

November 15, 2003

**New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers**

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NJ-ARP Annual Report

2002-2003

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Message from the President

At this time last year, we had 304 members and a renewal rate of 72%. Since then, Joe Versaggi, our Membership Director, has formalized the renewal process by creating a database for renewals. This allows him to send renewal notices to each of you on a timely basis. When a member does not respond within 30 days, I personally follow up with a reminder letter. In addition, we sent a targeted mailing to NARP members who were not NJ-ARP members. This yielded 16 new members, exceeding our expectations. Thus, as of November 1st, our membership number stands at 324 and our renewal rate has improved dramatically to 87%. However, these improvements are not taken for granted and we will continue to aggressively court new members. As I mentioned last year, unless we can keep our membership renewal rate above 85%, we will have a shrinking organization. We can't let

that happen.

For 2004, I'd like to set a goal of reaching 350 members. If all of us try to get at least one person to join, we can easily achieve that goal. I would also like to target high school and college students to join NJ-ARP. We need to show them that there are better ways to get around than cars and gas guzzling SUV's that are nothing less than Urban Assault Vehicles. Finally, I want to reach out to members to build some redundancy in key areas. We've accomplished some of that by getting John West, Lee Lensky and Paul Iverson to prepare PowerPoint presentations for us. We still need volunteers and I will be personally reaching out for them.

2003 was a good year for NJ-ARP. Our core mission of railroad advocacy was adhered to with passion. Al Papp has been "laser-beam" focused on PATH/Lex. He has been able to secure meetings with the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, DOT Commissioner Jack Lettiere, Senator Jon Corzine (D-NJ), Congressman Jerry Nadler (D-NY) and countless others to push what I believe is a proposal which will enhance both sides of the Hudson "Ocean". Al has not missed an opportunity to push this proposal. We are disappointed and baffled as to why New Jersey elected officials have chosen to ignore the proposal. They have not been good advocates for New Jersey in the reconstruction of Lower Manhattan. Compounding state government's indifference has been the media's hitting the snooze button on their laptop computers. We have some reason to be optimistic, however. At the last meeting with Congressman Nadler, at which representatives of the PA and MTA were present, he asked pointed questions to which the PA and MTA must respond. There is cause for hope and I can assure you, Al Papp will not let this drop.

The beginning of the year showed promise when Governor McGreevey appointed a Blue Ribbon Commission to study transportation problems in the State and report back to him with recommendations for improvement. We lobbied to be named to the panel; however, the Governor chose to name high profile members from academia, government and corporations. As of November 1st, we do not know if the Commission has accomplished anything, other than having some nicely designed stationery printed at taxpayer expense. Four public hearings were scheduled within the past 60 days. Two of the hearings were scheduled in transit unfriendly venues: Vineland and Cherry Hill. The Vineland session was cancelled with little notice given and has not been rescheduled. The Cherry Hill session was held during the day so that one would have to take a day off to attend. The session was adjourned an hour before its scheduled ending time thus denying those that came after the cut-off the ability to testify. The session in Newark was pushed from 12:00 Noon to 3:00 P.M. to 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM. This denied the ability for citizens to give up a lunch hour to attend. Finally the session in New Brunswick was truncated in length and there was a dearth of Commission members in attendance. Such is what happens when there is a Commission without a mission. Not really clear on what they were supposed to be doing, the Commission has done nothing. It has done nothing very well indeed.

MOM also saw a good year in 2003. The DEIS process continues and the testimony is more in favor than against. Dan Kerwin has done his usual huge job in this area by winning people over the old fashioned way-one person at a time. Bill Armstrong has been a recurring presence at street festivals and at hearings providing testimony. We've also been very fortunate to have the help of Patrick Torpey of The Strategy Group. Pat has come to the numerous street fairs and festivals at which NJ-ARP participated and had flags and decals made up. We thank Pat for his ongoing efforts and look forward to working with him in

2004. We also salute the ongoing efforts of the *Central Jersey Rail Coalition* where Bill Braden and Dan Green, among others, lead the charge in their backyard. Thank you, CJRC! Changing demographics, more traffic and good advocacy have people asking, "Why don't we have a train?" Why, indeed.

HBLRT continues to succeed and as of the date you read this, will have been further extended to 22nd Street in Bayonne. The system continues to be expanded to the North through Hoboken and much activity will be seen there in the upcoming year. New Jersey City University is in the process of working with Jersey City to develop land on Route 440. Part of that development would include extending the West Side Avenue branch of HBLRT into the Route 440 area. This will be a huge boon to that area. We remain disappointed that signal pre-emption has not been more aggressively fought for. It slows the system down and it doesn't have to be that way. We will continue to press on this issue.

At the Annual Meeting, you'll be close up and personal with SNJLRT. If ever there was a political football, it is this line. I need not recount the controversy swirling around this light rail project this year. We are believers in this project, are convinced it will spur transit village type development in the Camden to Trenton corridor and the working poor will have the option of bus or rail. We are confident they will use the faster option. Our thanks to Carol Ann Thomas for being such a staunch supporter from day one.

A lot of things that we take for granted happen because of dedicated members. Our Newsletter Report and Observations happen because of the hard work and dedication of Doug and Mary Ann Bowen and Les Wolff (who incidentally has added Bergen County Liaison to his duties). Bob Scheurle continues his professional handling of the website and we are all thankful that he came through a life-threatening situation this year. Bill Wright continues his tireless efforts at the NJTPA, Union County matters and TransAction. Gary Johnson was named NEC Liaison and has done that job well. Tim Apgar continues to advocate in Sussex County and maintain NJ-ARP's adopted station in Mount Olive. Paul Mulligan continues to push Cape May Seashore Lines and transit in that region. Orrin Getz has been a constant presence at MTA Board Meetings pushing our agenda for Rockland County. Finally, Jim Ciacciarreli has been active on behalf of MOM, testifying (when allowed to) at the Blue Ribbon Commission hearings and lobbying in Washington, DC for Amtrak funding.

I thank the Board, Officers and, most importantly, the membership for making us look good in 2003.

