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New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers

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NJ-ARP Annual Report

2000-2001

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Message from the President

When I was selected as President of NJ-ARP last year, I set three goals. First, I wanted our organization to reach 400 members. Second, I wanted to continue our aggressive advocacy on many fronts and third, I wanted us to make a greater outreach to inner cities. I am pleased to advise that, for the most part, we made our objectives and even exceeded them in some cases.

Our membership is now at an all time high numbering 385 members, 33 greater than last year at this time. This is despite increasing our dues and introducing a Patron category at \$100. While we fell short of the 400 number I had set as our goal, I am pleased that we made significant progress in expanding our outreach. I am even more pleased that 12 of you decided to support us at the Patron level. We thank you for doing so.

Much of this increase has come from our active participation at festivals such as Hoboken Transit Festival, Milltown Day, Howell Community Day, etc. We have addressed groups such as the Monroe Kiwanis Club, the Camden Empowerment Association and are

scheduled to speak before the combined Chambers of Commerce of Dover, Mount Olive, and other Northwestern New Jersey communities who seek rail as an alternative. We have lobbied members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U. S. Senate in Washington in addition to actively supporting the efforts of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) in advocating for passage of the High Speed Rail Investment Act. For an organization that is strictly made up of **volunteers**, most of whom work full-time jobs, these accomplishments are remarkable.

My second goal of continuing our aggressive advocacy was exceeded during the year. Our efforts on the MOM project continued undaunted under the leadership of Dan Kerwin. We have succeeded in apparently driving into temporary silence the Concerned Citizens Against the MOM line. We note that their website is no longer active. MOM is now in the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) stage which will take approximately 18 months to complete. We will seek to have representation on the EIS committee and will continue to push this project forward. I am convinced it will become a reality.

We have been huge supporters of Hudson-Bergen Light Rail (HBLRT) when it has been assailed in the press as "not carrying its anticipated load" and "losing money". We believe otherwise. We see it as a necessary transit option that grows by the day and will continue to grow as the line is extended both north and south. Its positive redundancy is now being proven with the loss of the PATH Downtown New York service as a result of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center of September 11th. PATH passengers disembarking at the Pavonia/Newport Station are able to transfer to HBLRT and get to Exchange Place.

Progress also continues strong and steady at the Secaucus Transfer, which will come on line in 2002 providing many options to passengers to switch to trains on the NEC.

The Montclair Connection has had significant progress with catenary strung over almost all of the Boonton Line between Walnut Street Station and Great Notch Yard, a distance of almost 4 miles. In addition, a new station for Montclair State University has been approved by the NJ Transit Board of Directors, which will allow for a significant enhancement of the connection.

On the Port Authority front, we opposed the proposed PATH fare increase to \$2.00 per ride and through organized lobbying and testimony at every fare hearing, were successful in having the increase rolled back to \$1.50. I was proud at how many members of our organization came out to the hearings. Your voice made a big difference. On the other Port Authority matter, we were not as successful. I refer to the fare structure for the very soon to be opened Newark Airport Station. We lobbied the Port Authority, including meeting with officials of the Port Authority to express our concerns on the fare structure, pedestrian and bus access to the station and the lack of development to allow Newark to continue its renaissance. Despite repeated inquiries and back channel efforts, we could not get the Port Authority to tell us what the fare structure should be. When finally announced in mid-August, we took our case to the press with no success. The press did not see this as a story since they felt that a premium price for this service was not a bad thing. We saw it, and still see it, differently. In our recent meetings with the candidates for Governor, we have stressed that it will be in their power to get the Port Authority to roll back its abusement park fare for their "Six Flags over Newark Airport" Disney monorail. We also need to actively lobby the legislature for a new law that states that no new service can be introduced without public fare hearings.

In the Southern portion of our state, Carol Ann Thomas continues to do a wonderful job for us on the Southern New Jersey Light Rail Transit project (SNJLRT). The recovery, inspection and righting of the Rancocas Creek Bridge has been completed and work continues with track realignment outside Camden. Despite opposition -- some from rail groups -- saying this has been a "colossal" waste of funds and will not have the ridership needed, we have begged to differ. We believe this will prove to be a boon to the entire corridor and will help relieve Trenton of traffic congestion once an extension is approved to the Statehouse. It will help revitalize Camden and it will allow individuals currently on public assistance because they do not own a car and cannot get to work to seek work and ride LRT to their job. This is a win-win all the way around.

Also in South Jersey, Paul Mulligan, our Cape May Liaison, continues to do yeoman's work with Tony Macrie on the Cape May Seashore Lines. People have discovered this "little" railroad with so much potential and ridership hit new levels this year.

