



October 21, 2007

New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers

P.O. Box 68

Chatham, NJ 07928-0068

www.nj-arp.org

NJ-ARP Annual Report

2006-2007

Contents:

- President's Message
- Membership
- Access to the Region's Core (ARC)
- Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project
- Bergen County Developments
- Hudson-Bergen Light Rail
- Morris & Essex, Gladstone, Montclair-Boonton
- Sussex County Passenger Service Improvements (?)
- Lackawanna Cut-Off
- Raritan Valley Line
- MOM
- River Line
- Cape May Branch
- National Rail Passenger Advocacy
- Sponsorships
- Miscellaneous
- Web Site

President's Message

Civil War analogies can be dangerous (and inflammatory, even in New Jersey!). But they're useful, and if T.H.E. Tunnel, MOM, and the Cape May Branch don't really equate to the 1864 horrors of The Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor, the message for success or victory might be the same: Press on, despite one's "losses" or setbacks.

That's what NJ-ARP continues to do despite the steadfast insistence of state powers that be, including but not limited to New Jersey Transit, that continue to insist Manhattan is the sole prize for rail passenger service -- and, at times, the sole price worth paying.

NJ-ARP disagrees -- vehemently. New Jersey Transit, providing New Jersey's transit, should be addressing New Jersey's needs, intrastate needs, in addition to those of New York and (sometimes acknowledged) Philadelphia. It's good policy, and it's even good politics. It's

even good railroading. Somehow too many New Jersey players don't get it.

NJ-ARP members do, however, and as the annual report makes clear, we do not accept the idea that "New York only" must hold sway, or that "one-seat ride" is an overarching goal or need. The true aim is mobility, in concert with and in lieu of the almighty automobile, at a time when it becomes slowly but inexorably more clear that the transportation status quo simply cannot hold indefinitely.

To be sure, NJ Transit can point to "New York-driven" achievements this year that -- oops! How'd that happen? -- bolster intrastate (and even inbound-state) needs. After seven years of delays, the Pascack Valley Line graduates from near-orphan "commuter" status to a seven-day-a-week rail line with real off-peak and late-hour service. The Raritan Valley Line also gets improved weekday options on its outer portion (still languishing during weekends). A Connecticut governor asks a New York-based transit authority to get east-of-Hudson football fans to a New Jersey point by rail, and New Jersey actually reacts -- alas, reacts, but still in all reacts positively -- to the idea. And the state gears up on its own to serve New Yorkers and -- gasp! -- its own residents wishing access to the new Prudential Center in Newark. Win-win for the region, including New Jersey.

All great improvements -- and nearly all of which should have been implemented in 1987, not 2007 (or 2009, for Giants/Jets fans). Indeed, New Jersey's limited vision of breaching the "Hudson Ocean" divide doesn't even measure up to the sports effort. NJT simply wants to deliver more folks to Manhattan -- and not even the best spot in Manhattan, where a majority of its Gotham-oriented customers might actually wish to go. The "one-seat ride" mantra is in effect only until one arrives in New York -- not necessarily one's destination.

Don't get us wrong: We love New York. And that's why NJ-ARP has put so much energy into T.H.E. Tunnel proposal even as its purpose and mission statement de-evolves into a mega-project of uncertain impact and benefit. Led by Director Albert L. Papp, Jr., NJ-ARP continues to insist that New Jersey deserves something better for the money than split terminals, circuitous train routings, and "one-seat ride" propaganda that can't possibly be fulfilled. Against "Access to the Region's Core" are we? Hardly! We want the real deal.

That said, we'll continue to pursue other opportunities regardless of New York-New Jersey rail travel; contrary to the wishful thinking of many -- even rail advocates -- other projects can and will advance regardless of Trans-Hudson-Express (T.H.E.) Tunnel or its ever-fainter variants.

In 2007 NJ-ARP succeeded in putting light rail back on the table for Bergen County's Northern Branch, as we insist on putting the "Bergen" in Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit. NJ Transit, to its credit, relented despite cries from Bergen County officials convinced that T.H.E. Tunnel was their savior --even after being shown no plan is in place to give them a one-seat ride, and that the cost was astronomical. Led by NJ-ARP Government Affairs Director Rose M. Heck, a crack NJ-ARP team is riding herd on the scoping process, detailing how LRT can serve New Jersey needs and Bergen County riders in superior fashion.

In somewhat less spectacular fashion, NJ-ARP has pressed on with Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex (MOM) rail passenger service, again despite official desires among too many for a "one-seat ride to Manhattan" above all. Such access would be great, and NJ-ARP is all for it, but we believe MOM still stands on its own intrastate potential and, in any event, the time to begin its implementation is long overdue. NJ-ARP's "Dashing Dan Duo" (Dan Kerwin and

Dan Green) and Director Lee Lensky have soldiered on, with some noteworthy if subtle results among both allies and those yet to be convinced.

Similarly, the Raritan Valley Line would greatly benefit from that mystical "one-seat ride" to New York; indeed, by many accounts it's No. 1 on the list of those scrambling for T.H.E. Tunnel's benefits. But NJ-ARP Director Jack McDougal has advanced ideas to improve service in the here and now, for those who "merely" need to get to and from Newark or other New Jersey points.

Everything is tied to T.H.E. Tunnel? Surely not true for potential rail revival in Gloucester County, being monitored closely by NJ-ARP Vice President Jim Ciacciarelli, or for the Cape May Branch, overseen by Cape May Liaison Paul Mulligan. Ironically, the "north-south" divide within New Jersey politics may work in our favor here; southern New Jersey interests insist they not be forgotten, and even NJ Transit pushes ahead with its planned New York-Atlantic City service, in concert with casino interests.

Yet NJ Transit, landlord of the Cape May Branch, continues to dismiss passenger rail opportunities provided by a tenant (Cape May Seashore Lines) and, worse, allows a bigger tenant (CSX Corp.) to bully CMSL and disrupt such efforts. NJ-ARP continues to question NJT's lack of resolve, indeed, clarity, on this matter.

For clarity of purpose is what keeps NJ-ARP going. For all the turmoil and confusion, the rail passenger picture within the Garden State -- indeed, nationwide -- often is changing for the better, even if in a constant state of "catch-up." It's important to remember that even as rail advocates get frustrated by those who can't see tomorrow's potential. Some of those tomorrows are now yesterday, some of those rail ideas have come to fruition.

Some of NJ-ARP's "loss" count, in the end, have become merely mileposts to something much better. And so, with the help of so many of you to numerous to name, and the officers and directors of this organization, we press on.

-- Douglas John Bowen

Membership

Between November 2006 and August 2007, 8 batches of renewal notices were sent. In comparison to the identical period a year ago, our membership has gone down from 311 to 305, while the renewal rate has remained at 89%. The late August renewals are still coming in, so the rate excludes that last batch. The net loss of 6 members includes 29 new members. Of those, 17 signed up via the Internet and 11 came randomly through US postal mail from sources such as brochure distribution or membership forms on the Web site. Of the 305 members, 242 (79%) reside in New Jersey.

Initial annual renewal notices are sent within two weeks of when the last such notice was sent in the prior year, or when a new member joined, not when we received the last check. This matters when the renewal check comes several months late. A "2nd chance" notice is sent from the Treasurer two months after the initial notice was sent to those who have not renewed, and that member is dropped two months after that. If someone wants to renew at a different time of year, we must be notified explicitly in writing. We will not "take the hint" by receiving the renewal months late. It is also a waste of our volunteer's time and NJ-ARP's

treasury money to send out additional renewal notices.

We 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.

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. Our membership count is cautious and conservative.

-- Joseph Versaggi

Access to the Region's Core (ARC)

(aka the Trans-Hudson Express [T.H.E.] tunnel)

During 2007, NJ-ARP, the *Empire State Passengers Association* (ESPA) and the *Lackawanna Coalition* rapidly accelerated their outreach activities and engaged New Jersey Transit (NJT), the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), and elected leaders in both New Jersey and New York concerning the pivotal lack of a direct rail connection between New York's Penn Station (NYP) and Grand Central Terminal (GCT) in particular, and the lack of an overall vision for regional rail planning in the New York metropolitan area in general.

NJ-ARP continues to advocate for a regional rail connection in midtown Manhattan, known in ARC parlance as Alternative "G," between Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal which would have the effect of tying the three rail operating agencies together and providing alternative trans-Hudson mobility to supplement or replace increased vehicular congestion at the three Hudson River auto and truck crossings.

