officials indicated that the reason they finally decided to support the light rail option was the inability of NJT to procure FRA-compliant DMU cars within a reasonable period. We and the people of Bergen County will take our victory any way we can get it. According to NJ Transit, the DEIS will still contain all four rail options, as well as the NEPA-required "Do Nothing" alternative, but the "Agency's Preferred Alternative" will be extension of HBLR to Tenafly North. This is subject to further conformation when the FEIS is published.

Some NIMBY opposition has developed, notably both in Leonia and Tenafly. In Tenafly, much of the concern relates to "being at the end of the line" and residents' fear of local streets being flooded with motorists who live in communities to the north and west seeking parking spaces. As a result, some pressure is mounting locally for extending HBLR to Northvale and perhaps into Rockland County. Our view is that, while this makes sense, it should be part of a future project so as not to further delay extending HBLR into the lower part of the Northern Valley.

While our major battle appears over, the war will be won only when we learn of NJT ordering additional light rail vehicles and we see construction commence. We need to remain vigilant. The new Governor's position concerning an HBLRT extension into the Northern Valley has not yet been made public.

We hope to now work with local officials to assuage the concerns of their residents and convince them about the line's benefits. And we will continue our dialogue with NJT to ensure that the HBLRT extension to Tenafly turns out to be a model for what interurban light rail transit can be.

–Philip G. Craig

Morris & Essex Lines

It appears that we are past the worst as far as Morris & Essex, Gladstone, and Montclair-Boonton Lines are concerned. At least a few positive things have come to pass this year.

Finally weekend service on the Montclair-Boonton Line, at least up to Bay Street was inaugurated in mid-November. This was achieved by extending the Hoboken-Newark Broad Street shuttle to Bay Street. NJ Transit is commended for instituting a cross-platform transfer between this new Montclair service and the existing Midtown Direct service, thus allowing folks from Montclair to go to New York by transferring to the Midtown Direct service at Newark. Of course, passengers from Summit and Dover are still able to go to Hoboken by transferring to this new Montclair service at Newark too. Service at present, alas, is only every two hours. It is hoped that NJ Transit will restore this to an hourly service, and extend service to MSU as soon as possible.

Madison and Morristown stations have seen significant restoration work. Chatham, Millburn and Short Hills are scheduled to get some attention in the near future.

In the course of the year, more trains on the M&E have started running with multilevel consists. While these have been criticized by the knowledgeable rail advocates for being heavy and thus causing trains to perform less crisply, the traveling public appears to like these cars a lot. Hopefully with the arrival of the more capable ALP-46As some of the slow-running issues can be mitigated. However, that is more likely to happen only if running time reduction is set as a measurable goal for NJT management.

The Gladstone Branch was again all but unusable through the summer on weekends due to “bustitution,” and the situation was pretty bad even on some weekdays. This was ostensibly required for repair and upgrade of the track and electrification system on the line. The bustitution as implemented by NJ Transit was much better this year than before.

Work on the track realignment and station reconstruction at Newark Broad Street was completed early in the year and the nicely rebuilt station is back in full service with all platforms and tracks in use for regular service. There are new electronic arrival/departure boards and train destination boards installed that work very nicely and except for an occasional glitch, do show the right destination and also list all stops of the train.

Track replacement between Summit and Denville continued apace through the summer with the laying of new concrete ties to replace the old wood ties. Upon completion of this work, the old M&E would be all concrete ties all the way from Millburn to Dover barring a few short segments here and there. This is expected to improve ride quality and reduce maintenance cost. In addition the Stimulus Package is funding upgrading of the signaling system on the Morristown Line allowing bi-directional operation on both tracks all the way between Summit and Dover. This will reduce delays considerably when one track needs to be taken out of service for maintenance.

--Jishnu Mukerji

Montclair/Boonton Line

Though **NJ-ARP** scored a major victory this year by securing weekend service on the ex-Lackawanna portion of NJ Transit's Montclair/Boonton Line, the major portion of the route had its own ups and downs, which are listed here first.

Mount Arlington Station has just completed one year in service. Ridership there has been disappointing, which is not surprising, considering the service cutback beyond Dover, and the fact that there is no weekend service beyond Dover. The amount of time that it takes to get from there to anywhere useful considering the ever slower speed of trains and the change involved to get to New York is likely to continue to hamper ridership growth at this station.

Wayne Park and Ride station on Montclair-Boonton Line in Wayne near Rt. 23 and I-80 also completes one year of service and it is reportedly doing much better in terms of ridership than Mt. Arlington. This can be attributed to better bus connections and that it is closer in to areas that people need to travel to. It still suffers from lack of weekend service, the need to change trains to get to New York, and lack of eastbound service in the late afternoon.

All in all it has been a bit better than last year though we have suffered some additional service cuts for and certain inconvenient service changes on these lines this year. The inexorable slowing down of train schedules has finally stabilized. The efficiencies and speed achievable with a pure EMU operation is not possible anymore because the schedules are apparently set up to be operable with the least common denominator equipment, exacerbated further by the heavier and slower multi-level trains, and any change in that policy seems unlikely. A saving grace is that there has been no fare increase this year, being an election year.

The hope that this situation of ever slower trains will be remedied with the arrival of the Arrow IV EMUs remains elusive. Even though Arrow IVs had been budgeted for in the last fiscal budget, no order has materialized yet. The only tangible hope at present is that the more capable ALP-46As will allow some improvement in running times, but even that at present seems unlikely.