In Northern New Jersey, we actively advocated for and testified at the hearings on Bergen County Light Rail options. Many of our members expressed their support for one, two or all three of the options proposed for the County; Northern Branch, the West Shore Branch and the Cross County corridor. We believe all of them will be viable in one form or another and help relieve Bergen County of vehicular traffic congestion.

We are disappointed that more progress wasn't made in completing the sidings for the Pascack Valley Line; however, we will continue to lobby NJ Transit to see if the schedule can't be speeded up considering how many other projects are going on at the same time. We thank Orrin Getz for his continuing role here.

One of the major projects we were able to influence was the repair work begun on the Bergen Tunnels. We proposed numerous alternatives to schedules to allow the least number of people to be inconvenienced and suggested ways to get the word out to passengers. We believe this was handled well and I am pleased to report that it continues to go smoothly.

In the Northwest part of the state, we are now gearing up to aggressively push the Lackawanna Cut-Off. Renewed interest has been spurred in this project as people sit in bumper-to-bumper traffic each day on Routes 80 and 46. There is a better way and the Chambers of Commerce in the area have reached out to us to help them and help them we will. Incredibly, some transit advocates are actually opposed to the Cut-Off citing that it will exacerbate suburban sprawl. We will show them the errors of their way. The Cut-Off is a project whose day has come.

My third goal was to have more outreach to inner cities and minority communities, usually not as well served by rail. I can advise you that we have started that effort by presentations to Team Newark, the Camden Empowerment Association, and the Jersey City Landmarks Conservancy. I am now representing NJ-ARP on the Bergen Arches Committee of the Conservancy. We will strive to do better in this area next year.

I want to specially acknowledge one individual who works behind the scenes but whose work you may see everyday. That person is Bob Scheurle. He is our webmaster and it is he who keeps our website humming. The website now averages over 26,000 hits per month. Each of our Hotlines is viewed an average of 275 times. Our mailing list of people who want to be notified of a new Hotline has more than doubled to 120. From all of NJ-ARP, thank you for this most important project coordination.

I also want to acknowledge Bill Wright and Art Reuben (posthumously) for having been inducted into the NJ Transit Hall of Fame recently. It is quite an honor bestowed on them and it reflects on the great credibility NJ-ARP has earned and achieved.

Next year will present unique challenges to the transit picture in New Jersey, especially in light of September 11th's terrorist attack. With the increased traffic and searches at the area tunnels, we can seize the opportunity to get people to more utilize rail options. We need to back Access to the Region's Core in an aggressive, focused way. With Al Papp leading the charge, we need to push harder for a second Hudson River Tunnel to build capacity for our region. I know we can do this and I know we can get it done within 10 years. Let's make that another challenge we take on.

Our organization is strong and it is through the effort of each and every one of you here today. On behalf of our Board, I thank you.

Sincerely,
Leonard Resto
September 29, 2001

Cape May Report

As the summer of 2001 passes into fall, it marks the completion of the SIXTH summer of passenger trains operating in Cape May County and the THIRD summer of train service to Cape May City! For Cape May Seashore Lines (CMSL) this is a major milestone, with as many years operating to Cape May City as before crossing the canal. NJ-ARP has supported CMSL because it can provide a real transportation alternative for the parking and traffic woes of Cape May City. This season it became evident that the traveling public is using the train to spend a car-less visit in Cape May. Passenger travel patterns were south on the early trains, returning two, four or six hours later for their north bound travel back to their parked cars. This travel pattern has caught the attention of planners in Cape May. The Cape May Taxpayers Association's committee on parking and traffic is taking a position, requesting grant funding to expand the operating day and increase frequency. All three local newspapers covered this and the Courier Post sent a reporter to explore the question of train shuttles and wrote a glowingly positive article. Another boost to the presence of train service was the opening of the renovated and expanded Cape May Transportation Center.

Future expansion and improvements are beginning to take shape; the rehabilitation of the railroad north to Tuckahoe can begin thanks to a reworking of CMSL's lease from NJT. This revised lease allows the line to qualify for NJDOT rehab funding. Passenger service to Tuckahoe may take several budget years to complete. Waiting for that service is the beautifully restored Tuckahoe station and CMSL has acquired the land "in the Y" for a future maintenance base. Agreement is also nearing so that CMSL can access Winslow Jct. to interchange equipment with NJT. The need for an agreement is highlighted when moving equipment to the TransAction Conference and the movement of visiting private equipment, which provided the popular lunch special service.

NJ-ARP's continued support is needed to complete the above-described initiatives and to develop a smart program to provide transportation to and from Cape May County. A long-standing problem needing NJ-ARP involvement is the unfair treatment train travelers

receive at the County Zoo. The Cape May County Zoo has free admission and free parking, but the past practice of the county has been to charge \$50 every time a shuttle bus transferred train passengers from the train to the Zoo entrance. It is time to level the playing field -- there should be encouragement to travel without a car, not punishment.

