
Committee Meeting

of

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

*“The committee will receive testimony from invited guests
on the proposed extension of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail into Bergen County
with a new terminus at the Englewood Hospital and Medical Center”*

LOCATION: Committee Room 4
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: March 17, 2014
10:30 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Nicholas J. Sacco, Chair
Senator Loretta Weinberg
Senator Gerald Cardinale
Senator Thomas H. Kean Jr.



ALSO PRESENT:

Philip M. Mersinger
*Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aide*

Julius Bailey
*Senate Majority
Committee Aide*

Harrison Neely
*Senate Republican
Committee Aide*

***Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey***



NICHOLAS J. SACCO
Chair

ROBERT M. GORDON
Vice-Chair

DONALD NORCROSS
JAMES W. HOLZAPFEL
JOSEPH PENNACCHIO

PHILIP M. MERSINGER
Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aide
(609) 847-3840
(609) 292-0561 fax

New Jersey State Legislature
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
STATE HOUSE ANNEX
PO BOX 068
TRENTON NJ 08625-0068

REVISED
COMMITTEE NOTICE

TO: MEMBERS OF THE SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
FROM: SENATOR NICHOLAS J. SACCO, CHAIRMAN
SUBJECT: COMMITTEE MEETING - MARCH 17, 2014

The public may address comments and questions to Philip M. Mersinger, Committee Aide, or make bill status and scheduling inquiries to Melinda Chance, Secretary, at (609)847-3840, fax (609)292-0561, or e-mail: OLSAideSTR@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the committee by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.

The Senate Transportation Committee will meet on Monday, March 17, 2014 at 10:30 AM in *Committee Room 4, 1st Floor, State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey.

The committee will receive testimony from invited guests on the proposed extension of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail into Bergen County with a new terminus at the Englewood Hospital and Medical Center.

The following bills will be considered:

S-1027 Holzapfel	Designates State Highway Route No. 35 bridge between Brielle and Point Pleasant Beach as "Veterans of All Wars Memorial Bridge."
S-1253 Beach	Permits installation of GPS navigation devices which do not obstruct a motor vehicle operator's vision.
S-1271 Turner	Establishes crimes of operating school bus with suspended or revoked driving privileges and being involved in accident causing bodily injury; permanently prohibits passenger and school bus CDL endorsements for persons convicted of those crimes.

(OVER)

S-1571
Sarlo

Designates State Highway Route No. 71 bridge between Borough of Belmar and Borough of Avon-by-the-Sea as "Robert A. Briant, Sr. Memorial Bridge."

Issued 3/10/14

*Revised 3/14/2014 Committee Room has been changed to Committee Room 4, 1st Floor.

For reasonable accommodation of a disability call the telephone number or fax number above, or TTY for persons with hearing loss 609-777-2744 (toll free in NJ) 800-257-7490. The provision of assistive listening devices requires 24 hours' notice. Real time reporter or sign language interpretation requires 5 days' notice.

For changes in schedule due to snow or other emergencies, call 800-792-8630 (toll-free in NJ) or 609-292-4840.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Evan J. Piscitelli Director Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Utility and Transportation Contractors Association	2
Assemblyman Gordon M. Johnson District 37	11
Assemblyman Robert Auth District 39	11
Richard F. Turner Mayor Township of Weehawken	17
Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle District 37	17
Assemblywoman Marlene Caride District 36	20
Assemblywoman Holly T. Schepisi District 39	21
Congressman Albio Sires 8th Congressional District	24
Kathleen A. Donovan County Executive Bergen County	27
James J. Tedesco III Freeholder Bergen County	30
Former Assemblywoman Rose Heck District 38, and Mayor Borough of Hasbrouck Heights, and Chair Light Rail Panel New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers	32

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Warren Vincentz Councilman Borough of Ridgefield	36
Warren Geller President and Chief Executive Officer Englewood Hospital and Medical Center	39
Rae Hutton Senior Director Legislative Relations New Jersey Transit	42
Paul Wyckoff Chief Government and External Affairs New Jersey Transit	43
APPENDIX:	
Testimony submitted by Assemblyman Gordon M. Johnson	1x
Testimony, plus fact sheet submitted by Kathleen A. Donovan	4x
Testimony, plus PowerPoint submitted by Rose Heck	7x
Testimony submitted by Rae Hutton	38x

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

APPENDIX (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Letter, addressed to Senate Transportation Committee from Assemblyman Gary S. Schaer District 36	40x
pnf: 1-46	

SENATOR NICHOLAS J. SACCO (Chair): I would like to call the meeting to order.

Thank you.

All right, before we begin the main section of the meeting we have three bills to go through. And we're waiting for Senator Weinberg to come and join the Committee.

Bill number one is S-1027, Holzapfel; designates the State Highway 35 bridge between Brielle and Point Pleasant as "Veterans of All Wars Memorial Bridge.

And there are amendments to the bill?

MR. MERSINGER (Committee Aide): There are amendments to the bill. The amendments are to the preamble to the Bill and would include an approximation of the number of military veterans currently living in the state, and would correct a spelling error.

SENATOR SACCO: I see that no one has signed in to speak on the Bill. Is anyone here to speak on the Bill? (no response)

Any comments or questions on the Bill?

SENATOR KEAN: Let's move the Bill.

SENATOR CARDINALE: Second.

MR. MERSINGER: On the motion to release Senate Bill No, 1027 with Senate Committee amendments, Senator Cardinale.

SENATOR CARDINALE: Yes.

MR. MERSINGER: Senator Kean.

SENATOR KEAN: Yes.

MR. MERSINGER: And Chairman Sacco.

SENATOR SACCO: Yes.

The second bill is S-1253, Beach; it permits installation of GPS navigation devices which do not obstruct a motor vehicle operator's vision.

No amendments to the Bill?

MR. MERSINGER: No.

SENATOR SACCO: There are no amendments to the bill, and no one signed up to comment on the Bill.

Is anyone here to comment? (no response)

Okay, any comments or questions? (no response)

SENATOR KEAN: Move the Bill.

SENATOR CARDINALE: Second.

MR. MERSINGER: On the motion to release Senate Bill No. 1253, Senator Cardinale.

SENATOR CARDINALE: Yes.

MR. MERSINGER: Senator Kean.

SENATOR KEAN: Yes.

MR. MERSINGER: Chairman Sacco.

SENATOR SACCO: Yes.

And our third bill -- S-1271, Turner; establishes crimes of operating school bus with suspended or revoked driving privileges and being involved in accident causing bodily injury; permanently prohibits passenger and school bus CDL endorsements for persons convicted of those crimes.

We have, in favor, Jonathan Pushman, New Jersey School Boards Association, with no need to testify; and Evan Piscatelli, UTCA, in favor.

Is Evan here to testify?

E V A N J. P I S C I T E L L I (off mike): That's for the next bill.