None of these difficulties diminishes the triumph **NJ-ARP** scored this year with the re-introduction of weekend service between Newark-Broad Street Station and Montclair's Bay Street Station, which commenced Nov. 9. Numerous **NJ-ARP** volunteers covered the inaugural ceremony and rode the rails both on the first weekend day (Sunday, the 9th) and following Saturday (Nov. 14) to gauge ridership loads, passenger problems, and NJ Transit's implementation of the service.

NJ-ARP Montclair residents Phil Craig and Jack May attended NJ Transit's Board of Directors meeting Nov. 10, immediately following up with observations and recommendations which, to its credit, NJ Transit responded to in large measure. Speaking for both the township's Public Transportation Advisory Committee and for **NJ-ARP**,

May thanked numerous political officials (many of them truly helpful) and allied groups for their efforts, and also said, in part:

“Considering it was a Sunday and many residents of Montclair and the surrounding communities were not yet aware of it, a surprisingly large number of passengers were carried on the branch. ... However what should have been a red letter day for both New Jersey Transit and residents along the line was not, due to a number of lapses in NJT operations” [which impeded smooth transfers to other trains at Newark-Broad Street Station] ... OK, so the first train had teething problems. Unfortunately, two hours later the second one did the exact same thing. But fortunately the crew knew it was going to happen and the New York passengers were advised to ride to Hoboken and take PATH. Only one got off at Newark as he decided to give up and return to Montclair.

“I’d like to read from an email sent to the Advisory Committee from Tom Morgan prior to the start of service, in a response to our query: ‘. . . the schedule is built for an across the platform transfer at the Broad Street Station. Other than an occasional weekend where maintenance activities force us to make the transfer between platforms, **that** is how we expect the service to operate.’ And it turned out that the electronic train annunciators were programmed for that--because they showed the Hoboken-bound train arriving on Track 3 and the New York train on Track 1, across the platform from each other, just like it was **supposed** to happen. But a few minutes before the trains were due the signs were changed to Track 2. At least some planning was accomplished, even if operations did not follow through.

“[I]t was clear there was either a breakdown in communications or perhaps, the management of the Operating Department never informed the dispatchers about what was supposed to happen. If we want to make this a success, and I assume we do, we need a concerted effort to run the service the way it is supposed to be operated. The residents did their job by riding; New Jersey Transit must do **its** job by performing.”

For its part, **NJ-ARP**, led by May, Craig, and Montclair/Boonton Liaison George Musser, continue to coordinate the group effort not just to solidify this successful first round, but to expand weekend service through the Montclair Connection itself, first throughout electrified territory to Montclair State University—a vocal ally that had not yet been rewarded for its efforts—and eventually along the entire line.

May also has prepared “Weekend Service on the Montclair/Boonton Line: How It Came About –A Personal Recollection,” which will be made available to **NJ-ARP** members beginning at the 2009 annual meeting, and subsequently accessible on **NJ-ARP**’s Web site. “More than a cataloging of events, the piece also could serve as a “how-to” manual for other members faced with similar obstacles elsewhere in New Jersey,” says **NJ-ARP** President Douglas John Bowen.

“Aiding the **NJ-ARP** leadership trio were numerous other **NJ-ARP** volunteers both local and from afar; at the very real risk of my overlooking some worthy participants, thanks go to **NJ-ARP** veteran Joseph Hearn, **NJ-ARP** Morris Liaison Jishnu Mukerji, **NJ-ARP**

Director Les Wolff, and **NJ-ARP** Treasurer Leonard Resto,” Bowen adds. “Special thanks to Montclair resident Chris Isidore, manager of **NJ-ARP**’s ‘Montclair Connection’ softball team, for continue valuable local insight.”

–Jishnu Mukerji, Jack May

Lackawanna Cut-Off

The “New Jersey-Pennsylvania Lackawanna Cut-Off Passenger Rail Restoration Project” (as it is officially called) has as its goal the restoration of passenger rail service between the New York metropolitan area (initially Hoboken) and Scranton, Pa., operating over the fabled 28 mile “Lackawanna Cut-Off.” This remarkable feat of engineering was opened in December 1911 by the then Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad as a low-grade alternative route from north central New Jersey to the Delaware water gap bypassing its then curving and steeply graded main line.

Some important forward progress, albeit it snail-like, has occurred in the last several years.

NJ-ARP was represented by several members at the Environmental Assessment (EA) hearings held in January 2007 in New Jersey. Your writer was at the January 29th hearing in Blirstown. The project's cost is now estimated at \$551 million, with \$13.9 million in annual revenues, \$26.2 million in expenses and a “subsidy” of \$12.3 million.

Of note is that the major push for re-establishing passenger service on the Cut-Off is occurring in Pennsylvania, which is understandable since of the 6,700 riders (2,850 each way per day), 5,840 will be from Pennsylvania and only 860 from New Jersey, according to the EA.

There will be only 11 properties that will have to be acquired, with seven (7) already publicly owned. Horn and whistle noise is estimated to impact 448 residences within the FTA defined “Impact” distance and 38 within the “Severe” category. “Quiet Zones” will be established at seven locations in accordance with FRA guidelines. The goal of the EA is to secure a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) from the FTA, after which the Cut-Off could enter into the engineering phase.

On Sept. 13, 2007, U.S. Senators Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), and Bob Casey (D-Pa.) announced jointly that the PNRRA received \$2 million to continue engineering work to prepare the project for bidding and to conclude any outstanding environmental issues. Malski was quoted as saying that \$12 million to \$14 million has already been expended on environmental studies, preliminary engineering and the securing of right-of-way. All track in Pennsylvania is now under the control of the PNRRA. He further opined that contracts could be awarded in 2011 with construction taking nine months. The PNRRA had been anticipating a full FONSI from the federal Office of Environmental Protection (EPA); it was expected in the summer of 2007 but was only received in September 2008 for the initial segment in New Jersey.

Thanks to the Cut-Off being included in TEA - LU, there is now a further \$120 million authorized, as mentioned above - but not appropriated - for this work contingent on a satisfactory FTA rating. The FTA criteria include five subjective factors: 1.) an improvement in the ability of a rider to reach his/her destination, 2.) environmental benefits, 3.) efficiency of operation, 4.) a satisfactory cost/benefit ratio, and 5.) the ability of the project to support existing land uses. However, despite all the “politicking”, this rating has not yet been forthcoming.

On June 4, 2008, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) gave its approval for construction of the first segment of the Cut-Off, a 7.3 mile stretch between Port Morris and Andover, in the vicinity of U.S. Route 206. Scheduled trains are expected to be run as extensions of the current Montclair/Boonton line.

On June 16, 2009, a supplement to the EA environmental assessment was released by NJT, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the FTA. And finally, to end this story on a high note, the FTA issued on October 2nd a “Finding of No Significant Impact” (FONSI) for the entire 81 mile route from Hoboken to Scranton.

–Albert L. Papp, Jr.

Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex (MOM)

The Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex (MOM) passenger rail project continues to languish as a mere proposal with still no assurance that it will ever be approved or constructed. The publicly-funded draft environmental impact study for MOM, originally scheduled to be completed in 2003, still goes on and on with no definite conclusion date. Despite widely-accepted figures, which validate the need for restoration of passenger rail service via the Monmouth Junction alignment, several politically-connected factions persist in actively opposing that route.

The preceding paragraph was the introduction to our MOM Update one year ago. Unfortunately, it still holds true.

It was also stated last year that “Red Bank, the second route option, is viable but not as good, while Matawan, the third option, is unrealistic and next to impossible. Yet the DEIS continues to treat all three alignments with equal commitment and detail.” Now, as the result of widely publicized alternate proposals earlier this year, the Red Bank option faces the same kind of active opposition as that of Monmouth Junction.

High Hopes for MOM Last Year

In October 2008, some optimism remained that a way could be found to fund and build MOM. A Republican candidate for Congress, Chris Myers, held a news conference in Toms River highlighting his support for MOM. With him was Rep. John Mica of Florida, the ranking Republican member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. As if pre-planned, Mica stepped away from the podium to answer his cell phone and returned a few moments later with an announcement. “That was U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters, who just informed me that the President is going to sign the Amtrak reauthorization bill,” Mica said. “And what's interesting is the MOM line will connect into the Northeast Corridor. Myers then stated, “My opponent, (state Sen.) John Adler (D-Camden), is one of the guys holding up the MOM line.” He added that politicians who oppose the MOM line, such as those in Middlesex County, fail to understand that there is a compelling public interest to build the line. But Myers lost the election to Adler, and all talk of MOM soon faded away into the back hallways of Congress once again.

Alternate ideas and plans continue to flow

As the endless DEIS ground on and on toward the close of 2008, old ideas and alternate plans for MOM issued forth from longtime supporters. An op-ed essay in the December 7 *Asbury Park Press* by Sal Petoia resurrected a plan by the now-dormant *Central Jersey Rail Coalition*. Writing with enthusiasm about the revitalization of Red Bank, a newly trendy community with a good future, Petoia again made the case for interim passenger

rail service:

While the debate and the studies persist about the MOM line route, why can't some type of limited shuttle service, using self-propelled rail cars between Lakehurst and Red Bank, be considered? The tracks exist and are usable, although they are in need of some upgrades. Such service would free seniors from the need to drive on the already congested Garden State Parkway, with its recently increased tolls. For those who want to go into New York, a change of trains in Red Bank would accommodate them. Ocean County could begin to benefit by having alternative public transportation in the form of passenger rail service from Lakehurst. In addition, businesses in Red Bank could share in the benefit by the influx of patrons from their neighboring county to the south.

But no one in Monmouth or Ocean County government agreed, nor did anyone at New Jersey Transit agree. As 2009 dawned, the endless DEIS still ground on and on with no announced completion date. In March, Paul Mulshine of the *Star-Ledger* noted that the federal government had released another \$980,000 so NJ Transit could complete the DEIS for MOM. After personally exploring segments of the Monmouth Junction and Red Bank alignments, Mulshine concluded that either one would work just fine to run passenger rail service and help cut down automobile traffic and carbon emissions. He asked Jeff Tittel of the *Sierra Club* to explain why the DEIS is so important, and Mulshine summarized the answer: “The feds are giving us money to do a study to convince the (other) feds to give us more money.” He believes that the enormous benefit of building MOM is a no-brainer, so this \$980,000 is a waste of public money, which will result in more years of endless study for a beneficial project proposed so many years ago.

Shocking report on funding for MOM

Last year at this time we reported that the DEIS, under the supervision of NJ Transit, was quietly and methodically proceeding despite all the negative headlines in the news. The professional planners known as the “MOM working group” continued to study the ridership figures and the capital costs of the three alignments, which had by now changed substantially at the behest of Monmouth County officials. In March a long-delayed interim report was finally made known to Monmouth and Ocean County officials. It concluded for the first time that none of the three alignments being studied would qualify for federal funding. NJ Transit decided to withhold this report from the public for the time being, perhaps to ease the shock of this news, or perhaps to allow some time to develop alternate plans. Meanwhile, since this was only an interim report, the endless DEIS still ground on and on with no announced completion date—regardless of the possibility that it would all now result in nothing at all.