-- Paul Mulligan

Hudson-Bergen Light Rail

By late September, estimates for Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit (HBLRT) stand at 15,000 trips per day, with roughly 4,000-to-5,000 of those trips generated by passengers displaced from other routes and/or modes due to the attack on the World Trade Center.

At the one-year operations anniversary mark in April, HBLRT stood at approximately 8,700 trips. That was below the varying estimates of 10,000-to-12,000 riders projected by New Jersey Transit and other observers, but (in NJ-ARP's view) not critically so; nonetheless the ridership "shortfall" received plenty of attention (and implied criticism) from the *Star-Ledger*, *Courier-Post*, and *RAILPACE Newsmagazine*.

But even before Sept. 11, average weekday trips had broken through the 10,000 mark, with surges of 11,000 and 12,000 trip-days (mostly Fridays) becoming more and more common during the summer months.

NJ-ARP is quietly urging New Jersey Transit to expedite completion of the HBLRT link to Hoboken Terminal, now targeted to open in the fall of 2002. Meanwhile, NJ Transit's efforts to get HBLRT's Pavonia-Newport Station up and running last fall have produced unexpected beneficial results, as that stop is now a key transfer link to and from truncated PATH service.

-- Douglas John Bowen

Bergen County Developments

NJ-ARP members Douglas John Bowen, William R. Wright, John Cannizaro, and Orrin Getz advanced the organization's support for three rail routes in New Jersey's most populous county -- two LRT routes (extensions of HBLRT) and West Shore passenger service -- as hearings were held during the summer.

To its credit, New Jersey Transit was on the point in advocating all three (3) options for Bergen County, home to 800,000-plus New Jerseyans; West Shore service would benefit residents of adjacent Rockland County as well.

The "inclusive" approach has soothed friction between county leaders -- county Republicans lean toward the NYS&W east-west light rail route, while Democrats -- spurred on by the *Transit Committee of Bergen County* -- have urged focusing solely on the Northern Branch. (Rockland County officials, the weakest players, of course want the West Shore to be of first priority; they are backed by the *Tri-State Transportation Campaign*.) It also has helped coordinate efforts between county/state and federal officials.

But the hard part -- obtaining funding -- remains, and NJ-ARP must coordinate its membership, and focus its lobbying skills, to help move the process to the next step. (Volunteers are welcome.)

-- Douglas John Bowen

Lackawanna Cut-Off

Since the last Annual Meeting, events have moved forward on the restoration of passenger service on the former DL&W between Hoboken and Scranton. The initiation of service is still years away, definitely no earlier than the end of 2003 and possibly as late as 2006.

In early May, the state of New Jersey agreed to pay Gerald Turco \$21 Million for the New Jersey segment of the Cut-Off (26 miles between Port Morris and Columbia Junction). The surprise in the New Jersey-Turco settlement was the inclusion of the Delaware River Bridge and the one-mile of track to Slateford Junction, Pa. The Delaware crossing had always been considered the most problematic piece of the route structure. New Jersey opted to buy the bridge and the one-mile track to Slateford Junction and then negotiated a price to be paid to them by Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's state representative Kelly Lewis has subsequently requested that \$4 Million of the Pennsylvania state budget be set aside to reimburse New Jersey for Pennsylvania's portion of the bridge and Slateford Junction trackage.

The only remaining segment not in public or otherwise friendly hands was the 10 miles of track in Pennsylvania between Slateford Junction and Anamolik/Gravel Place. Bob Hay, Chairman of the Monroe County Railroad Authority continued his discussions with Norfolk Southern and GVT Rail for a solution that would accommodate all interested parties and stakeholders. GVT Rail is a New York Holding Company in Batavia, NY, which owns 5 freight railroads in New York and Pennsylvania with 285 route miles. Agreement was reached earlier this month and provides that GVT Rail's Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad Company, Inc. (a private regional freight line) will assume operation of the 10-mile segment and enter into a long-term lease/purchase agreement of the track between Anamolik/Gravel Place, through the Delaware Water Gap and Slateford Junction, to Portland, Pa. Monroe County will be permitted access to the Anamolik/Gravel Place to Slateford Junction portion of this trackage for resumption of rail passenger service between Hoboken and Scranton.

Funding remains an overriding concern for this project. There is a current Federal Transit Administration study regarding the economic viability of passenger service. An unqualified justification would bolster the likelihood of future federal funding, especially now that track purchases are complete. Both New Jersey and Pennsylvania are preparing plans to draw down the \$184 Million already authorized-but not yet appropriated-for service restoration. To date, \$1 Million has been drawn down for initial engineering studies and county officials in both states are requesting an additional \$4 Million.