SENATOR SACCO: Oh, the next bill; I'm sorry. Excuse me.

Any comments on the Bill? (no response)

SENATOR KEAN: Move the Bill.

SENATOR CARDINALE: Second.

MR. MERSINGER: There are Committee amendments on the Bill. And the Committee amendments would replace an improperly cited section of statutory law.

On the motion to release Senate 1271, with Senate Committee amendments, Senator Cardinale.

SENATOR CARDINALE: Yes.

MR. MERSINGER: Senator Kean.

SENATOR KEAN: Yes.

MR. MERSINGER: Chairman Sacco.

SENATOR SACCO: Yes.

And our final bill to be voted on is S-1571, Sarlo. Designates State Highway Route No. 71 bridge between Borough of Belmar and Borough of Avon-by-the-Sea as "Robert A. Briant, Sr. Memorial Bridge."

Mike Travostino, Associated Construction Contractors, in favor, no need to testify; Bill Layton, New Jersey Concrete and Aggregate Association, in favor, no need to testify; and now Evan Piscitelli, UTCA, in favor, to testify.

MR. PISCITELLI: Mr. Chairman, Evan Piscitelli, on behalf of UTCA -- the Utility and Transportation Contractors Association.

Both UTCA and the Briant family would like to thank the sponsor and the Committee members for this great honor. Bob Briant Sr. dedicated his life to the bridges and the roads of New Jersey, and we feel it

is a very fitting honor and there's a great amount of sincere gratitude on behalf of both the organization and the family.

So thank you.

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you.

Any questions or comments? (no response)

Anyone like to move the Bill?

SENATOR KEAN: Move the Bill.

SENATOR CARDINALE: Second.

MR. MERSINGER: On the motion to release Senate Bill No. 1571, Senator Cardinale.

SENATOR CARDINALE: Yes.

MR. MERSINGER: Senator Kean.

SENATOR KEAN: Yes.

MR. MERSINGER: And Chairman Sacco.

SENATOR SACCO: Yes.

Okay, that bill passes and moves forward.

At this time we are waiting for Senator Weinberg. When she arrives we'll begin the testimony and the explanations that will be given concerning the Light Rail that would be proposed to leave from Hudson County into Bergen County.

I thank you for your patience; we are hoping to get started as soon as possible.

RECESS

END OF RECESS

SENATOR SACCO: All right. As you know, today's topic is the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail and the proposed extension.

If you want to, at any time, come up to see the maps on each side of the podium -- you'll get an idea of what we're talking about and a more direct idea of the route.

The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail -- which is really the Hudson Light Rail right now -- began probably in 1987 with a meeting I attended with the Hudson County Executive and the mayors at the time. Although I wasn't the mayor yet, I was representing the community of North Bergen.

And we made a decision that we would propose a light rail, and we would draw it out where we thought it should go. And once we sat down and worked it out as to where it would go in Hudson County, we all agreed to never, ever change the direction; never ask for an extension; never do anything that would show a division, because if we showed a division we would lose the light rail to another section of the state. There was absolutely no question about it.

So the mayors did that. They stayed focused, and had no idea what a light rail would be like. I mean, the Disney light rail, trolley cars, you know? Not a clue. And most believed we would never see it. There was absolutely no belief that we would be here when this light rail was completed. And right now there are only two -- Mayor Turner from Weehawken and myself -- who are still here when the Light Rail reached its final destination. So it was a long haul.

And what it did it worked its way from Bayonne to Jersey City, to Weehawken through North Bergen, through Union City, with its stop in Hoboken, of course -- (indiscernible) the major component of it -- it's last

stop being in North Bergen at 50th Street. Then we drew-- We had nowhere to go, so we drew a line out to the Vince Lombardi Service Area. And that was the only part that was negotiable. We had nowhere to go; where are we going? Draw a line out to Vince Lombardi; there's a lot of parking out there, and we said, "That's where we're going to be."

That's where the contention came in. Since then, in Bergen County, there have been many different discussions about where it should go, what type of line it should be. One changed direction from Vince Lombardi out to Xanadu -- which is no longer Xanadu, but that's where that was going; other ones went with diesel motorized units, and as far Tenafly. So there was a lot of discord as to where it would go.

And the only warning I could give people is that as long as that remains, it will never go anywhere. You have to sit down, focus, and say where it's going to begin, where it's going to end.

And at this point, this is where I'm going to end. I'm going to now turn this over to Loretta Weinberg, who asked me to have this meeting. And then we'll begin to call witnesses forward.

Loretta -- Senator.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Yes. Thank you very much, Senator Sacco. And thank you for agreeing to chair this meeting, because it is a second, or third, or fourth step -- however you want to count it -- of, I think, Bergen County being unified, focusing. And I think you gave us a very, very good history lesson of what's been done wrong in the past.

But I believe that we now have the Bergen County Legislative delegation, in a bipartisan manner. And my colleague, the good Senator from northern Bergen County, has been completely supportive and has lent

his name to continuing this work to actually see the Hudson-Bergen -- I underline *Bergen* -- Light Rail actually become a Light Rail into Bergen County.

Now, my particular position of the county -- eastern Bergen County -- we have no rail transportation. The only mass transit that is available to the residents in my particular portion of the county is buses or private cars. And I think you'll hear from the County Executive and other members of our legislative delegation that this is becoming untenable in terms of the traffic, of the use of roads, and of economic development.

So it's time that we are together, that we are focused, and that this becomes a major issue for Bergen County -- the most populous county in New Jersey -- in order for us to get what we really need, and that is the extension of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail.

I appreciate Senator Cardinale, Assemblyman Johnson, Assemblywoman Huttle, Assemblywoman Schepisi, and other members of the Bergen County delegation for their support, and their input, and their encouragement. And I think, Senator Sacco, at a joint meeting that we held at Englewood Hospital not too many months ago to kick this off -- oh, and Assemblywoman Caride, I didn't see you sitting back there, thank you -- Senator Cardinale gave us a great history lesson in the evolution of this. And I'm determined to now -- that it not to be history lesson, but that it be a step into the future.

So thank you.

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you.

Senator Cardinale.

SENATOR CARDINALE: Thank you, Senator.

The history goes back well beyond the 1980s. In the 1960s we still had some sort of rail option for commuters, at least, in Bergen County. And it was privately owned. And the owners of the railroad did everything possible to discourage commuters from using it.

And finally they ended it in a place that nobody wanted to go. And I don't mean to disparage Hudson County in any way, but that was before the Gold Coast development, and there was really nothing there when the connection to New York dissipated.

When I moved into Demarest, I lived just about diagonally across from the railroad station. And there was one commuter every morning. He hung on until the very end. But in 1966 it stopped, and you didn't see him anymore.