In testimony submitted to the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, Inc. (NJTPA), NJ-ARP explained that, "During the Major Investment Study (MIS) phase of Access to the Region's Core (ARC) project, three final options were selected for detailed examination... The third option, Alternative "G" would turn north and tie into existing tracks in the Lower Level of Grand Central Terminal. This option is strongly supported by NJ-ARP and transit advocates because it would bring passengers to the East Midtown area, where a large number of NJT rail passengers are headed... In each case Alternative "G" outperforms that other options, and we believe, should be the clear choice. It produces the highest number of peak hour passengers and diverts the greatest number of auto trips from crowded trans-Hudson highways. It is the only option that saves travel time for passengers headed to the East Midtown area. Surprisingly, this superior performance is achieved with the lowest operating and capital cost, and with the highest projected passenger revenue."

The stated reason for the rejection of Alternative "G" was that New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) had continually objected to this option throughout the ARC study period. As early 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.

On June 25th, at the Regional Citizens Liaison Committee (RCLC) meeting for the Trans-Hudson Express (T.H.E.) Tunnel (as New Jersey Transit refers to it), the agency presented yet another iteration of its locally preferred alternative. At that time, it was revealed that a "new," revised even deeper (increasing the lowest level platform to 175 feet below street level) 6 track (now 3 over 3 track) bi-level 34th Street NJT station will replace the previous twin 2-over-2 track configuration. Further, the revised station dimensions will no longer extend outside the curb line boundaries of 34th Street, and there will be no track connection (asymmetrical as it was) between the new trans-Hudson Express (T.H.E.) Tunnel and the existing NYP trackage on the Manhattan side of the "Hudson Ocean." Inexplicably, one of the two proposed exits from the terminal on 8th Avenue has been deleted.

So extensive were the changes from the former proposal that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has required NJT to file a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) and to schedule another round of public hearings. However, NJT has not reduced its cost estimates for the tunnel despite making major simplifications.

In fact, as if to state the obvious, NJT is now numbering the 6 tracks beneath 34th Street as 22 through 27 - continuing NYP's numbering scheme from track 21. Plainly stated, ARC, the T.H.E. tunnel, truly has been unmasked for what it really is: just another 6 tracks for NJT to originate and terminate its trains at Penn Station. Worse, there has been no mention (again) of the original intent (Alternative "G" and its spawn) to link NYP with GCT. Tail tracks on both levels, under the former proposal, would have extended to 5th Avenue leaving open the possibility of a track connection. Now only the upper level tracks will head east and then only to 6th Avenue; the lower level tracks are precluded from doing so because they would encounter New York City Water Tunnel #1 beneath 6th Avenue.

Why the abrupt configuration change?

Officially, NJT claims the City of New York asked it to keep its "deep cavern" stub end terminal between the curb lines of 34th Street. Unofficially, the word on the street is that the real estate firms planning to build on the north side of 34th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues needed to sink their foundation piles deep into Manhattan bed rock and the wide "deep cavern" station NJT had planned would have interfered with those support columns. Then there was the Con Edison switchyard and other developable property nearby 10th and 11th Avenues (that section of the tunnel would have been "cut and cover"), so transportation imperatives gave way to commercial real estate pressures. NJ-ARP understands that the Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) can continue from New Jersey, stay deep (not having to worry about a New York track connection with the existing NYP), and go even deeper below 34th Street. And those two extra tracks (of eight) on the lower level of the north cavern, ballyhooed for future NJT capacity and growth expansion (the Lackawanna Cut-Off, the Northern Branch, Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex, the Susquehanna, West Trenton, etc.), have now been eliminated.

The stated logic as to why NJT adopted the 34th Street Penn Station annex solution hinges on the providing of convenient IND and BMT subway connections at Herald Square on 6th Avenue which will allow the rider to get to the 5th and 3rd Avenue stations on the "V" and 59th and Lexington Avenue on the "N," "R" and "W" thereby fulfilling the ARC original "promise" of East Side access for New Jersey's residents.

NJ-ARP takes strong exception to this explanation. The principle reason for our continuing rejection of the 34th Street deep level terminus lies in NJT's dismissal of one of the principal

tenets the original ARC scoping document -- the provision of **direct** Manhattan east side rail access for New Jersey regional rail riders through an NYP to GCT track linkage. Absent the incorporation of this link, an increasing amount of New Jersey regional rail riders will now face being taken to and from a location in midtown Manhattan that they do not really want to -- or need to -- access.

On September 27th, the *National Association of Railroad Passengers* (NARP) Executive Committee passed a motion unanimously endorsing Alternative "G" which embodies the construction of a fixed rail link between New York Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal.

NJ-ARP has concluded that NJT's current ARC iteration is a grave and irreparable mistake, especially in the light of rapidly rising motor fuel prices, ever increasing vehicular congestion and continuing environmental degradation. Out of an admitted forced expediency, New Jersey Transit has selected an alternative that does not require the full active cooperation of the MTA. Going it alone, we offer, results in a costly and inferior plan.

-- Albert L. Papp, Jr.

Portal Bridge Capacity Enhancement Project

Along with ARC (now the T.H.E. tunnel in NJT speak), NJ-ARP has been a persistent advocate for a solution to the congested track capacity between Newark Penn Station (NYP) and Secaucus Junction. When ARC originated in 1995, the intent was always to consider midtown Manhattan access as extending from the Passaic River in Newark, across the Portal Bridge over the Hackensack River, beneath the Hudson River to NYP and thence to Grand Central Terminal (GCT). But in the inimitable words of Mae West, "I once was Snow White, but I drifted." Then again, so did New Jersey Transit.

But the method of securing federal dollars, in large part due to Amtrak owning the Northeast Corridor (NEC), took precedence and was the chief driver for NJT to separate the project into two parts. The section between Secaucus Junction and Penn Station was designed by NJT to have "independent utility" and as such, led NJT to seek dollars from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Since neither Amtrak nor the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) would have any jurisdiction over that track segment, NJT would be the sole dispatcher of the operation and it was thought that the resulting lower cost of construction (compared with a full build from Newark to NYP and CGT) would be such that funds could be secured faster and construction begin earlier.

NJT very cleverly "packaged" the number of trains that would use the new twin track tunnel to include through train service from the Main/Bergen County lines that would traverse a loop at Secaucus (and thereby achieving "critical mass"), in seeming disregard that the \$600 million Frank Lautenberg transfer would become largely redundant. To add injury to insult, NJT peak hour Morris & Essex trains were then to be removed from the NEC (they enter it now at CP Swift interlocking), continue on the Hoboken line to West End, but instead of entering the Palisades tunnel, turn left (north) and continue to just before Secaucus Junction where an entrance to the aforementioned loop for Bergen County trains would permit access to the new trans-Hudson tunnel or the current former Pennsylvania Railroad ones. (Note: This has now been modified - see below.) While this diversion would have permitted all train services operating on the NEC trains from exceeding the track capacity of the two

tracks between Newark and Secaucus Junction, it had the distinct and damaging downside of adding 7 to 10 minutes to M&E riders morning and evening journeys. This after implementation of the 1996 MidTown Direct service precipitated a not insignificant real estate boom along the M&E because the shortened travel time put most riders to within 45 minutes of midtown Manhattan. Not surprisingly, the *Lackawanna Coalition* and NJ-ARP took strong exception to this plan and met with NJT officials regularly to protest this unacceptable "solution" proffered by NJT in general and former Executive Director George Warrington in particular.

By late 2006, the common outcry by both NJ-ARP and the Coalition may have some effect because on December 12, 2006 a Notice of Intent (NOI) was issued to initiate the scoping process and the first scoping meeting was held a month later on January 17th, 2007 in the Newark Public Library; NJ-ARP was there and submitted prepared testimony. A month later the first Regional Citizens' Liaison Committee (RCLC) was held on February 13th quickly followed by a second on April 26th where options available were narrowed. NJ-ARP is a participating member.

The first substantive presentation by the consultants occurred on July 9th and options were narrowed and a tentative plan put forth. As now envisioned, the Portal Bridge replacement involves two new bridges (the current span is to be removed) with a total of 4 or 5 tracks - a 3 (or 2) track northern span to serve the NEC and most North Jersey Coast Line (NJCL) electrified services plus Amtrak - and a 2 track *moveable* southern span to serve Midtown Direct, Montclair/Boonton, Raritan Valley and outer NJCL dual-mode locomotive services plus the new Kearney Yard Trans-Hudson Express (T.H.E.) tunnel lead.

The 2030 operating plan envisions (from the diagram) all the NEC, most NJCL and Amtrak trains using the existing 1910 tunnel and Penn Station (the northern bridge) and MidTown Direct, Montclair/Boonton, Raritan Valley, outer NJCL and the Kearny Yard feed trains the new tunnel and 34th Street "deep cavern" (now 3 over 3 track) station (the southern bridge).

