



Mass Transit Coalition Calls on State and NJ Transit to Kill Proposed Fare Hikes

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A coalition of mass transit advocates is urging the state to kill plans to hike bus and train fares by nine percent and cut schedules and routes.

New Jersey For Transit, an 18-member coalition that is calling for more equitable transportation funding, testified at a packed NJ Transit's Board of Director's meeting this morning, urging NJ Transit and leaders in Trenton to work together to find a budgetary solution to stave of the fare hikes and service cuts.



A petition campaign over the next two weeks will target state legislators. Planet Princeton will post the petition when it becomes available.

The public comment period on the proposed hikes closed on May 21 and NJ Transit Board is expected to vote on the proposal at the July Board Meeting.

“The time is now for Senate President Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Prieto and others in Trenton to be working with NJ Transit to find a solution to avoid the need for NJ Transit’s proposed fare hikes and service cuts.” said Janna Chernetz, New Jersey Policy Analyst for Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

“Governor Christie has failed to acknowledge the breadth of the transportation funding crisis in New Jersey and has placed the burden of transit funding on the backs of transit riders. Transit riders are still rebounding from the historic 25 percent fare hike in 2010.

To impose another fare hike, the fifth since 2000, is simply unconscionable,” Chernetz said.

NJ Transit’s fare hikes and service cuts a direct result of the overall broken structure for funding transportation in NJ, the coalition says. The Transportation Trust Fund, New Jersey’s source of funding for transportation capital projects, is bankrupt and the direct state subsidy for NJ Transit’s operating needs has been steadily decreasing since 2005.

“The clock is ticking for NJ Transit riders in Trenton. The only way to stop a fare hike and service cuts will be through the Legislature, not the Governor’s office,” said Doug O’Malley, director of Environment New Jersey. “Senate President Sweeney and Speaker Prieto need to ride to NJ Transit’s budget rescue without continuing to raid dedicated clean energy funds like the Christie Administration.”

The current proposed state contribution in fiscal year 2016 for NJ Transit is \$33 million. In 2009 it was \$348 million. To fill that gap, the Christie Administration proposes to raid the Clean Energy Fund of \$62 million and redirect \$295 million from the Turnpike Authority that was supposed to be dedicated to the cancelled ARC tunnel.

The fare hike and service cuts do not address the need to expand service as transit ridership is growing and continues to set records post 2008.

NJ For Transit has come together to fight the agency’s plan, calling for the state to adequately invest in public transit, and bring attention to the benefits that affordable and efficient trains and buses could bring to New Jersey’s economy, its environment and its everyday working people.

“With the deplorable condition of NJ’s roads due to lack of state funding, and little political will to make roads safer for bicycling and walking, raising transit fares and cutting service is backwards, 1950s era public policy, and the beginning of a downward spiral,” said Cyndi Steiner, Executive Director of New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition. “More and more people are choosing to live and work in areas that provide adequate mass transit options. The nation’s most densely populated state should be embracing a mass transit-centered transportation policy that encourages other transportation options to access transit.”

“New Jersey Transit is headed in the wrong direction,” said Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club. “Instead of expanding service and increasing ridership, they are raising fares and cutting services. This will put more people back in cars adding more traffic and more air pollution. We need to fight for more funding for transit not only to expand ridership, but to maintain transit systems. Raising fares and cutting services hurts commuters, the economy, and the environment.”

The New Jersey For Transit coalition is calling for the state to fix its transportation funding crisis and dedicate an adequate amount of money to NJ Transit. The groups signed on include transportation, environmental, consumer, anti-poverty, grassroots and labor organizations – and more groups are joining each week. The coalition is being led by Environment New Jersey, New Jersey Policy Perspective and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

New Jersey For Transit is a broad-based coalition focused on the need for investment in affordable, efficient high-quality public transit in New Jersey. Its members are: AAA New Jersey, The Amalgamated Transit Union, The Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey, Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, Clean Water Action New Jersey, Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers, Environment New Jersey, Fair Share Housing Center, Ironbound Community Corporation, **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, New Jersey Working Families, South Jersey Urbanists, and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign.