

How 14 groups are joining forces to oppose NJ Transit fare hike



An NJ Transit bus picks up passengers on Palisades Avenue in Jersey City. A coalition of 14 different group formed to fight proposed fare hikes and lobby for better transportation funding. (Larry Higgs | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com)

By [Larry Higgs | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

on May 14, 2015 at 10:27 AM, updated May 14, 2015 at 11:47 AM

There's a new coalition in the state to fight NJ Transit's proposed fare increases and service cuts.

Their message is that NJ Transit's **proposed 9 percent fare hike** affects more than just commuters. And they want state lawmakers to work on the bigger issue of transportation funding, which the group contends led to the fare hike and service cut proposals.

"We're drawing attention to the fact that fare hikes affect a lot of diverse groups, not just

commuters, said Janna Chernetz, Tri-State Transportation Campaign Senior New Jersey Policy analyst.

The New Jersey for Transit group brings 14 organizations together, which cover poverty, working family, environmental and transportation issues. The group plans to deal with the short term fare hike and the larger issue of finding revenues to fund transportation adequately, said Jon Whitten, New Jersey Policy Perspective deputy director.

"This effort is about organizations coming together rather than just organizations representing commuters," Whiten said. "I saw a need for a lot of organizations that I cross paths with to get engaged on the issue."

While the fare increase and service cuts are the immediate issue, the group plans to be around to tackle the bigger issue of how transportation is funded. The state's **Transportation Trust Fund runs out of revenue** for projects and even to cover its debt next year.

"We oppose the fare hike, but they're part of a bigger transportation funding problem in New Jersey," Chernetz said. "That's what needs to be resolved instead of fixing it on the shoulders of riders."

The group has formed a week before NJ Transit is scheduled to hold **public hearings about the fare increase and service cuts**, which would be voted on in July and implemented in the fall.

The group has planned a "short, swift campaign" to oppose the fare increases at key locations out of nine public hearings to be held from May 16 to 21 across the state, Whiten said.

"We'll try and have a presence at as many of them as we can, but we are prioritizing hearings in Secaucus, Camden, where services cuts are happening, Newark which is a huge city for transit users and Trenton because that's where the policy makers are," he said.

This organization isn't the only new kid on the transit advocate block. The recently formed New Jersey Commuter Action Network also is part of the 14-member group.

That group is mustering commuters to oppose the fare hike and to write to their state assembly members and senators about the transportation funding issue.

Other member organizations are AAA New Jersey, The Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey, Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers, Environment New Jersey, New Jersey Amalgamated Transit Union, **New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition**, New Jersey Citizen Action, The New Jersey Commuters Action Network, New Jersey Policy Perspective, New Jersey Public Interest Research Group, New Jersey Sierra Club and New Jersey Working Families.

"Another aim of this coalition is bring groups with economic, environmental, equity for low-income and middle-class interests (together) to talk about the best ways to prioritize transit in the state," Whiten said.

Larry Higgs may be reached at lhiggs@njadvancemedia.com. Follow him on Twitter [@commutinglarry](https://twitter.com/commutinglarry).