Support for the Cut-Off service restoration is also coming from New York. Recent articles in the Binghamton Sun Bulletin and Scranton Times suggest the feasibility study being conducted by the New York Department of Transportation will conclude that service between Binghamton and New York City will be quicker and less expensive than one routed through Port Jervis. According to the Empire State Passengers Association (ESPA) both

papers interviewed New York State Senator Tom Libous (R) Binghamton who promoted the study and Mike Fleisher of the DOT. The study is expected to be released later this fall.

-- Albert L. Papp, Jr.

Monmouth - Ocean - Middlesex

Retro

July 11, 2000; MOM project signed into law by acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco. August 25, 2000; New Jersey Transit Director Mr. Jeffrey Warsh vows that NJT will come into Jamesburg, build a train station, and put in much needed infrastructure improvements.

Current

June 2001, MOM project receives \$4.5 million for DEIS as mandated by Federal Government. Systra Consultants, of Bloomfield, New Jersey, are the successful bidders for the 18-month EIS. Study began July 2001.

NJ-ARP's Role

NJ-ARP's role in the MOM project remains strong. Currently, NJ-ARP's community outreach program has been successful in Middlesex and Monmouth Counties this past year. Most recently, we have attended the Monroe Township Mothers Club Country Fair and the Helmetta Crabtree Festival, Milltown Day, Howell Community Day and Englishtown Pride Day. In addition, NJ-ARP has given many presentations to area civic groups with very positive results.

NJ-ARP's President, Vice President and assigned Directors continue to lobby for the MOM project on the Federal, State, County and Local levels, keeping public officials constantly aware of the MOM project and pushing for its completion. NJ-ARP also keeps the MOM project in the public eye by submitting letters to the editor and radio show outlets, such as WCTC AM.

The MOM project also enjoys public exposure given to it by the Central Jersey Rail Coalition through their public outreach programs. The coalition, working together with NJ-ARP, continues to keep pressure on area politicians to get MOM moving. The coalition, led by Mr. Bill Braden, President, has been successful in their endeavors.

NIMBY Opposition

This past year, we have seen the rise and possible fall of the Concerned Citizens Against the MOM Line. This group, based in Howell, briefly led local opposition against the MOM project. At one time, this group joined together with the Middlesex County NIMBYs to fight against MOM. When New Jersey Transit announced that both routes mentioned in the MOM study would be built, Middlesex NIMBYs began lobbying for the dismissed Matawan to Lakehurst route. The Concerned Citizens Against the MOM Line seemed to have faded away. As of this report, their web site has been off the Internet for some time. However, we will remain vigilant.

One State Senator, Peter Inverso, R-14, introduced a Senate Bill S-1674 that would compel NJ Transit to commission an independent study of any and all possible alignments. Assemblypersons Linda Greenstein and Gary Gear, Democrats, have introduced an Assembly bill of their own to re-study the dropped Matawan to Freehold alignment. They have serious questions about the viability, safety, and costs of the MOM project. Middlesex County still opposes the MOM project. The county and three municipalities are all Democratic governments.

Other

Old Bridge Township, in Middlesex County, has requested to New Jersey Transit a new train station in the Laurence Harbor section, east of the Garden State Parkway exit 120, next to New Jersey Transit's active coastline route. NJ Transit will spend \$1.3 million to design the train station over the next two years. This project has the cooperation of the State Department of Transportation.

Conclusion

This past year has been good for the MOM project. MOM is now in the EIS; this will take approximately 18 months to complete. NJ-ARP will continue its aggressive community outreach programs. NJ-ARP will continue to push the MOM project on all levels. NJ-ARP made its presence known in Monroe Township September 9 at Middlesex County's Thompson Park. We were challenged, we held our ground, we showed ourselves to the residents of Monroe Township. We are the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers, and we are here to stay in Middlesex County.

-- Daniel Kerwin

Montclair Connection / Boonton Line Electrification

Throughout the past year, significant progress has been made in New Jersey Transit's Montclair Connection Project. While almost all of the catenary poles were erected over a year ago (some poles at the connection site were installed during this year), catenary wire has been strung over almost all of the Boonton Line between Walnut Street Station and Great Notch Yard, a distance of approximately 3-4 miles.

At the connection site itself, all the buildings in the path of the connection right-of-way have been removed. The actual connection path is in a cut, with white concrete retaining walls installed on either side of the right-of-way (and black metal fences installed above the walls). Track has since been installed through the cut, with welded rail and concrete ties in place. As of this writer's last observation, switches have not yet been installed from the Boonton Line to the connection tracks, although a shoo-fly (and temporary speed restriction) is now in place at the future site of such a switch. A new station is under construction (and has partially opened) at Bay Street, featuring a pair of high-level platforms, and a footbridge to connect them. Related development is going on all around the connection site, which will eventually include a new fire house, upgraded day care facilities, and a major parking deck capable of handling as many as 400 automobiles.