New compromise proposals

A plan was now needed to fill the huge void which would suddenly open when the DEIS interim report would have to be announced to the public. On April 23, Monmouth County Deputy Freeholder Director John D'Amico proposed two new options for the Monmouth Junction route. One would have passengers walk across a platform at a station to be built in South Brunswick to board Corridor trains. The other proposal would have MOM trains use the Amboy Secondary line and join the North Jersey Coast Line near South Amboy. The Monmouth County freeholder board approved a resolution supporting the ideas and asking NJ Transit to include the two options in the DEIS.

D'Amico said that the Monmouth Junction route would certainly generate the most riders, but it would be more costly because of the underpass needed to bring southbound trains from the Corridor to the MOM line. D'Amico said that high cost could derail federal approval of the Monmouth Junction route. "The next thing NJ Transit is looking at is the cost-effective ratio. That's why he (D'Amico) came up with alternatives that are less costly and will benefit (the three) counties," said Bonnie Goldschlag, assistant Monmouth County planning director. "It's not too late to consider the alternatives." *NJ-ARP*, however, wasn't consulted by its allies prior to this move.

D'Amico said in written comments that the alternatives would offer the benefits of the Monmouth Junction line—getting traffic off Route 9 and providing mass transit for Ocean and western Monmouth counties. D'Amico said that NJ Transit had received a total of \$1.5 million from federal appropriations bills in 2008 and 2009 to advance the MOM line. Dan Stessel, NJ Transit spokesman, said the 2008 appropriation allowed NJ Transit to do MOM planning, and 2009 funding was only recently passed by Congress. But he cautioned that formally adding a new alternative could significantly extend the federal environmental process.

In a May 4 editorial, the *Asbury Park Press* praised D'Amico's proposals, saying that his MOM ideas were "on the right track." The Press went on to call for NJ Transit to sit down with all interested parties, specifically including *NJ-ARP*, to "hammer out an agreement that will finally get this proposal on track and moving. With decades of studies behind them, and federal stimulus dollars available to projects that are ready to go, now is the time for action on the long-overdue rail service plan." NJ Transit did attempt to achieve a consensus, but it made no effort to contact *NJ-ARP*.

'MOM Lite' appears as an option

It was several more weeks until NJ Transit finally announced to the public on May 15 what they had learned two months earlier: "The three routes in their current forms would likely have difficulty competing against other transit projects nationally for limited federal new starts funding," said Joe Dee, another NJ Transit spokesman. "We suggested the counties use a phased approach, which we've employed with success on other lines."

This was how NJ Transit officials revealed to the public the findings of their cost analysis using a new Federal Transit Administration formula. They now suggested scaling back the original plans and using a phased approach to build the MOM line in segments, similar to what is being done to restore rail service elsewhere in New Jersey.

The four new scaled-back alternatives were now dubbed “MOM Lite.” Two options would reduce the proposed Monmouth Junction and Red Bank routes to a single track railroad with sidings for trains to pass and fewer stations. The Monmouth Junction route would dead-end at a station to be built on the Northeast Corridor, where MOM line passengers would change trains, according to the documents. This idea was similar to one of the two proposed by Sen. D’Amico. A third option would be to build a spur off the Red Bank line to serve Freehold Township as the second phase of the Red Bank alignment, if that is built. A fourth option proposed widening shoulders for buses on three segments of Route 9 from Freehold Township up to Route 18 to offer bus rapid transit. The documents did not consider the Matawan route.

Once again, the *Asbury Park Press* called upon NJ Transit to step in and work with the counties to arrive at some compromise agreement. If no consensus can be reached, said the *Press* editorial, NJ Transit should make a decision on its own and move forward with one or more of the options. The *Press* then published an op-ed essay *NJ-ARP* Ocean Liaison Dan Green, who wrote: “It is obvious by now that ‘hammering out an agreement’ will never happen. Middlesex and Monmouth counties are too entrenched in their respective positions after all these years, while Ocean County still suffers in silence.”

Counties agree, then Monmouth backtracks

NJ Transit made an earnest attempt to bring the counties together to choose one of the MOM Lite options. At a May 21 meeting, they agreed to support MOM Lite via Red Bank, under which the line would begin in Lakehurst and run along existing freight tracks to join the North Jersey Coast Line in Red Bank. It would also include the possibility of a spur from Farmingdale to Freehold, and also consider better bus service on Routes 9 and 18. The agreement was announced a week later by NJ Transit, but it was immediately challenged, criticized, and repudiated by Red Bank and all the neighboring towns because of the increased highway traffic it would allegedly cause.

NJ-ARP, on its own terms, restated its severe reservations over the Red Bank route, a stance it has held for 25 years. “That’s not a compromise. Middlesex wins on this round. The route’s efficiency and effectiveness is compromised,” said President Bowen. Walking the fine line between agreeing with anti-rail forces on a given point, or siding with them outright—a slippery slope *NJ-ARP* tried to avoid at all costs in the battle for the RiverLINE—Bowen added, “We’re aware of the Red Bank opposition, and *NJ-ARP* shares many, but not all, of their doubts and concerns.”

It became apparent that Senator D’Amico had done the bargaining on behalf of Monmouth County but had failed to first secure the support of other county and local officials. Many who had long been hoping for some form of MOM rail service were again disappointed when the compromise agreement quickly fell apart. The *Asbury Park Press* was incensed by the backtracking of Monmouth County. In a May 31 editorial it called the Monmouth County freeholders short-sighted, saying that the MOM Lite alignment via Red Bank is the only remaining viable alternative. “If this plan doesn't fly, any hopes for mass transit in Ocean County and unserved portions of Monmouth are essentially dead. NJ Transit can't allow that to happen,” wrote the *Press*. “One way or another, NJ Transit should see to it that this train's a-comin'. And Monmouth County should get on board.” Nevertheless, just about every town and official in the area promised to fight against the Red Bank proposal because of all the harm it would allegedly cause them. With that, all talk of MOM faded away into the back hallways of state and county officials for three more months.