Shortly after I began to take an interest in the legislative doings, there was an organization called the ORBIT. ORBIT was Orange, Rockland, and Bergen County. It started in Rockland in New York, then Bergen County in New Jersey. And they were a group that organized in order to promote a rail option for commuters in all of those areas.

Suffice it to say that they didn't go very far. Their focus was on getting -- and I'm only mentioning them because of the numbers -- \$6 million. With \$6 million, they could restore four trains a day in each direction; \$6 million. Now, New Jersey Transit was the principal opponent of ORBIT. And at every ORBIT meeting, New Jersey Transit would come and say why it can't be done. And of course they were focusing on the west shore, not on the north.

One little bit of success that ORBIT had was they took one ceremonial and demonstration ride from Hoboken -- from the rail yards of

Hoboken -- all the way to Selkirk, New York, to demonstrate that the stories being told by New Jersey Transit -- that the rail didn't exist, that it was impossible, that there was no right-of-way in some places -- that all of that was not true. There was right-of-way.

Well, in the late 1970s, early 1980s a fellow from Tenafly came along and he really knew as much as the people at ORBIT did. But he knew the northern line, and he convinced me that the northern line was much more practical and the situations did change.

And I mention this because you're very right. We have to come together on a single notion, so that we don't have the ability of those who would want to compete for whatever monies that are going to be used to say, "Well, they don't know what they want." Englewood is not in my district; Tenafly is no longer in my district; Englewood Cliffs is no longer in my district. Even Alpine is no longer in my district.

SENATOR WEINBERG: I'm sorry about that, Senator Cardinale. (laughter)

SENATOR KEAN: So is he, so is he. (laughter)

SENATOR CARDINALE: But the residents of all of those towns and the others that I still do represent -- even though it ends in Englewood -- will have the option of being served by this rail option.

I want to say this. I frequently -- usually around campaign season -- but I frequently will go to some of the bus stops which are along some of the rail lines. And I will ask the people waiting at the bus stop-- Now this is totally anecdotal; people have done studies. But my anecdotal information corresponds with those studies. If you ask them if there were

rail, would you take it? And they will say, universally, "Yes, if it goes where I need to go."

So the question becomes, where does it take them, and where can they get on the train? Those are the two questions that have to be answered. And I think they have been answered, because this question has been studied to death. The addition of Englewood Hospital's overture to provide parking at their terminus makes this a very viable project. But at the time when I switched -- when Al (Indiscernible) convinced me to switch my allegiance from west shore to north -- it was about a \$200 million project. And that's a lot more than a \$6 million. But today--

SENATOR WEINBERG: It's a lot less than \$800 million.

SENATOR CARDINALE: --you're talking about \$900 million.

I make this point because it ain't getting cheaper. It is going to be more and more and more. And Senator, I was very touched by what you had to say -- that in your original group, none of you really believed you would actually see it come to fruition. I've been at this a long time, and I am very hopeful that it will come to fruition and I can at least see that first passenger get on that first line.

So thank you very much for having the hearing today. I'm sure we're going to hear a lot of details from a lot of folks. But thank you very much for having this hearing and pushing this idea forward.

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you for the history lesson. Thank you.

The first group I'm going to ask to speak is Assemblymembers. I'm going to break them into two sections because there are too many to sit

here at the podium -- at the speaker's desk -- I'm sorry. And first will be Assemblyman Gordon Johnson and Assemblyman Robert Auth.

Incidentally, they were the first two to come to the meeting. That's how you ended up being the first to be called.

ASSEMBLYMAN GORDON M. JOHNSON: Thank you, Chair.

SENATOR SACCO: And note that there is one Democrat and one Republican.

ASSEMBLYMAN JOHNSON: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROBERT AUTH: Good planning, Mr. Chairman. Good planning.

ASSEMBLYMAN JOHNSON: Hands across the ocean here, yes. (laughter) In a bipartisan spirit.

Chairman Sacco and Transportation Committee members, it's great to be here before you today to talk about this very, very important topic.

Thank you for calling this meeting and focusing attention on the northern branch corridor project. The northern branch is an extension of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail line into Bergen County. It would extend from the Tonnelle Avenue Station and run to its proposed terminus at Englewood Hospital.

It is time for the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail to live up to its name. The current Light Rail line does not have any stations or track in the County of Bergen. The Northern Branch has been identified for a very long time, and each study comes back with the same result: that the line should be built in this densely settled suburban environment, the most densely

populated state in the United States, in the most densely populated region in New Jersey.

The project was part of the original Hudson-Bergen Light Rail plan and we have still been waiting for this to take place for over 10 years. The benefits of the project cannot be understated. It will provide mass transit options for the underserved Bergen County communities, enabling them to get to ferries and PATH stations and other destinations in Hudson County; as well, it allows New Yorkers and Hudson County residents easy access to the County of Bergen.

We have reached a decision point on the future of mass transportation in Bergen. The current rail service has reached maximum capacity with tunnels that are over 100 years old. The ARC tunnel -- which would have provided a one-seat ride to New York City for Bergen County commuters -- was cancelled, as we all know. People are now trying to pin their hopes on the extension on the Number 7 subway line or the Gateway project.

Most of the people in my district get to New York by bus and/or car. The Port Authority Bus Terminal is in shambles, to put it lightly. It's decrepit, it's old, and it needs to be expanded. There are lines of overfilled buses snaking through the halls. Because there are not enough parking spots, New Jersey Transits buses must come back to New Jersey, park, and then go to a terminal to pick up passengers for the return commute.

Being subjected to local traffic and weather conditions, the buses are less efficient and frequently delayed. Some private bus carriers bypass the terminal entirely, discharging passengers at random points

throughout Manhattan. There is a reason I have heard many commuters say, “When it rains, take the train.”

It’s time for us to get cars and buses off our roads and onto rails -- and the people onto rails. The Northern Branch Corridor would reduce traffic congestion, a sore subject for the most densely populated state in this nation.

The Light Rail line will support economic development throughout our region. It makes Bergen County more accessible and attractive to businesses looking to grow. Business projects that are created near the Light Rail stations are eligible for a bonus under the Economic Opportunity Act of 2013 -- another plus for this project.

The Light Rail line will work both ways, helping Hudson County residents and New Yorkers reach Bergen County region. We have much to offer from vibrant downtown areas of Bergen County including, in my city, the Bergen Performing Arts Center.

We have been working to make sure everyone is on board with this project. Officials at the Federal, State, County and local levels-- some of who you will hear from today -- are all supportive of the project. With a project this important, all levels of government must work together to make it a reality.

I have worked with folks on both sides of the aisle who realize that this line will serve both Democrats and Republicans. This bipartisan effort has been extensively studied by transportation experts for many years. And also, I may include that the City of Englewood has included this in its Master Plan.

The line will create jobs and improve our economy while protecting our environment by taking cars and buses off the road. It's a great project by anyone's measure.

And as a member of the Budget Committee, I will fight for the funding to make this very important project happens.

Again, thank you for holding this hearing on this important topic. I urge you to support the Northern Branch Corridor. It's about time we put *Bergen* in the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail line.

Thank you, Chair.

SENATOR SACCO: Assemblyman Auth.

ASSEMBLYMAN AUTH: Good morning, Senator. Thank you very much. And good morning to the Committee also. I thank you for allowing us to express our interests in the Light Rail.

I'm sure you're going to hear a lot of well-detailed explanations on why this is important, as just by Assemblyman Johnson. He's been active in it for some time, as well as Senator Cardinale.

I've had the good fortune to attend some of those meetings with New Jersey Transit. But as I was coming down here today, I just decided to take advantage of the Ben Franklin way of trying to decide whether something was good or bad -- you would just put a *T* on a sheet of paper and say, "What are the reasons for it and what are the reasons against it?" And I wrote a few things down and, at the risk of being redundant, I'll read them off to you quickly and just enter it into the record.

The first thing is the region's traffic has, since 1966 when the trains stopped, increased exponentially. And it's created a problem where traffic has gotten to the point where people wait 45 minutes to get across

the bridge and down to the tunnels and to the PATH -- even to some of the park-and-rides. It's gotten pretty difficult for commuters. I know my son has to allow probably for an hour-and-a-half to get into work close to midtown Manhattan. It's difficult.

The second thing is the population has increased exponentially as well. A lot of corporations have settled in northern New Jersey -- international corporations -- and it's increased the traffic also and it has created a problem with regard to the time it takes to get in and out of Manhattan. And subsequently it makes it more difficult to conduct business.

Thirdly, the real estate commissions have done surveys between 1966 and the present. And they have determined consistently that municipalities that have a rail line in them see a 10 percent increase in property values, and see an increase in the development to the local municipalities in their Main Street areas, and that a vibrant, robust economy flourishes as a result.

Fourth -- and it's something that Senator Cardinale touched on -- is as we continue to wait to develop this line further into Bergen County the cost continues to rise. And he mentioned in his testimony -- or comments this morning -- that it is up to approximately \$900 million. I feel that with the economy a little bit slow right now, we can create a lot of jobs and probably get a reasonably good bid for the project, and perhaps see a little bit of a savings when (indiscernible) all of this.

And finally, I read in an article that Englewood Hospital, which is currently underway with an expansion of their facilities, is anticipating

this and is supplying extra parking spaces at their facilities for people who want to take advantage of the light rail.

So there are a lot of things falling into place in the positive column for this expansion and project. So I encourage all of you -- and others who would be looking to help put the financing together -- to work together on this in a bipartisan manner to make the project come to a reality.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR SACCO: The mention of the economic development in the area-- As the Mayor of the community where we have one now on 50th Street, we're finally seeing some interest. I know the economy itself is depressing things right now. But we're seeing interest in an area that would normally show very little interest because it's right on the State highway. So it does happen, and it will happen in the areas that get this.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Senator Sacco.

SENATOR SACCO: Yes, Senator.

SENATOR WEINBERG: If I may-- Assemblyman Johnson referred to the fact that he is a member of the Budget Committee and would be fighting for funding toward the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail. We do have a letter of support from the Chairperson of the Assembly Budget Committee, Gary Schaer; he couldn't be here today and did submit to the Committee a letter of support for this project. And the Chairperson of the Senator Budget Committee, Senator Paul Sarlo, asked me to express his very strong, unequivocal support for this project. He was not able to be here today, but he wanted to make sure that I did express that.

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you for your testimony.

ASSEMBLYMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

SENATOR SACCO: Going to the order that I did set up, we will have the next three Assembly--

SENATOR WEINBERG: The Congressman is here.

SENATOR SACCO: Congressman Sires has come into the room. I'm going to just ask him to speak right after the Assembly people. He also came with Mayor Turner. Mayor Turner, you were mentioned earlier as the only other person still around from the initial meetings on the Light Rail -- me and you.

MAYOR RICHARD F. TURNER (off mike): I don't know if that's good or bad.

SENATOR SACCO: Did we ever think we were going to see it? No. (laughter)

Okay, we have Assemblywoman Valerie Huttle, and Assemblywoman Marlene Caride, and Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi.

And I'm going to ask that we don't be redundant, because this is a limited time that we have here and we have a lot of speakers. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE: I'll try not to, Mayor.

Good morning, Chairman Sacco, and to the members of the Committee. Also I thank the Committee for hearing -- that's redundant -- but I do want to thank you again (laughter) for hearing the -- restoration of passenger rail service -- Northern Branch of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail. And I'll be redundant again, Mayor Sacco, because unfortunately we are

still waiting on the *Bergen* portion -- which you alluded to in the beginning of your remarks.

I don't think I have to tell this Committee why light rail is so important; but I do want to highlight that Hudson and Bergen counties are fully developed and host mature economies. These highly densely populated communities are dependent on their infrastructure. And so for the most part we know it's not feasible to build new roads, bridges, or tunnels for people to get to work between Hudson, Bergen, and New York City, because highways that were designed and built in the 1920s cannot simply feed a region that is one of the most densely populated in the country and allow it to grow. There is simply no land left to build highways.

So the time has come now to complete the New Jersey Transit studies, to obtain an FTA Record of Decision, and to obtain funding for this regional transportation project. Now, just last week in the *Times* it was reported that since 1956 the percentage of the population using public transit has grown as service improved and local economies grew. So it's time for New Jersey to get on the train of prosperity and not fall behind any of our neighboring states in the pace of economic growth.

That concludes my remarks but, if I may, I just want to read a quick highlighted testimony from Mayor Frank Huttel of Englewood.

"The City of Englewood has recognized the transformative value of the Northern Branch Light Rail, and has been working extensively with New Jersey Transit in the past two years to hone the project to adequately meet the needs of Englewood and the eastern Bergen County region it's intended to serve.

“As led through the Mayor’s Office and together with the Economic Development Corps, the City has undertaken to study the impact light rail service would have on the City. And the preliminary findings, of this study were submitted to New Jersey Transit on February 21, 2012 during a comment period of the DEIS. The planning study also came in conjunction with the City’s recent adoption of its Master Plan, and the Mayor’s Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Commission is going to be, I guess, put together from mayors from Hudson and Bergen counties representing towns along the rail line and its proposed extension. The Mayor feels this ground-up method of collective planning and collaboration will help to smooth the project from an agreed-upon plan to its build-out phase.

“And in conclusion, I just want to mention the needs of Englewood are unique, particularly since it is now situated at the end of the Northern Branch line, and it runs directly through our downtown. We have been working closely with NJ Transit to ensure that those needs are addressed in a supplemental DEIS before its final approval, which the City supports and is conditioned upon.

“Light rail service is vital to the City of Englewood and every municipality along the line -- to our region and to the State of New Jersey as a whole. Simply put, it is the best transportation infrastructure rail project to bring real economic growth and jobs for New Jersey. It promises to do this in one of the largest economic regions in the nation, and also one of the most congested. And, of course, we ask for the support of the entire Legislature from the State of New Jersey.

“Thank you very much, Chairman, for your consideration.”

A S S E M B L Y W O M A N M A R L E N E C A R I D E: Good morning, Chairman, members of the Committee. My name is Marlene Caride and I represent District 36.

I'm here more than anything else on behalf of the town that I live in -- Ridgefield -- which is one of the potential stops along the line of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail.

For as long as I can recall, Ridgefield has been willing and ready to embrace the rail in town. Many of our residents commute to New York; we have the buses and they have to go in their private cars. And like everyone here has said already, this is only adding to the congestion on the roads.

If you have driven along 1 and 9 -- and Senator Sacco I know you are very familiar with 1 and 9 -- the congestion is terrible. Between the congestion on 1 and 9 that leads, then, on to the bridge, we need to find another mode of transportation to get our residents into New York. The Light Rail would be wonderful for the town of Ridgefield and the surrounding towns in Bergen County.

We know that the Light Rail has helped to spur economic growth in North Bergen, Jersey City, Union City, and in Bayonne. And Ridgefield could use that help right now with its economic growth. It will alleviate traffic, it will alleviate the congestion, and more than anything else, it will help to alleviate the wear and tear that we're seeing on our roads today.

I am in support of this Light Rail. We have been discussing it for more than 10 years -- that I can recall -- and if there's anything that we can do to help to push this along -- especially with the issues that remain,

which is funding -- please feel free to count on my District and my town to help to move this along.

That's all I have to say at this point -- to be brief. Thank you.

SENATOR SACCO: The 1 and 9 corridor is-- The problems are exacerbated by the fact that the Light Rail station is on 50th Street. To reach it from Bergen, you have to take 1 and 9. So that's adding more traffic on 1 and 9 to get to the Light Rail station. And if they would expand upward, there would be no need for people to drive down through 1 and 9. And that's, I think, a very, very important point you brought out.

Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HOLLY T. SCHEPISI: Good morning; Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi from District 39. Thank you for having us today.

Like Senator Cardinale, I do not represent a town that would have the Light Rail going directly into it. However, as somebody who did commute for many, many years from that portion of Bergen County -- from Harrington Park into New York City -- I know personally the need for more and better public transportation in our area.

It's funny, in anticipation of this meeting this morning I had my office pull up some of the history from my predecessor, Charlotte Vandervalk. And we have e-mails going back to 2001, with then-County Executive Pat Schuber, talking about the need for this Light Rail system -- the congestion and the traffic in New Jersey. And I see we have our County Executive from Bergen County, Kathy Donovan, here today who will be able to talk more about that.

I'm here to talk about my own personal experiences, my support for this project as a person who commuted into New York City for four to five years. My husband did as well. There were mornings where it would take us two-and-a-half to three hours sometimes, depending upon what had happened -- if there was an accident, if there was traffic -- not even talking about the congestion. And I have traveled every single road, I think, in Bergen County to try to get around it -- whether it be Palisades Parkway, which right now is like a Third World nation with the potholes, to Route 3 to 1 to 9, 17, 4. Any person who's ever done the hellish commute that I did for years can tell you we have attempted to find any way around it.

So to have a light rail system -- even if it's not going completely into our district -- will help alleviate congestion, will help bring, as people have spoken about, economic opportunity to our entire region. We are the most heavily congested county in the entire state. We need something like this.

I also did a couple of little calculations. If I was continuing to do the commute that I did with my husband and we had to take separate cars because our work hours were different, and the public transportation did not enable us to always rely upon it because sometimes we would work later than buses would come home or trains, right now, with the toll increases, with parking -- not even including gas -- our total commuting costs would be \$17,000 per year, as a conservative estimate, for him and me driving into New York City to our respective jobs.

SENATOR WEINBERG: We have to do something about those tolls. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: And traffic.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Sorry about that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: But I am just here--

SENATOR WEINBERG: Sorry.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: I am not going to reiterate a lot of what has been said -- it's okay, Loretta. But this project has full support; it is desperately needed in our communities for a multitude of reasons.

And I thank you for allowing us to come here today. Thank you.

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you for your testimony.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Thank you.

SENATOR SACCO: Okay--

SENATOR WEINBERG: Mr. Chairman, if I may. You now see bipartisan support, I believe, of just about the entire Bergen County delegation.

SENATOR SACCO: I've noticed.

SENATOR WEINBERG: In case you didn't notice.

SENATOR SACCO: It gets worse. We have the-- We'll get there later. (laughter)

Without the Federal component, this is not going to happen. And we have here Congressman Albio Sires, with Mayor Turner. Mayor Turner, could you come up also? I want people to see the one person who was there with me back in 1987. The years have been tough on us. (laughter)

MAYOR TURNER (off mike): I would have worn a tie if I knew you were going to do this. (laughter)

CONGRESSMAN ALBIO SIRE S: Well, good morning.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: No, red light's on. You're on.

CONGRESSMAN SIRE S: It's green in Washington; it's red here.

Good morning and thank you for having me here today, Chairman and members of the Committee. I am willing to enjoy this opportunity to be here before you today.

And as you know, I represent the 8th Congressional District, and I am a member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. And I'm also the former Vice Chairman of the Circle of Mobility, created by Tom Kean many, many years ago, that decided on the Light Rail. Mayor Sacco was part of that Committee, and it has been nothing but a success -- all the mayors working together.

You know, I'm here today to express my support for the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail -- which I have been an advocate for many, many years. Investment in transit provides the (indiscernible) long-term economic impact, and generates future economic returns to individual regions and the national economy.

According to the U.S. Census, the United States will add 120 million people between now and 2060, increasing the size of the population by one-third. Increased transit ridership and growing populations are making transportation options a requirement for smart planning.

The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail began operating in 2000, and has been expanding ever since. This Light Rail serves 24 stations, connects

communities throughout much of Hudson County, including Bayonne, Jersey City, Hoboken, Weehawken, Union City, North Bergen, and West New York. The line employs about 21 miles, and serves about 44,000 passengers a day.

In both New Jersey and nationwide, public transportation ridership has been increasing. Last year ridership hit the highest mark nationwide since 1956: more than 10 billion rides in 2013. These increasing numbers show that there is evidence that there is a demand for convenient, affordable and clear transportation, and expanding the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail can provide that option to the residents of Bergen County.