Sincerely,
Leonard Resto, President
November 15, 2003

Access to the Region's Core

2003 saw preliminary funding provided for the initial Environmental Impact Statement for the construction of additional Hudson River tunnels to New York Penn Station. NJ Transit has gone it alone to begin the process of making these critical tunnels a reality. The economic recession and the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks have only added to the ongoing lack of energy and vision on the part of the MTA to adopt Alternative G which would connect New York Penn Station with Grand Central Terminal. Hopefully, if

PATH/Lex becomes a reality, access to Manhattan's East Side can be achieved in the short term. NJ-ARP will continue to push for the connection of the two most important transportation terminals on the East Coast.

The overwhelming success of NJT's MidTown Direct service on the Morris & Essex line, the Montclair Connection and the Secaucus Transfer station prove the need for accelerating ARC's tri-state capacity and enhanced regional rail expansion recommendations. While incremental improvements continue to be made by NJT, additional track capacity is needed to supply the ever burgeoning New Jersey demand for direct rail service to Manhattan. Demand is expected to be generated by:

- Growth on the currently operating Northeast Corridor, North Jersey Coast and Morris & Essex Lines.
- Increasing use of the Newark/Liberty International Airport rail station.
- The initiation of weekday use of the Secaucus Transfer Station.
- The Raritan Valley line once direct access to New York Penn is achieved by either electrification or use of dual-mode diesel and electric locomotives.
- The Middlesex-Ocean-Monmouth (MOM) proposed central New Jersey route.

NJ-ARP has already had discussions with NJT regarding through-running of NJT and Metro-North regional trains through the New York Gateway thus providing more integrated rail service with existing and available equipment. NJ-ARP has met with the Bronx Borough President's office which supports our suggestion enthusiastically. We will continue to push for this during 2004.

-- Al Papp, Jr.

Bergen County Developments

The optimism of DMU in 2002 has given way to the harsh reality of New Jersey Transit's "back-to-basics" policy, although there were some rays of hope for the beleaguered 10% of the state residents that live in Bergen County.

Herewith: some of the details since our wildly optimistic meeting on board Colorado Railcar's DMU last October.

Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit (HBLRT)

Still mostly Hudson very little Bergen. The good news is that HBLRT marches inexorably north towards the Bergen County line (and also a little further south to 22nd Street in Bayonne). Funding is only secured as far as 81st Street-North Bergen (which is scheduled to be reached sometime in 2005 (already two years late). In October 2002, we were happy to report that Vince Lombardi Park & Ride was no longer the northern terminus. The Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeloaders and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority determined that HBLRT should terminate in Tenafly via the Northern Branch and should also be linked up with Bergen Cross-County DMU service. In December, Governor McGreevey, Senator Corzine, NJDOT & NJT approved the change in terminus and announced that federal funds will be sought.

NJT Fares Remain Stable; MTA Fares Spike; Machines Take Over

May 1st saw a 20% to 28% increase in fares for New York State patrons of the Bergen, Main, Port Jervis and Pascack Valley lines. All stations along these lines have been outfitted (or soon will be) with Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs). In addition to easing the burden on conductors handling cash fares, magnetically encoded tickets issued by the TVMs will allow seamless transfers at the newly opened station at Secaucus.

Secaucus Junction

Although the official rollout was September 6, patrons of Secaucus' former Harmon Cove station (now abandoned) were actually using the new Secaucus Junction station 7-days-a-week beginning August 4. Beginning September 6 on weekends only, Secaucus Junction became the culmination of almost eight decades of dreams for a unified, statewide rail system. The station will convert to a full time transfer on December 15, 2003, after PATH service is restored to the site of the former World Trade Center.

Service Increases

Weekend service was increased to hourly frequency on the Main/Bergen line for the opening of Secaucus Junction. Transfer opportunities to the Northeast Corridor and North Jersey Coast line were well coordinated. (No weekend service was instituted for the Pascack Valley line [PVL], though.) August marked the debut of a new PVL Express operated by the MTA between Hoboken and the Metro North stations of Pearl River, Nanuet and Spring Valley. Two additional trains in each direction (making New Jersey stops) were added to the PVL on October 26. Unfortunately, the sidings required to turn the PVL from a commuter operation to a full time line (originally due in 2000) have now slipped even further until sometime in 2005, an incredible five years late.

Parking

NJT is anticipating ridership increases because of Secaucus Junction. In that regard, it is expanding parking at various stations along the PVL, including Pearl River (85 spaces), Montvale (140 spaces), North Hackensack/Route 4 (400 spaces) and, as advised to us by Orrin Getz, our Rockland County Liaison, an additional 220 spaces in Nanuet, NY. A major new parking facility (1,300 spaces) on the Ramsey/Mahwah border on Route 17 is being built for the Bergen/Main/Port Jervis lines.

The Future of DMU May be Xanadu

NJT is evaluating options to tap into all three Bergen County rail lines to service the multi-billion dollar entertainment center that is envisioned in the Hackensack Meadowlands adjacent to the current sports complex. It is considering DMUs to shuttle between Hoboken Terminal, Secaucus Transfer, and a new station located somewhere before the Pascack Valley/Bergen County Line junction, and any Xanadu terminus. thereby putting the complex within easy reach of both New Jersey and New York rail passengers.

-- Les Wolff

Cape May Report

The 2003 season completes the EIGHTH summer of passenger trains operating in Cape May County and the FIFTH summer of train service to Cape May City. New equipment made for better and more flexible operations this season. On the railroad this year were the two URHS F units, three coaches and the lounge car #37. A typical train consisted of an F7, the lounge and an RDC as a cab car in MU control. The other F7 and coaches were added for charters and special events such as the "Fireworks Special".

Future expansion and improvements are beginning to take shape. The rehabilitation of the railroad from Tuckahoe south to Woodbine (4 miles) is complete. Passenger service to Tuckahoe will still take several budget years to complete, but it's started. Agreement was reached so that CMSL can access Winslow Jct. to interchange equipment with NJT, which opened the gateway for the URHS equipment to arrive.