Because the 2030 operating plan is expecting conflicting train movements, Swift Interlocking is to be rebuilt. There will be *complete* grade separation between the M&E (Midtown, Montclair/Boonton) and all NEC (NEC, NJCL, Raritan, and Amtrak) trains into Secaucus Junction (versus the existing Midtown merge/diverge directly into the 2 track NEC at CP Swift). In fact, M&E trains will never touch Amtrak's NEC except in one crossover location; NJT will control the entire dispatching between outlying end terminals and NYP. This was cited as a demonstrable positive of the Portal Bridge plan by NJT management in a meeting held on September 7th.

Eastbound Swift Interlocking will be the decision point where all traffic on the NEC leaving Newark Penn Station (NEC, most NJCL, Amtrak to NYP; dual mode Raritan and outer NJCL to 34th Street) is directed to either NYP or 34th Street. Westbound, Raritan and outer NJCL (the normal arrangement) trains merge with the existing NEC.

In summation, the reconfiguration of CP Swift and the separation of the NEC and M&E Midtown trains from CP Swift to Secaucus Junction has the ability to obviate usage the loop for M&E trains (even though it still will be built for Main/Bergen direct Manhattan services) and give more operating flexibility for consolidated train operations.

Yet all of this expensive construction coupled with a downsized Trans-Hudson Express Tunnel "deep dungeon" 34th Street, 3 over 3 track station, and still no mention of the

original intent of a through track connection between NYP and GCT? Examined in the cold light of dawn, all NJT riders are really getting for close to 15 years of on-going studies is a reconfigured and (expensive at that) interlocking and six (6) additional originating/terminating tracks adjacent to Penn Station.

NJ-ARP will continue its outreach program to re-establish the original goals of the ARC project -- true Access to the Region's Core rather than solely a Trans-Hudson Express (T.H.E.) Tunnel. The change in nomenclature speaks volumes.

-- Albert L. Papp, Jr.

Bergen County Developments

Pascack Valley Line

The long-awaited sidings (originally due in 2000) which will allow two-way, all-day service on the Pascack Valley Line, have been completed and expanded service is to start on October 28. NJT's October 28 timetable will include 16 new weekday trains -- nine inbound, seven outbound from Hoboken; most will be midday services but one late-night train will be added as well.

Of the four sidings surviving anti-rail protests upon the original six, one is actually in New York State -- Pond Siding lies just east of Nanuet Station. The others all fall south of the actual Pascack Valley, and include Cole Siding, east of North Hackensack Station, Sack Siding, just west of Malcolm Avenue in Hasbrouck Heights between Teterboro and Wood-Ridge stations, and Long Siding, just east of Wood-Ridge Station, running through to Pascack Junction (Main/Bergen Line). That makes the southern section of the line almost a two-track operation, suggesting possible 'Short Turns' for Hackensack, 'Express Runs' to New York State.

Scare tactics used by NIMBYs resulted in nine communities filing a lawsuit to block the sidings. Rather than waste millions of dollars and years of time fighting the lawsuit, NJT opted to build only four of the sidings. As the elimination of sidings preclude more frequent service, the communities north of Hackensack and south of the New York state line who instigated the lawsuit will, in effect, be getting only half the service -- and local service at that. MTA express trains will bypass those stations. Hackensack, seat of New Jersey's most populous county, will be well-served by "short-zone" trains.

NJ-ARP still maintains that the siding project was not a dependency to provide even limited reverse weekday service, and totally unneeded to support 2 to 2-1/2 hour weekend headway service in the intervening seven years that they have taken to come to fruition.

Xanadu / Meadowlands Sports Complex

Despite the financial problems being encountered by Xanadu's developer, the spur from the Pascack Valley Line to serve the Xanadu, approved in 2006, is under construction. It will bring a new station to Carlstadt and a new combined station in the Meadowlands serviced by both Pascack Valley and Bergen/Main Line trains. NJT intends to provide DMU shuttle service at half-hour (or greater) frequency between Xanadu and Hoboken with an

intermediate stop at Secaucus Junction. Talk also arose of finally bridging the "Hudson Ocean," spurred by, of all people, Connecticut's Governor Jodi Rell. NJ Transit, in conjunction with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has announced that in 2009 through service will commence from Connecticut and New York points to the new rail station being built at the Meadowlands Sports Complex during the football season.

Parking

Not much new transpired in 2007. NJT's Park & Ride Station, Ramsey-Route 17 with 1,251 spaces, is still being underutilized despite heavy marketing along the Bergen/Main Line. NJT maintains that it is "ahead of the curve" and the station will see full use once the T.H.E. Tunnel project is completed and a one-seat ride into New York is supposedly available.

NJT continues to discuss/promote parking facilities for Secaucus Junction. NJ-ARP believes that, as broadly applied by NJT, this would only encourage many NJT customers to abandon using the train at outer stations for a car ride to Secaucus and then a short rail trip into NY-Penn.

-- Les Wolff

Hudson-Bergen Light Rail

Last year the 2006 Annual Report noted NJ-ARP had organized "some of its best and brightest ... to launch an informational counteroffensive to New Jersey Transit's disinformation campaign on light rail transit (LRT) in general and HBLRT in particular. " One year later we can report that, at least regarding HBLRT, we've had a big impact.

During 2007, both northern and southern ends of HBLRT were discussed for growth. In Bayonne, at least, New Jersey Transit has held to its longtime game plan for LRT, awarding contracts to extend HBLRT to 8th Street, along with a new station. NJT also was a secondary (but still proactive) player in aligning efforts to route buses from Staten Island, operated by New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), to link with HBLRT's 34th Street Station, providing transfer options for New York residents working on New Jersey's Gold Coast (as well as to Manhattan points).

As 2007 draws to a close, LRT is back on the table as an option -- not yet **the** option, alas -- for Bergen County's Northern Branch, thanks to hard work by NJ-ARP members Phil Craig, Jack May, Frank Miklos, and Bergen Liaison Lester W. Wolff, capably led by NJ-ARP Government Affairs Director Rose M. Heck. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) work has gone "back to square one," and NJ-ARP will participate in ongoing information gathering, much as we did 20 years ago, to offer a complete picture of rail modal opportunities and options.

Prior to NJ Transit's move, NJ-ARP, sidestepping bullheaded resistance (and some verbal slights) from Bergen County officials, has made its case to Bergen County municipalities one by one, explaining the difference between LRT and diesel multiple-unit (DMU) rail, and the reason why a "one-seat ride to Manhattan" is, at best, a long shot on several levels (physical, fiscal, technological, political). Those municipalities have either endorsed LRT outright as a preferred option (Ridgefield) or, more cautiously, questioned why LRT was

dismissed so cavalierly. To its great credit, NJ Transit, under Executive Director Rich Sarles, agreed to reopen the issue -- something Bergen County itself fails to grasp as it continues to snipe at the LRT mode, saying, "It's DMU or nothing." NJ-ARP disagrees.

Oddly enough -- almost paradoxically -- NJ Transit continues to pursue a \$1 billion-plus plan to extend HBLRT three miles west to the Meadowlands Sportsplex via Harmon Meadow (Secaucus), cutting across wetlands on brand-new right-of-way. This differs from the ongoing construction of a passenger rail spur, as noted by Lester W. Wolff elsewhere in this report.

NJ-ARP stands ready to help with any LRT proposal, including to or from Xanadu. After all, we're the state LRT champions. Throughout 2007, however, we continued to question why \$1 billion is "just right" for Xanadu but "too much" for 10-plus miles to Tenafly, on existing rail right-of-way with a built-in passenger base. NJ-ARP, pointing to the twin branch of HBLRT in the south, argues that the same can occur for Bergen County itself, truly putting the "B" in HBLRT.

More than that, in 2007 we questioned the \$1 billion price tag to Tenafly to begin with -- challenging naysayers simplistically saying we just want double the money -- and our research on the matter has withstood challenges to its credibility.

Some of NJ-ARP's credibility is close by; the 2006 extension of HBLRT service to North Bergen (Hudson County) has generated real ridership gains which continued through this year. NJT light rail personnel can take much credit for this, as they continue to market HBLRT's capabilities as a feeder/distributor and on its own local merits.

The "end points" of HBLRT are garnering most of the attention at present, but movement is afoot in Jersey City to add light rail extensions in various places, including a possible link to Pavonia/Newport via the Bergen Arches. NJ-ARP continues to monitor this, along with a still-extant proposal to push LRT to Jersey City's true west side, state Route 440, being shepherded in part by NJ-ARP Treasurer Len Resto.