It would mean creating jobs, bringing in business, improving mobility, expanding commuting options, and contributing to help the communities. The economic benefits are real: for every \$1 we invest in public transportation, we generate about \$4 in economic return. In my experience, in the House of Representatives, I can state that investment in transportation and infrastructure are supported both by Republicans and Democrats alike. Nobody argues that the nation's crumbling transportation infrastructure is in trouble and is falling behind that of Europe and Asia. Being proactive and investing in expanding public transportation like the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail can help states like ours begin to plan for the future, to create jobs and boost our New Jersey economy.

Within investments at the State and Federal levels, New Jersey was able to build the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail. And now it's one of the largest and most successful public works projects in the state. President Obama has outlined his support for increased funding for transit projects in

his 2015 budget, and Congress is on track to reauthorize a new transportation bill. There are possible funding options available, and New Jersey should put together a plan to secure funds for this critical transit project, like the expansion of the Bergen Light Rail. Traditionally, light rail projects have been funded with the assistance of the Federal Transit Administration. For example, the first two stages of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail received money from the FTA New State program, which has been funded annually at \$2 billion.

I look forward to working with the State to identify mechanisms to secure future funding for transportation projects, especially the Bergen Light Rail.

In closing, I want to thank Chairman Sacco and the members for allowing me to testify. And I'd be happy to answer any questions. And I'd just like to end by saying that we have two mayors here that survived all the Circle of Mobilities. And we also have Assemblywoman Rose Heck who was a big supporter of the light rail years ago. And I know that Senator Loretta Weinberg is a staunch supporter of this project, and is making sure that Bergen County has this extension in the future.

So I thank you. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to--

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you.

Any questions? (no response)

Well, Congressman, thank you very much for taking your time to come.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And a personal note of thanks, Congressman Sires and Mayor Turner, for taking the time out to come here. I know your office was well represented when we put together the

meeting at Englewood Hospital to first try to coordinate our response here. And we appreciate your support and your acknowledgment of what a serious issue this is for all of us.

So thank you very much.

CONGRESSMAN SIRES: Thank you; thank you for having me.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Keep up that hard work in Washington. Thanks.

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you, thank you very much.

CONGRESSMAN SIRES: Thank you, ma'am -- excuse me, Senator. (laughter)

SENATOR SACCO: All right, I'm going to jump to County government. We have Kathleen Donovan, the County Executive of Bergen County.

I can be mischievous and also invite up James Tedesco at the same time, but I think we'll separate you for the moment. (laughter) I know you all are very civilized up there.

KATHLEEN A. DONOVAN: That's no problem, Senator. We're colleagues.

Good morning. Thank you very much, Senator Sacco and all the members of the Transportation Committee. I am very delighted to be here today.

Some of this may be redundant, Senator; it will go quickly. I apologize if there is any redundancy. But I am glad to hear that we all agree on what we want done.

I'm here today to provide testimony on the critical need to extend the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail finally into Bergen County. We have waited patiently for this critical extension of the Light Rail to arrive on the Northern Branch, while witnessing several extensions into southern Hudson County as well as the construction of the South Jersey Light Rail. It has taken longer than any of us might have expected, and while there are still a few minor hurdles ahead of us this is an important opportunity not just for the commuting public, but also for Bergen's economy and continued quality of life.

We in Bergen are all too aware of the daily congestion that plagues us throughout the northern New Jersey area, and this is especially true in the eastern tier of Bergen -- where overburdened local and county roads bear the brunt of daily traffic in absence of a major highway corridor. We cannot build our way out of this congestion, especially in Bergen's fully developed landscape. Instead, we must explore and implement strategic transit alternatives wherever possible. The Northern Branch represents just such a project.

The original draft environmental impact statement considered two northern termini for the project -- Tenafly and Route 4 Englewood. Due to community issues raised by the Borough of Tenafly they have opted not to support light rail in their community

The City of Englewood, on the other hand, strongly supports light rail and expressed a desire to extend the northern terminus into its vibrant downtown. Accordingly New Jersey Transit has modified the DEIS to reflect a new northern terminus in downtown Englewood, at Englewood Hospital. As such, we have finally addressed the last hurdle of opposition

and reached a point where all municipalities now stand in support of this critical transportation project.

We believe the line's proven success in Hudson County -- and we're really envious of that, Senator -- should be a great encouragement to our communities that stand to gain from this new service. Studies -- including the DEIS -- have shown that the corridor has the strong ridership and higher overall densities of development to support the project.

We at the County recognize its great potential to reach economic benefits, above and beyond its capacity to provide a much-needed alternative to the automobile in this heavily congested landscape, through redevelopment, reinvestment, and other innovative strategies.

While we are fully aware that, as it currently stands, no funds have been allocated to build the Northern Branch Light Rail, we look forward to the completion of the final environmental impact statement and a Record of Decision -- and that needs to be issued so that we can best position the project's eligibility for future funding streams. New Jersey Transit has noted that a project does not require a funding plan to be in place in order for a ROD to be issued.

The Northern Branch is critical to the continued economic vitality of Bergen County. I thank you for the opportunity to stress the crucial nature of this project and ask for your continued support -- both here in Trenton and in Washington -- stressing not only the merits of the Northern Branch project, but also with an eye toward potential funding sources to finally, as so many of us have already said, to finally put the *Bergen* in the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail.

And I have a fact sheet submitted along with my testimony.

Senator, as you've heard so many speakers say -- and you know so well -- it is very critical to Bergen County, but also to Hudson County and the northern part of the state. So I thank you so much for this Transportation Committee meeting here today. Those of us who have been working on it for many years see it inching forward and we are delighted about that. We all agree on where it should be, and we look forward to seeing it actually run on lines and have people on it -- as Senator Cardinale said before. Senator Weinberg, thank you also for your continued support of the project. It really is very helpful.

Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you, thank you very much for your testimony.

You know, we have John Leon here and his staff from New Jersey Transit if there are any questions at all; any interjection that they would like to make at any time, please do so. They are there for anyone who would like to hear their ideas or input into this.

So thank you for coming. Ms. Donovan, thank you.

Okay, James Tedesco, Bergen County Freeholder.

F R E E H O L D E R J A M E S T E D E S C O: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, my name is Jim Tedesco; I'm a Bergen County Freeholder.

I'm here today in support of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail extension to Englewood Hospital. The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail will bring much-needed relief to the traffic chokehold now found along eastern Bergen County. Along with the easing of traffic, the economic gains for the local

municipalities are tremendous. The opportunity to develop areas along the proposed extension will bring labor jobs, full- and part-time employment, and new ratables to those communities.

The environment will benefit by reducing the number of vehicles traveling in eastern Bergen County on a daily basis. This is a win-win for everyone. I dare say that those who may not be supporting the Hudson-Bergen extension today will be the ones shouting its praise once it's completed and its success is known.