NJ-ARP has supported CMSL because it provides a real transportation alternative for the parking and traffic woes of Cape May, and makes it FUN.

-- Paul Mulligan

East Coast Greenway

The East Coast Greenway (ECG) will be the nation's first long-distance, city-to-city multi-modal transportation corridor for pedestrians, cyclists, hikers, wheelchairs, strollers, Roller-bladers and other users of non-motorized transportation. The goal is to connect existing and planned trails that are locally owned and managed to form a continuous, safe, green route - easily identified by the public through signage, maps, and user guides. It will be a 2,600-mile route from Key West, FL to Calais, ME at the USA - Canada border. At least 80% of the route will be off-road, with on-road and sidewalk connections where necessary.

The Greenway will allow people to commute safely to work or school, or to ride a bicycle to the local park. The trail is being developed by volunteers in partnership with scores of state and local organizations and agencies. Nationally, the ECG is currently 20% complete, and an additional 30% is in development. For state-by-state maps and further information, visit <http://www.greenway.org>.

The goals of the ECG are to be off-road where possible, but to connect residential areas to transit facilities, schools, parks, downtowns, historic sites, and other points of interest.

The New Jersey segment will start at the Calhoun Street Bridge linking Morrisville, PA to Trenton about a quarter-mile upstream from the Statehouse. In fact, the first officially designated segment of the entire ECG is here in New Jersey, the 28-mile stretch of the Delaware & Raritan Canal from Trenton to South Bound Brook.

The challenge has been to find a suitable route between South Bound Brook and a Manhattan-bound ferry terminal. The New Jersey Department of Transportation is funding a Route Locator Study by the planning firm RBA Group for a route from South Bound Brook to Newark and then across the Meadowlands to Jersey City to access the Hudson River

ferries to Pier A (Battery Park) in Manhattan. ECG Executive Director Karen Votava urged the planners to maximize off-road stretches, even if it will take a decade or more to achieve.

The proposed route of the New Jersey segment (going north) would go through or near the following train stations: Trenton, Princeton, Bound Brook, New Brunswick, Metropark, Rahway, Cranford, Union, Newark Penn Station, Harrison, Grove Street, and Exchange Place. The most uncertainty is in Jersey City, where they are trying to use the Bergen Arches and the 6th Street corridor.

I would like to see signs along the greenway directing its users to the nearby train stations, and likewise to put East Coast Greenway signs at the NJ Transit and PATH stations directing the transit riders to the greenway. This will encourage more people to walk or ride a bicycle to the train station, freeing up more parking for those on the waiting lists to finally be able to use the trains instead of driving to work.

This is a fascinating project that offers opportunities for auto-free transportation and is worth supporting; however, the possibility of losing unused rail right-of-ways concerns me. No final decision has been made about the exact route, so **we at NJ-ARP can influence the planning and decision-making process to try to preserve rail corridors so that they are not converted to a "rail-to-trail" scenario.** Having the ECG run alongside the tracks in a "rail-with-trail" scenario is good for both transportation and the environment as long as there are means to keep greenway users off of the tracks and an occasional grade-level separation to enable pedestrians and cyclists to cross the rail right-of-way at appropriate locations so that the tracks don't become a "dividing line" that isolates neighboring areas from each other.

Today's inactive rail lines will be needed in the coming years; especially as freight volume into Port Newark-Elizabeth surges when the ongoing project to deepen the shipping channels to 50 feet is completed. When today's super-tankers enter Port Newark-Elizabeth, they are filled to less than half of capacity because the weight of a full load would cause the ship to hit the bottom of the Kill Van Kull or other shipping channels in the region. When the 50-foot depth is achieved, these ships will come in loaded to full capacity. This could double the number of trucks on New Jersey highways within 15 years unless today's inactive rail freight lines are reactivated. Most trucks would use major highways such as the New Jersey Turnpike, Interstates, and US highways. This added truck volume would turn these roads into "clogged arteries." Additional truck traffic would cause some motorists who are currently driving on those major highways to use the state and county roads as alternates. With all highways already choked with traffic, this trickle-down effect could result in widespread gridlock unless there is a heavy increase in freight train volume to pick up the slack. The increase in port cargo volume must come in the form of more freight trains, NOT more trucks!

How can you help? I ask that members join me on the New Jersey Committee for the East Coast Greenway and consider attending their meetings. I can be contacted via njarp@nj-arp.org.

-- Gary Johnson

Hudson-Bergen Light Rail

Another year, another portion of Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit added to the mix. New Jersey Transit early on targeted November 15 for its extension of HBLRT south to 22nd Street in Bayonne, making it the new southern terminus of the system. Though touted as "early" or "ahead of schedule," this segment, sometimes semi-officially described as Initial Operating Segment 1A (IOS-1A), was slated to open in 2003 as per the earliest of projections. Measured by that standard, the segment has opened "on time." Given New Jersey Transit's difficulties in achieving such goals, NJ-ARP will take it.

And, as NJ-ARP noted last year, the "phase-in" approach to HBLRT employed by NJ Transit, and 21st Century Rail Corp, the Design-Build-Operate-Maintain contractor overseeing the project, is a positive, realistic approach to rail passenger expansion, in NJ-ARP's view. Rather than wait until everything was "perfect," HBLRT has opened in bits and pieces as each segment became available. This proved critical following events of Sept. 11, 2001, when HBLRT was pressed to cover for PATH's absence at Exchange Place -- had NJT and others listened to the experts calling for "full-package" opening to Hoboken Terminal, HBLRT would not have been in place to serve the riding public.

HBLRT's piecemeal opening(s) will continue in 2004, possibly in a two-stage manner, as the system expands north along Hoboken's western border and, by year's end, to the Weehawken ferry operations at Port Imperial.