New study confirms need for more transit

A flurry of interest in MOM swirled again briefly in early August when the *Tri-State Transportation Campaign* issued a report on New Jersey entitled “The State of Transportation—2009.” The report did not mention specific projects such as MOM, but it showed that Ocean County had experienced the largest population and employment growth in the state in recent years. Vehicle miles traveled increased by 44 per cent in Ocean County and 22 per cent in Monmouth County. Yet, despite this vigorous growth, Ocean County, along with Somerset and Warren, still has the least public transit service. The findings make it more urgent than ever for the state to find a permanent funding source for its Transportation Trust Fund, now depleted. The *Asbury Park Press*, in another pro-transit editorial, lamented that:

In spite of the fact that New Jerseyans embrace and use mass transit when it's accessible, even if not optimal, train and bus services in the Garden State's fast-growing counties are sorely lacking. That includes New Jersey's fastest-growing county—Ocean—where more and more people are forced by the lack of options to take to their cars and further clog already jam-packed local roads. It's another symptom of the sad state of affairs created by officials who seem to love cutting ribbons on various road projects that only invite more development instead of focusing on developing long-term traffic-reduction plans through smart, efficient mass-transit services. Yet too many officials in New Jersey either give little more than lip service to the issue or balk and bellyache, finding fault with proposed projects—such as the long-on-discussion, short-on-action Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex rail line—that could reduce dependence on individual vehicles and bring mass transit to those currently left stranded in the geographical dust. Stalling on providing needed mass transit is only going to steer New Jersey in the wrong direction.

NJT's Sarles misses the point

Reacting to the relentless editorial pressure by the *Asbury Park Press* for more transit in Ocean County, NJ Transit's Executive Director, Richard Sarles, wrote a rebuttal which was published on August 18. He vigorously defended NJ Transit's accomplishments in improving the North Jersey Coast Line and related Jersey Shore services, concluding that NJT has "worked diligently toward consensus on expanding rail service in the growing Shore region and remains committed to that endeavor." But Sarles apparently looked past the main purpose of the MOM rail project, which is to serve those thousands of transit-starved residents who live in the inland region of Monmouth and Ocean Counties. If NJ Transit wants to work toward consensus on expanding rail service, well and good, but it must learn to refocus on the large parts of the region which are far from the North Jersey Coast Line and the Jersey Shore—areas which have no passenger rail service at all. Until that time, it is evident that NJ Transit still does not understand what the *Press* is calling for.

Assemblyman seeks to cut red tape, build MOM

Toward the end of summer, longtime Ocean County Assemblyman David W. Wolfe investigated the total amount spent so far on studies for the MOM rail project, and then called upon Governor Corzine directly to choose a route and build it. Wolfe, a longtime supporter of MOM, though not often vocal, had been trying for months to discover how much had been spent. After receiving no replies from NJ Transit and state transportation officials, Wolfe made his request through the state's Office of Legislative Services. He received a seven-page report which said that, over the past 29 years, a total of \$13.89 million has been spent as of June, and of that total, \$9.76 million has come from the federal government and \$4.13 million from the state.

Wolfe said it would be a waste of money, even by New Jersey standards, to continue the studies. "I'm looking for a plan to be implemented, a commitment to go forward and not to study it to death and accomplish nothing," Wolfe said. "Other legislators are on board; let's just get going."

NJ-ARP President Bowen commended Assemblyman Wolfe for his initiative but said **NJ-ARP** was not optimistic that it would accomplish much. "We're doubtful Governor Corzine will risk antagonizing Middlesex County Democrats as Election Day draws near, but the request is no less valid." Indeed, Election Day came and went without any response from Corzine and with no further news of MOM from any direction.

MOM and the Barnegat Branch Trail

The long-abandoned Barnegat Branch of the former Central Railroad of New Jersey runs from Lakehurst to Toms River and Beachwood, then southward to Barnegat. Most of this

right-of-way is now owned by Ocean County, and the county is developing it as a multi-use trail. Nearby US Route 9, the only north-south artery in the area, is heavily congested and has no public transit except hourly bus service by NJ Transit. Rail advocates urge that provision be made for future light rail passenger service parallel to the trail. The plan is that the light rail serve a multi-modal transit terminal in Toms River, then connect with the MOM terminal in Lakehurst. Another leg of the light rail would connect Lakehurst with Whiting. Rail-with-trail already exists elsewhere in New Jersey and beyond, and a former county engineer has declared the project technically feasible.

But a number of problems tend to make the light rail idea unrealistic for the foreseeable future:

- Local trail proponents accept rail-with-trail as a concept, but there is little enthusiasm.
- None of the local residents foresee how light rail will ease their traffic and transportation problems.
- Much of the right-of-way is narrow and flanked by large trees, which would have to be cut down to make room for rail-with-trail.
- Four timbered railroad bridges have now been designated by the state as historic structures.
- Lacey Township owns a two-mile segment of the right-of-way and is determined to build a road on it.

Despite the proven benefits which a light rail line would bring to this area of rapidly increasing population, it appears that there is not enough local support to make continued advocacy worthwhile at this time.