-- Douglas John Bowen

Morris & Essex, Gladstone, Montclair-Boonton

The last year has been quite eventful for these lines. Here are some of the highlights.

First, the ugly. Morris and Essex Lines lost half the through service to Hoboken on weekends. This means that the wait at Hoboken to get a train on the M&E on weekends could be as long as two hours and at least for one period in the late afternoon as much as three hours long. There is no indication that this is going to be remedied any time soon, although one would hope that after the work at Newark Broad Street is completed (see below) this service will be restored to hourly as it was before.

The Gladstone Branch was all but unusable through the summer on weekends due to "bustitution," and the situation was pretty bad even on some weekdays. This was ostensibly required for repair and upgrade of the track and electrification system on the line. The bustitution as implemented by NJ Transit was not terribly well coordinated and many riders were left stranded due to non-arrival of substitute bus at the designated stops at designated

times or any time near it. Often it was difficult to find the bus stops too. Hopefully this is behind us now for good.

Now for the good news.

Work on the track realignment and station reconstruction at Newark Broad Street is continuing apace, and reportedly on or ahead of schedule, though now a bit over budget due to recent discovery of greater than expected aging damage to some bridge infrastructure. The new high level island platform is in place and in service. The roadbed for Track 2 is ready to receive new track with concrete ties over a raised bridge across University Avenue, and the side high level platform is also quite close to being done. Once Track 2 and the side platform are placed back in service, Track 1, the center track, will be taken out of service for reconstruction and raising of the University Avenue overpass. When that is done, and the reconstruction of the interior of the head-house is completed, the new station will be ready for service. This is expected to take place sometime in 2008.

Track replacement between Summit and Denville continued apace through the summer with the laying of new concrete ties to replace the old wood ties. Upon completion of this work, the old M&E would be all concrete ties all the way from Millburn to Dover barring a few short segments here and there. This is expected to improve ride quality and reduce maintenance cost.

Construction activity at the new Mount Arlington Station, located on the Montclair-Boonton Line between Dover and Lake Hopatcong, has been under way since the middle of 2006 and is anticipated to be completed by the beginning of 2008. Both the eastbound and westbound high-level platforms were in place as of the end of August. Numerous functional and cosmetic elements such as canopies and lighting still remain to be installed but the basic outline of the facility is evident.

When completed, Mount Arlington Station will feature platforms of 285 feet in length and have the ability to accommodate parking for approximately 300 vehicles. It is situated adjacent to an existing park-and-ride lot serving Interstate Route 80 at Exit 30 (Howard Blvd - Mt. Arlington) in Morris County. One can question whether 300 parking spaces will divert any significant portion of daily I-80 traffic; in any event, NJ-ARP will watch the station's use with interest. At present, there is roughly service every two hours between Dover and Lake Hopatcong on weekdays, and no service on weekends, further limiting the station's overall effectiveness.

Another new Park and Ride station is under construction on the Montclair-Boonton Line in Wayne near Rt. 23 and I80. This station will have a much larger parking lot than the one at Mt. Arlington, reportedly with a capacity of 3,000 or so. Off-peak service only is scheduled to commence at this station with the October time change. We hope more complete and regular service will eventually be offered.

Unfortunately, unless the frequency of trains is increased considerably in this section of the railroad which is west of the termination point of the frequent electric service at MSU, it is not clear how effective this station will be. Given the current single track infrastructure West of MSU with a crossing siding at Lincoln Park it is possible to run hourly service in both directions on this segment, but such has not come to pass yet for reasons unknown. One would hope that with the inauguration of this station NJTransit would re-arrange the timetable for the upper Montclair-Boonton line to make this station more usable by instituting hourly service which connect to electric service at MSU.

Rumors of the imminent commencement of weekend service on the Montclair-Boonton line keeps getting more persistent. Reportedly this could happen in 2008 or 2009, after the Newark Broad Street reconstruction is completed. It is also predicated on the Township of Montclair completing grade crossing upgrades to standards that would meet FRA requirements for a grant of the whistle rule waiver at grade crossings in Montclair. Naturally, when weekend electric service is instituted on the lower Montclair-Boonton Line, it would make sense to institute connecting hourly diesel service on weekends for the upper Montclair-Boonton line running all the way up to Lake Hopatcong, with connections to electric service out of Dover, thus providing predictable weekend service to the two new Park and Ride stations.

In other related news, the headway on Newark Light Rail between Newark Broad Street and Newark Penn Station was improved to 15 minutes on weekends, thus affording better connection between the M&E and the North East Corridor trains using the Light Rail. Kudos go to the *Lackawanna Coalition*, with assistance from NJ-ARP, for driving this adjustment, and to NJT's Joe North for seeking input and implementing same.

All in all it has been a mixed bag for these lines this year, but in balance it is more positive than negative, though much remains to be done. The inexorable slowing down of train schedules continues, though somewhat balanced by introduction of outer zone expresses during rush hours in a more consistent fashion. But the efficiencies and speed achievable with a pure EMU operation is not possible anymore because the schedules are apparently setup to be operable with the least common denominator equipment, and any change in that policy seems unlikely. And all this while the fares keep going up and gas prices keep going up and highways keep getting more jammed up.

-- Jishnu Mukerji

Sussex County Passenger Service Improvements (?)

Sussex County Mobility Study

This study, conducted by Urbitran Associates under contract with the County of Sussex, is a comprehensive analysis of current and future transportation issues that must be mitigated by long-term planning. The scope of the study encompasses a ten year period of time. A combination of short and long-term action items are recommended to improve transit accessibility.

Bus (short-term)

The NJ Transit-sponsored 967 WHEELS bus route linking Sparta and Parsippany, which currently operates two departures each way daily, should be expanded to an hourly frequency of service.

Shuttle buses originating from various strategic points within Sussex County should be operated to Dover Rail Station, Netcong Rail Station, and to the new Mount Arlington Rail Station when it is placed into service.

Rail (long-term)

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) planning should be implemented around proposed rail stations in Andover Borough, Sparta Township, and Stockholm. These areas should also be included into Smart-Growth Initiative zones where appropriate.

-- Tim Apgar

Lackawanna Cut-Off

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

Some important progress, albeit snail-like, occurred in the last two years.

On May 6, 2006, Senator Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) reported at the Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton, that \$20 million had been appropriated from Washington for the currently expected \$350 million cost of the plan. Specter thought that he could secure another \$120 million for the line but gave no further details. Half of the \$20 million has already been spent studying the feasibility of the restoration, and the remaining \$10 million will be directed toward preliminary engineering.

New Jersey House Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, (R-11), while not present at this meeting, let it be known that he was instrumental in obtaining the additional \$10 million from the federal transportation budget for the design work.

In the summer of 2006, Pennsylvania's Monroe County Railroad Authority and Lackawanna County Railroad Authority (Pennsylvania) merged their respective agencies to form the *Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority* (PNRRA). Chaired by Bob Hay, a Pocono Realtor and former chair of the Monroe authority and with Larry Malski of the Lackawanna authority as its chief operating officer, the combined entity is composed of eight board members with equal representation from each county. With 100 miles of track and \$28 million in assets, the joint agency feels it is better able to influence legislators in Harrisburg and Washington.

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

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

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

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

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

-- Albert L. Papp, Jr.

Raritan Valley Line

While there are currently several projects and proposals for the Raritan Valley Line, probably the most important is the ongoing I-78 Corridor Study driven by the *North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority* (NJTPA). To date this has targeted mainly the causes and possible remediation of the traffic congestion on the highway. This fall (at least one year late) the emphasis will shift to looking at how the Raritan Valley Line can be utilized to help solve the highway problems. The study will probably suggest that the rail line be extended west to Philipsburg and possibly into Pennsylvania, with new stations on the line to be added at Hampton, near Bloomsbury and in Phillipsburg. It may also recommend a new park-and-ride near Annandale where I-78 and Rts. 22 and 31 converge with the Raritan Valley Line. Considerable local opposition exists to this last proposal, although we can expect the NJTPA and DOT to do what is best for the larger public regardless of NIMBY objections.

The I-78 Corridor Study led off the agenda of NJ-ARP's 2007 Annual Meeting.

The idea of a pocket track east of Newark Penn Station has been abandoned. RV trains now mainly come in on track 1 and will be able to go into a small yard to be rebuilt east of the station in order to get off the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and to wait to reverse west. (Shades of the old Manhattan Transfer.) This will allow same-platform transfers for passengers headed to New York, comparable to NJ Transit North Jersey Coast Line rail service.

Platform 5, the normal track for westbound RV trains, is to be extended so two trains can await passengers at the same time. None of this is a one-seat ride to New York, but it is better than at present.

NJT has started building high-level platforms at the Somerville station and making the station handicapped accessible.

The new White House passing siding is complete! The October 2007 schedule change will include more trains on the line west of Raritan. Expect to see earlier a.m. and later p.m. trains as well as a pair of midday trains. There still will be no weekend service. The running time from the end of the line, High Bridge to Newark, remains at about 1.5 hours. Express service is needed.

Dual-mode locomotives are being advanced for future use on the RV line ending the need to change trains in Newark when slots are available into Penn Station-New York, either when ARC is completed or possibly before.

Ridership continues to grow with considerable growth at the outer stations.

All in all there are many favorable aspects for the present and future of the Raritan Valley line. The *Raritan Valley Rail Coalition*, a semi-official government body, is an effective watchdog over these lines. NJ-ARP Directors Jack McDougal and William R. Wright are members of the coalition.

West Trenton Line: No progress on reactivation has occurred. The regional Federal Railroad Administration office has said FRA will not advance any future rail plans (mainly required environmental data) unless there is a full funding plan in place. New Jersey elected officials are attempting to get FRA to rethink its position.

-- Jack McDougal

MOM

Recent History of the Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex Line Development

It's difficult for NJ-ARP members not to become frustrated at the slow pace of progress on the development of the MOM line. It seems that every study has led only to another study at the expense of millions of taxpayer dollars, and the end is still nowhere in sight. While most signs point to a final study recommendation to construct MOM via Monmouth Junction -- the result strongly sought by NJ-ARP and other rail advocates -- the project continues to face obstinacy by a small minority of Middlesex County municipal and county officials who wish to block it. This is no more than local posturing and chest-thumping and will have little or no impact on the expected favorable outcome of the Final Environmental Impact study. The preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Study results and an independent ridership study conducted by Monmouth and Ocean counties suggest that the Monmouth Junction route serves more riders, relieves more highway congestion and, most importantly, includes New Brunswick -- the county seat -- as a destination.

Early efforts

In 1985, NJ-ARP, led by then-Vice President Greg Bender, unveiled its MOM proposal, which garnered print notice in the *Asbury Park Press* the next year. In 1997 citizen transportation volunteers formed the *Central Jersey Rail Coalition* to advocate for MOM passenger rail service to Lakehurst via either Monmouth Junction or Red Bank or a combination of both routes. NJ-ARP held to its plan by demonstrating that the alignment via Monmouth Junction in South Brunswick would yield many more passengers and benefits than the Red Bank route, and Ocean and Monmouth Counties came to the same conclusion, as did a group of business leaders called the Monmouth-Ocean Development Council (MODC).

Monmouth and Ocean get on board

Ocean and Monmouth Counties teamed up to hire a consultant to promote the Monmouth Junction alignment. It was well-known that MOM could be successful even if its trains had to terminate at Newark or Hoboken, but that idea was never taken seriously by NJ Transit. The two counties concluded that if MOM trains could run all the way to Manhattan, thereby making a "one-seat ride" possible, MOM would have faster running time and attract many more passengers and they succeeded in convincing NJ Transit to change some of the parameters of the DEIS to reflect the possibility of a one-seat ride to Manhattan. But this revamping of the DEIS would delay any conclusions for another two years or more. No matter, for Ocean and Monmouth Counties were dead set against both Red Bank and Freehold-Matawan. NJ-ARP was also pleased for it considered the long-range goal of having the best route more important than getting the project started sooner.

For some time, the Monmouth-Ocean Development Council (MODC) had been hosting its own MOM Rail Line Committee to advocate service via Monmouth Junction. An active partnership emerged between MODC and the two counties, with the Chair being Bonnie Goldschlag of the Monmouth County Planning Department. This partnership, with the assistance of Kathleen Edmond of Ocean County, as well as the consultant, determined to conduct a Rally For MOM Rail, as had been done several times in previous years. This rally was really a press conference, and it was held outside the Monmouth County Library in Manalapan on May 11, 2007 -- the Friday morning of Mother's Day weekend. A number of elected officials gave brief speeches to promote MOM and the Monmouth Junction route, and NJ-ARP sent representatives and distributed pro-MOM publicity. Several newspapers reported on the event. But it had not been widely reported to the public, and a few fleeting headlines seemed to be the forgettable result. Nothing further has been heard from the MODC in the five months since the rally.

NJ-ARP continues to take the "long view": Waiting for the best route is better than making the fatal error of building the wrong route that will be destined to fail because it does not fully serve the areas of greatest potential ridership.

NJ-ARP activism continues

This year, NJ-ARP expanded our outreach strategy beyond face-to-face contact with local politicians and increasingly positive citizenry in the "NIMBY THREE" towns of Monroe, Jamesburg and South Brunswick. We continue to believe that New Brunswick is the center of gravity (and power) in Middlesex County as well as being the premiere transit destination and our outreach efforts reflect that view.

Community Fairs

Based on previous years' opinion sampling, support grows as local demographics and economics change.

Political Front

Most elected officials in three southern Middlesex County towns (South Brunswick, Monroe and Jamesburg) continue to oppose MOM on purely political reasons. Their arguments are at best, shallow, and they continue to endorse "bus service" as the way to go. This year however, one of the Republican candidates for Middlesex County Freeholders, NJARP Director Dan Kerwin, put MOM on his election platform.

State, NJ Transit remain non-committal until release of the study, due in late 2008.

There is still damage left over from NJT's first series of local open house meetings. Many in the affected towns have told NJARP, that NJT's attitude was one of arrogance, and a "take it or leave it" approach to community acceptance. NJT was not focused (and some believe still not) on promoting MOM as a true inter-county, regional rail link that it once was. MOM is not a true new startup, but a reactivation of passenger rail opportunities (albeit in different form) that existed until the 1960s.

NJT continues to ignore or dismiss the Middlesex County supporters of MOM. This is evident by the "false commitment" to meet with NJ-ARP's Dan Kerwin to discuss why NJT does not include the Middlesex MOM supporters. Former NJT CEO George Warrington made a public commitment at a NJ-ARP annual meeting sometime ago to have a "sidebar" conference on MOM. We are still waiting for NJT to meet with NJ-ARP's Dan Kerwin. Perhaps after this election, it will have to.

New Brunswick and Rutgers University

NJ-ARP believes that the among keys to the eventual success of MOM, are the voices that have yet to be heard from in Middlesex County's most important destination -- New Brunswick. At a high level, DEVCO, Rutgers University, UMDNJ, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital and the growing immigrant community that requires public transportation to and from their jobs -- mainly within the county.

Combined, these employers, along with those people who come to do business at the country offices and courts, account for almost 20,000 vehicle trips per day in and out of New Brunswick. And the ongoing tidal movements of Rutgers students moving from campus to campus across the Raritan River keep traffic at high levels throughout the day, putting continual pressure on a road and bus network that simply cannot grow further to meet demand. The ongoing widening of NJ Rt. 18 has brought a surge of new traffic, including many heavy trucks, transiting the corridor between I-287 in Piscataway and the New Jersey Turnpike and US1 -- cutting right through New Brunswick and disrupting local traffic.

NJ-ARP has been actively contacting officials at Rutgers and DEVCO, the primary redeveloper of office and commercial building space in downtown New Brunswick to

promote the MOM route by getting these powerful voices to acknowledge what their business plans say: New Brunswick is *the* key destination in central New Jersey.

We plan to expand our outreach in the coming year to the University's Department of Parking and Transportation and the Athletic Department, whose success in developing Rutgers into a national football power has also resulted in severe gridlock conditions in the New Brunswick area on football game days.

The Athletic Department has promised to investigate the addition of bus shuttles from the Edison NEC station to the football stadium. This route will avoid congested river crossings and will shorten travel time to the stadium (as compared to the existing shuttle from the New Brunswick station) by as much as 15 minutes per trip, promising more frequent and convenient service for Rutgers fans who choose NJT Rail to travel to the games.

The Department of Parking and Transportation is faced with a parking crunch as the more than 8,000 daily commuter students scramble for parking places for their vehicles -- and very little room to expand parking facilities in densely developed New Brunswick and the College Avenue and Cook/Douglass campuses. It's hard to estimate without a study, but NJ-ARP believes that a significant number of these daily commuters originate in Ocean and Monmouth counties and would take advantage of student-rate rides on a route that serviced the New Brunswick-area campuses frequently with two stations, one on each side of the Raritan.

Oops! Where's Voorhees?