While the major parts of the Montclair Connection project include installation of new track between the Montclair Branch and Boonton Line, and catenary between Bay Street and Great Notch, improvements have been made in many other areas. Fences, designed to prevent people from crossing tracks at non-designated locations, are already in use at Walnut Street and Montclair Heights stations, and are now being installed at Mountain Avenue Station. New signals are being installed throughout town, with new signal masts visible from the Bellevue Avenue and Mt. Hebron Road grade crossings. The grade crossings themselves are also being replaced, with new bells, gates, LED lights, and hi-rail rubber pads under the rails. Welded rails lie on the ground over much of the Boonton Line (especially between Upper Montclair and Watchung Avenue stations), hinting rail replacement in the near future. In short, it appears this stretch of the Boonton Line is seeing, in addition to the installation of catenary, other significant improvements in the right-of-way.

In the past few months, plans for a new station at Montclair State University have been approved by the NJ Transit Board of Directors. This proposed station is slated to include some 1,000 parking spaces. This is significant in that, with the Connection finally taking shape, one of the most heated arguments among Montclair Residents has become "Where will all the cars new commuters will be driving into town go?" Residents have even gone so far as to petition the town council for two hour parking in certain areas, specifically to prevent Connection-generated commuters from parking on the sides of main streets, next to petitioners' homes. Fortunately, this new station and parking solution will bring significant relief, and solve a dilemma that has puzzled residents throughout construction.

In closing, significant progress has been made in the Montclair Connection/Boonton Line Electrification project in the past year. New Jersey Transit has done an excellent job in building this project such that inconveniences to trackside residents (such as this writer), and others in town are minimal. The Connection is currently slated to open sometime in the first half of 2002, and this writer is confident that it will become yet another project on New Jersey Transit's list of success stories.

-- Adam Otsuka

Newark Airport Station

In February 2001, "reliable sources" indicated to us the anticipated fare structure for the Newark Airport Station Rail Service. We stated this "rumor" on our e-mail chat list and we went to work on it. In early Spring, we picked up suggested fares at a public meeting and published it on our website. We were roundly scolded by the Port Authority for speculating, that our estimates were not correct. Curiously, the Port Authority did not ask us to retract the Hotline piece. However, the Port Authority turned out to be right. Our estimates were off, they were LOWER!!

The Port Authority's expertise in fare technology outshines its modal muddle. The new station will utilize encoded card technology to ensure that the "business elite" will pay a standard NJ Transit fare, plus \$5 additional one-way from Newark-Penn Station and \$7 additional one-way from New York Penn. To add insult to injury, the business elite will have this fare fully reimbursed as a business expense by their companies. The Port Authority's take on the fare is \$3.50 per rider, with NJ Transit receiving the remaining extra fare.

The entire issue is one of balance. Once again, the Port Authority demonstrated that it does not stand for public accountability. For months, we requested fare information and were brushed off each time. We tried unsuccessfully to meet with City of Newark officials to assist us in our efforts. They brushed us off as well. The business elite gets an enhanced service while the less well to do person can take the bus. Why are some airport users discouraged under the current plan? The Port has yet to answer.

The two other important issues are lack of pedestrian and bus access as well as the lack for the ability to develop the area. We were told at a meeting with Port Authority representatives that this was not possible because of the FAA funding received for the project. We rejected that argument to no avail.

Once the fare structure was announced, we took to the press and asked our membership to call, write or e-mail the Acting Governor. While our membership responded admirably to the challenge, the press largely ignored the Port Authority's stance and made NJ Transit the "bad guy". The press focused on the perceived lack of service when, in fact, NJ Transit will stop at least 75% of its trains there -- including express trains. Only one paper, in a tepid editorial, noted the lack of access by foot or bus and suggested the Port Authority get to that when it could.

We have already taken steps in our meetings with the Gubernatorial Candidates to emphasize that they have the power to have the Port Authority roll back this fare structure. In addition, we will lobby the legislature to seek a new law that calls for fare hearings before ANY new service is implemented.

-- Len Resto

Newark City Subway

Dignitaries, customers and railfans came together on Friday, August 24th to bid a fond farewell to the Presidents' Conference Committee (PCC) cars that have carried millions of passengers since their introduction into service in 1954. The cars were purchased second hand from the Minneapolis-St. Paul's Twin Cities Rapid Transit system. The cars began first running under NJ Transit's predecessor company, Public Service Coordinated Transport.

The celebration coordinated by NJ Transit was exceptional. Merchandise was available for purchase, customers were allowed to ride for free during the evening and there was a festive mood in the air.