Rebirth of the Southern Secondary

A glimmer of hope for MOM shone forth in October when Anthony C. (Tony) Macrie began restoration of a long-abandoned segment of the Southern Secondary rail line. The right-of-way, stretching 13 miles from Lakehurst to Woodmansie, is now owned by the Clayton Sand Company. Clayton has contracted with Macrie to restore the rail line and then run trains to transport its sand northward to Lakehurst and beyond. Macrie, already the owner and operator of Cape May Seashore Lines, a tourist passenger railroad, is now envisioning a similar tourist operation in addition to the sand business on his new railroad. Such passenger excursions could possibly run between Whiting and Lakewood. Arrangements with NJ Transit will be needed, of course, for operation north of Lakehurst. Once that kind of passenger operation is under way, local residents will become enthusiastic about boarding the trains themselves, and a future schedule of regular passenger service may not be far over the horizon.

MOM's future

As of *NJ-ARP's* 2009 annual meeting, the DEIS still grinds on, with no announced completion date; MOM remains merely a concept and a hope. MOM can certainly be developed and built in segments using an incremental approach, so there is room for negotiation in that respect. But negotiation of the route itself is physically impossible, so some agency or some person must actually decide which route it will be. Going northward from Ocean into Monmouth County, MOM can now proceed no farther than Farmingdale. A red signal set by Middlesex County prevents it from going west to the Northeast Corridor, and a red signal set by Monmouth County prevents it from going farther north to Red Bank. After many months and many meetings between Ocean and Monmouth County officials, consensus is now further away than before. After years of impartial meetings with all three counties, NJ Transit has not succeeded in negotiating a consensus, and, per past performance, the agency is reluctant to choose a route on its own. At this point, only the governor has the power and influence to choose one of the routes and overrule the opponents of the other route. It will now be the privilege of incoming governor Chris Christie to decide the future of MOM.

–Daniel Green, Douglas John Bowen

Raritan Valley Line

NJ-ARP Director Jack McDougal continued to monitor developments (most of them reflecting stagnation) on the Raritan Valley Line, many of whose purported champions remain fixated on the elusive “one-seat ride to Manhattan” at the expense of progress in other ways.

McDougal also lent considerable effort to local officials and other pro-rail forces trying to extend or broaden the Raritan Valley Line’s overall reach. Notably, he lent support and counsel to Flemington-area business leaders and political officials seeking reactivation of the Flemington Branch, which would link its namesake city with the Raritan Valley Line near Manville, with stops possible in Flemington, Neshanic, Hillsborough, and Manville.

Crediting McDougal’s work, one Flemington area rep told *NJ-ARP*, “Hunterdon and Somerset counties have come together and made the line from Flemington a part of the Route 202 Corridor Assessment and Multi-Mobility Plan. There has been very strong support for rail service, and hopefully the study will go in that direction.”

A much older effort involves extending some Raritan Valley Line service along the West Trenton Line, a route abandoned in the early 1980s even as New Jersey Transit assumed rail passenger duties in New Jersey. This effort, spearheaded for years by *NJ-ARP* Legislative Agent Arthur L. Reuben before his death in 1999, remains on life support – always a possibility, seldom progressing.

Capacity constraints on the Raritan Valley Line’s “choke point” ex-Lehigh Valley Line between Cranford and the Northeast Corridor remains a real concern. Freight rail traffic on this segment is likely to only increase in the future, even if added track is deployed. *NJ-ARP* continues to eye the ex-Central of New Jersey right-of-way between Cranford and Elizabeth as an alternate route for some rail services, with Cranford serving as a transfer station similar to setups in Summit or Newark-Broad Street stations.

–Douglas John Bowen

RiverLINE

In late May, *NJ-ARP* inquired on the original/destination breakdown of the RiverLINE, which had entered its sixth year of operation, surmounting criticism from NIMBYs, anti-rail zealots, some pro-rail factions, and New Jersey Transit itself. Our inquiry was based on the RiverLINE achieving average daily ridership of besting 8,500 one-way trips – a number critics said that at best was decades away.

Data available showed:

NORTHBOUND TRIPS: 4,820 passenger trips per weekday. Of those, approximately 1,700 riders get off at the RiverLINE's Trenton terminus. Of those 1,700, "about half" continue further north on NJ Transit Northeast Corridor trains. No breakdown of NEC station stop destinations (New Brunswick, Newark Airport, Newark-Penn, New York) was available at the time.

SOUTHBOUND TRIPS: 4,880 passenger trips per weekday. Of those, approximately 1,800 riders get off at the RiverLINE's Walter Rand Station in Camden, the transfer point for PATCO service; roughly 60% of those riders, or about 1,080, board PATCO.

The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), more commonly known as the federal stimulus package, targeted \$40 million for a transfer station to straddle the River Line and NJT's Atlantic City Line where the two cross in Pennsauken. Groundbreaking for the transfer station occurred in October. In a sign of the times, Pennsauken officials were far more receptive to the concept than in the mid-1990s, and the concerns that were voiced (access, parking, security) had at least some merit and were offered with genuine concern.

Critics again are claiming a transfer station will fail to draw or boost ridership. Though *NJ-ARP* isn't convinced this is the best possible such transfer within New Jersey, we still disagree with those critics, for we've met many riders on the RiverLINE originating in Atlantic City or Absecon, who currently transfer to PATCO at Woodcrest and then again to the RiverLINE at Walter Rand; for them, especially west/northbound, a single transfer is a service upgrade. The transfer also offers a second option, if for some a "lesser" one, for New Jersey residents seeking rail access to Center City Philadelphia, another layering of "positive redundancy."

On the RiverLINE itself, signals were upgraded at Control Point 175 and CP 184 to aid the flow through Burlington City and its stretch of single track between Burlington Town Centre and Burlington South. This allows for a moving meet between the northbound and southbound trains, reduces gate activations at Keim & Reed and traffic congestion between the Burlington Bristol Bridge and Route 130.