Oddly silent on a major transit development project right in its back yard is the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC, unfortunately named more like a park 'n ride lot than an institute of higher education) at Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Public Policy.

Its mission statement on "Service" states: *"VTC provides transportation expertise to citizens and policy makers on a range of transportation issues...; and maintains a communications function with a commitment to disseminating information related to critical transportation issues, and simplifying and clarifying transportation data and information for popular understanding, leading to improved quality of choices made by voters and public officials."*

Yet neither on its own Web site nor in any public pronouncement, nor in attempts by NJ-ARP members to engage its leadership on this issue, has Voorhees either commented upon, publicly endorsed, or disparaged the MOM line project. This is quite amazing, given the magnitude of its charter and since the school (and presumably its resident faculty) are situated at ground zero of some of the most ambitious and far-reaching development projects in densely developed Middlesex County.

The redevelopment of downtown New Brunswick (a Transit Village), and the recently published master plan for the development and further integration of all five New Brunswick-area campuses of Rutgers University, itself beset by painful inter-campus transportation problems on a bus network that crawls through the constantly knotted mess of traffic in and around the county seat and its cross-river neighbors, would seem to be a natural and compelling challenge and opportunity for informed comment/opinion by this institution. And yet, Voorhees remains silent as the last possible land for highway lanes is

excavated, high-density business and residential towers sprout and tens of thousands of commuters -- many of them Rutgers students and faculty -- stream in and out of New Brunswick daily.

New Brunswick's municipal government, which would be a huge beneficiary (along with Rutgers, Johnson & Johnson world headquarters, UMDNJ, two major hospitals and the county offices and courts), would also appear to be a beneficiary of improved intrastate rail service. Yet it too has adopted a "no position" stance on MOM.

We will continue to press local governmental officials, who may suffer from "local transportation myopia," as well as those who profess to have a broader vision for public transportation throughout the state and the nation, to take a position on MOM. Whether their assessment is an endorsement or not, it is high time that their attention became focused on their own back yard and the needs of its permanent and transient residents.

-- *Dan Kerwin*

-- *Daniel Green*

-- *Lee Lensky*

River Line

Ridership

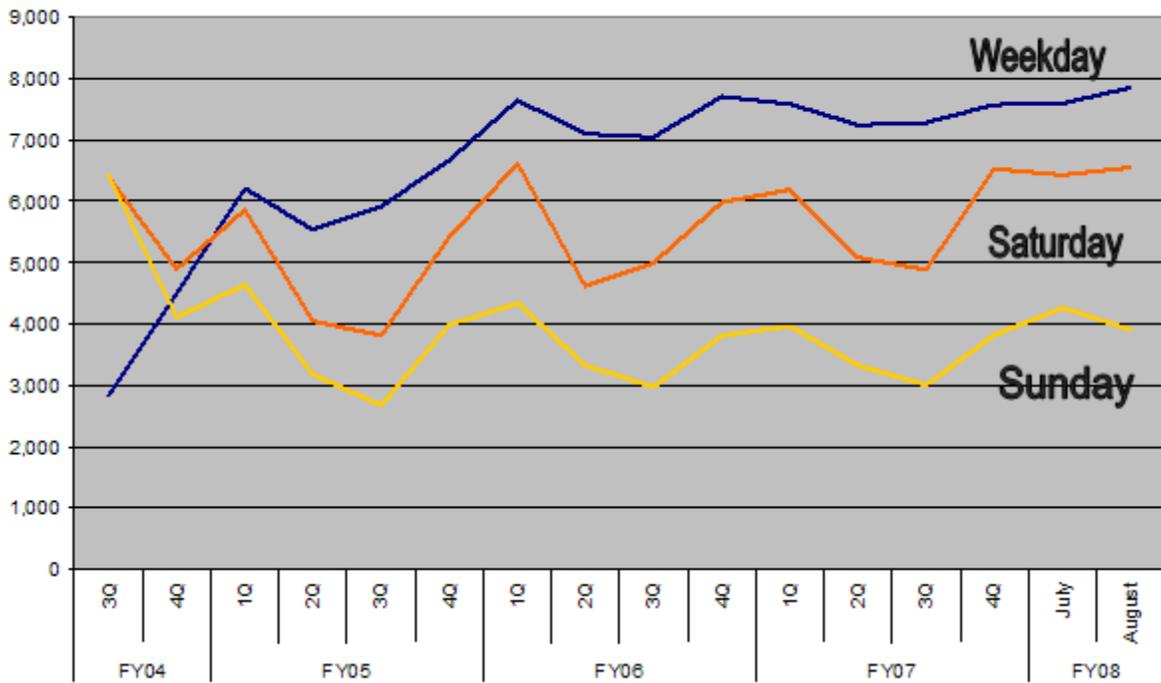
Ridership continues to grow modestly with several new records set this summer. NJT Light Rail Operations' Joe North reports the following statistics:

Aug. 2007 had the best monthly total ridership at 229,757 surpassing June 07 at 220,085.

Aug. 2007 average weekday ridership was also the best ever at about 8,100 trips. Note: NJT thinks that commuters and a high number of discretionary riders in August helped set the record and that number may drop when September ridership figures are in.

The single day ridership record was set on Sat. June 9, 2007 at 13,885. A free concert at The Tweeter Center in Camden that day was the cause.

River LINE Ridership History



Schedule Innovations

The June 1, 2007 timetable featured "Earlier, Later, Faster" service with the first ever Express trip. The express is train 204 (5:53 a.m. out of WRTC) and it routinely carries in excess of 150 customers.

The earlier and later service was made possible by signal improvements between 36th St. and Pennsauken Rt. 73 Station and FRA approval to has allowed the River Line to share a single track section with Conrail.

That June 1, 2007, timetable also cut run times by 6 minutes from Camden to Trenton, and 5 minutes from Trenton to Camden. This is due to Al Fazio making a number of infrastructure improvements (like adding super-elevation to flat curves) as well as his efforts to increase the vehicle maximum speed from 60 mph to 65 mph.

OTP dropped partially as a result of the more aggressive schedule but an October 2007 schedule change promises to fine-tune the meets to improve schedule reliability as well as introduce a new evening express trip out of Trenton at 9:15 p.m.

-- Carol Ann Thomas

Cape May Branch

2006 closed with mixed news. The southern end of the Cape May branch, due to still-uncompleted repairs to the canal bridge, as promised by NJT, was out of service and with it no trains to Cape May City. Better news on the northern end of the Cape May branch where

the December Richland to Tuckahoe "Santa" excursions were very popular.

NJ-ARP and CMSL used the winter months to prod contractors and NJT to complete the bridge re-habitation project and to push NJT to renew the Richland agreement with a longer term to provide for more stable long term planning. Staff at NJT was late preparing the new agreement in time for a March 24 start, so former Executive Director George Warrington personally intervened to motivate staff to complete the paperwork in-time.

On the north end the news was positive; Saturday excursions started strong, new siding construction in Woodbine progressed and work was underway to ready the ex-PRR P70 coaches for use.

On May 20, CMSL hosted the NJ-ARP patron lunch with a meeting and lunch in Tuckahoe on the Alex DeCrocce café car. Then a private train with one of the P70s took the patrons for an excursion to Woodbine where the Mayor of Woodbine addressed the group on the plans for Woodbine's future and the role rail needs to play. The train then made an inspection trip to the end of the new siding -- to the delight of the NJ-ARP members on the trip.

A coalition to support the rehab of the Cape May branch was organized and a vision of the contribution that the branch could make to the economy of the region was developed. The presentation has been presented to key stake holders: NJDOT Chief of Staff (Trenton, June 28), SJTPO (Vineland, July 10), Cape May Men's Club (Cape May, Sept. 15) and the Cape May Tourism Commission (Cape May City Hall, Oct. 1).

Conditions on the southern end of the line continues to frustrate CMSL. With help from NJ-ARP's prodding, NJT completed the canal movable bridge repair and completed acceptance testing in mid-May. But on Sunday April 15 a rare spring nor'easter swept across the state and washed away ties, ballast and weakened small bridges in the Dennis Twp. section of the Cedar Swamp. With operational motive power (including RDCs) in Tuckahoe, the washout prevented needed equipment from reaching Cape May Court House to serve the Cape May City operation for the 2007 summer season. CMSL & NJ-ARP are working with NJDOT to secure funding for the repair of NJT-owned ROW.

Cape May Branch milestones:

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

-- Paul Mulligan

National Rail Passenger Advocacy

NJ-ARP Role vis-à-vis NARP and Other Regional Advocates

Since its inception as New Jersey's premier passenger rail advocacy concern, NJ-ARP

continues to focus on the national rail passenger scene as a most important component of New Jersey's rail passenger network. Indeed, NJ-ARP is deeply engaged in all rail matters of national importance and continues its tradition of fervent advocacy.