Despite the progress, the system has drawn some criticism, even by LRT advocates and fans, and NJ-ARP believes some of the criticism is legitimate. As we noted in our 2002 Annual Report, frustrations with slow operating speeds north of Liberty Science Center remain, though some obstacles and issues have been resolved. Unresolved is the limiting aspect of "signal priority" -- where autos appear to get the priority -- which not only has impeded speeds at Harborside and Pavonia-Newport stations, but emboldened automobiles to literally run through red traffic lights and inflict damage to light rail vehicles (and danger to LRT riders). NJ-ARP plans to meet with officials of 21st Century Rail Corp., the design-build-operate-maintain (DBOM) corporation overseeing HBLRT, on this and other matters by year's end.

-- Douglas John Bowen

Lackawanna Cut-Off Delayed Yet Again

Despite Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen's (R-NJ) continuing efforts to secure additional funds to continue the study of the Lackawanna Cut-Off's restoration, the lack of state matching funds have delayed this project further. Local officials in New Jersey's northwestern-most counties as well as officials across the Delaware River in Pennsylvania continue to advocate for this restoration. Increasing sprawl and record traffic along Route 80 make this rail line's restoration crucial to the economic viability of that region.

NJ-ARP remains as firmly committed as ever to this project and hope that the State of New Jersey can see its way to begin matching critically needed funding.

-- Al Papp, Jr.

Meetings with Transit Agencies

NJ-ARP's credibility throughout the state is recognized when transit agencies request to meet with us on a regular basis. During 2003, we have met with New Jersey Transit's Executive Director, George Warrington, and senior management members to discuss items of interest to New Jersey rail users. While we were disappointed that more frequent meetings were not held, we believe our efforts have resulted in better service for rail users in the state.

Similarly, we have met with PATH's General Manager Michael DePallo and his senior management team. We have reviewed their plans for the restoration of service to downtown Manhattan and Exchange Place in Jersey City. We have suggested improvements in service and our ideas have been met favorably. Our dialogue is ongoing.

Finally, our Rockland County liaison, Orrin Getz, regularly attends the monthly MTA Board meetings being our lone voice for improved service west of the Hudson. Additional trains have been added, including weekend service thus giving Rockland and Bergen County riders another choice besides their cars.

-- Leonard Resto

Membership Report

Between November 2002 and August 2003, eight batches of renewal notices were sent. In comparison to the identical period a year ago, our membership has gone from 304 to 323, up nearly 6%, and the renewal rate has gone from 72% to 88%. The net gain of 19 members includes 48 new members and 3 deaths. About a third of the new members were produced by a cross-membership list exchange with NARP of members residing in New Jersey, which we obtained last year. We are about one third of the way through recruiting via the NARP list. Most of the rest of the new members were obtained via the Internet.

Membership benefits are cumulative as status is upgraded. Patron members get "Observations" newsletter too. Since Family memberships can be of two or three interested parties in the household, Sustaining and Patron members can be double or triple counted, but only if the renewals invoice slip says so in the name area. Renewal notices are within a month of when the last such notice was sent (or when a new member joined), not when we received the last renewal check. A 2nd notice is sent from the President to the relative few who do not renew, and the member is dropped a month or so after that. We do have a \$10 membership category for seniors and students, and can handle an annual waiver on a case-by-case basis for financial or personal hardships.

-- Joe Versaggi

Monmouth - Ocean - Middlesex

Review

Since last fall 2002, MOM is still proceeding, rather at a snail's pace, but still moving ahead. Last December, New Jersey Transit held the first of three Public outreach scoping meetings, one each in the three counties in which the MOM project will encompass. The first one was held in Middlesex County, Monroe Township. The meeting was conducted at the Holiday Inn, off exit 8A NJTPK. Attendance was good, NJ-ARP was there, as well along with the *Central Jersey rail Coalition*. NJ Transit offered both public and, for the first time, private testimony. The NJ Transit presentation was good and informative.

Support for MOM by Middlesex County residents, showed just under 50 percent, based on figures then available. This is good considering what was the support before NJ-ARP arrived and promoted MOM in Middlesex County. NIMBYs showed up as expected. However, they offered no new reasons for not having MOM proceed farther. No new arguments to justify their position on MOM. The other two meetings went well for MOM. The public was offered a chance to give their input on MOM. NJ Transit, along with SYSTRA, the firm hired to study MOM, conducted the meetings.

Since the last past year, MOM has been discussed much, both public and private. Meetings have, and still are being conducted between NJ Transit and the municipalities that MOM transverses. MOM is still in the Federal DEIS, which will conclude sometime in 2004. During this year, Monmouth and Ocean Counties have both combined to hire the Strategy Group, a public relations firm located in Trenton, New Jersey. The goal of this endeavor is to better educate the elected officials and the general public about the positive benefits of passenger rail service for this area, and how MOM will provide that service.

NJ-ARP, along with the *Central Jersey Rail Coalition*, are currently working closely together, and coordinating with the Strategy Group in obtaining the mentioned goals. This is producing satisfying results. The political atmosphere in Middlesex County is basically the same as before. However, as the public awareness of MOM increases, this has impacted the elected officials who still oppose MOM. They have acknowledged that there is support for MOM, but still believe that the numbers do not justify them to reverse their position on MOM. NJ-ARP disputes this that on the grounds based on what has been conveyed to NJ-ARP and CJRC by residents who expressed their support for MOM at our booth when we attended area community events.

This year also saw a telephone survey conducted by a firm out of Virginia. This firm conducted the survey in a manner which explained the pros and cons of the MOM project. Survey results from Middlesex County showed a high approval of MOM. The survey also revealed that a large percentage of Middlesex residents do not know of the MOM project. We believe that if given the opportunity to make MOM more widely known in Middlesex County, the support will be much greater, and the governments of Middlesex County will have to listen to the needs of the populace and support MOM. The NIMBYs have decried this survey as politically slanted to favor the Republicans of Monmouth and Ocean Counties. At the time of submittal, of this report, MOM is getting more attention, and, more public support in Middlesex County.

NJ-ARP's Role

NJ-ARP's role in the MOM project remains strong. NJ-ARP's community outreach program is successful in Middlesex and Monmouth Counties this past year. Again, we have attended the Monroe Township Mother's Club Fair, the Fourth of July Celebration sponsored by the

Jamesburg Civic Association and Monroe Township Recreation Department, Milltown Day to name some events. In addition, NJ-ARP has given some presentations as well.