It is imperative that Federal and State leaders get behind this project with funding. Enough studies have been done; it's now time for action. Let's get the trains and people moving.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you very much for your testimony.
Any questions?

SENATOR WEINBERG: If I may, I'd like to sum up after each of these. You've now heard bipartisan support from our Bergen County government too.

SENATOR SACCO: Yes, we did. (laughter)

SENATOR WEINBERG: I don't want anybody to miss anything here.

SENATOR SACCO: It's so much easier in Hudson County, where we're only Democrats. (laughter)

SENATOR WEINBERG: So you can't have bipartisanship.

SENATOR SACCO: Again, we have-- On the local level, we have former Assemblywoman Rose Heck, who is the Mayor of Hasbrouck

Heights; and Warren Vincentz, Councilman in Ridgefield. I mean, they were hanging out together too. (laughter)

MAYOR ROSE HECK: I have some things to give you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And I guess, if I may, Mr. Chair, you might even describe former Assemblywoman Heck as the mother of the legislative aspect of the Bergen-Hudson-- Right?

MAYOR HECK: Hudson-Bergen Light Rail.

I'm very pleased to be here today, and I'm so pleased to see all of you in unison supporting this wonderful project. I've listened to the testimony, and I'm very pleased that so many people are on board.

You will see, Mr. Chairman, that your original support of this project -- along with the mayors of Hudson County -- gave birth to the most fantastic Light Rail project in the nation. And I thank you for all of your efforts in that regard.

We have had a lot of bumps in the road, so to speak, with different parties coming and going on a County and State level, and light rail being stymied for quite some time -- except for the fact that we in Bergen did support all of the Hudson County extensions. And since 2004, the extension to Lincoln Harbor, Port Imperial, Tonnelle Avenue in North Bergen, and Bayonne 8th Street -- I've been at all these openings -- and the last one was, of course, January 31, 2011. Since that time things have remained stagnant.

I'm going to synopsise my report, but you have it in full.

I am the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers Light Rail Panel Chair. We have worked on this in keeping it alive all of these

years. We have gone to each of the towns involved along the Northern and given PowerPoint presentations. And I gave you a complete copy -- the most updated version of that, Mr. Chairman -- that you may or may not wish to look at. But it has all the information you could possibly want.

I have two file cabinets filled with data and information if you want more. And know that I am one of three people -- I am the Chair of the original Assembly bipartisan committee, which Alex DeCroce was a part, and of course Joe Doria. And we still meet -- Joe Doria, Alex -- of course, before his passing -- and I, to discuss and keep light rail alive.

This public transportation is really (indiscernible). And I want to read my initial paragraph, because I think it's a very, very important paragraph.

We live in the most densely populated county in the most densely populated state. Add to that the high cost of living, and what most people view as high taxes rates. Add to that our economic and job worries, especially for our younger generation -- those just graduating from college, most of who have to pay back student loans -- are they getting the jobs they hoped for?

We older folks worry when we look at the young moms and dads with young children to raise, and wonder what it must be like for them. We wonder about their challenges in this time of instability. We look at our physically challenged, and the aged who have experienced difficulty in getting around.

Public transportation is epitomized by Light Rail. It has all the advantages: You've heard them speak about the environmental, but you

didn't hear about the fact that it is handicap accessible, that it is wheelchair accessible. Baby carriages can go onboard, as well as shopping carts.

So it's not just a long-range transportation mode. It's within the community transportation mode. So it serves a multi-faceted role in every community. You'll see, with me today, Ridgefield was the first Bergen County town to be onboard 100 percent. That's how I met Warren Vincentz -- long before he entered politics. And they supported this; they didn't even know what light rail was. When I mentioned the word -- do you remember trolleys? Then everyone, of course, was onboard. They understood what that meant. It was the best mode of transportation; it's also enjoyable.

I'm telling you because I'm Hoboken-born and raised. I never knew how to drive until I went to Bergen County and could go nowhere -- nowhere. So at 33 years of age I had to learn to drive a car. It's not my favorite mode of transportation. I like public transportation; I like the buses, I like the trains, I used the tubes -- now called the PATH -- when I went to New York City.

So this particular piece, when they came to me -- the NJR people -- and asked me to be involved, I was delighted because trolleys, to me, are just the best fun in the world.

Hudson County is doing beautifully. We saw and heard from Albio Sires who has been involved with this, as you have, since the inception of the idea. But remember that my work in the Assembly, for the poor, and the elderly, and the abused -- and working with now-Senator Loretta Weinberg for children who were abused, and neglected, and domestic violence victims -- we know that this is the means to get them to

and from where they have to go and to their jobs. We know that billions of dollars of investments were made in Hudson County, and certainly the shocker of all -- for which I was most condemned when I was in the Assembly, for supporting the Capital Improvement Fund of the River Line in South Jersey, saw billions of dollars come into being. And the development three miles out from that train station -- from that light rail station is phenomenal. If you've never been down there, it's worth a ride to see it.

As far as we're concerned-- And again, when I was in the Assembly I chaired the Light Rail Panel and had a group meet with me in my Lodi office, and they were the advisory committee. And I will tell you that people from all fields -- top people in their fields -- donated their time to this effort. They were professionals, including the man Gordon Thompson, who ran the Buffalo, New York trains. He actually stimulated the DBOM concept -- design, build, operate, and maintain. And please note -- it has not been noted heretofore -- that this extension is part of the original plan, from North Bergen into Ridgely. It is a project and a plan that has FTA approval as an ongoing project. It is not a new project; it is an ongoing project. It needs support from the State level for it to proceed.

And again, I'm very proud that Kathy Donovan came today. She has been a point person. I also want you to know I did not have enough time to reach Arthur Imperatore Sr., to ask him to be with us today, because he has been meeting with me for the past year -- six months to a year -- his son, more recently -- and he met with the County Executive as well. He is in full support of the extension. It will help the Waterways

project as well. None of this hurts any of the other modes of transportation -- it helps those modes of transportation.

And please know that the guestimates for ridership in Hudson - - when we first put the plan together with Executive Director Shirley DeLibero and the Commissioner, Frank Wilson -- the guestimates that we, our Committee, put together were 10,000 to 15,000 riders a day in Hudson County. And in Bergen, it was to be 25,000 to 30,000 riders a day. And we said, "Let's support going into Hudson, because it gives Bergen residents a destination -- a wonderful destination." And again we know what happened: it tripled. We have had an increase to 47,500 riders a day in Hudson County. Looking at that history -- which is being made daily -- we know that our projection of 25,000 to 30,000 a day in Bergen could not only double, it could triple and take lots of cars off the road and help people with their jobs.

Again, I'm here to tell you that we did have the money set aside, Mr. Chairman. And you can look at the history. If you talk to New Jersey Transit, there was money set aside to take us from North Bergen into Ridgefield -- not the entire length, but into Ridgefield. That money was taken out by a former Executive Director and put into a now-defunct project. So again, we did plan and we did have the money. Now we're asking your help and the Committee's help to be our saviors of this project.

