

Legislative Budget Hearings Testimony

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- Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee.
- It is my pleasure and my honor to appear before you today as NJ TRANSIT's executive director, on behalf of an agency that provides some 900,000 rail, bus, light rail and Access Link trips every work day -- safely, efficiently and with a focused commitment to improving the travel experience for our customers, your constituents.
- I've been on the job exactly two months, and in that time I've had the opportunity to travel our statewide system and to talk first-hand to our customers, as well as our employees.

- I've also met with many of NJ TRANSIT's stakeholders, passionate advocates for transit and the role it plays in New Jersey.
- Mr. Chairman, NJ TRANSIT has a long and strong record of service to the citizens of New Jersey.
- The message I would like to share with you and the committee today is that, with the help and leadership of Governor Christie and Commissioner Simpson, I and the 11,000 men and women of NJ TRANSIT are committed to learning from our experiences... to building on the best of our record and our lessons learned... and to moving this agency forward.
- Moving forward means rolling up our sleeves, digging into issues large and small, and focusing on the things our customers have told me are paramount to them: improving our on-time performance, and improving our communications and the information our customers receive

- Another top priority our customers report is keeping fares stable. So I'm happy to say that, once again, there will be NO NJ TRANSIT fare increase in the upcoming fiscal year.
- Now let me speak for a moment about on-time performance: Trust me...I get it.
- I've experienced the disruption of delays first-hand as a customer....and I've seen it first-hand over the course of the past two months as Executive Director ...at New York Penn...and at the Port Authority and elsewhere.
- We now measure on-time performance using the industry standard – which is whether a train arrives within six minutes of its scheduled time.
- I'm not satisfied with that measurement; it doesn't reflect our customers' perception of their experience. So we are looking into other ways to measure and report on-time performance.

- Believe me, the men and women who crew our trains and operate our buses face challenges every day as they work to keep our customers on schedule.
- I've seen how a disruption 200 miles away on the Northeast Corridor can create spillover delays for our customers here in New Jersey.
- Mr. Chairman, I also am personally aware of the challenges faced by our customers who use the Port Authority Bus Terminal each day.
- The PABT is an old facility, designed for the traffic levels of a different era. Today, it serves more than 230,000 commuters a day, and is the busiest bus terminal in America.
- The physical structure of the PABT, along with the layout and congestion of the city streets, presents serious challenges. But we know how important this is to our customers. So while we work with the Port Authority to study longer-term solutions, we are looking at adjusting some of the more immediately controllable things, such as

repositioning platforms and gates, to smooth the flow, particularly during the evening rush.

- We also are leveraging technology to improve our communications with our customers – and, of course, communication is never more important than during service interruptions.
- To ensure that our customers have the information they need, when they need it, NJ TRANSIT has re-launched our “reaching out” campaign, designed to specifically communicate all of the many ways our customers can access the latest, most up to date information on NJ TRANSIT service.
- We are directly engaging our customers as part of this campaign... and we will specifically highlight innovative technological tools such as MyBusNow, Departure Vision and, perhaps most importantly - MyTransit Alerts.

- Aside from schedule, getting customers to their destinations safely and efficiently requires infrastructure that is kept in a state of good repair – and infrastructure includes everything from buses and train cars to railroad tracks and bridges.
- We have made tremendous strides since Sandy devastated New Jersey and the region.
- A lot of attention has been given to rolling stock that was damaged in Sandy. The good news is nearly every rail car and locomotive damaged in the storm has been repaired and placed back in service.
- Meanwhile, we have created new, safe harbor rail storage yards in Linden and Garwood to be sure rolling stock has the greatest chance of staying dry and undamaged in case of another super storm.
- With the help of our Police Department, the state Homeland Security office and others, we also have completed a comprehensive, agency wide all-hazards emergency plan

that will better guide our efforts during all emergencies, whether it be floods or other things.

