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**New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers**

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# NJ-ARP Annual Report

## 2003-2004

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## President's Message

One more time, NJ-ARP dragged New Jersey's transportation "experts" kicking and screaming toward a new rail passenger product -- until the wizards discovered New Jerseyans liked the RiverLINE, in fact loved it, proving (once more) that the demand for quality rail transit exists.

In that regard, 2004 was an NJ-ARP triumph, and at the same time just another year at the advocacy office. Make no mistake: It hasn't been New Jersey Transit, or NJDOT, who have spearheaded true rail expansion (new routes, new route-miles). No one does it alone, of course -- but NJ-ARP is an integral player on the Garden State scene. As a member, you can be proud. The RiverLINE gets added to HBLRT, or the Hackettstown extension of the

Boonton Line, as an NJ-ARP victory -- *your* victory.

It's NJ-ARP members like you who, day in and day out, pursue tasks unrelated to their own earnings livelihood. Some contribute money, others ideas, and still others valuable time. Some do all three. And more than quantity, it's the *quality* of the contributions -- and, often, the selflessness of such contributions -- that make NJ-ARP members stand above other interests in the crowd.

Traditionally, in fact, an NJ-ARP member will be called on to testify for, or otherwise assist, a project of no immediate value or impact to him or her directly. It's customary for a Greg Bender of Toms River to hammer on PATCO/River Line connections at Walter Rand Center in Camden. It's routine for a Paul Mulligan of Rahway to push diesel multiple-unit (DMU) opportunities for Bergen County or the Atlantic City Line. And it's a happy common occurrence for so many NJ-ARP members to pick up their pens, or activate their computer keyboards, to dash off a letter in support of this rail project or that, even when (to twist a phrase's meaning) it's not in your backyard. The Board of Directors and Officers at NJ-ARP are grateful.

Such practices, applied year in and year out, give NJ-ARP a consistency other "professional" organizations (and other ARPs nationwide) might envy. NJ-ARP changed presidents in midstream during 2004; it took several weeks before most people (let alone many NJ-ARP members) noticed. One reason: NJ-ARP is flexible enough to apply its volunteerism to the things that need doing.

President Leonard Resto, in stepping down this past January due to career requirements, immediately adjusted his efforts so that he could continue as NJ-ARP's treasurer and de facto membership director, and has performed ably in both roles. President Douglas John Bowen returned to his previous role as his parental skills became less taxed. The organization's consistency (and contributions from others who had more stable lives in 2004) made it so that the change was hardly noticed.

That's *not* to say that players or presidents are clones. As president, Len Resto made membership enrollment a priority, and succeeded in boosting our "hard" numbers. He offered civility to all players (including adversaries), heaping scorn on the failed *processes* but not the personalities. (Gov. McGreevey's Blue Ribbon Transportation Panel, for instance, proved a political fiasco of a high order, eventually offering no recommendations at all for New Jersey's pressing transport needs. President Resto called it as it was.)

Each leader leaves his contribution, and this President's Message, along with the annual report itself, is another of Len's ideas put into practice. NJ-ARP is lucky to have him, and this President continues to rely on his counsel.

But as a rule, neither NJ-ARP presidents nor most members are political professionals, no matter how good (or bad!) we are. For the past five years, we've lacked the political visibility in Trenton that a legislative agent can bring, and one of NJ-ARP's goals for 2005 will be to rectify that lack. We lost Legislative Agent Art Reuben in November 1999, and his presence, wit, and professionalism have been missed more and more as the years go by. Five years later, it's clear that NJ-ARP must consider his successor. We have two good candidates in mind, and are working on ways to finance the hiring of a legislative agent without unduly unburdening our membership.

For as successful as we've been -- in some ways, more than any one of us could reasonably

expect us to be -- our work is cut out for us in the years ahead. Few rail transit expansion projects of any magnitude are in the pipeline. NJ Transit, and other "leaders," claim they must first address the "basics" of the existing system. For NJ Transit in particular, that means putting projects such as the Lackawanna Cut-Off, Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex (MOM), West Trenton, Raritan River Line extension(s), HBLRT (to Bergen County), and restoration of the Cape May Branch far off into the future. Some future. Some leadership.

One can fudge with definitions, of course, and certainly NJ-ARP supports state efforts to expand Northeast Corridor access to Midtown New York. (In fact, we were the *first* organized New Jersey group to do so, more than a decade ago, and if anything the state's current approach is too cautious, too timid, and too yielding to New York's own parochial objections.) NJ Transit is upgrading/restoring the Morris & Essex Line viaduct work, Hoboken Terminal Yards, various stations on the system -- all to the good, and not enough. "Back to Basics" is, basically "back in the box" -- and, hence, unacceptable.

That leaves it up to other forces both at other government levels and elsewhere, to advance the cause of rail expansion. Union County proceeds with its own plans to install light rail transit between Elizabeth, the county seat, and Newark Liberty International Airport -- really to the airport, not just to a monorail connection. Bergen County is weighing its own county tax to advance public transit. Monmouth and Ocean counties, aided by NJ-ARP and the valuable *Central Jersey Rail Coalition*, have increased political pressure on NJ Transit and the legislature. *Cape May Seashore Lines* is instituting freight service between Tuckahoe and Woodbine as one way -- not the only way required -- to restore track quality between Tuckahoe and Cape May City.

The annual report provides numerous other examples, all with NJ-ARP participating, to one degree or another depending on the situation and the need. As NJ-ARP members compile it, they're sometimes startled to be reminded of just how many items are on the table, and how many issues in so many corners of New Jersey are in play. No one can be everywhere, even in a "small" state such as New Jersey. But NJ-ARP's absence in a given situation is noteworthy; we think the annual report reflects that.

In fact, it's remarkable that a band of volunteers can consistently be on hand for so much change. As volunteers (even when we have a legislative agent on the payroll), we're often up against the best-paid consultants and paper staffers money can buy, NJ-ARP gets beaten.

This year's biggest setback, the rejection of our PATH/Lexington Avenue link through downtown Manhattan, perhaps might be expected; NJ-ARP can hardly expect to go toe to toe with the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey and waltz to victory. But we gave it our best shot, even in defeat, and led by Director Albert Papp NJ-ARP pushed every button we could, made every rational argument we could find. We're proud we did.

The charge often is made that NJ-ARP fixes solely on rail expansion. Not so, as (again) the annual report documents. When NJ Transit takes the initiative to improve infrastructure, for example, NJ-ARP has voiced its support and offered assistance. One example among many: Our staunch support for the new Ramsey/Route 17 park-and-ride lot on the Bergen/Main Line. A second: Our constant consultation with NJT's light rail staff, as well as private contractors such as Twenty First Century Rail Corp. (operators of HBLRT), on matters seemingly as trivial as the placement of ticket validators and pedestrian exits -- or as weighty as faster running times and the need for LRT signal pre-emption.

But we'll readily acknowledge that a larger New Jersey rail network can translate into a

larger NJ-ARP membership base, which helps grow a larger rail network ... etc. Under President Leonard Resto, NJ-ARP set a goal of 350 members in 2004, versus 304 in 2003. As of this writing, we reached 331 members, thanks to the detailed work by Resto, Joe Versaggi, and Webmaster Robert Scheurle, who implemented a membership registration form on NJ-ARP's Web site.

We can always use more help, more members. But NJ-ARP has always adhered to the advice of its founder and first president, Anthony Perl, who counseled: Don't go wide. Go deep. The quality and dedication of NJ-ARP members has made the organization a force to be reckoned with, even measured against far larger and more powerful players in the state.

For that, this President thanks the Board of Directors, officers and those many NJ-ARP volunteers for making New Jersey a better place for rail and public transit in 2004.

-- Douglas John Bowen

## Access to the Region's Core

Access to the Region's Core (ARC) project entered into its final evaluation stages during 2004 with only one common element intact: crossing the Hudson River.

Sadly, one of the principal tenets the original scoping document -- direct access to Manhattan's East Side, linking Penn Station with Grand Central Terminal (GCT) -- has been all but forgotten. Through running between Metro-North's Hudson and Harlem Divisions to NJT's NEC operations will be put aside for at least another generation.

Despite that, NJ-ARP and its New York counterpart, the *Empire State Passengers Association* (ESPA), continue to pursue through running between the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North's New Haven Division via Penn Station. This affordable and doable proposal has been vetted before New Jersey and New York transit chieftains and elected leaders, and has generated some interest.

On December 10 2003, NJ-ARP called for Alternative "G" to be re-introduced into the DEIS. NJ-ARP noted Alternative "G" included the link to east Midtown (GCT) from Penn Station, and we reminded all that the decade-old PA-sponsored ARC effort was launched precisely to increase tri-state mobility.

