

P.O. Box 283
Millburn, NJ 07041

www.lackawannacoalition.net
email: info@lackawannacoalition.net

Lackawanna
Coalition

July/August 2009

...An independent organization
advocating for better transit

RAILGRAM

Montclair Leaders Call For Weekend Rail Service

By **DAVID PETER ALAN**

Elected leaders in Montclair, including Mayor Jerry Fried, have called for weekend rail service to their town. "It's really important for [N.J. Transit] to know that we, the people, want this service. We'd support it and make it worth their while," Fried told the Montclair *Times*. At the NJT Board meeting on June 10, Fried led a delegation of his town's residents and called for hourly weekend service on the Montclair-Boonton Line between Montclair and Hoboken. This service would connect at Newark's Broad Street Station with Morris & Essex Line trains between Dover and Manhattan. Service could also eventually be expanded westward.

Fried's call marks a sharp turnaround for Montclair, a town that was often hostile to the construction of the Montclair Connection. Rumors have circulated for years that Montclair also opposed weekend rail service, even when weekday off-peak service was restored when the Montclair Connection opened for service in 2002. These rumors were never confirmed, however. The Montclair *Times* also quoted rail advocate Phil Craig as saying that Montclair residents who had resisted weekend service through the years "had a handshake agreement that, for seven years, there would be no weekend train service." If Craig's allegation is correct, the seven-year moratorium on weekend service will end this September.

NJT Executive Director Richard Sarles acknowledged Fried's request but cautioned the town's delegation that the agency had recently taken over operations from a private bus carrier in Hudson County that had recently gone out of business, so it would be difficult to find money to operate the service. New Jersey rail advocates have long criticized NJT for not operating weekend service on the Montclair-Boonton Line.

Rail advocates, including the Lackawanna Coalition and the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP), have consistently supported the Montclair Connection and, more recently, weekend service on the line. Albert L. Papp, Jr., who was Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition during the 1990s and has served as a Director of NJ-ARP since that time, recalls the hostility exhibited by Montclair officials during this period. "Some mayors of Montclair just didn't care to have the Connection built, while others were openly hostile." Longtime rail advocate William R. Wright recalled town opposition as far back as the early 1980s. Montclair sued to prevent construction of the Montclair Connection, but

finally agreed in 1998 to allow the project to proceed.

No trains have run to Montclair on Sundays since 1959. A limited Saturday service remained until 1966, when all off-peak service was eliminated. Weekday mid-day trains were restored in 1967 but disappeared again the next year, not to be restored until 2002.

Rail advocates have speculated that weekend service would return to Montclair when residents along the line decided to push for it. "When the residents want weekend service enough to make it clear to the politicians that they're tired of waiting for it, they'll get it" said Lackawanna Coalition Vice-Chair Robert Hingel. Maybe that time is coming, and they will get it in the foreseeable future.

Corzine Signs Budget, with Reliance On Federal Stimulus Funds

By **JIM RALEIGH**

There has been some interest in the New Jersey State budget process with respect to rail issues and funding. The process has been a multi-year effort leading to the budget proposal that was submitted by Governor Corzine to the Legislature in last March. The New Jersey financial year starts July 1 and the State Constitution requires a balanced budget for each year. Following the Governor's budget speech and a "Budget In Brief" document, the Legislature conducted a number of meetings, first with the public and then with the various departments of the Governor's administration, including transportation.

This year was different, with the input of various Federal funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The ARRA monies are often called "Stimulus or Recovery Act." In both processes the New Jersey Department of Transportation has met with various regional planning organizations, such as the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, to review the use of Federal funds and project prioritization. Some highway projects have already started.

The detailed budget and the 2009 budget were reviewed by the Legislature and changes were made to produce the balanced budget for the June 30 deadline.

(Continued on next page)

HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Come to a Lackawanna Coalition meeting!

Fourth Monday of the month, 7:15 p.m., Millburn Town Hall.

The transportation section of the Budget signed by Governor Corzine includes many items and accounts, some operating and some capitol. Operating funds and number of specific projects are identified. As of July 1, other projects such as the Tonelle Avenue Bridge on Routes 1 & 9 for the Access to the Region's Core (ARC) project will commence. The ARC has been referred to as the Trans-Hudson Express Tunnel (THE Tunnel) and the Mass Transit Tunnel (MTT).

There are other funds for the ARC project in different parts of the budget:

- **Transportation Trust Fund** - NJ Transit Corporation
\$70,000,000
- **Public Transportation** - Federal Highway Administration
\$75,000,000
- **Public Transportation** - Federal Transit Administration
\$48,000,000.