NJ-ARP continues to lobby for the MOM project on the Federal, State, and local levels, keeping public officials constantly aware of the MOM project and pushing for it's completion. NJ-ARP also keeps the MOM project in the public eye by submitting letters to the editor in local papers, attending community events such as Monroe Mothers Fair. The MOM project enjoys public exposure given to it by the *Central Jersey Rail Coalition* and the Strategy Group through their outreach programs. The Coalition, working along side with NJ-ARP, continues to keep pressure on area politicians to keep MOM moving. CJRC has been successful in their endeavors to promote MOM.

NIMBY Opposition

This past year, Middlesex NIMBYs have, and continue to lobby for the Matawan to Lakehurst route. They have proposed for southern Middlesex County, an express bus service out of Jamesburg. This service calls for use of County Park property to be used as a park and ride, with a capacity of 100 slots. service is Monday to Friday only. Coach USA is speculated to be the County appointed provider for this service. Assemblypersons of the 14th district are still supporting the Matawan alternative along with Middlesex County, and Jamesburg, Monroe, and South Brunswick.

Conclusion

The past year has been better to MOM than some years past. MOM is still in the DEIS, this will take approximately until mid to late 2004 to complete. NJ-ARP will continue to push for MOM project on all levels. There is still much more work ahead to keep MOM "on track" such as finding funding sources, and continued education of the general public about MOM. As mentioned in the previous report given, NJ-ARP is still challenged often, we held our ground, and now are on the offensive, we continue to show ourselves to the area residents. NJ-ARP is here to stay in Jamesburg, Middlesex County when the first MOM train comes to town.

-- Daniel S. Kerwin

National Rail Passenger Advocacy

With New Jersey's unique geographic position situated between two major metropolitan areas, it is in the unique position to benefit immensely from the intercity passenger rail system as well. Indeed, the Northeast Corridor is directly owned by Amtrak and is the very spine of our statewide rail passenger system. As such, it is imperative that a careful watch is kept on national rail policy issues and initiatives particularly in light of the continued fiscal crunch that Amtrak continually finds itself. NJ-ARP is on the forefront here as well.

Two NJ-ARP Directors are also Board members of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) of which NJ-ARP is an affiliate. Jim Ciacciarelli is a NARP Region III Director and Albert L. Papp, Jr. is a NARP Director At-Large. The National Association of Railroad Passengers is headquartered in Washington, DC and lobbies Congress on behalf of the national passenger rail system. As evidenced, New Jersey interests are well represented

on the national scene. Additionally, as Jim Ciacciarelli resides within southern New Jersey and as Albert L. Papp, Jr. resides within northern New Jersey, we can effect "regionalized" representation and are able to represent all statewide interests very effectively. We also maintain direct involvement in the biannual NARP Board of Directors meetings where our presence is consistent. Here we are able to propel New Jersey interests in a specific sense as well as support general Northeast Corridor interests as a whole.

Our lobbying efforts are well established. We attempt to personally meet with the entire New Jersey Congressional delegation on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC as well as throughout the year. This not only provides for distribution of vital information but also imparts our position on issues more effectively while at the same time provides the necessary physical presence that is critical in today's cyber world. We have found that this approach benefits both NJ-ARP and New Jersey's interests well. This year, as in past years, funding is always an issue and is becoming increasingly scarce; it is crucial that such a presence is consistently maintained. NJ-ARP also manages a comprehensive national and statewide legislative mailing list where the NJ-ARP newsletter and other pertinent, timely documentation such as reports and press releases are consistently sent.

NJ-ARP also interacts with the various adjacent NARP affiliates in order to promote unified regional advocacy. These organizations include the *Keystone Association of Railroad Passengers* (KARP), the *Delaware Valley Association of Railroad Passengers* (DVARP), the *Empire State Passengers Association* (ESPA), and the *Delaware Rail Passengers Association* (DRPA). We also interact with other rail advocacy organizations such as the *Penn-Jersey Rail Coalition*, the *Central Jersey Rail Coalition* and the *Lackawanna Coalition*. Interaction provides for greater regional coordination as well as advocating ideas and proposals of particular interest to NJ-ARP. Such interstate projects include the Lackawanna Cut-Off proposal, PATH-Lex, among others.

In conclusion, part of NJ-ARP's mission is to seek consistent economic and political support for rail passenger service that not only directly affects New Jersey but also on the national level. We persistently strive for an increasing share in our nation's overall transportation policy. The rail passenger alternative has historically played and continues to play an important role in America's comprehensive transportation policy.

-- Jim Ciacciarelli

Northeast Corridor

The only real significant development of 2003 was the September 6 weekend-only opening of Secaucus Transfer that links the Northeast Corridor (NEC) riders to the Morris & Essex, Main, Bergen County, and Pascack Valley Lines; however, the next few months and years will be very interesting to watch.

The impending re-opening of PATH service to Lower Manhattan will enable thousands of New Jerseyans to resume their pre-9/11 commuting patterns of taking the NEC, NJCL or RVL to Newark Penn Station and then take PATH to the World Trade Center. This will be followed by the debut of seven-day service at Secaucus. This will benefit weekday users, particularly Bergen and Passaic county residents traveling to midtown Manhattan and in-state transfers between the various lines. On the other end of the line, the new light rail line from Trenton to Camden will link several riverfront communities to the existing NJ

Transit, SEPTA, and Amtrak service at Trenton as well as the PATCO High Speed Line in Camden.

Looking down the (rail)road at the next several years, studies are underway for a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River to double the current number of trains going into and out of Manhattan. This would enable riders on the Raritan Valley Line to finally get their coveted direct ride into New York and could open the door for more frequent service on existing lines and expansion of the NJ Transit rail network into new parts of the state that are currently lack passenger rail service.

One such project is the Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex (MOM) line from Lakehurst to South Brunswick, where it would connect with the NEC. A new station about halfway between Princeton Junction and New Brunswick could be added to the NEC as part of this project.