The original ARC scoping document noted that 70 percent of Midtown employment sites are within a 10-minute walk of Grand Central Terminal, only 36 percent are so situated near Penn Station.

But New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has continually objected to Alternative "G" throughout the ARC study period. As recently as March 2002, in its "West of Hudson Quarterly Report," MTA recommended to the ARC Project Director that Alternative "G" be eliminated from further consideration.

MTA's clout carried more weight than NJ-ARP's. The ARC study team announced August 19 Alternative "P2" would advance to the next stage of the environmental review process. "P2" would construct two new tracks under the Hudson River south of the existing bores (the common element), terminating in a new deep-level station in a three track-over-three

track configuration below 34th Street (160 feet to the deepest of the twin three-track levels from the street). But the facility would be physically separated from the current Penn Station.

"P2" would allow future eastward expansion (to GCT or a midtown loop), but its backers tout convenient IND and BMT subway connections at Herald Square to East Side points. Tracks of the new trans-Hudson tunnel would be joined with the current NYP track layout. The new tunnel would curve gently southeasterly under the Hudson River, then turn northwesterly (in a bow shape) in order to keep it on an alignment with grades that do not exceed 1.8 percent (a 1.8 foot vertical rise in 100 feet of distance), to permit it to join with present NYP track plant.

Meanwhile, proposed "Early Action Improvements" taking place at Penn Station include three elements:

1. Improvements in existing Penn Station circulation;
2. NJT Concourse "extensions"; and
3. The addition of circulatory elements in the new Moynihan Penn Station (Farley Post Office) Building.

Specifically, tracks 1 through 4 would be extended under 7th Avenue so all four can hold 11-car trains, coupled with the building of a small new concourse over those extensions to aid in ingress and egress. The LIRR Central Corridor is extended south from platform six (track 11) over the rest of the station to platform 1 (tracks 1 and 2). This is described as "NJT Central Corridor Extension." NJ-ARP publicly asked the consultants to rename this "NJT Central Corridor Addition" to eliminate any misimpression NJT's new East End Concourse, opened in 2002, was being expanded.

A new "Exit Concourse Level B (Above) Level A (Below)" would be built to the west of the LIRR extended central corridor. Finally, the yet to-be-built Moynihan Station "LIRR West End Concourse" would be extended south over tracks 1 through 4 with passageways extended east to meet the west end of platforms 1 and 2 (tracks 3 and 4).

ARC's West of Hudson features include a new rail connection at Secaucus Junction (right now envisioned as a 270 degree turn) to permit direct access to NYP by Main Line, Bergen County, and Pascack Valley line trains. Also foreseen: A new rail yard to store trains south of the Junction, quadruple-tracking of the Northeast Corridor from the west end tunnel portal to Newark-Penn Station, and the replacement of the existing two-track Amtrak Hackensack River Portal Bridge with a high-level structure (and the construction of an additional two track high bridge).

Next steps include a refinement of the West of Hudson alignment, an operations analysis, more ridership forecasting and recommended elements for DEIS continuing review. The study team says its "choice" will be "fast tracked" with the goal of securing its adoption by the various stakeholders. The "lead agency" is the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), while the "lead transit agency" is New Jersey Transit. The PA is the "study planning partner." The "Steering Committees" includes MTA, subsidiary Long Island Railroad, and Amtrak.

Procedurally, the project is in its second stage, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The official scoping comment period closed on January 30th, 2004 and all comments were logged into a database with those comments included in the Final Scoping

Document, now approved by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and posted on the ARC web site.

On June 15, 2004, various EIS alternatives were reviewed, including three "build" options and a "no action" alternative. The three "build" options incorporated a subtle change. Alternative "G" had been replaced with "P2" (a variant of "P1") which could

allow for an extension either into a GCT track connection or into a Manhattan loop proffered by the Regional Plan Association (RPA). The consultants asserted that this would cover any future "political" consensus for a direct NYP-GCT link.

"Early Action Items," the new euphemism for previous "Near Term Improvements (by 2010)," saw a transformation as well. Both the 31st Street and 12th Avenue yards have been dropped, and replaced by platform extensions to tracks 1 through 4 on both the east and west side of NYP, with "E" yard modifications to improve train staging and passenger circulation enhancements. Additional NJT concourses over tracks 1 through 9, at both the east end under Seventh Avenue and west end under Eighth Avenue near 31st Street, were envisioned along with a relocated diagonal track platform extending under 9th Avenue. Passenger circulation passages within the proposed Moynihan Station were included.

A July 22, 2004 meeting was a small private effort, with New Jersey Transit attending, to focus on alternative short-term ARC measures to ease train and passenger congestion. NJ-ARP, working with the Regional Rail Working Group, urged running electric NJT trains to Sunnyside Yard where a larger storage facility would be constructed along with a "duck under" to facilitate easy ingress into the yard. The duck under would also provide Amtrak access to the Hell Gate Bridge line.

-- Albert L. Papp, Jr.

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## **Bergen County Developments**

One of the key words for 2004 in Bergen County seems to be "conflict," although some positive developments did develop in New Jersey's most populous county.

### **Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit (HBLRT)**

The good news is that in September, Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit (HBLRT) made its way north towards Bergen County by some three miles and now services still another Hudson County community: Weehawken.

The bad news is that if Hudson County has its way, Hudson-Bergen LRT will become Hudson-Hudson LRT and terminate at the new Xanadu complex in the Meadowlands -- technically in Bergen County but serving anything but. Hudson County has commissioned a study to recommend a route (along the Route 3 corridor). This does not sit well with Bergen County communities who were promised a Tenafly terminus years ago in return for allowing construction to start on the southern end of the line.

New Jersey Transit has proposed utilizing either a RiverLINE-type LRT diesel vehicle or a Colorado Railcar LLC-type diesel multiple-unit (DMU) option to service the Bergen portion of the line from Tenafly to the Tonnelle Avenue station (50th Street, North Bergen

Township) at the foot of the Weehawken Tunnel portal, with a cross-platform transfer at that station to electric LRTs. The problem, of course, being that diesel trains cannot use the Weehawken Tunnel. Additional rationale for this "solution" is that there will be substantial cost savings by not electrifying the line north of Tonnelle Avenue.

Privately, NJ-ARP hears doubts from some NJT personnel that the Xanadu "hijacking" will happen, since the proposed route meanders north and south to serve the various complexes on either side of Route 3 and relies heavily for financing on a Route 3 Hackensack River Bridge replacement that is not due for many years. Of course, Xanadu is where "the money is" and that has many times determined where additional monies will flow.

## **Xanadu To Receive Passenger Rail**

NJ Transit, with money from the Port Authority Of New York & New Jersey (PA), and, perhaps, even a few dollars from the Xanadu developers, is planning a spur from the Pascack Valley Line to serve the Xanadu complex. Outgoing Governor Jim McGreevey (D) seems to be pushing this project very hard, perhaps to leave as his legacy, finally bringing modern rail transit to the Meadowlands complex after 30 years and also offering additional venues for a possible 2012 Olympics bid by New York City.

The rail spur, as envisioned, would bring a new station to Carlstadt and a new combined station in the Meadowlands serviced by both Pascack Valley and Bergen/Main Line trains. As reported last year, DMU shuttle service between Xanadu and Hoboken with an intermediate stop at Secaucus Junction would be provided for events, in effect tying the Xanadu complex to the entire NJT rail network.

## **Secaucus Junction**

Passenger counts still are increasing at Secaucus Junction. The latest figures, as reported by NJT Executive Director George Warrington at the dedication of a new Park & Ride facility in August, were 7,000 weekdays, 1,700 Saturdays, and 1,500 Sundays.

## **Parking**

NJT is anticipating even more passengers at Secaucus Junction because of the various expanded parking facilities at stations along the Pascack Valley Line, including Pearl River (85 spaces), Montvale (140 spaces), North Hackensack/Route 4 (400 spaces), and, as advised to us by NJ-ARP Rockland Liaison Orrin Getz, an additional 220 spaces in Nanuet, N.Y. NJ Transit's major new Park & Ride Station, Ramsey-Route 17 with 1,251 spaces, opened on August 22nd and is being heavily marketed in local newspapers and along the Bergen/Main Line.

## **Pascack Valley Line Disaster**

In 2003, we reported that the sidings, which would allow two-way, all-day service in the Pascack Valley Line (PVL), were delayed, yet again, from 2000 to 2005. Little did we realize that one year later, we would look at a target date of 2007, with one less siding.

Eight communities along the line plus one additional community serviced by shuttle bus connections to the line, joined together to file suit against NJT to stop the sidings. The ugly

specter of mile-long, chemical-filled freight trains running day and night along the line was raised, as was the old NIMBY tactic of stopped trains blocking emergency vehicles at crossings.

The suit also raised the issue of possible environmental damage to the reservoir parallel to the Oradell siding. In an open letter to government officials of the "NIMBY Nine", NJ-ARP dismissed the suit as frivolous. The PVL terminates in Spring Valley and there is only one freight customer north of Hackensack who only gets one shipment per week.

In addition, no such restrictions were placed by these communities on trucks using their roads. We pointed out that 19 communities on the North Jersey Coast Line that see up to 69 trains per day have never had a problem with emergency vehicles blocked by trains. We also noted that these communities didn't ask the N.J. Department of Transportation to make Kinderkamack Road one-way south in the morning and north in the evening. Finally, we stated that this suit impedes interstate commerce and deprives Rockland County (New York) customers of all-day, two-way service.

Much to our chagrin, NJ Transit caved in and decided to eliminate the Oradell siding, stating that it would be able to maintain two-way, all-day service without it. The towns have dropped the suit. NJ-ARP believes that this is a disastrous precedent for NJT to set. It will embolden (and perhaps already has emboldened!) any municipalities with a few dollars (the nine towns kicked in only \$1,000 each) to challenge rail service expansion on existing rights-of-way.

In theory, what is to stop the "NIMBY-Nine" from waiting until the remaining three sidings are built (hopefully by 2007), and then filing suit against NJT again when their new expanded-service schedule is announced?

-- Les Wolff

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## Cape May Report

*Cape May Seashore Lines* (CMSL) has completed its ninth year of passenger operation, and its sixth year of crossing the Cape May canal to serve Cape May City. Twice as many years crossing the canal than before! Beyond that, 2004 has been a year of accomplishments and issues, some new and some ongoing.

The accomplishments:

- The northern five (5) miles between Tuckahoe and Woodbine received 3,500 new ties and a complete redecking of the trestle over Route 550 in Woodbine.
- A Saturday of excursions between Tuckahoe and Woodbine demonstrated continued support in the northern end of Cape May County for train service.
- Cape May City had Fourth of July fireworks for the first time in decades, and CMSL operated two round-trip "Fireworks Specials." These trains brought passengers into Cape May from Cold Spring Village at 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., and took them back 30 minutes after the show with two quick-turn round trips. The service transported 420 people with more than 115 cars parked in the Cold Spring Village lot -- 115 cars NOT adding to overburdened Cape May City's congestion, and helping to prove trains are the solution!

Some of the issues:

- County college construction forced the closing of the 4-H/Cape May Zoo station and its great parking lot. In response, CMSL this season reopened the South Cape May Court House station. This initially hurt ridership with the loss of the zoo as a destination and the public being unfamiliar finding the new location. By the second half of the summer daily counts grew back to near normal -- which highlights the demand for service to Cape May.
- The Gap: Even after the trackwork between Tuckahoe and Woodbine was completed, close to 10 miles of railroad between Woodbine and Cape May Court House still is waiting for funding to be rehabilitated. Such rehabilitation is essential before passenger service can run between Tuckahoe and Cape May City.

-- Paul Mulligan

## Hudson-Bergen Light Rail

"Another year, another portion of Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit added to the mix," we wrote in NJ-ARP's 2003 Annual Report. The same holds true for this year. On Sept. 7, New Jersey Transit launched HBLRT operations between Hoboken Terminal and Lincoln Harbor, Weehawken, with interim stops at 2nd Street, Hoboken, and 9th Street/Congress Street, complete with elevator for serving riders going to and from the Jersey City Heights neighborhood atop the Palisades.

The extension was the first of two segments identified as Initial Operating Segment 2 (IOS-2). NJ-ARP again reiterates its strong support for the "phase-in" approach to HBLRT employed by NJ Transit, and Twenty First Century Rail Corp., the design-build-operate-maintain (DBOM) contractor overseeing the project, as a positive, realistic approach to rail passenger expansion. Rather than wait until everything was "perfect," HBLRT has opened in bits and pieces as each segment became available.

HBLRT ridership increased even before the opening of the new extension, perhaps due to the resumption of PATH service to downtown Manhattan in December 2003; PATH's resumption restored a critical (and well-designed) intermodal transfer point at Exchange Place for LRT riders, particularly from Bayonne.

HBLRT's next extension is slated for 2005, north from Lincoln Harbor to the new Weehawken ferry terminal, then underneath the ex-Central Railroad of New Jersey Weehawken Tunnels to (or under) Union City and terminating in North Bergen at 50th Street, west of the Palisades.

In December 2003, NJ-ARP met with officials of Twenty First Century Rail Corp. to address numerous passenger service and comfort issues. General Manager Al Fazio and other Twenty First Century officers were cordial and interested in NJ-ARP's input, advice, and suggestions. And they offered good news and concrete approaches to some of the problems identified, many of which bore fruit through 2004.

At the December meeting, NJ-ARP voiced its frustrations with slow operating speeds north of Liberty Science Center; Fazio noted that speed increases were being implemented, and

throughout 2004 running times on this segment have improved markedly (if not yet to the ideal).

[It's ironic that HBLRT is the only major rail line within New Jersey Transit's system that can boast of *reduced* scheduled travel times in 2004 -- even as NJT and Twenty First Century Rail Corp. are accused of "dumping" passengers to maintain on-time performance. NJ-ARP finds the timing of the charge, and the story as reported by the *Star-Ledger* Sept. 26, curious at best.]

HBLRT vehicles also appear to be more assertive, though not reckless, when crossing streets at grade during 2004. The system's "signal priority" remains suspect, but appears to be giving a bit more true "priority" to LRT operations, at least during rush hours. NJ-ARP acknowledges the risk posed by reckless drivers, typified by HBLRT's first accident north of Hoboken on Sept. 22 when an SUV challenged HBLRT at 19th Street Weehawken, and lost (the driver suffered only minor injuries). But we believe automaniacs -- not just light rail operators -- shoulder the responsibility of not running red traffic lights and disregarding traffic and safety laws.

Ticket machines and validators at Hoboken Terminal Station have been relocated closer to the LRT platforms, making it easier for first-time riders or the forgetful to buy and validate their ticket without retracing their steps 75 yards, buying and validating a fare, then scrambling back the 75-yard distance a third time to make their train. This issue, brought to the fore by NJ-ARP's Steve Lanset, is one example of the little things NJ-ARP pursues for customer convenience. We do credit both NJT and Twenty First Century Rail Corp. for taking heed.

-- Douglas John Bowen

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## Lackawanna Cut-Off

Some minimal progress was notched during 2004 to restore passenger rail service between the New York metropolitan area and Scranton, Pa. But the results of the most recent environmental assessment seem to raise more questions than they answer.

Within New Jersey, the "New Jersey-Pennsylvania Lackawanna Cut-Off Passenger Rail Restoration Project" means restoring the fabled 28-mile "Lackawanna Cut-Off," opened by the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad in 1911. The project is alive at all largely due to NJ-ARP, which in 1989 lobbied first to put a bond issue for rights-of-way on the ballot, then worked to ensure the measure's passage; the bond funding specifically targeted the Lackawanna Cut-Off as one beneficiary.

Last year, \$2 million in federal funding was added to the \$43 million Pennsylvania contributed and \$21 million New Jersey share made in 2001. In January 2004, another \$2.5 million was approved to finance completion of the environmental assessment.

NJ-ARP attended the Lackawanna Cut-Off "Open House Meeting" in Andover, Sussex County on June 29, 2004 to find more confusion than solutions at hand. New Jersey Transit (NJT) held the meeting to permit interested citizens to discuss their concerns with NJT personnel, the Edwards & Kelcey consulting group, and other participants. The meeting was part of the ongoing Environmental Assessment to allow the Federal Transit Administration

(FTA) to determine whether further federal funding will be forthcoming for engineering and construction.

The forecasts presented cast such future follow-up funding in doubt, and NJ-ARP, in turn, protested the forecasts themselves. Just 2,800 passengers are expected for each eastbound weekday by 2025, "removing" 800 cars from the road. The number seems absurdly low to NJ-ARP; the "removal" of cars is a red herring, often seized on by anti-rail forces to discredit rail as a transportation *alternative*.

The latest forecast also calls for the Cut-Off to commence service in 2009 -- another in a series of "target dates" that NJ-ARP questions. Construction is estimated at \$350 million; annual operating costs are projected to be \$22 million.

Projected trip time for the 133 miles between Scranton and Hoboken would be a rather lengthy 3 hours, 10 minutes -- a target NJ-ARP continues to protest vehemently as too modest and uncompetitive. Trains would operate at a 45-minute frequency during peak periods. Candidate stations are Tobyhanna, Mount Pocono, Analomink, East Stroudsburg and Delaware Water Gap in Pennsylvania, and only two stations -- Blairstown and Andover -- in New Jersey. Transfers would be available to MidTown Direct trains along the Morris & Essex Lines, though at present no additional specifics are available.