NJ Transit's Executive Director, Jeffrey Warsh, has indicated his intent to keep each of the retired PCC cars in New Jersey for use by towns wishing to establish some kind of trolley service. NJ Transit will donate three PCC cars to the New Jersey Transportation Heritage Center which will be built in Phillipsburg. We salute Mr. Warsh's resolve to keep these cars in New Jersey, as many others would have liked to have had them.

The new service commenced on Monday, August 27th and has been well received.

-- Len Resto

Raritan Valley

Continued attention by NJ Transit with coordination and ideas from the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition (RVRC), whose bi-monthly RVRC meetings I attend and participate, brings incremental improvements, and short and long range capital plans to the Raritan Valley Line, and keeps active proposals for future West Trenton Line and west of High Bridge service.

A new Union station in Townley on the Lehigh portion of the line near Kean University is currently under construction.

Plainfield station is currently being rebuilt so that when complete, it will be much like the current Westfield station. High-level platforms, reopened pedestrian subway, elevators, and a new pavilion on the westbound side are all under construction.

Some refurbishment was recently completed at Dunellen.

Ridership has grown geometrically at Bridgewater (east) with not only traditional city-bound commuters, but with local ridership induced by the adjacent Promenade shopping center and Commerce Bank (Somerset Patriots) ballpark.

Planned for, but thus far un-funded, are a Whitehouse rail siding to permit about 7 additional weekday trains to be extended west of Raritan, and a turnaround siding east of Harrison between the eastbound and westbound mainline tracks permitting a higher percentage of same platform transfers to New York Penn in the AM rush hour, with the number increasing from 4 to 8 out of 11 trains.

Typical daily, weekday line ridership for most months often grows in percentage terms by the highest amount of any NJT rail line, and is now around 9,800, an all-time high, and is slightly ahead of the Main/Bergen line most months. I feel it is an undercount, as the high amount of local intra-line ridership is not as well quantified as it is on NJT bus operations.

I try to emphasize the needs and characteristics of non-traditional city-bound ridership, i.e. local intra-line and reverse-commuters, many of whom are transit-dependent, and the need for feeder buses, both as corporate shuttles and residential feeders. To that end, in late April '01, NJT judiciously rescheduled existing PM rush hour trains and tightened turn-around times resulting in a net-addition of a frequency west of Plainfield to Raritan, an additional frequency from Raritan to Newark, and re-timings of several other eastbound trains reestablishing two connections from 884-Wheels buses at Somerville for reverse-commuters.

-- Joe Versaggi

Southern New Jersey Light Rail Transit System

The most significant accomplishment on this LRT system was the recovery, inspection and righting of the Rancocas Bridge, which had fallen into Rancocas Creek. The bridge was not compromised in any way and the project is back on target for a 2003 opening.

In Camden, work continues with utility searches and relocations, mainly along the waterfront, and moved into track bed and station slab construction. Street running track has been laid adjacent to the Tweeter Center and is advancing up Delaware Ave. Station slabs have also been constructed on Cooper Street and at Tweeter. Work on the new Walter Rand Transportation Center is advancing and its construction will be a joint project between the SNJLRT contractor and the Delaware River Port Authority.

Track rehabilitation and replacement work continues along the entire 34-mile alignment. Generally, the work underway is the replacement of aged track with continuously welded rail. Degraded wooden ties are also being replaced with either new wooden ties or concrete. Grade crossings are being repaired and signalized at a number of locations along the alignment. In addition, clearing and grubbing operations are underway to provide a clean line of sight for light rail operations and to facilitate the installation of a trench running parallel with the rail for the installation of a duct bank which will contain communication cables critical to the operation of the system.

Finally, the proposed one-mile Trenton extension of the alignment up State Street is in the final stages of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Study. This document evaluated the impact of various alignments as well as a "no build" alternative. It is now a draft under review by the New Jersey DEP.

-- Carol Ann Thomas

Sussex County Area

Lackawanna Cutoff

Sussex and Warren Counties announce that their rail stations along the Cutoff are to be located in Andover Borough and in Blairstown.

Condemnation proceedings conclude in July when the State of New Jersey acquires the right-of-way of the former DL&W Cutoff in Morris, Sussex, and Warren counties from Kearny developer Gerald Turco for \$21 million. The purchased right-of-way extends from its intersection with New Jersey Transit's Boonton Line at Port Morris Yard to Slateford, Pennsylvania. Also included in the purchase is the bridge over the Delaware River. The only missing link remaining is a Norfolk Southern-owned section between Analomink and Slateford in Pennsylvania.

The Appropriations Committee of the United States Senate approves \$2.5 million for preliminary engineering and design work.