- My focus, however, is on our infrastructure – the non-moveable parts of the system.
- I have seen first-hand the damage and repairs that were made at Hoboken Terminal and the Meadows Maintenance Complex and to bridges, track and electrical substations.
- In the event of another Sandy-like superstorm, while we have safe-harbored our rolling stock, our infrastructure continues to need resiliency protection.
- That is why our pending resiliency grant application to the Federal Transit Administration is so important.
- So far we have been allocated \$448 million from the FTA for post-Sandy repair and rebuilding. And we have applied for more than \$1 billion for a number of important resiliency projects, projects that will better protect bus, rail and light rail services from extreme weather and other emergencies in the

years ahead, and that will help get those services back in operation more quickly after a hurricane or other event.

- For instance, on key portions of the rail network we are replacing old and damaged electrical substations. This money will allow us to ensure the power stays on or comes back on quickly after a major storm.
- And we have proposed building TransitGrid, a new, independent power generating system – a microgrid – in the Meadowlands that will help not only NJ TRANSIT, but also PATH and Amtrak keep moving, even if the state’s main power grid is compromised.
- We are also planning for the relocation of a key bus garage in Bergen County that is vulnerable to flooding. We are looking to harden signal, communications and other systems on our rail lines, and to construct a new, permanent emergency storage, maintenance and inspection facility in North Brunswick for up to 400 rail vehicles.

- Our capital plan for the coming year has much regular work, too. This includes progress on a \$40 million renovation of the Elizabeth train station, and work on \$40 million in accessibility improvements at stations in Perth Amboy and Lyndhurst.
- Additionally, we have allocated significant resources to help Amtrak upgrade its Northeast Corridor, which is used by more than 80 percent of our passengers each week day.
- We will dedicate more than \$1 billion to the NEC over the next ten years, not just in our ongoing Joint Benefits infrastructure work program with Amtrak, but also for investments in NJ TRANSIT projects to improve reliability and efficiency on our most heavily-used rail service.
- For our bus customers, we continue to improve their experience by, for instance, advancing a \$15 million project at the Frank R. Lautenberg Station at Secaucus to expand bus capacity and improve the transfer between buses and trains.

- This last project has already proven its value, allowing more buses to flow more smoothly on several occasions when problems at the Lincoln Tunnel have prompted us to divert buses to Secaucus, so our customers could transfer to trains and get into Manhattan with the least possible delay.
- Of course, having good equipment and infrastructure – and talented, qualified people – is crucial for safety. And NJ TRANSIT has an excellent safety record. But we cannot afford to be complacent.
- That is why NJ TRANSIT is reinforcing our safety efforts and focus by hiring an independent, nationally-recognized firm to conduct a full safety audit of our railroad. We also are undertaking a national search to hire an executive-level corporate safety officer, who will be focused on maximizing safety throughout the agency, for every one of our modes.
- Mr. Chairman, our continued efforts continue to pay off. Our regular customer surveys show that nearly seven in ten of

our customers would recommend NJ TRANSIT to a friend – a strong endorsement for which we are very grateful.

- We want to build upon that trust. So we are staying focused on making NJ TRANSIT a more attractive option for the customer.
- For instance, acting on the suggestion of riders, we are ready to begin a pilot program next week expanding our quiet car program to off-peak trains that serve Hoboken Terminal.
- And we are looking at ways to inaugurate multi-modal tickets, so customers can travel from places like Wood-Ridge to Atlantic City using just a single ticket.
- Moving forward, NJ TRANSIT will look to expand upon our current initiatives and add additional amenities wherever possible.

- Mr. Chairman, in my two months as executive director, I've been tremendously impressed – impressed by our customers, and their interest and their thoughtful suggestions, and impressed by the hard-working men and women of NJ TRANSIT, and their dedication to serving our customers and providing value to the taxpayers of New Jersey who help fund our service.
- Transit is an integral part of New Jersey's transportation system, and we at NJ TRANSIT are committed to providing safe, convenient and reliable rail, bus, light rail and Access Link options to keep New Jersey moving.
- Mr. Chairman, thank you for your time. I look forward to your questions.