A handout states, "It is anticipated that the project, in and of itself, would spur minimal growth. Regardless of this rail project, significant growth is anticipated in the study area as residential growth continues to move west of the New York City metropolitan area to areas where housing costs are lower. Local growth policies are the primary determinant of growth."

NJ-ARP has consulted with NJT, Edwards & Kelcey, the Morris County Board of Public Transportation, and the *Penn-Jersey Rail Coalition* on not just the ambitions but also the attitude of those purportedly advancing the Cut-Off. NJ-ARP remains concerned with unduly slow running times from Scranton to Hoboken; due in part to the equipment E&K assumes would be used. Running times in excess of three (3) hours between Scranton and Hoboken is clearly unacceptable in the 21st Century and provides an overall speed of less than 44 miles per hour -- in effect, an extension of the "commuter rail" mentality that holds NJT and indeed much of the transit industry in thrall.

The Cut-Off, dubbed by some the "Pocono Corridor," deserves another approach. Its 28-miles of fast, straight track includes a modest downgrade line from Port Morris to Columbia, N.J. By contrast, the 60 miles between East Stoudsburg, Pa. and Scranton is replete with steep hills and restrictive curves not conducive to rapid running. The 45 miles of track between Hoboken and Port Morris have multiple operational constraints in one of NJT's densest ridership (and "commuter") districts, its Morris & Essex line, including numerous hills and curves.

Given such variety, a high-performance trainset with quick acceleration and braking, and also the ability to traverse curves expeditiously, seems required.

Advocates (inside NJ-ARP and out) may debate which equipment options might work best, but it seems clear that the "Comet cars pulled by diesel engine" default favored by NJ Transit is, at best, inadequate. Some have espoused the Spanish Talgo train, now operating on Amtrak's Cascade service in the Pacific Northwest. Others believe Colorado Railcar LLC's diesel multiple-unit (DMU) alternative, with its ability to offer flexible consists, is in

order.

What's not called for is the "more of the same" attitude and approach dished out by NJ Transit and its consultant partners. NJ-ARP will continue to insist for an expanded scope of options, so that a 21st-century rail solution is offered to address 21st-century needs on what becomes not just a "commuter" line, but also a bistate intercity service.

-- Albert L. Papp, Jr.

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## 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 2004, 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 making the rider's viewpoint known. To its credit, NJT's Warrington also has expressed a desire to increase the number of meeting between NJT senior staff and NJ-ARP officials, a move NJ-ARP welcomes and will endeavor to make happen.

Similarly, we have met with PATH General Manager Michael DePallo and his senior management team. We have discussed the need for better service to the former World Trade Center as well as consideration of direct service between Newark and 33rd Street. Our dialogue is ongoing.

Our Rockland County liaison, Orrin Getz, regularly attends the monthly MTA Board Meetings being NJ-ARP's voice for improved service west of the Hudson. We continue to push for weekend service and the completion of those all too elusive sidings on the Pascack Valley line.

-- Leonard Resto

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## Membership

Between November 2003 and August 2004, eight batches of renewal notices were sent. In comparison to the identical period a year ago, our membership has gone from 323 to 331, up more than 2 percent. But the renewal rate has gone from down from 88 percent to 81 percent. We expect several more from the August renewal notice to trickle in.

The net gain of 8 members includes 50 new members, two more than last year's gain. Of those, 18 signed up via the Internet, 10 came by our manual solicitation of New Jersey-residing NARP members, and 22 came randomly through U.S. postal mail from sources such as brochure distribution or membership forms on the Web site. We are about 75 percent of the way through recruiting from the NARP list that we acquired two years ago.

Of the 331 NJ-ARP members, 288 (87 percent) reside in New Jersey, and 43 do not.

Membership benefits are cumulative as status is upgraded. Patron as well as Sustaining

members get the *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. NJ-ARP's membership count thus is conservative.

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. This matters when the prior renewal check came several months late. A second notice is sent from the Treasurer to those that do not renew two months after the first notice was sent, and that member is dropped two months 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

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## MOM

We reported at the 2003 NJ-ARP Annual Meeting that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was still ongoing for Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex (MOM) rail passenger service. One year later, that's still the case.

An announcement on what route, or LPA (Locally Preferred Alternative) now is expected sometime between December 2004 and March 2005. The official reason given for the delay is the inclusion of additional ridership data, and additional municipalities -- developments NJ-ARP believes should bolster MOM's already strong case.

New Jersey Transit held a meeting for both the community liaison committees (CLCs) and the public on June 3, at the Marriott, in Monroe Township, Middlesex County. The purpose of this meeting was to provide additional information, and to inform that the LPA has not been chosen. Additional study was needed because of new input, NJ Transit said. Public attendance was good. NJ-ARP was represented by Vice President Jim Ciacciarelli and Director Dan Kerwin. The *Central Jersey Rail Coalition* (CJRC) attended as well. NJ Transit's format in its presentation of the MOM project has improved. But NJ Transit still is lagging in its responsibility to keep the public informed about MOM.

Since 2003, MOM has been discussed extensively in both public and private meetings, many of which NJ-ARP has attended and/or monitored. The meetings include those hosted by NJ Transit and various municipalities that MOM traverses.

Monmouth and Ocean counties have retained the services of The Strategy Group in their joint effort to further MOM's progress. The Strategy Group has aided NJ-ARP as NJ-ARP advances MOM, particularly at Middlesex County festivals. The consultants also have assisted the *Central Jersey Rail Coalition*, of which NJ-ARP is a member.

The political atmosphere is still the same in Middlesex County -- official opposition. However, on the local scene, NJ-ARP sees increasing signs of resignation amongst MOM opponents, who seem to be maneuvering for room (or cover). We are seeing an increase in pro-MOM residents, even some who have the line literally in their back yards.

For example, at the Monroe Township *Mother's Club Country Fair*, one woman, with baby in tow, signed our petition sheet, and remarked to a NIMBY nearby, "The train will run through my backyard, but if it gets me to and from New York City faster than anything else, I'm for it." Middlesex residents, such as this mother, are now making a difference. However, most elected officials still choose to ignore the growing numbers of MOM supporters.

NJ-ARP's display table made its debut this year in South Brunswick, and results were promising. How so? Just hearing from those who stopped by our table, and said thanks for coming to present the positive side of passenger rail service in their town.

Elsewhere, NJ-ARP shared efforts with CJRC at the *Toms River Festival* in Ocean County early this year. NJ-ARP attended the *Tonkery Day Fair* in Jamesburg during August, South Brunswick *Community Unity Day* and Monroe Township *Mother's Club Fair* in September, and the *Pride in Milltown Day* and *Fall Festival in Englishtown* during October. NJ-ARP also joined other pro-MOM groups at a press conference Sept. 28 hosted by Monmouth and Ocean counties in Lakewood Sept. 28.

NJ-ARP continues to lobby for the MOM project on many levels. NJ-ARP keeps the project in the public eye, as well as in the minds of elected officials. NJ-ARP continues pushing for MOM's completion. The MOM project continues to receive support from the Central Jersey Rail Coalition, which has demonstrated its effectiveness in obtaining support within its sphere of MOM territory. The group is a strong ally in our cause to have MOM completed. NJ-ARP continues to work along side them in our combined endeavors.

**NIMBY Opposition:** Give Middlesex County NIMBYs high marks for consistency. They continue to lobby against MOM, often using questionable data and skewed facts at best.

In South Brunswick, for example, one couple, not happy with NJ-ARP's new presence promoting MOM, found the nearest Assemblyperson who represents their district, and conveyed their displeasure to her (after venting on NJ-ARP itself).

County government is still in vehement opposition to MOM, and is using every tactic to derail the project. "Helpful" suggestions (or distractions) have included total electrification of the North Jersey Coast Line, support for the Lakehurst-to-Red Bank route, and the use of express buses out of Thompson Park (Public Green Acres Land) in Jamesburg to Manhattan as cost-effective options to MOM. Coach USA is reported to be the user of this public property to serve southern Middlesex County residents.

State assembly representatives and state senators in Middlesex County remain opposed to MOM, at least publicly. On the federal level, Senator Frank R. Lautenberg (D), as well as Rep. James Saxton (R-3) and Chris Smith (R-4), supports MOM. So far, Sen. Jon Corzine (D) has no comment. Rep. Rush Holt (D-12), who represents parts of Middlesex County, remains officially neutral, pending final release of the study.

Much remains to be done to keep MOM on track. We must help identify funding sources, and keep the public aware of MOM through our own community outreach. NJ-ARP is still challenged often, but the number and fervor of challenges appears to be weakening. We continue to keep coming back, and note with some pride that some local residents in the "NIMBY Three" of South Brunswick, Jamesburg, and Monroe look forward to our annual presence at the fairs. NJ-ARP is here to stay in Jamesburg, Monroe, and, now, in South Brunswick. NJ-ARP will be there when the first trains roll into those towns.