NJ Transit also is overseeing the installation of cab signaling in preparation for eventual use of Positive Train Control on the line to comply with a congressional mandate.

Other changes or improvements, according to NJ Transit, include:

- A new central control center put in service in June, which oversees train movements for both River LINE light rail service and Conrail's freight service.
- A recycling program is in the process of being implemented at all station platforms that will enable passengers to properly dispose of their glass, cans and paper products.
- An anti-trespassing campaign was implemented to educate the general public and passengers, as to the dangers of trespassing along the line.

NJT is also currently in the process of negotiating the addition of a station between Bordentown and Roebling that will be an integral part of a mixed-use development site. *NJ-ARP* is monitoring this fairly closely.

The problems dogging the RiverLINE are, indeed, mostly the problems of success. The line could use additional rolling stock. The line could use more passing sidings and/or double-tracking, particularly on a roughly one-mile stretch south of the Delair Bridge, to facilitate shorter headways in both directions. And the line's northern reaches could still benefit from operating later on weekday evenings—something Bombardier's Al Fazio, general manager of the RiverLINE, noted was a priority when he addressed *NJ-ARP*'s Patrons Luncheon meeting at the RiverLINE shops in late June.

Led by Director Carol Ann Thomas, *NJ-ARP* continues its “parental oversight” of the first U.S. diesel light rail transit line (DLRT), already being duplicated elsewhere nationwide and, perhaps a harbinger of the return of “interurban” rail passenger service.

—Douglas John Bowen, Carol Ann Thomas

Cape May Branch

This year, the good news is all about equipment. Four locomotives now have complete event recorders and auxiliary lights (ditch lights), a requirement that Conrail has imposed above that of the FRA. *Cape May Seashore Lines* (CMSL) equipment provided for several enhanced operations. Included was a two-day excursion out of the City of Cape May to Hawk Haven vineyard & winery, a fund raising excursion to benefit the URHS with a food collection to help a local food bank, and the operation of the Richland – Tuckahoe schedule service.

2009 brought the hassles from Middle Township to a new level. CMSL had moved the heavily vandalized passenger cars parked near K-mart out of Middle Twp during 2008. But that was not enough for Middle Township; it was learned during the start of 2009 that Middle was going to file an action in municipal court with expensive fines and an order to enter railroad property and seize the remaining cars for scrap. To preempt this, CMSL requested and received a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) in federal court to stop Middle's action. For good community relations (and the safety of the equipment), CMSL agreed to a program to move the cars out of Middle in exchange for a letter of support.

Community and business support out side of Middle Township remains positive and strong.

Cape May Branch milestones:

- 1996 CMSL starts Cold Spring – 4H passenger service.
- 1999 CMSL expands operation Cape May City -- 4H passenger service.
- 2005 October CMSL adds Tuckahoe – Richland passenger service.
- 2005 December CMSL suspends Cape May City passenger service – due to bridge trouble.
- 2006 November CMSL hosted Downtown New Jersey reception in the Atlantic City train station.
- 2007 November CMSL hosted Downtown New Jersey reception in the Atlantic City train station.

–Paul Mulligan

Sponsorships

Light Rail Now!

As the leading voice for light rail transit (LRT) within the Garden State, **NJ-ARP** continues to be an “underwriter” to *Light Rail Now!*, a Web site and organization dedicated to aiding pro-LRT supporters in the United States (and often elsewhere). *Light Rail Now!* disseminates information, political strategy and options, and news to LRT supporters as they move to initiate or expand LRT systems.

And during 2009, input from LRT advocates nationwide, channeled through the site, helped **NJ-ARP** in its push to lock in light rail for Bergen County’s Northern Branch—a true extension of Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit (HBLRT). The exchange has been a two-way affair, as well, with **NJ-ARP** Light Rail Panel members Phil Craig, Jack May, and Frank Miklos routinely offering counsel and insight to other U.S. LRT advocates as those advocates struggle to advance rail passenger options. (It’s no small credit to **NJ-ARP** members that they must overcome resistance, sometimes fairly irrational, to ideas emanating from Garden State sources—we may not know everything, but we at **NJ-ARP** think our track record concerning LRT is worth weighing for merit, at the very least!)

As we noted in last year’s annual report, both allies and adversaries of **NJ-ARP** in the HBLRT drive have learned to tap and/or trust **NJ-ARP** data on light rail, in no small part due to LRN!’s assistance. Ironically, often **NJ-ARP** critics will pan *Light Rail Now!*, citing a “pro-rail bias” – a charge **NJ-ARP** will readily vouch for!—and accusing the site of being anti-bus (which it certainly is not). Indeed, while *Light Rail Now!* endorses bus improvements, it is highly critical of subversive efforts to “substitute” LRT “Bus Rapid Transit” proposals, which claim to be “just like LRT, but cheaper.”

NJ-ARP’s sponsorship of *Light Rail Now!* is funded by contributions from individual **NJ-ARP** members, and not from the **NJ-ARP** treasury.

“Montclair Connection”

NJ-ARP has maintained its sponsorship of the softball team “Montclair Connection” in the belief that symbolism matters—and perhaps it does! During 2009, the team fell just short of a league championship, recording its best performance—the same year **NJ-ARP** helped secure 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

Miscellaneous

TransAction Conference, Atlantic City

Through the good efforts of *NJ-ARP*'s Frank Reilly, *NJ-ARP* routinely enjoys good positioning as an exhibitor during TransAction, and the 2009 conference proved to be yet another ideal location—just inside the main entry to the exhibit hall, where one almost had to pass *NJ-ARP*'s table.