The Portal Bridge is identified in the ARC Project as a related project and is allocated \$15,000,000 from the Transportation Trust Fund. This bridge replacement is planned as two bridges over the Hackensack River between Newark and the ARC project.

There are numerous other projects of interest to the Coalition in various parts of the budget signed by the Governor. Some items are preventative maintenance for bus and rail and continuation of projects already in progress. The Lackawanna Cutoff Project in Morris and Sussex County is allocated \$6,547,000.

Report From The Chair

By **DAVID PETER ALAN**

You can't say that we didn't warn you. For the past several years, we have been warning the riders of the Morris & Essex and Montclair-Boonton Lines that, if New Jersey Transit builds the proposed deep-cavern terminal at the end of the proposed new rail tunnel to Manhattan, the riders from our communities will be kicked out of the existing Penn Station, and there will be no future rail access to the East Side of Midtown Manhattan.

Unfortunately, our message has not been heard; at least, not enough. The propaganda machine of New Jersey's political establishment keeps talking about jobs, although they do not mention that many of the construction workers who would build the proposed deep-cavern terminal are New York residents, not New Jerseyans. They also say that the proposed deep cavern terminal can eventually go to the East Side, but they do not mention that such a move would require New York City to give up its water tunnel, which now blocks such an expansion. They promote improved access to Manhattan, while not disclosing that riders on the M&E and Montclair-Boonton Lines would be moved out of the existing Penn Station, never to return.

We at the Lackawanna Coalition, along with our friends in other national and local rail advocacy organizations have done our best to make you aware of the facts, and of the losses you will suffer

Be sure to visit our improved and expanded website at www.lackawannacoalition.net.

Keep up with the Lackawanna Coalition and transit news from around the region!

if the project is built as proposed. We do not oppose additional rail capacity into Manhattan, but it should go to the existing Penn Station and allow convenient connections with other NJT lines, Amtrak and the Long Island Rail Road.

Still, the forces lined up against us in our efforts to represent you are formidable. They represent the political, business and labor establishment of the Garden State. New York has not objected to a plan that will decrease rail access within Manhattan, because New Jersey plans to subsidize the paychecks of thousands of New Yorkers for several years.

We know that NJT has touted the groundbreaking ceremony for the project that took place in June. We are not impressed. There have been four groundbreakings for the proposed Second Avenue Subway in Manhattan since 1972, and it has not been built yet. In 1925, Cincinnati built an entire line with more than two miles of subway tunnels. While there is still talk of running service there someday, it has not happened in the past 84 years.

We know that money is short in New Jersey, and we still doubt that NJT can raise the funds needed to build the entire project. We continue to hope that financial reality will cause management to scale back the project and improve its utility to the riders at the same time.

If there has ever been a time to think realistically about available money, that time is NOW. NJT has cut service during the past few years, especially on the M&E Line. There is still no weekend service on the Montclair-Boonton Line, even though the communities want it. We have heard that massive service cuts are coming, and our duty to you as our constituents requires that we fight these cuts. The first step is for NJT management to re-align its plans to comport with financial reality and make it their first priority to expand service, rather than eliminate it.

Gladstone Substitute Bus Service: A Permanent Change?

By **PAUL BUBNY**

For the third summer in a row, New Jersey Transit is implementing substitute bus service on a portion of the Gladstone Line while crews replace the poles used to support overhead wires. Significantly, NJT is only busing from Bernardsville to Gladstone on weekdays, but provides bus service all the way from Summit to Gladstone on weekends. While the weekday bus service will end August 28, the weekend substitute service remains in effect "until further notice," according to an NJT schedule.

"If the work has progressed sufficiently that trains can run to Bernardsville on weekdays, why would there be a need to use the bus all the way from Summit on the weekends, rather than turning trains at Bernardsville?" asks Lackawanna Coalition Chair David Peter Alan. "This leads to the speculation that weekend service will remain a bus for the foreseeable future." The Coalition has been informed by a reliable source that severe cuts in rail service are coming; this could be one of them.

Railgram

David Peter Alan, Esq.
Chairman/Publisher

Bob Hingel
Vice Chairman

Paul Bubny
Treasurer

Gary R. Kazin
Recording Secretary

Editor for this Issue
Paul Bubny

Contributors
David Peter Alan
Paul Bubny
Jim Raleigh

Lackawanna Coalition
P.O. Box 283
Millburn, NJ 07041