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## National Rail Passenger Advocacy

Members should be pleased to realize that your organization continues to be heavily involved with issues of passenger rail importance on the national level. Indeed, this organization was originally set up as an outgrowth from the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), the national passenger rail advocacy group to better serve New Jersey constituents. Historically, we have continued the mission of NARP and continue to do so with ever fervor.

To that end, it should be comforting to our members to realize that three (3) individuals hold prominent positions within the NARP organization, namely Jim Ciacciarelli, Albert L. Papp, Jr. and Joe Versaggi. Both Jim Ciacciarelli and Albert L. Papp, Jr. are NARP Region III Directors; Joe Versaggi is a NARP Director at-large. Additionally, Al Papp is also NARP's current Secretary. With the addition of Joe Versaggi to the NARP board statewide New Jersey interests continue to be well represented. These individuals offer New Jersey statewide regionalized representation. This is due to the fact that Jim Ciacciarelli resides within southern New Jersey, Albert L. Papp, Jr. resides within northern New Jersey, and Joe Versaggi resides within central New Jersey. As such statewide interests to the national organization are presented and represented that much more effectively.

Our advocacy efforts are well founded. It is no secret that a modern national rail passenger system is essential to the future mobility, quality of life and to the economic well being of the American people. The general public, particularly since September 11th, agrees with the importance of maintaining and improving our national passenger rail network. Yet, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, another benefit of the intercity rail passenger system has been added: that of domestic security. Our nation's rail transportation network must be strengthened in order to offer a viable alternative means to move both passengers and goods. These points, as basic as they may seem, are the backbone of our lobbying effort.

Our activities include advocacy beyond New Jersey; we interact with influential policy makers in Washington, DC as well as elsewhere in the country. For example, we generally meet with the entire New Jersey Congressional Delegation on Capitol Hill during the year. We have found this very effective where it offers a personal approach that is needed in this day and age of impersonal cyberspace. Through our efforts we provide for the dissemination of information and our indication of our position on crucial issues. This has benefited both the organization and New Jersey interests where we are welcomed warmly and where our stance is clearly respected. We also are involved in constant letter writing as well as meeting involvement. In short, we have learned over the past almost quarter century that NJ-ARP has been in existence that it is crucial that a constant presence be consistently maintained. A current, comprehensive national and statewide legislative mailing list is also maintained where the NJ-ARP newsletter and other pertinent, timely documentation such as reports and press releases are sent.

NJ-ARP also interacts with the various adjacent NARP affiliates such as 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 are interested in promoting unified advocacy, which can only strengthen our goals. As an example NJ-ARP has sponsored the recent Region III NARP Meeting that was held in Camden and thus touted the initiation of the River Line.

In conclusion, it's apparent that New Jersey is greatly affected by national transportation policy. The existing national rail passenger system is a skeletal one at best, and must be continued in its entirety. Annual subsidies for other transportation modes continue into the billions of dollars while the Amtrak appropriation is a miniscule one by comparison.

We at NJ-ARP strive consistently to promote our goals in conjunction with staunch support of national passenger rail.

-- Jim Ciacciarelli

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## **Northeast Corridor**

Connections have been the theme of the last 12 months for the Northeast Corridor.

On November 23, 2003, PATH service to the World Trade Center resumed, enabling New Jersey residents to resume their pre-9/11 travel patterns between Newark-Penn Station and Exchange Place to lower Manhattan for the first time since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Three weeks later, on Dec. 15, 2003, seven-day service debuted at Secaucus Junction, connecting all New Jersey Transit rail lines in northern New Jersey. For the first time, weekday travelers on the Main, Bergen, and Pascack Valley lines could access the Northeast Corridor for transfers to and from New York City and -- important from NJ-ARP's point of view -- more than 100 New Jersey destinations.

The March 14, 2004, debut of the River Line between Trenton and Camden offered another important link to the NEC -- initially overlooked by most of the media. Delaware River communities in Burlington County now are linked to existing NJ Transit, SEPTA, and Amtrak service at Trenton, as well as the higher-profile PATCO High Speed Line in Camden, itself offering connections to Philadelphia and to Lindenwold / Atlantic City.

Connections to and from Camden via the River Line, the World Trade Center via PATH, and the Main, Bergen, and Pascack Valley Lines via Secaucus Junction will enable more riders to access Northeast Corridor destinations. Likewise, residents living along the Northeast Corridor will be able to travel to more destinations without having to drive a car. These improved connections should bolster ridership on all lines involved.

-- Gary Johnson

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## **PATH/Lex Connection**

NJ-ARP suffered a defeat as well as a victory in 2004. The River Line commenced victorious. PATH/Lex got buried by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PA).

Advancing the PATH/Lex Connection was an exercise in frustration, rejection, and disappointment.

But at the very least, NJ-ARP got a refresher on how powerful agencies such as the PA and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) can obstruct and "run out the clock." NJ-ARP still holds that PATH/Lex is one of boldest transportation initiatives -- with amazingly little risk -- to be advanced in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

PATH/Lex emerged from discussions following the destruction of Manhattan's World Trade Center, coupled with the MTA's rejection of a regional rail link between New York City's Pennsylvania Station (NYP) and Grand Central Terminal (GCT). (See Access to the Region's Core.)

NJ-ARP advanced PATH/Lex not to replace ARC, but to **supplement** it. Many of the anticipated benefits offered by ARC, including access to east midtown Manhattan, could be offered relatively quickly (within four years) and inexpensively (\$800 million-to-\$1 billion) by PATH/Lex.

The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey (PA) officially rejected PATH/Lex in a June 10, 2004 letter, stating that it did "not plan any further investigation of the proposed connection at this time." The PA claimed design, constructability, operation and maintenance problems, as well as restrictive federal regulations. Selective application of the New York City Transit's (NYCT) best practices for grades, curvature and intersecting line separation distances virtually precluded PATH/Lex.

NJ-ARP and the Regional Rail Working Group (RRWG) consisting of our counterpart in New York, the *Empire State Passenger Association* (ESPA), continued to meet frequently to refine our plan and alignment to meet PA and MTA requirements during 2003 and early 2004. But it took until March 26, 2004 for those agencies to meet with us and present comprehensive analysis of the PATH/Lex Connection. At the meeting, a PA representative claimed that the PA had expended \$200,000 for the consulting firm of Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade & Douglas, Inc. to do the PA's analysis, and that further such studies examining any future RRWG alignments were not likely given that they have satisfied themselves that the connection is "infeasible" [sic].

Basically, Parsons prepared its drawings using the MTA/NYCT **new** construction standards to preclude PATH/Lex's chances. One example: A full tunnel diameter of clearance between two intersecting subway lines -- about 18 feet from top of rail to top of rail -- modest grades of 3 percent or less, and a minimum curve radius of 350 feet. In essence, the twin agencies changed the rules of the game in mid-play to justify rejecting the concept of interoperability of the transit systems.

After our initial meeting with the PANYNJ on March 31, 2003 and subsequently with the PANYNJ and the MTA/NYCT on March 26, 2004 -- virtually a year to the day -- NJ-ARP then joined by the RRWG, refined its alignment in several iterations to comply with best practice operating parameters of the **existing** PATH and NYCT properties. The PATH/Lex Connection was premised on grades of 4.5%, curve radii of 200 feet and a minimum rail-to-rail clearance of 17 feet (where the connecting track passes under the "A" and "C" subway line) and 14 feet (where the track link passes over the "#2" and "#3" line at Beekman Street). We agreed, and stated to the agencies and the elected leaders with whom we met, that the paramount issue for the PATH/Lex connection was the feasibility of

building these close clearance intersections without infringing on the reliability of these heavily traveled lower Manhattan transportation arteries.

As such we reminded the PA, the MTA, and Parsons Brinckerhoff, the NYCT's #7 line operates on two-minute headways and surmounts 4.5% grades in its Steinway Tunnels located to the west of Grand Central Terminal and in Long Island City. Even steeper gradients can be found on the approaches to the East River Bridges. The PATH has used 115 foot radius curves on its WTC approach and departure tracks for 30 years while NYCT has turned trains on its 147 foot radius City Hall loop for a century, both with no ill effect on operational reliability. Because of the age of the structures in this part of the City (some dating back to Colonial times) and the narrow street grid, engineering of the City's early subway infrastructure was carefully built to preclude damage to any number of priceless historic structures. And if success can be gauged by the yardstick of longevity and uninterrupted service, these lines have served the City faithfully for almost a century and likely will continue to do so for at least several more. But they weren't buying this practical approach.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for a permanent PATH terminal at the World Trade Center site was published on May 22, 2004 and, as required by law, hearings were held for public comment. The first occurred in Jersey City June 22; on June 23, one was held in Manhattan. Both hearings were perfunctory and non-events; in fact, at the Jersey City location, NJ-ARP's president was the only one who signed up to speak. NJ-ARP Director Albert L. Papp was one of just five speakers addressing the New York City venue. The Cracchiolo letter had been received about ten days earlier.