The Cutoff becomes a unified entity in September with the agreement by Norfolk Southern to lease the section of right-of-way between Analomink and Slateford to the Monroe and Lackawanna County Rail Authorities for \$1 per year for twenty years with an option to purchase.

(For more detail on the cut-off, see separate report included)

New York Susquehanna and Western

New Jersey Transit is under protracted negotiations with the Delaware Otsego Corporation of Cooperstown, New York, the owner of the NYS&W, to purchase the right-of-way in New Jersey out to Warwick, New York in Orange County.

Little, if any progress, is made in the restoration of passenger service. The delay is attributed to the lack of a suitable location for an overnight layover yard. Sparta Township rejected a proposal to locate the overnight layover yard there in 1998. However, Hardyston Township is offering a parcel of land that is located at the site of its former municipal landfill. The site must be reclaimed before New Jersey Transit can begin construction. The State Senate has appropriated \$500,000 for Hardyston Township's ongoing cleanup of the Walkill River Valley as well as the landfill site.

Mount Arlington Intermodal Station

A combination park-and-ride and bus station is under construction on the eastbound side of Route 80 at exit 30 in Mount Arlington. The site is immediately adjacent to New Jersey Transit's Boonton Line approximately half way between Dover and Lake Hopatcong. However, no funding has been designated for the addition of a "Mt Arlington Station" on the New Jersey Transit right-of-way.

Route 46 Netcong Circle Rehabilitation Project

The New Jersey State Department of Transportation has committed funding to the elimination of the Netcong traffic circle and the re-alignment of the intersection of Routes 46 and 206 in Netcong near Exit 28 of Route 80. Included in the project is the rehabilitation of the Route 206 bridge that spans New Jersey Transit's Boonton Line at a point immediately east of the Netcong Station. It is reported that the new bridge is being designed for a clearance with respect to the tracks that is consistent with that required for installation of overhead catenary; a possible indication that New Jersey Transit has long-range plans to extend electrification west of Dover.

Route 15 Widening

The North Jersey Transportation Authority has included the widening of Route 15 between Sparta Township and Route 206 in Frankford Township in its list of projects. Sussex County residents living in adjacent communities have opposed the widening project in favor of improving existing intersections south of Jefferson in Morris County as well as accelerating the proposed NYS&W passenger service.

Lake Hopatcong Station

New Jersey Transit completes cosmetic improvements to the Lake Hopatcong Station on the Boonton Line. A new shelter is included in this rehabilitation. This shelter is characterized by a more conventional wood frame structure in contrast to the glass/Plexiglas and metal shelters found throughout the New Jersey Transit system. Despite these improvements the Lake Hopatcong Station remains as one of the least photogenic and least visually appealing stations west of Boonton. The shelter mentioned above is identical to the one recently installed in Towaco on the Boonton Line.

Freight Customer Lost

Toys-R-Us announces that it is discontinuing its use of the Morristown and Erie Railroad to interchange shipments from its distribution center in the Flanders section of Mount Olive Township to NS/CSX due to the unreliability of service provided by NS/CSX since their acquisition of Conrail. Trucks are to be used in place of rail service.

Mount Olive Station Notes (NJARP Adopt-A-Station)

The State DOT installs blue destination "New Jersey Transit - Mount Olive" signs (the ones depicting a person boarding an Arrow coach in silhouette aspect with NJT stripes in the upper right corner) in the area of the station. Specifically, signs are installed on Route 80 east and west at Exit 25, on Route 46 east and west at the ITC (International Trade Center) entrance, and at two locations within the ITC property. I had been reminding NJT for three years that Mt Olive was the only station, to my knowledge, not to have destination signs posted at major intersections near the station.

Rourdervan, a European-based perfume and commercial fragrance manufacturer, relocates its US east coast corporate headquarters and manufacturing operations into the ITC at a location on Waterloo Valley Road approximately 1000 feet from the Mt Olive Station.

Sportcraft, a manufacturer of gymnasium and sporting equipment, relocates its distribution/warehouse into the ITC approximately 750 feet from the Mt Olive Station.

A new distribution/warehouse/office building incorporating spaces for fifteen truck loading docks is constructed immediately adjacent to the Mt Olive Station. No tenant leases the building at this time even though, from all external appearances, it is ready for occupancy.

New Jersey Transit re-installs all signs on the Mt Olive Station property. The signs are sunk into either cement or asphalt; they had previously been installed in turf and were all either leaning to one side or loose. These include one "stop" sign, two "handicap parking only" signs, one "no truck" sign, and one "no parking" sign. I originally brought this to Transit's attention multiple numbers of times along with requests for re-striping of the entire station, which has yet to be accomplished.