Another potential project is the Newark-Elizabeth Rail Link from Newark Penn Station to Newark International Airport (EWR) Lot D (Segment 2) and from (EWR) Lot D to Elizabeth station (Segment 3).

2003 was, unfortunately, plagued with serious delays that inconvenienced thousands of daily riders. Among the most serious was the derailment of a set of Arrow trains in July. While no one had life-threatening injuries, the press had a field day. When compared to deaths on the highway, rail remains among the safest modes of transportation. In general, riders are frustrated with the total lack of communication by NJT to its passengers. While NJT has announced steps to manage emergency situations with better communication, ensuing delays have met with only marginally better communication. This is an area that NJ-ARP continues to press hard with NJT.

-- Gary Johnson

PATH/Lex

NJ-ARP has proposed a physical connection between the lower Manhattan PATH line with that of the New York City Transit Authority's Lexington Avenue Subway. The plan benefits passengers between New Jersey and both downtown and uptown New York locations. During 2003, we have enlisted the support of the New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) and are grateful to them for their support. We have met with representatives of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), the Port Authority (PA), the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) as well as Senators Corzine and Lautenberg and Congressmen Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Jerrold Nadler (D-NY).



[Click to enlarge](#)

We continue to move as quickly as possible as time is of the absolute essence. With Governor Pataki (R-NY) aggressively pushing for the redevelopment of downtown Manhattan and our own Governor McGreevey (D-NJ) notably absent from any discussions about this proposal, we must fight hard to keep this PATH/Lex option open. The current PA plan focuses its efforts on a vast labyrinth of underground pedestrian passageways to link the soon to re-open PATH downtown line with New York City subway lines. New Jerseyans deserve better than the status quo rebuild of the former World Trade Center transportation complex with a series of expensive underground walkways designed to cater to commercial

retail interests.

View the proposal on our website or contact me and I will make sure to send you a copy. What can you do? Contact your elected officials demanding that they give this PATH/Lex proposal serious consideration. Write letters to the editors of newspapers who have remained strangely silent on the entire matter. Your voice does count.

-- Al Papp, Jr.

Raritan Valley

Every Raritan Line train consist has been re-fleeted by disk brake-equipped consists of rebuilt Comet-II's mixed with center door-equipped Comet-III's and IV's. Unfortunately, due to the loss of the WTC PATH line and the weak economy, weekday ridership is down about 15%, and 7 car consists are a thing of the past. There are currently two 5 car and seven 6 car consists assigned to this line. PATH's decision to redirect Newark line trains to the reopened and sparsely used Exchange Place terminus, forcing a transfer at Journal Square for most people, has not helped the situation. Holland and Lincoln tunnel crossings continue to spiral upward. Pre 9/11/01 peak-direction rush hour ridership destinations were more or less evenly divided among New York Penn, PATH, and neither of the above. With the destruction of 20% of lower Manhattan's office space, the residential conversion of more, and a relentless job recession, it is anyone's guess what ridership trends will be once PATH service is restored to the WTC site in late November.

Union (Townley) station opened last winter and is well patronized. Both tracks have gauntlet tracks for freights. There were some dispatching errors by CSX initially by routing RVL passenger trains onto the outer gauntlet track necessitating the train to overshoot the switch beyond the station and back into the station track.

Bound Brook and Cranford were among six new transit village projects announced by the state DOT commissioner. These projects encourage business, apartment, and townhouse development near the downtown train station. That means each municipality so designated gets a \$200,000 grant, which is particularly good news for Bound Brook, devastated by Hurricane Floyd in 1999. Their commuter/shopping parking lot would become a parking deck for 350 with 130 housing units. They would most likely be one bedroom units so as not to strain school budgets while adding to ratables.

The former 989 (Bedminster-Hillsborough) Wheels route has now been taken over by Somerset County with a \$1.50 fare. It is still not very successful and trip frequency to AT&T in Bedminster has been cut, so any future extension use as a feeder to the Far Hills station is now even more elusive.

Hunterdon County is choosing a site for an intermodal transit center in the Annandale-Clinton area on US22. This is the most promising project going on with active local interest. It would enable 884 Wheels and Trans Bridge I-78 route buses to share one facility.

The 21-mile West Trenton line is still undergoing environmental assessment, but there is no funding beyond that in sight. Its estimated start-up capital cost of stations, parking, signal upgrades, and a terminal train yard are now pushing \$125 million. The majority of that money is from the host freight railroad's insistence of a flyover junction be constructed at

Bound Brook. Bridgewater station would be bypassed, even though it is a possible traffic generator with the Commerce Ballpark and Promenade Mall within walking distance, and could be a hub for feeder buses to nearby office parks. That is necessary if this line is to put a dent into US206 traffic, its main selling point. NJT's service plan of 5 peak and 1 reverse peak through trains to Newark do not capitalize on that, has ridership projections in the 700's, so the cost-benefit criteria will be very hard to meet.

-- Joe Versaggi

Right-of-Way Legislation (Including Rahway Valley Issues)

Events in Union County, germinating just after the 2002 NJ-ARP Annual Meeting and developing rapidly through 2003, showed that NJ-ARP was ready and able to fight for rail rights-of-way preservation aggressively -- and paradoxically, re-emphasized the long-term need to gain state legislative support to preserve and re-develop our state's priceless transportation arteries -- New Jersey's abandoned, disused and underused railroad rights-of-ways.

Per our 2002 Annual Report, NJ-ARP continues to ask members of the State Senate and Assembly to introduce two pieces of related legislation which would:

(1) direct the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) to prepare a comprehensive inventory of abandoned, disused or underused railroad rights-of-way suitable for preservation, restoration and/or service initiation to active passenger and freight commerce and to place the lines so selected on the state rail rights-of-way preservation map; and

(2) require the publication and dissemination of information regarding the rights-of-way so selected in order to facilitate adequate disclosure to counties, towns, real estate developers and agencies and potential buyers and sellers of said property such that a contract for any property so affected, within a pre-defined distance from a rail line, will, upon being offered for sale or transfer, be required to have a proximity notification embedded within indicating that the price, so agreed upon, reflects the presence of a rail line.