NJ-ARP and RRWG formally replied to the Port Authority's Director, Priority Capital Programs, on August 4, requesting it also be inserted into the DEIS public record for the permanent WTC PATH station. That letter concluded by stating: "Despite the comments expressed in the May 22, 2004 DEIS, and the statements contained within a June 10, 2004 [PA] letter to [NJ-ARP], NJ-ARP continues to believe that the construction of either a track connection or an across the platform transfer (as portrayed in the attached diagrams, Alignment 2.8 and Alignment 4.1 respectively) remains a viable option.

But NJ-ARP must acknowledge that the PA has slammed shut the window of opportunity -- again ironic, given that the PA was formed over 80 years ago to plan New Jersey and New York bi-state transportation arteries.

The PA had plenty of complicit help. NJ-ARP's PATH/Lex never received much attention and gained little traction. Meetings were held with congressional representatives, transit agency officials, media representatives, all to little avail. PowerPoint presentations were shown to the likes of New Jersey's Commissioner of Transportation, Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), and Rep. Robert Menendez (D-13). Some support -- not enough -- was offered by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA).

Media avoidance of PATH/Lex was notable in spades. A major article prepared by the New York's *Daily News* never appeared because it had "no New York angle." New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg personally received a copy of the plan; the silence was positively and ultimately deafening. Efforts by our New York advocate allies went unheeded.

But if nothing else, the professionalism of all rail advocates who were involved on both sides of the Hudson "Ocean" was amply demonstrated. NJ-ARP salutes the efforts of RRWG

Chairman (and NJ-ARP member) George Haikalis, John West, another NJ-ARP member and the Community Preservation Corporation's and Civic Alliance's representative (also responsible for the PowerPoint presentation), retired Parsons Brinckerhoff planner Herb Landow, former LIRR planner Joe Clift, Bill Guild, Phil Strong, and Paul Di Maria.

-- Albert L. Papp, Jr.

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## Raritan Valley Line

No major changes -- good or bad -- occurred operationally in 2004 on the Raritan Valley Line. Ridership continues to grow, passing the levels achieved prior to the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

The "one-seat ride" to New York coveted by many commuter advocates of the line above all else -- a focus NJ-ARP does not share -- remains a distant prospect. New Jersey Transit maintains such an option is not possible until added capacity is added on the Northeast Corridor under the Hudson River; direct access to New York's Penn Station thus is hinged to whatever permutation of *Access to the Region's Core* advances. (Currently, the project is billed as Trans-Hudson Express Tunnel, or T.H.E. Tunnel.)

For now, the focus is on addressing problems associated with changing trains -- and platforms -- at Newark-Penn Station. A pocket track north (east) of Newark-Penn is planned to allow same-platform transfers between Raritan Valley trains and Northeast Corridor (NEC) service. The project is partially funded, but must be completed in cooperation with Amtrak, which owns the NEC.

Also being proposed is a third track east of Aldene, but this impacts freight rail operations more directly than Raritan Valley Line service.

Interestingly, anti-rail partisans battling the reactivation of the Staten Island Railway and Rahway Valley Railroad argue that freight use on those two short lines will interfere with ongoing NJ Transit operations on the Raritan Valley Line. (See Rights-of-Way Legislation below.)

It's been roughly one year since the new "Union Station" opened in Union Township; the station is now the first such west of Newark on the Raritan Valley Line. The station has been accepted by most riders, but some have complained that the added stop slows running times and schedules.

West of Raritan Borough, no weekend, midday, or late-evening service remains the rule. NJT holds that the proposed White House siding track must be built before service west of Raritan can be improved. The project, projected to cost \$3 million, lacks funding.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation is spearheading the effort to build an intermodal park-and-ride station near Annandale, and the project is currently under study. The location is the only spot where Interstate 78, U.S. Route 22, and state Route 31 all intersect with the Raritan Valley Line. Local opposition has dogged this project, but the general public benefits more than outweigh the opposition's claims. Like so many other needs, no money for construction is available at present.

The West Trenton Line, a separate project that can be seen as a branch of the Raritan Valley Line, is under environmental study and is moving forward slowly. Extension of passenger service to Flemington, from either Bound Brook or Somerville, is in early discussion stages.

Service west of High Bridge to Phillipsburg, or even Allentown, Pa., across the Delaware River, remains elusive, although auto congestion and accident rates on Interstate 78 seem to get worse by the day. NJ Transit already owns the right-of-way for this route, and even potential station locations to boot, but under its "Back to Basics" mentality will not consider nor advance incremental extensions or improvements.

Interest in this project from neighboring Pennsylvania is weak -- NJ-ARP has seen little interest from either state official or its sister organization, *Keystone Association of Railroad Passengers* (KARP). But Warren County, and Phillipsburg itself, have voiced strong support.

NJ-ARP is a member of the *Raritan Valley Line Coalition*, which supports better service and improvements for the line. The coalition claims a good relationship with NJ Transit, and NJ Transit often sends a representative to coalition meetings. The coalition meets six times per year, with NJ-ARP Directors Jack P. McDougal and William R. Wright, and NJ-ARP members Ralph Braskett and Joe Versaggi, in regular attendance.

The Trustee Board, which includes NJ-ARP Director McDougal, also consists of a freeholder, a municipal official, and a public member from each of the four counties served by the Raritan Valley Line -- Union, Middlesex, Somerset, and Hunterdon. Warren County will soon be invited to participate as the fifth county member, because of its expressed interest in rail service.

-- Jack P. McDougal

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## Rights-of-Way Legislation

In 2003 and again in 2004, NJ-ARP moved aggressively to defend individual rail rights-of-way, and the showcase effort (and success) has been the two lines bisecting Union County now rolled into one as the Rahway Valley Railway.

But the success, paradoxically, spotlights the high cost, in time and effort, to NJ-ARP and others as they defend rail rights-of-way one by one. And as 2004 progressed, NJ-ARP found, to its near-astonishment, that even plans for existing, routinely used New Jersey Transit lines are not immune to assault. Worse yet, NJ Transit seems reluctant, at best, to defend its own turf, if Pascack Valley Line developments are any barometer. (See Bergen County Developments.)

If plans to expand and improve rail passenger service are slowed or stymied for *even existing, active passenger lines*, what chance does a little-used, freight-only, or inactive route hold? NJ-ARP remains committed to find a way to preserve and redevelop 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 that 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.

As we noted in 2003, state legislators themselves can be the problem. Members 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.

Thanks to pro-rail forces, including NJ-ARP, the legislation so far has gained little traction. But its co-sponsors are generally considered "friendly" to rail and passenger rail interests, making the threat perhaps more ominous.

Anti-rail objectors often cite freight train traffic -- variously described as dangerous and/or increasing -- to head off track upgrades and improvements. Indeed, in 2003 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.

The Staten Island Railway portion of Rahway Valley operations is expected to commence operations in December 2004, serving one shipper and one consignee. But the line between Cranford and Summit remains yet to be rehabilitated, and four municipalities, including Roselle Park, Kenilworth, Springfield, and Summit, are contesting such rehabilitation in court.

NJ-ARP, along with the Morris & Essex Railway and Union County officials, remain confident that such litigation 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. And New Jersey Transit's reluctance to defend its existing turf vigorously, as on the Pascack Valley Line, sends the

wrong message. The Pascack Valley Line's existence is not in danger, but anti-rail forces can be bolstered into believing any potential new service (MOM, the Cut-Off) is easily turned aside.

In 2003, NJ-ARP voiced the concern that the battle for Staten Island Railway/Rahway Valley Railroad rail restoration might be just the first of many such conflicts. We take no joy in noting that 2004 has proven that concern to be justified.

-- Douglas John Bowen

## RiverLINE

It's official: New Jersey Transit has found its faith in the RiverLINE, nearly a decade after NJ-ARP helped spearhead the project to fruition -- and only six months after the River Line opened for business March 14.

NJT's belief -- *after officially, actively, denigrating the line publicly, to NJ-ARP's astonishment and distaste* -- in part may be due to the astounding development activity -- planned and actual -- that has surfaced during 2004, making even the staunchest naysayer or NIMBY hard-pressed to say the RiverLINE makes "no difference" to the economic well-being of communities along the Delaware River. From Trenton to Camden -- and with numerous Burlington County municipalities in between -- the nation's first diesel light rail transit (DLRT) line is drawing attention -- and riders.