A request is made to the New Jersey Transit Department of Stations and Revenue (the administrators of the Adopt-A-Station program) for permission to install a clear plastic box on the pole supporting our NJARP Adopt-A-Station sign. It is proposed that the box be used to display Boonton Line timetables that would be available for patrons of the station. Many reverse commuters who utilize the Mt Olive Station without going to or from Hoboken or Dover have no opportunity to obtain a printed timetable. The proposal is rejected on the grounds that it would be a non-standard feature unique to one station and that there was the possibility that the material in the boxes would turn into litter or that the boxes would not be consistently stocked.

Landscaping notes

Over the last three years a total of eighteen White Dogwood (*cornus florida*) saplings have been planted on the station property. Their growth is agonizingly slow but steady.

Tim Apgar's emphasis on planting in the two islands on either side of the shelter over the last three years has transitioned from "annual" types with some bulbs mixed in to "perennial" types to, starting this fall, with eastern native "wildflowers". The "annual" types that local nurseries are so fond of selling require too much irrigation and are intolerant of extremes of heat. I've noticed over the last year or two that the soil temperatures in the two "islands" rises excessively due to the fact that they are three to five inches higher than the asphalt grade level of the parking lot. They are like raised beds and so the soil dries out and heats up faster than soil at normal ground level.

The first year I installed colorful annuals such as *salvia*, *cleome*, and *dusty miller* but these perform poorly without constant care. The following season I installed *monarda* (Bee Balm), *buddleia* bushes, and a few *goldenrod* (*canadensis*) plants along with a *sand cherry* specimen. Perennials such as these seem to be OK as long as they get the chance to establish a good root system. This fall the corner in front of the "handicapped" access ramp will be planted with native eastern wildflowers that are known to be drought-tolerant. These include *black eye susan* (*ruhbeckia*), *goldenrod* (*canadensis*), *purple coneflower*, *Joe Pye weed* (*eupatorium*), *coreopsis*, and *common milkweed* (*asclepias*). These seeds are available on the Internet along with tips on planting. The soil in this area is being prepared for these seeds by completely eliminating all existing grass and weed growth.

-- Tim Apgar

Web Site

NJ-ARP has had an Internet web site since November 1995. The web site contains membership information, position papers, press releases, and the weekly Hotline. NJ-ARP obtained its own domain name, nj-arp.org, in November 1999. In June 2001, an additional domain name, njarp.org (without the hyphen) was obtained to make it easier for people to find our site. Either domain name can be used to access the site.

Since November 1999, the NJ-ARP web site has been hosted by Pair Networks, Inc., located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Pair Networks operates over 600 servers in their datacenter. NJ-ARP's site is hosted on an Athlon Thunderbird 1000 MHz computer with 384MB of RAM and a 16.1GB disk. (This server is shared with other Pair Networks customers.) The web hosting cost is \$5.47 per month, and the domain names are \$19 per year each.

Last year, a search function and a detailed privacy policy were added to the web site.

The NJ-ARP web site averages over 26,000 "hits" and 6,000 "page views" per month. Each Hotline is viewed an average of 275 times. The Hotline Mailing List, which allows people to be notified by e-mail when a new Hotline is available, currently has over 120 subscribers.

The web site is maintained by Bob Scheurle. The Hotline is written by NJ-ARP Vice President Douglas John Bowen.

-- Bob Scheurle

Miscellaneous Activities

TransAction Conference, Atlantic City

NJ-ARP was again well represented at April's TransAction conference. Bill Wright was a member of the Steering Committee and was able to secure proper representation at that ever-growing conference. Bill Nikel manned our table in the exhibit hall for which we are grateful. This was the second year that Bill represented us. Bill Wright also moderated a panel on new rail starts and was able to torpedo TriState Campaign's argument that new rail starts create suburban sprawl. Ron Monaco, Mayor of Readington and member of NJTAC, and Al Papp were also on the panel.

NJTPA

Bill Wright continues to represent us at the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. He has attended nearly every NJTPA meeting to keep NJ-ARP's positions in the limelight. It has been easier this year, as again NJTPA has been sanctioned for devoting too much effort on roads and not enough on transit.

NJ Transit Hall of Fame

Bill Wright and Art Reuben (posthumously) were inducted into the NJ Transit Hall of Fame. This was a great honor for both as well as for NJ-ARP. At the ceremony, NJ Transit Executive Director Jeffrey Warsh announced plans to name the Bridgewater Rail Station after Art Reuben for his many years of selfless dedication to rail issues.

Union County TAB

Bill Wright continues as Cranford's official representative to the Union County Transportation Advisory Board, the Raritan Valley Coalition, and the Cross County Rail Link trying to keep the Cross County group focused on Elizabeth as a hub with both West Trenton and Phillipsburg using the former CNJ capacity to downtown Elizabeth.

-- William R. Wright

These files were created by Bob Scheurle.