These times continue to be are trying for Amtrak and our national rail passenger network. New Jersey, considered to be a corridor state being situated between two major metropolitan cities, is in a unique position to benefit from a healthy intercity passenger rail system. As the Northeast Corridor is deemed the spine of New Jersey's rail passenger network, NJ-ARP seeks to ensure that the substantiation of the Northeast Corridor continues. As Amtrak directly owns the Northeast Corridor it is imperative that a constant monitoring be kept on national rail passenger issues and policy. Your organization, NJ-ARP, continues to be highly involved in this endeavor and continues to involve itself in the role of necessity in the area of national rail passenger advocacy.

NJ-ARP is no stranger to the national rail passenger scene. Similar to local and statewide rail passenger advocacy, NJ-ARP was founded under the premise to ensure the continuation and expansion of national passenger rail. To that end NJ-ARP's mission, that of the promotion of rail passenger service, encompasses not only a New Jersey base but also at the broader level to regional and national initiatives.

The New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers originally was conceived as an outgrowth of the national rail passenger advocacy group, the *National Association of Railroad Passengers*. The NJ-ARP concept, the brainchild of our founder Anthony Perl, was created not only to support and advocate rail passenger service on the part of New Jersey interests, but to further provide additional advocacy at the local level and to surrounding areas. However, NJ-ARP's birth from the national organization continues to lend itself as part of the bigger picture for America's mobility needs. To that end involvement in regional as well as national rail matters is required to ensure the enhancement of necessary rail passenger service. New Jersey's future mobility would be highly jeopardized if anything less should occur and, as such, NJ-ARP's mission continues.

As in years past, Amtrak continues to be under the federal microscope in terms of funding initiatives. The Administration continues its seemingly never-ending call for less funding for passenger rail or a complete elimination of it. It would appear to the rail passenger advocate that the Administration continually attacks Amtrak for essentially being existent and, as a result, has Amtrak repeatedly fending for it's virtual survival. The reality is that the total annual subsidy for a rail passenger system that is national in scope is paltry in comparison to other transportation modes, highway being the most glaring example. Additionally, in light of never-ending gasoline price increases, it would appear that a prudent course of action would be for America to seek alternative modes of transportation, rail being a primary, underutilized example. Be assured that NJ-ARP is on the forefront for this cause. As NJ-ARP enters its 27th year, we carry on with the commitment to promote and support the cause of a viable rail passenger system, national in scope and regional in nature. NJ-ARP recognizes that passenger rail is the most cost-effective, efficient and safe carrier of the public, and its up to NJ-ARP to shout that message in a meaningful and effective manner in order to ensure that passenger rail remains an integral component of mobility within our already overcrowded state.

In promoting your organization's goals, NJ-ARP continues to hold prominent positions within NARP. Jim Ciacciarelli, a current NJ-ARP director and Vice President of the organization, also serves as a Region III NARP Director representing New Jersey,

Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Similarly, Al Papp, Jr. serves in the capacity as an NJ-ARP director as well a NARP Region III Director and is the NARP organization's secretary.

Joe Versaggi, NJ-ARP's Membership Officer and one of our best numbers crunchers, is also a NARP Region III Director. It's clearly evident that NJ-ARP opinion and advocacy are unmistakably represented at the national organization, which is significant to New Jersey interests.

As well as demonstrating a high degree of participation at the national organization, NJ-ARP's reputation as a player at the political level is also highly substantiated, and our advocacy efforts are well regarded. We interact with influential policy makers in Washington, DC as well as elsewhere in the region. In addition, NJ-ARP representatives generally meet with all of the House representatives that comprise the New Jersey Congressional Delegation on Capitol Hill as well as the state's two senators during the year. NJ-ARP has risen to the level of familiarity with people of political influence, and years of experience have indicated that a straightforward, individual approach is necessary in this age of impersonal cyberspace in order to accomplish relevant advocacy. While our goal is to steer New Jersey's respective representatives in the correct direction for passenger rail, we have witnessed such personal interaction to be a very effective process towards influencing legislators.

NJ-ARP also directly participates within the public domain. Press conferences, public appearances and interviews are typical of our efforts in order to convey our respective position on matters of passenger rail importance. Furthermore, NJ-ARP efficiently provides for the dissemination of information on critical issues through position papers, press releases, persistent letter correspondence and meeting involvement. Most important, NJ-ARP's *Newsletter Report* plays a key role in solidifying NJ-ARP's stance. In summary, years of experience have taught us that a constant presence must be consistently maintained in order to be effective.

Your association also corresponds with 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). Such alliance promotes rail advocacy unification as well as solidifying regional coordination. Furthermore, NJ-ARP also has interacted with other pro-passenger rail groups, such as the *Central Jersey Rail Coalition*, the *Penn-Jersey Rail Coalition*, and the *Lackawanna Coalition*. Such interaction is necessary and essential in today's mobility environment. Interstate projects such as Access to the Region's Core (ARC), the Trans-Hudson Express (T.H.E.) Tunnel, the Lackawanna Cut-off proposal, and NJ Transit's Clocker Service proposal has a direct benefit to New Jersey as well as to its neighbors, further providing the public widespread advocacy as well as better mobility choices. NJ-ARP has consistently been interested in the promotion of unified advocacy, which strengthens NJ-ARP's goals and mission for New Jersey and passenger rail as a whole.

In brief, NJ-ARP's involvement in the national rail passenger arena is one of the major supports to the overall mission of the organization and a basic tenet in NJ-ARP's platform. Although national transportation policy affects the United States as a whole, it also has a high impact regionally. The existing national rail passenger system is skeletal, at best, and must not only be supported in its entirety as a national system but also further expanded. Such expansion will allow the national system to attain economies of scale that is critical to

bring passenger rail to the forefront of America's mobility needs. NJ-ARP continues to promote its goals for such a comprehensive national passenger rail system, a goal that we have consistently maintained since its inception.

-- Jim Ciacciarelli

NARP Region III Meeting

Hosted by the *Keystone Association of Railroad Passengers (KARP)* and presided over by Tom Sweeney, the *National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP)* Region III meeting was held in the Zion Lutheran Church in Harrisburg, PA on May 12, 2007.

Rich Esposito, Amtrak's Service Manager for the Keystone Corridor, addressed the group of about 50 individuals on the history and progress of the rehabilitated rail line. The Keystone Corridor represents the largest passenger rail investment project in the nation outside the Northeast Corridor. There were two phases to the project; the first was completed on October 30, 2006 when the inaugural run took place, the second ended in Fiscal Year 2007.

The first phase was two years in duration, cost \$145.5 million and was funded 50% by Amtrak and 50% by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It focused on infrastructure including catenary, the installation of welded rail, concrete ties, and switches, and the upgrading of bridges and signals. Track speed was raised from 90 mph to 110 mph, and frequencies boosted from 22 to 28 trains per day. Esposito noted that the use of standard 5 car trainsets - operated in a push-pull configuration with an AEM7 electric on one end only - has been a major contributor to the success of the service because the elimination of the locomotive change in Philadelphia between diesel and electric motive power permitted a 20 to 30 minute time saving.

Ridership, revenues and customer satisfaction gains have been gratifying. As of May 2007, on a year-to-date basis, passenger loadings rose 17.3%, revenue 24.3% and customer satisfaction 76%. Food service is absent but if it were provided, the estimated loss would be \$1.2 million.

Phase two of the Keystone corridor included further refinements to the rail infrastructure with the expense divided between Amtrak, SEPTA and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Additional welded rail, concrete ties and catenary hardware were installed on outside (SEPTA) tracks 1 and 4 between Paoli and Overbrook, catenary was modified in 17 locations, eight substations were upgraded, a new interlocking installed at Rheems and the Lancaster station platform rebuilt. All of these improvements were aimed at reliability by facilitating better dispatching and scheduling of SEPTA regional rail trains in the eastern portion of the Keystone Corridor.

Esposito explained that he believed that there was a definite need for a second train from New York to Pittsburgh. NARP's proposal to restructure the Three Rivers into an overnight train between New York and Pittsburgh and a day train via Cleveland to Chicago - and its subsequent dismissal by former Amtrak President David Gunn - was reviewed with Esposito. The possibility of exchanging through cars between the Pennsylvanian and the Capitol Limited at Pittsburgh, thereby providing service between New York and Chicago through New Jersey and Pennsylvania, was recommended to Esposito with the hope that Amtrak management would give the proposal some consideration.