With NJ Transit's permission, we reprint (in edited form) data supplied by it as of Sept. 10, 2004. Our thanks to NJT. (NJ-ARP comments appear in ***bold italic*** where warranted.)

NJT reports that in August, "[t]he average weekday ridership over the last 30 days was 5,700, while weekend ridership averaged about 5,100 on Saturdays and nearly 3,580 on Sundays over the same period. [NJ Transit's revised first-year target for the RiverLINE is 5,900 weekday trips.] The RiverLINE currently boasts the highest group tickets sales of any service in the NJ TRANSIT system. Area attractions and special events are driving about 20% of weekday and 40% of weekend ridership, while journey-to-work trips are responsible for 51% of weekday and 15% of weekend ridership.

"While we expect to see some seasonal leisure ridership decline, particularly in light of the closing of the Camden Aquarium for renovations, we believe this will be offset to some degree by "back to school" student trips to Rutgers-Camden, and other campuses where students are taking advantage of our new statewide discount program. To educate college students about the advantages of transit, we are offering all college students the opportunity to ride free anywhere on our system the week of Sept. 8th.

NJT states that "the measure of success for this line is not ridership in the first year. Our business plan assumes that ridership demand growth over the long term depends upon realizing the local economic development potential that transit offers. Already, we are seeing evidence that the line is becoming a catalyst for economic development.

"In Cinnaminson, the River Route business park -- a 45,000 square-foot retail and office building scheduled to be completed in 2005 -- proudly advertises its proximity to the River LINE. Also in Cinnaminson, the Kaplan Company is building Cinnaminson Harbour, a 900

unit residential complex with 97,000 square feet of retail space across from the station.

"Kaplan has also recently purchased the Keystone Watchcase Building next to the Riverside light rail station for adaptive reuse as condos and retail. We also understand that Dranoff properties is moving forward on redevelopment of the former RCA Victor buildings along the Camden waterfront, which feature condos and retail.

"Through our River LINE Economic Opportunity Project, we are working very closely with municipal leaders to offer technical assistance to local and regional planning and revitalization efforts. In fact, on October 21 we are hosting a Mayors' Symposium to highlight current development activities in the 13 River Route communities. A companion event in December will bring together developers for a Community Marketplace symposium connecting the private sector with communities to identify and engage transit oriented development projects around light rail stations."

NJT reports Southern New Jersey Rail Group, the design/build/operate/maintain (DBOM) contractor for the RiverLINE, operated trains with a 93 percent on-time record during August.

The corporation continues to discuss with local communities their interest in applying to the federal government for "quiet zone" status, which would enable other grade crossing protections to substitute for horn blowing (absent a clear safety hazard). "We are also preparing a waiver application to the Federal Railroad Administration seeking permission to maintain the horn blowing rules we currently have in place after stricter rules take effect at the end of the year. Under our current rules, horns are replaced by lower decibel bells nearly 40% of the time on the system. Specifically, bells are used at intersections where light rail vehicles are "street running" and in certain other instances where there is no safety risk. We believe that the FRA will give our waiver request fair consideration." *[NJ-ARP supports such efforts, but we believe NJT should be more vocal in promoting this, since "noise" issues, legitimate or otherwise, are now anti-rail partisans' primary "no" calling card.]*

Encouraged by both Burlington County officials and NJ-ARP, the RiverLINE, led by NJT's Joe North and Joyce Gallagher, continue "nibbling at the edges" of the problems generated by time-of-day separation. Federal Railroad Administration rules prohibit LRT vehicles from operating when freight trains do; current separation hours slot freight activity during nighttime hours on weekdays.

Led by North, NJT has succeeded in securing two earlier morning starts out of Roebbling and Florence, which offer better connections to Newark and New York via Northeast Corridor trains in Trenton. RiverLINE service also operates deeper into the night hours on Saturday, when fewer freight operations exist to offer conflict. And NJT, working with Conrail Shared Assets, has secured holiday exemptions one at a time, the most notable being the July 2-4 weekend. July 2 ridership, topping 9,000 trips, so far is the record ridership for the service.

NJT also has "supplemented our Capital Connection bus service with 10 additional trips in the peak commuting periods to create a loop service -- more frequent and convenient connections from the light rail to downtown office buildings."

Opponents of the RiverLINE remain convinced the line will somehow fail to measure up during the next decade, despite mounting evidence to the contrary. NJ-ARP's part as unofficial RiverLINE spokesperson will continue, and we're gratified that Burlington County, in particular, has played a leadership role in advancing the line and its benefits --

current and future -- to the press and public. Sometimes government *does* get it.

-- Douglas John Bowen  
Carol Ann Thomas

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## Sponsorships

NJ-ARP, bolstered by individual members' efforts and finances, has lent its name, time, and financial resources to rail-related activities or public relations efforts, improving the organization's visibility and credibility as the pro-rail voice for the state of New Jersey.

### **Adopt-A-Station (Mt. Olive Station)**

Most of NJ-ARP's Adopt-A-Station activities are focused on maintaining the existing planting area, centered on the two islands located east and west of the plexiglass shelter. The below-normal temperature profile that characterized the winter of 2003-2004 resulted in damage to one-third of the existing plants that had occupied both islands for the last few years, as well as damage to three (3) of the 10 dogwood saplings that were planted in 2000.

The islands are re-populated with two perennial varieties of buddleia davidii: "Black Knight" and "Harlequin" that feature dark-blue and lavender blooms, respectively. Additionally, a new variety of annual cleome, "Ice Ballet", characterized by pure-white blooms, is installed around the foundations supporting the overhead lighting poles.

The planting area has been expanded to include the section adjacent to the ADA handicap-access ramp. Plant material in this section is restricted to those species native to the eastern and central United States, and also considered beneficial to insect pollinators, including bees and butterflies. It's a symbolic effort by NJ-ARP to counteract the wildlife habitat destruction resulting from overdevelopment and sprawl (due in part to the lack of a rail alternative!).

Other factors in the selection of plants for this area include the desire to mix varieties that can provide a succession of color from mid-summer to late autumn, as well as the ability of each type to resist drought conditions.

Initial perennial varieties planted thus far are False Aster (*boltonia asteroides*), Goldenrod (*solidago canadensis*), and Northern Blazingstar (*liatris borealis*). Subsequent additions to be installed this autumn will be Common Milkweed (*asclepias syriaca*) and Purple Coneflower (*echinacea purpureum*). A summer annual, Scarlet Sage (*salvia coccinea*), will be seeded in this section next spring for the summer of 2005.

NJ-ARP has requested NJDOT to install a quantity of NJ Transit "directional" signs at various locations in the area of the International Trade Center. This request encompasses both newly-identified locations in addition to those locations where previously-existing signs have been removed or destroyed.

The Mt. Olive ITC region is characterized by the confluence of a number of major highways (U.S. 46, U.S. 206, U.S. 183, I-80), combined with an extensive retail shopping area mixed in with corporate facilities and hotels. These elements represent an opportunity to draw riders from diverse sources.

Existing signs are located at:

- U.S. 46 East (ITC entrance)
- U.S. 46 West (ITC entrance)
- ITC (Continental Drive)
- ITC (intersection Waterloo Valley Rd/Continental Dr.)

Replacement signs are requested for:

- I-80 East (Exit 25)
- I-80 West (Exit 25)
- U.S. 206 North service road (Stanhope)

New signs are requested for:

- U.S. 206 South (ITC entrance, Roxbury Twp.)
- U.S. 206 North (ITC entrance, Roxbury Twp.)
- U.S. 206 South service road

NJ-ARP Sussex County Liaison Tim Apgar heads up NJ-ARP's station sponsorship and maintenance role, assisted by other NJ-ARP volunteers. Mt. Olive Station is located within Morris County.

## **Light Rail Now!**

Since NJ-ARP is the leading voice for light rail transit (LRT) within the Garden State, it's fitting that the group has lent its support to *Light Rail Now!*, a web site and organization dedicated to aiding pro-LRT supporters in the United States (and often elsewhere). *Light Rail Now!* disseminates information, political strategy and options, and news to LRT supporters as they move to initiate or expand LRT systems.

NJ-ARP has found that *Light Rail Now!*, in turn, also boosts NJ-ARP's own visibility, and the visibility of New Jersey's own light rail progress. That's important because it appears that New Jersey's LRT role is profoundly overlooked even by ardent advocates -- odd, since New Jersey is No. 2 in number of LRT systems (3) operating, second only to California.

When New Jersey LRT issues are discussed or questioned within *Light Rail Now!*, they all too often are done in a negative light. NJ-ARP works hard to listen -- sometimes those from a distance can see the forest and not just the trees. But NJ-ARP can correct misperceptions or outright fallacies concerning the Garden State. (One example: Observers often believe New Jersey Transit is a constant driving force for LRT expansion; NJ-ARP is quick to counter this somewhat mistaken view.) And we can offer our experience and insights as examples of how to succeed -- or what to avoid.