Ironically, members of the state legislature themselves -- specifically, from the 22nd district in Union County -- introduced legislation late in 2002, at the urging of and with the backing of NIMBYs, to prevent re-activation of both the Staten Island Railroad (between Elizabeth/Linden and Cranford) and the Rahway Valley Railroad (Cranford to Summit) for use by the Morristown & Erie Railway (M&E), to provide local and "bridge" freight services. The legislation, posted on the Web and spotted by NJ-ARP, has gained little traction, but its co-sponsors are generally considered "friendly" to rail and passenger rail interests, making the threat perhaps more ominous.

Union County anti-rail forces throughout 2003 insisted that their argument was with the Union County Freeholder Board, and was not directly anti-rail in intent. Throughout the year, however, at numerous public meetings of the Union County Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), and at special "hearings," including one called by the mayor of Summit to "air out" rail freight concerns, NJ-ARP advocates on the scene found it hard to sift out "good

government" concerns from out-and-out anti-rail demagoguery. The usual buzzwords of anti-rail focus -- "dangerous trains," "noisy trains," "declining property values," and the most insidious, the looming arrival of "those people" -- were in ample evidence by "concerned citizens" concerned about "good government."

In numerous letters to daily and local weekly newspapers, and in numerous forums, and led by NJ-ARP Director William R. Wright but involving numerous NJ-ARP volunteers, NJ-ARP stated its belief in preserving and reactivating rail rights-of-way for both freight and passenger use. In this, NJ-ARP truly was "on the point"; another rail advocacy (or "commuter" group) offered tepid support for rail reactivation, urging a "study" of the situation, presumably so as not to offend local officeholders in Union County communities.

Indeed, NJ-ARP affirmed what it has long known: Even anti-rail forces in Kenilworth and Springfield raise the possibility of restored rail passenger service in those communities, if Summit-Cranford rail is restored. Indeed, NJ-ARP believes some voices in both communities seem to voice the potential for passenger rail in a positive vein -- and can vouch that some have held out for passenger service instead of freight operations, a dodge-and-delay tactic NJ-ARP does not buy.

In practical terms, track and tie renewal on the Staten Island Railway between Linden and Cranford is already under way, with the line expected to open for service sometime in early 2004, as Morristown & Erie forces, and private contractors, begin to work on the line. The true battleground -- and heart of NIMBY resistance -- remains and will be in Kenilworth and Springfield, abetted by Summit (the latter of which benefits from 170 passenger trains per day, and resultant real estate values, yet opposes expanded passenger opportunities!), in part because service on the Rahway Valley Line, particularly north of Route 22 and onward to Summit, has been discontinued for a longer period of time. "Rail/trail" alternatives, discredited by the NIMBY communities in the past, are now embraced as desirable options -- another dodge-and-delay tactic NJ-ARP has denounced.

NJ-ARP, along with the M&E and Union County officials, remain confident that litigation spearheaded by Kenilworth to stop rail's return will be rejected by federal courts. That litigation, in part, presupposes that the rights-of-way were abandoned, which in fact is not the case. Union County has acquired the lines, using state bond monies secured in 1989 (*with NJ-ARP a major player in securing funding language and passage of the bond issue by citizen vote*), for transportation purposes, as prescribed in the bond language.

Again, the real danger, the long-term concern, is that nominally "pro-rail" state officials are willing to thwart restored rail rights-of-way in piecemeal fashion. Absent a comprehensive mandate to check continued dismantling of New Jersey's rail right-of-way structure, the battle for Staten Island Railway/Rahway Valley Railroad rail restoration may be just the first of many such conflicts in future years.

-- Douglas John Bowen

Southern New Jersey Light Rail Transit System

Joyce Gallagher of NJ Transit, assisted by Dave Blizzard of Bombardier, gave the Annual Meeting attendees an excellent PowerPoint presentation regarding the project.

The project has been named the River Line. Highlights of the presentation:

The new line will serve the Route 130 Corridor. It has a 34.5 mile right of way with 20 stations in 13 communities. Over 3,000 new parking spaces are planned. Stations being served are: Camden's Downtown Entertainment Center, Aquarium, Cooper Street/Rutgers, Walter Rand Transportation Center, 36th Street Camden, Pennsauken/Route 73 Park & Ride, Palmyra, Riverton, Cinnaminson, Riverside, Delanco, Beverly/Edgewater Park, Burlington South Park & Ride, Burlington Town Center, Florence Park & Ride, Roebling, Bordentown, Cass Street, Hamilton Avenue, and Trenton.

33 miles of track is shared with freight. The River Line will be single-track operation with sidings. There is street running along 1.5 miles of its route with 50 public grade crossings. 23 bridges have been either reconstructed or rehabilitated.

The yard and shop is quite impressive. It is a 50,000 square foot facility. It provides control, communications and dispatching. In addition, the shop can provide maintenance, repair and storage. There are facilities for the members of the crew.

The cars themselves are spacious and visually attractive. There are 20 diesel-powered vehicles. They are low-floor, ADA compliant seating 90 and standing 100 passengers. The seats are high back with good lumbar support. There are bike and luggage racks. Windows are large and there is glass behind the operator so that passengers can see where they are going.

Right now, start up is scheduled for February 15, 2004. Revenue start date is driven by: testing, system integration process, activation, demonstration period and safety certification.

There will be a special introductory one-way fare for the entire line of \$1.10. The system will be fully interchangeable with local buses. The combined Light Rail/Philadelphia bus route monthly pass will be \$58.00. Combined Light Rail/NJT rail monthly pass will be \$18 plus the monthly pass.

Safety training has been ongoing in the school systems all along the line. Students, crossing guards, bus drivers have all been included in training. Public safety meetings have been held in each community.