NARP's Assistant Director David Johnson reviewed current legislative initiatives in Washington and highlighted the changes in ADA rules that the federal DOT is proposing to implement by 2009. As crafted, platform heights would be standardized and force Amtrak to rebuild all of its Superliner and California car fleet to comply with the requirements. Gauntlet tracks and passenger bridging plates would be necessary at most locations on the freight railroads to accommodate their high and wide loads. No mention is made in the proposed legislation as to which parties would be responsible for assuming the costs of implementing this rule making procedure.

The *Delaware Valley Association of Railroad Passengers'* Matt Mitchell presented a proposal to hold a northeast regional conference in Philadelphia next February on President's Day weekend in conjunction with the 2008 Region III meeting. Strong objections to the timing of this gathering were voiced from participants because 2008 is an election year for NARP Directors and invited participants from Region I and II would be required to attend three NARP functions between February and May: their own regional meeting, the northeast regional conference and the NARP Spring Board meeting in Washington, D.C. The conference would entail two nights in a center city hotel and since the Philadelphia flower show is scheduled that weekend, hotel rooms will be at a premium leading to an increase in their price. The likelihood that inclement weather could cause a disruption in travel plans cannot be discounted. Mitchell was advised to contact NARP Directors to survey their opinions before committing to this conference.

-- Albert L. Papp, Jr.

Sponsorships

Light Rail Now!

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

NJ-ARP has received valuable input from *Light Rail Now!* sources as the push for Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit (HBLRT) into Bergen County continues. Both allies and adversaries of NJ-ARP in the HBLRT drive have learned to tap and/or trust NJ-ARP data on light rail, in no small part due to LRN's assistance.

Light Rail Now! also can take credit for warning NJ-ARP early on of the likelihood of subverting LRT efforts through "Bus Rapid Transit" proposals, which claim to be "just like LRT, but cheaper." It's a dubious (and dated) concept that, alas, New Jersey Transit itself has bought into -- but such buying at least didn't catch NJ-ARP off guard. (Nor, as a result, have we made NJT's willing spinelessness politically pain-free.)

In turn, NJ-ARP is pleased to relay to *Light Rail Now!*'s members our own experience with LRT, especially on a political level, has been available to the numerous communities across the United States seeking to establish LRT and/or streetcars. We've stressed the need to be political but not partisan -- friends and foes of LRT can be found on "both sides of the aisle"

-- and we try to answer whatever queries for informational assistance come our way. We've also stressed that even LRT isn't a "one-sized" package, defending and/or touting our work for the River Line -- "diesel" LRT -- at any opportunity.

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 sponsored the 'Montclair Connection' softball team for its seventh year, as weekend service for the Montclair/Boonton Line begins to loom as a reality, long after the actual Montclair Connection made its own debut. The need for such service options -- for all rail passengers, not just "commuters" -- is one reason why NJ-ARP has continued its softball sponsorship. It's a commitment not likely to end soon; more work on the Montclair/Boonton Line needs to be done.

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." Overseeing the team is 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.

Adopt-A-Station (Mount Olive Station)

Improvements are made in July to the visibility of the curbing and also the concrete floor of the glass-and-aluminum shelter by applying DOT-grade yellow conspicuity paint to these surfaces. No additions are made to the existing planting areas during 2007. New plants are due to be installed during the first half of 2008 in the two areas immediately adjacent to the main waiting platform.

-- *Tim Appgar*

-- *Douglas John Bowen*

Miscellaneous

TransAction Conference, Atlantic City

As in previous years, 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 routinely enjoys good positioning in the Exhibit Hall, and the 2007 conference proved to be no exception on that

score.

In 2007, NJ-ARP continued to ask everyone to focus on the flaws we find apparent in Trans-Hudson-Express (T.H.E.) Tunnel, which continued to morph even as we questioned previous assumptions. Beyond that, NJ-ARP continues to remind New Jersey transport powers of needs near Atlantic City itself, including passenger rail service on the Cape May Branch (provided by Cape May Seashore Lines). NJ-ARP also offers its services for whatever panel discussions require our input; Director Albert L. Papp was on the point for this purpose, aided by Wright's role as moderator.

Planning for the 2008 Conference is already under way. If you have a topic you believe should be discussed as a theme, please contact NJ-ARP.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

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

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

Since then, however, 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. It makes grand noises about rail improvements for New Jersey, but (per the efforts of Princeton University) appears to have bought into Bus Rapid Transit as a transportation savior, along the federal sales pitch of "just like LRT, only cheaper."

NJ-ARP continually reminds all that the River Line was actively shunned by DVRPC. 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.

Recently, DVRPC has shown interest in the renewed efforts to place passenger rail in Gloucester County, a move driven by the Delaware River Port Authority, parent of PATCO. NJ-ARP welcomes such interest, but withholds judgment on DVRPC's overall resolve, and the MPO's willingness to commit funding to such a process -- funding that was missing in action for the River Line's implementation.

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

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.

NJ-ARP's working relationship with NJTPA continues to improve, as signified by the appearance at NJ-ARP's 2007 annual meeting of NJTPA's director of regional planning, Lois Goldman. A building emphasis on public transit -- though not yet enough on rail transit -- by NJTPA is in stark contrast to the MPO's earlier days when auto-only freeholder representatives seemed to dominate the organization's decision-making to an extreme.

Southern New Jersey Transportation Planning Organization

For years, NJ-ARP has attempted -- and failed -- to establish meaningful, permanent contacts with the New Jersey MPO responsible for transportation issues in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem counties. Contacts that were made faltered when *Southern New Jersey Transportation Planning Organization* (SJTPO) officials made it clear road improvements -- and road expansion -- was their priority.

NJ-ARP Cape May Liaison Paul Mulligan challenged the "road first, road only" concept directly in 2007, presenting NJ-ARP's PowerPoint presentation to the SJTPO board in the summer months, stressing the economic importance and potential of rail freight and passenger service on both the Atlantic City Line and the Cape May Branch. NJ-ARP is hopeful that our efforts have finally established a permanent basis for ongoing discussions.

Ocean County Transportation Advisory Board

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

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. 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, and one that anti-rail forces continue to obstruct. Bill, in numerous letters to local print media, continues to counter challenges by anti-rail voices within the county (opposed to both freight and passenger improvements), and stresses Union County's need for intrastate transportation options.

Web Site

The big change in NJ-ARP's Web site in the past year has been the addition of the NJ ARP Blog. Much as the Hotline is an "Editorial" page, the NJ-ARP Blog is intended to be more of an "Op-Ed" page. It is updated more frequently than the Hotline and features news and opinion from a variety of NJ-ARP authors. Readers are able to leave comments in response

to the articles in the Blog. We encourage you to check the Blog frequently.

NJ-ARP has attempted to develop additional revenue sources online. Unfortunately, this has not worked out. The NJ-ARP Store opened a year ago, but few people appear interested in purchasing clothing items with the NJ-ARP logo. The store remains open, as there is no cost to us to do so, but may be shut down in the future. More recently, we attempted to sell online ad space on the Hotline and the Blog, but there have been no takers. This is most likely due to the niche market served by the NJ-ARP Web site, making it less popular overall than other, more general sites. Again, there is no cost associated with continuing to offer the advertising space, but that will probably be pulled sometime in the future.

NJ-ARP continues to accept credit cards online for payment of new members' dues, as we have since March 2004.

NJ-ARP's Web site has been online for 12 years. The Web site contains membership information, position papers, press releases, the Blog, and the weekly Hotline. NJ-ARP obtained its own domain name, nj-arp.org, in November 1999. The Web site is also accessible via an additional domain name, njarp.org (without the hyphen).

Since November 1999, the NJ-ARP Web site has been hosted by pair Networks, Inc., located in Pittsburgh, Pa. Pair Networks operates more than 1,500 servers in its datacenters. NJ-ARP's site is hosted on an Intel Core2 Duo E6400 2.13 GHz computer with 2 GB of RAM and a 120 GB disk. (This server is shared with other pair Networks customers.) NJ-ARP has taken advantage of prepayment discounts offered by pair Networks, reducing the Web hosting cost to \$13.64 per month, and the domain name cost to \$10 per year each. The service provided by pair Networks is excellent, with no significant outages.

The NJ-ARP Web site is currently averaging more than 78,000 "hits" and 22,000 "page views" per month. Each Hotline is viewed an average of 450 times. The Hotline Mailing List, which allows people to be notified by e-mail when a new Hotline is available, currently has 203 subscribers.

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

-- Bob Scheurle

Copyright ©2007 NJ-ARP

These files were created by Bob Scheurle.