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

## **'Montclair Connection'**

NJ-ARP's sponsorship of the 'Montclair Connection' softball team marked its fourth year in 2004, two years after the actual Montclair Connection opened for business in September

2002. The sponsorship aims to keep the rail infrastructure improvement (and the name) visible to local townspeople -- an important item given the township's near-schizophrenic attitude toward the Connection itself.

The team uniform incorporates NJ-ARP's white logo on the green baseball cap, and black NJ-ARP logo against a green and white dress shirt. The shirt logo also includes the words "New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers" in small letters -- large enough for the rail-curious but small enough to remain unobtrusive to those interested in baseball only. The team's main shirt art includes a baseball diamond, with bases linked by railroad tracks, underpinned by the slogan, "The Fastest Way Home."

The team itself suffered a difficult year, winning only one game (and that by forfeit), according to team Manager Chris Isidore, a user of both the real Montclair Connection and competitor DeCamp bus services, and a valuable source to NJ-ARP of ongoing local political developments concerning rail passenger service.

NJ-ARP's sponsorship of the 'Montclair Connection' is funded by contributions from individual NJ-ARP members, and not from the NJ-ARP treasury.

-- Douglas John Bowen  
Tim Apgar

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## **Sussex County Developments**

### **New York Susquehanna and Western RR**

The project status is unchanged from 2003. Put another way, no progress has been made in efforts to revitalize passenger rail service.

New Jersey Transit and the Delaware-Otsego Corp., owners of the NYS&W, are currently at an impasse negotiating an acceptable price for NJT's purchase of the right-of-way and the associated infrastructure. In addition, it is likely that, in the event that an agreement is reached, the State of New Jersey lacks the capital funding necessary to complete the transaction.

### **Mt. Arlington Rail Station**

Construction of a rail station adjacent to the present Park-and-Ride facility off Exit 30 on eastbound Interstate 80 is contingent upon the acquisition of additional land and improvements to the expressway interchange. NJDOT considers this future rail facility, to be located on the Montclair-Boonton Line between the Dover and the Lake Hopatcong stations, to be an integral part of its "interception point" concept. The concept foresees intermodal transit stops removing large amounts of single-occupant vehicles off the highways and concentrating them into park-and-ride areas at moderate distances from urban destinations.

Speculation continues over extending electrification westward from Dover to Mt. Arlington at some future time to maximize its potential ridership via MidTown Direct. NJT's executive director himself suggested such a possibility in 2003.

## County of Sussex Mobility Study

The Sussex County Board of Freeholders released preliminary results of the data gathered from the *Transportation Needs Survey* taken during the last two years on commuting habits and patterns by individuals traveling both within the County and to diverse destinations in surrounding areas.

Conducted by Urbitran Associates at a cost of \$155,000, the final report on the *Mobility Study* is due to be issued later in 2004. The results are based on a sampling size of 5120 surveys that were sent in from the respondents, which is 32% of the total number of surveys distributed.

The major points emphasized in the initial report include:

- Highway expansion within the county is not a viable option for congestion relief.
- Sixty-percent of all workers work outside of the county.
- Eighty-four percent of workers drive alone to work destinations both in and outside of the county.
- Rail transit is not currently utilized by county residents because (1) the number of stops in proximity to the county is minimal, (2) the frequency of service is very low, and (3) the average distance to the nearest stop is excessive.
- Many newly transplanted county residents, especially those from urban areas, stated that they were accustomed to using rail transit in their and would welcome the opportunity to do so again.

-- Tim Apgar

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## 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 the 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, Pa. Pair Networks operates more than 1,000 servers in its datacenter. NJ-ARP's site is hosted on an Athlon XP2800+ 2.6 GHz computer with 1024MB of RAM and a 80GB 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.

NJ-ARP began accepting credit cards on the Web site for payment of new members' dues starting in March 2004. New members may choose to join at the regular, family, sustaining, patron, or student/senior membership levels. The credit cards are processed by 2checkout.com, which technically acts as a reseller of NJ-ARP's services. The charge is 5.5% of the sale price, plus 46 cents per sale.

For example, NJ-ARP receives \$18.44 for each \$20.00 membership sold online. There are no monthly fees or minimum sales requirements. The money is deposited into NJ-ARP's bank account twice a month. In the first six-month period of accepting credit cards, 16 members joined online, representing approximately 50% of the new members during the period.

The NJ-ARP Web site is currently averaging more than 32,000 "hits" and 8,700 "page views" per month. Each Hotline is viewed an average of 330 times. The Hotline Mailing List, which allows people to be notified by e-mail when a new Hotline is available, currently has 157 subscribers.

Bob Scheurle maintains the Web site. NJ-ARP President Douglas John Bowen writes the Hotline.

--Bob Scheurle

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## **Miscellaneous**

### **TransAction Conference, Atlantic City**

Once again, NJ-ARP Director William R. Wright served on the Steering Committee for the annual TransAction Conference, held in April at the Tropicana Hotel in Atlantic City, N.J. Through the good efforts of NJ-ARP's Frank Reilly, NJ-ARP had good positioning in the Exhibit Hall.

In 2004, we focused on PATH/Lex, *Cape May Seashore Lines*, and MOM. We had NJ-ARP speakers at several of the sessions and interacted with the "movers and shakers" of transportation in New Jersey. Because APTA -- the American Public Transit Association -- held its conference at the same time and nearby, we took advantage by meeting with transit officials we normally might not see at TransAction. Once again, Bill Wright made us look good.

Planning for the 2005 Conference is already under way. If you have a topic you believe should be discussed as a theme, please contact Bill Wright. Bill can be reached at 908-272-5968.

### **Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)**

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

DVRPC was one of the earliest MPOs in action when the first ISTEA bill for federal ground transportation was enacted by Congress in the early 1990s, and it was considered (by NJ-ARP and others) to be one of the more professional MPOs. But in NJ-ARP's opinion, DVRPC has caught the "SEPTA bug," and seems unable to initiate any large-scale public and/or rail transportation project, instead reacting to events as they unfold.

The River Line is the prime example. DVRPC declined to lead or even support the effort to establish the line, suggesting it wasn't high enough on its list of Philadelphia-area priorities and questioning its value (as so many other purported pro-transit groups have done). But in 2004, with the River Line open for business, DVRPC suddenly found time to make recommendations on transit-friendly development in Burlington and Camden counties. All well and good -- and academic if the River Line weren't in operation.

At present, DVRPC does show token interest in reviving efforts to place passenger rail in Gloucester County, a move driven by the Delaware River Port Authority, parent of PATCO. NJ-ARP welcomes the interest, but withholds judgment on DVRPC's overall resolve.

### **North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)**

NJ-ARP Director William R. Wright continues to represent NJ-ARP by appearing routinely before the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), one of three (3) metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) covering New Jersey. NJTPA covers the largest area in New Jersey among the three, 13 northern New Jersey counties. Wright has been a tireless advocate for public transit over road building and for equal modal support. He will continue in this role in 2005.

NJ-ARP enjoys cordial relations with NJTPA -- a significant change from earlier days when auto-only freeholder representatives seemed to dominate the organization's decision-making to an extreme. During 2004, NJTPA was one of the only entities of any kind that expressed any interest in NJ-ARP's PATH/Lex proposal, offering modest assistance.

### **Union County Transportation Advisory Board**

NJ-ARP Director William R. Wright continues as Cranford's official representative to the Union County Transportation Advisory Board (TAB). The Board focuses on all transportation modes and alternatives within Union County. In 2004, Bill has been particularly active in support of the reactivation of the Rahway Valley Railroad as a short-line freight railroad to be used by the Morristown & Erie. Great potential exists to connect Cranford and Summit with passenger rail -- a goal of NJ-ARP for at least two decades. Bill has handled the challenges of NIMBY forces in Springfield, Kenilworth, and Summit. He will keep advocating for what would be a significant intrastate transportation improvement.

### **Blue Ribbon Transportation Commission**

Early in 2004, the Blue Ribbon Transportation Commission released its report to Governor McGreevey and Transportation Commissioner Lettiere. Predictably, it cited the major challenges facing transportation in the state and the lack of funding. Without making any concrete recommendations as to how the Transportation Trust Fund should be funded, the Commission proved to be a complete whitewash, as NJ-ARP indicated last year.

NJ-ARP urges incoming Acting Governor Richard Codey (D) to reconvene a new Commission that would produce a series of findings and recommendations that the public could react to over a period of months in many more venues. The Commission must be given a clear mission so that it produces substantive recommendations, such as those produced by the Federal 9/11 Commission.

-- Leonard Resto

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*These files were created by Bob Scheurle.*