-- Leonard Resto

Sussex County Area

New York Susquehanna and Western

No progress is made in efforts to initiate the revitalization of passenger service on the NYS&W. New Jersey Transit's goal is to purchase the right-of-way from the Delaware-Otsego Corporation but NJT lacks the capital funding necessary to complete the transaction. However, a grant was received by the Township of Hardyston from the State of New Jersey for the purpose of defraying the costs associated with remediation of a landfill in Hardyston Township off of Lasinski Road, the proposed site of a railyard for the overnight storage of rolling stock and light servicing of equipment.

Mount Arlington Rail Station

Construction of a rail station adjacent to the present Park-and-Ride facility off of Exit 30 on Route 80 eastbound did not commence this year as originally anticipated. The original completion date of mid-2004 is dependent upon completion of site acquisition activities and may need to be altered to early 2005.

County of Sussex Commuter Survey

The Sussex County Board of Freeholders introduced a *Transportation Needs Survey* in early May to gather data on commuting habits and patterns by individuals traveling both within the County and to diverse destinations in other areas. Initially distributed by State DOT workers to motorists during evening and morning rush-hours by setting up roadblocks at strategic arterial roads, the survey may be accessed on the official County of Sussex website at <http://www.sussex.nj.us>. The data is to be collated and analyzed at the end of the year.

Route 206 Road Widening (Byram Twp)

The Sussex County Freeholder Board passed a resolution during the year endorsing the State DOT's plan to widen Route 206 in Byram Township between Acorn Street and Waterloo Road despite opposition from some business owners located adjacent to the affected zone who fear a permanent loss of frontal area. The Byram Township Council negotiates with the DOT to slightly reduce the magnitude of the project and ultimately signed off on the plan.

Adopt-A-Station (Mt Olive Station)

Documentation was submitted to the NJ Transit Stations and Revenue Department detailing the necessity of improvements and repairs of various items that have been deferred over a period of time. These items are related to maintaining a positive overall passenger experience. As a result, new lines and stencils are painted both in the parking lot and the platform, the Timetable Display board is repaired, the trash dumpster is removed, a new glass panel is installed in the shelter unit, and existing signs are straightened and re-aligned.

The amount of landscaped area is increased to include the vicinity of the ADA ramp in the eastern portion of the station. NJ-ARP members installed new perennial plants in late October. These eastern-US and mid-western US-native specimens are specifically selected for drought tolerance and longevity of blooming period.

-- 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, njarp.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 900 servers in their datacenter. NJ ARP's site is hosted on an Athlon 1000 MHz computer with 512MB of RAM and a 40GB 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. These costs have remained constant during the past year. The service provided by pair Networks is excellent, with no significant outages.

In the past year, pages were added comparing the rail fare costs of various passenger railroads in the United States, and documenting New Jersey's congressional delegation's voting record related to Amtrak.

The NJ ARP web site is currently averaging about 30,000 "hits" and 7,500 "page views" per month. Each Hotline is viewed an average of 300 times. The Hotline Mailing List, which allows people to be notified by e mail when a new Hotline is available, currently has 155 subscribers.

Bob Scheurle maintains the web site. NJ ARP Vice President Douglas John Bowen writes the Hotline.

-- Bob Scheurle

Miscellaneous

TransAction Conference - Atlantic City

Once again, NJ-ARP Director Bill Wright served on the Steering Committee for the annual TransAction Conference held this past April in Atlantic City, NJ. NJ-ARP obtained a good position for its table in the exhibit hall and, as has been the case in the past few years, co-sponsored the coffee/refreshment breaks. This year, we were particularly featuring our PATH/Lex and Funding Proposals. We had NJ-ARP speakers at several of the sessions and had the ability to interact with the "movers and shakers" of transportation in New Jersey. Once again, Bill Wright has made us look good.

Planning for the 2004 Conference is already underway. If you have a topic you believe should be discussed as a theme, please contact us.

NJTPA

NJ-ARP Director Bill Wright continues to represent us on the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA). Bill has been a tireless advocate for mass transit over road building. Bill will continue in this role during 2004.

Union County Transportation Advisory Board

NJ-ARP Director Bill Wright continues as Cranford's official representative to the Union County Transportation Advisory Board. This Board focuses on all transportation modes and

alternatives within Union County. This year, Bill has been particularly active in support of the reactivation of the Rahway Valley as a short-line freight railroad to be used by the Morristown & Erie. Great potential exists to connect Cranford and Summit with passenger rail, as indicated in Doug Bowen's Rail Rights-of-Way report. Bill has handled the challenges of the NIMBY forces in Springfield, Kenilworth and Summit and will keep advocating what would be a significant transit improvement for our state.

Blue Ribbon Transportation Commission

With much fanfare, Governor McGreevey created the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation last January. While charged with exploring ways in which transportation can be improved in the state, the public came away with the impression that the Commission's job would be to deflect responsibility away from the Governor for an increase in the state's gasoline tax.

If the Commission was seeking citizen input for creative ideas concerning how to fund transportation in the state, it missed a golden opportunity. While created in January, public hearings were not scheduled until this Fall. The southern most sessions were scheduled in Vineland and Cherry Hill respectively. Each session was to run from 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. Besides being held at a time when individuals would have to take time off from work to testify, the hearings were held in transit inaccessible venues. To further compound the situation, the Vineland session was cancelled for reasons yet unknown with little notice to the public. As of this writing, the session has not been re-scheduled. The Cherry Hill session was adjourned an hour early thus denying citizens, our own Director Jim Ciacciarrelli included, from expressing their views.

The northern-most sessions didn't fare much better from a time perspective. The Newark session was moved from its original Noon to 3:00 P.M. slot to 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. Whereas the original slot allowed for people to take a lunch hour to testify, the shift to a later slot -- and a truncated one at that, made it necessary for people to take an afternoon off to testify. Finally, the New Brunswick session, the only one held in the evening, had its hours cut from the original 6:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.

The Commission should have done its work much earlier and had a series of findings and recommendations that the public could react to over a period of months and in many more venues. Instead, the sessions became nothing more than open-mike affairs whereby anyone could say anything. What will come of the Commission? We think not a lot. We hope we're proven wrong.

-- Leonard Resto

These files were created by Bob Scheurle.