As in past years, *NJ-ARP* continued to ask everyone to focus on the flaws we find apparent in what's now Access to the Region's Core Mass Transit Tunnel. Many (even some *NJ-ARP* members) believe the battle is over, and any chance for a better tunnel project is distant at best; officials from NJDOT and New Jersey Transit present at sessions and luncheon podiums hammered home the inevitability of the tunnel project. Face to face, NJT was cordial to *NJ-ARP* representatives, a gesture *NJ-ARP* appreciates. *NJ-ARP* Directors Douglas John Bowen and Carol Ann Thomas, along with Frank Miklos and Paul Mulligan, contributed to *NJ-ARP*'s presence and lobbying efforts in numerous ways and situations.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

NJ-ARP representatives, led by Director Carol Ann Thomas, attend regular meetings of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), a bi-state metropolitan planning organization (MPO) that includes four New Jersey counties: Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer.

DVRPC was one of the earliest MPOs in action when Congress enacted the first ISTEA bill for federal ground transportation in the early 1990s, and at that time it was considered (by *NJ-ARP* and others) to be one of the more professional MPOs.

Weighted down by budget constraints in both New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and (in *NJ-ARP*'s view) beset with the "SEPTA bug," DVRPC appears unable to initiate any large-scale public and/or rail transportation project, instead reacting to events as they unfold. It makes grand noises about rail improvements for New Jersey, but (per the efforts of Princeton University) appears to have bought into Bus Rapid Transit as a transportation savior, along the federal sales pitch of "just like LRT, only cheaper."

As in 2008, we found DVRPC absent from any meaningful discussions on Gloucester County rail passenger service, suggesting that the Delaware River Port Authority will opt to enlist New Jersey sources, such as NJDOT and/or NJ Transit, to advance the so-called "PATCO extension" into Gloucester County, which may end up being only marginally related, in operational terms to PATCO itself.

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

NJ-ARP's access to the 13-county North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), one of three (3) metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) covering New Jersey, has seldom been better; NJTPA's director of regional planning, Lois Goldman routinely seeks out ***NJ-ARP*** input and feedback. However, ***NJ-ARP***'s influence on NJTPA is still weaker than desired; the MPO remains slow to grasp, or at least react to, ***NJ-ARP***'s continued insistence on addressing the flawed design, and limited focus, of T.H.E. Tunnel despite the high cost—limited bang for the taxpayer dollar. On other matters, however, NJTPA's awareness of public transit, and even rail transit, appears to be growing. Independent efforts by Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley to tap into passenger rail (most likely via the Raritan Valley Line) have been encouraged and augmented by NJTPA, despite the uncertain and long-range prospects of such interstate service. As noted elsewhere in this Annual report, another hopeful sign is NJTPA's endorsement last June of a Minimum Operable Segment (MOS) for the Lackawanna Cutoff service restoration, extending the Morris & Essex Line 7.3 miles from the NJ Transit Yard in Port Morris along the ex-Cutoff right-of-way to a new terminal station in Andover Township.

Southern New Jersey Transportation Planning Organization

Though ***NJ-ARP*** still requires a permanent liaison with the Southern New Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO), ***NJ-ARP*** Cape May Liaison Paul Mulligan has covered that gap with some success, first challenging the “road first, road only” concept directly in 2007, presenting ***NJ-ARP***'s PowerPoint presentation to the SJTPO board in the summer months, stressing the economic importance and potential of rail freight and passenger service on both the Atlantic City Line and the Cape May Branch. ***NJ-ARP*** will keep building on Mulligan's efforts to firm up our communications with this four-county MPO, responsible for transportation issues in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem counties.

Ocean County Transportation Advisory Board

NJ-ARP Ocean Liaison Daniel Green sits on the Ocean County Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) as the state's second-largest county (by area) wrestles with ever-mounting traffic congestion and transport problems. Green is one of many on the TAB attempting to advance rail transit -- particularly Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex (MOM) rail passenger service -- but the board still focuses mostly on road and bus projects, often relegating rail to a secondary or “back-seat” issue.

Web Site, Newsletters

NJ-ARP's Hotline still remains since 2008 as its chief writer failed to keep pace with weekly events, due to career conflicts, and as *NJ-ARP*'s Webmaster of 12 years resigned., apparently for reasons unrelated to content flow. *NJ-ARP*'s George Musser continues to assist as interim caretaker for *NJ-ARP*'s Web site, and during 2009 Director Lee Lensky began reorganizing and reactivating some functions. Calendar entries and *NJ-ARP* position papers are being posted as they become available.

In part to compensate for the diminution of information services to our membership, *NJ-ARP* Production Manager Lester W. Wolff last year began overseeing 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 membership fee.

NEWSLETTER PLUS! made two extra appearances during the summer months, as breaking news of progress for both HBLRT (Tenafly) and Montclair weekend service provided impetus to bring *NJ-ARP* members up to date quickly.

–Douglas John Bowen

Appendix: NJT Federal Stimulus Funds 2009

Federal funds from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009, commonly called the federal stimulus package, identified the following amounts for New Jersey Transit in 2009:

\$600 million for the Access Dead-End Tunnel;

\$250 million for 100 more Bombardier multilevel cars;

\$25 million for reverse signaling on the Morris & Essex Lines;

\$30 million for North Jersey Coast Line signal replacement;

\$30 million for Atlantic City Line siding construction;

\$20 million for River Line vehicle cab signaling;

\$15 million for a Danforth Interlock project for HBLRT;

\$15 million for a high platform at Plauderville Station;

\$20 million for Platform E rehab work at Newark-Penn Station; and

\$22 million for an “enhancing track replacement program