I thank you very much for your time, sir, and members of the Committee. And thank you, Senator.

COUNCILMAN WARREN VINCENTZ: Well, it's now good afternoon. (laughter)

Senator, Chairman, thank you very much; members of the Committee. Some of my points may overlap, but I need to reinforce a few important issues.

As a civil engineer -- licensed professional in New Jersey -- I spent my entire career widening highways and building new bridges throughout New Jersey. And I can tell you the northern area is maxed out.

You may know me, as I was the resident engineer on the 4 and 17 flyover project in Paramus. You can see that job today -- how it's overloaded. You can see the growth. This extension will easily outpace that growth 100 times over. This corridor needs the Light Rail project.

On a personal basis, I can tell you every morning I take my son to the Weehawken Light Rail with his classmates as they commute to Saint Peter's Prep. And they rave about the Light Rail: it's on time, it's punctual, it's quiet, it's clean. They love it. Rain or snow -- the train goes on. And I believe they can proudly say they have gotten no JUGs for being late -- and anybody affiliated with the Prep would know what that is.

A point about Englewood Hospital that hasn't been touched on is, the increase to their expansion is going to increase their outpatients. They are concentrating on a large number of outpatients. Well, the outpatients can easily take the Light Rail to the hospital; so can the visitors and so can the employees.

In Ridgefield we stand to gain even more. We currently have a redevelopment area of 44 acres, which the Light Rail goes right through the eastern border of this redevelopment area. It is also surrounded by other commercial areas that would benefit; other industry that would benefit from the Light Rail. And this Light Rail would attract new businesses to

Ridgefield, which is very important to that community. We need to build our base -- our tax base.

Also the values of the residential properties would increase immensely with this Light Rail access. As a Ridgefield Councilman, I have spoken to many residents as I campaigned. And many have said they're waiting a long time for this Light Rail project, and they support it. I have yet to meet a person -- and I'm sure I've knocked on every door at least six times -- I've yet to meet a person in Ridgefield who has opposed the Light Rail extension.

I want to also support that I spoke out at all four environmental hearings that were held recently, in Tenafly as well as in Englewood. And as a civil engineer, I fully support this Light Rail project. I think it's a great project. Mass transit is absolutely a necessity. And that while my son may not enjoy it, there are future students who will easily enjoy it for their access to other schools and other educational facilities, as well as the many people who work up and down the corridor.

I thank you very much for your support. And I look forward to the day when we can all get on that first car together, and we can draw straws for who gets to say, "All aboard," but I want to be there with you to ride that car.

Please advance this project. Thank you.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Mr. Chairman, if I may. On behalf of Rose Heck and I -- we were both going to be happy that it's barrier-free.
(laughter)

SENATOR SACCO: Okay, thank you very much for your testimony.

We have **Ciro Scalera**, New Jersey Laborers' Union, in support, no need to testify. Thank you for being here.

And we have our last speaker today -- **Warren Geller** from Englewood Hospital.

WARREN GELLER: Thank you. I thought you were going to bring people back from the crypt before I got to go. I appreciate it; thank you.

Good afternoon. My name is **Warren Geller**, and I have the honor and pleasure of being the President and CEO of Englewood Hospital and Medical Center. And it's an honor to be here on behalf of our Board of Trustees in support of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail project. It means a lot to us. And it is important that we're here today.

We're one of the state's leading acute care providers. For 10 years in a row we've had the top cardiac surgery outcomes in the state. We employ over 1,000 physicians, over 650 nurses, 750 volunteers, and have an employee base of over 2,500 people. We're a big economic stimulus for this area.

We've grown by over \$120 million in the last five years, bringing our total budget to over \$430 million per year.

As you heard earlier, health care is changing. There's a big shift to outpatient services -- which means that there's a lot more throughput and a much larger number of people coming to our campus and all of our outposts on a daily basis.

Our number one goal is to provide the best state-of-art health care in a humanistic environment. That means ease of access, recruiting and retaining highly skilled nurses, highly skilled physicians, and all of the

support staff that goes with that. With access, patients get what they need, visitors and volunteers lend their support, and we have a workforce that keeps our medical center thriving in our region.

The reintroduction of the rail transit service to the Northern Branch Line will provide all of our constituencies with the easy and affordable access that they deserve and certainly that they demand.

The rail line route -- and you know where the stops are, with Leonia and Palisades Park, all the way to Guttenberg -- overlays our catchment area. The market we serve goes from north of Route 3 all the way through Rockland County, and the residents of Districts 32 and 38 get a new transportation option while also reducing traffic in our area.

For these reasons, Englewood Hospital not only urges this Committee to pursue the project, we will help advance it. A critical aspect to New Jersey Transit's terminus at Englewood Hospital is commuter parking. Well, we completed a master plan five years ago, and in that master plan is a third parking garage on our campus -- a significant structure that we can partner with New Jersey Transit on and move that timeframe up considerably. And we will share this parking garage with the transit commuters. It would be our pleasure to do so.

Today the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail is incomplete and it's a vision unfulfilled in our eyes. It's 12 short miles of rail that will go a long way in giving our community access to the quality health care, as well as serving as an economic stimulus for the City of Englewood and an essential link for its future prosperity.

I thank you for having me here today, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

SENATOR SACCO: Well, you were the last speaker because you are the end of the line. (laughter)

Any questions at all?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Again, thank you to Mr. Geller for taking the time to come down here, for being our host at the first bipartisan meeting that we put together in conjunction with Assemblyman Johnson. And your willingness to come forth would be a very significant move for us to actually see the Bergen portion of this Light Rail come to completion. And I think it is because of the Englewood Hospital piece, and the commuter parking, that we are getting the support from people like Senator Cardinale and Assemblywoman Schepisi and Assemblyman Auth -- even though it doesn't directly go through the districts they now represent.

So thank you for your willingness and your vision on how this will help Englewood Hospital as well as the economic engine. And former Assemblywoman Heck brought up-- You know, we're not talking here about commuting into New York. We're also talking about how you get from Point A to Point B right within Bergen and Hudson, and how we bring an employee workforce--

Mr. GELLER: Exactly.

SENATOR WEINBERG: --that is needed at places like Englewood Hospital and others from other sections of the counties.

So thank you all for sticking with it, and for your discipline, and for your vision.

Mr. GELLER: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you very much for your testimony.

We'll have a question-and-answer session right now. I know New Jersey Transit is here, Senator Weinberg. You had some questions?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Yes, thank you, Senator Sacco, and thank you to all the folks from New Jersey Transit who are here.

And I'm just wondering -- I know we have to do the supplemental DEIS. I don't know whether it's John Leon or who will answer the question, but I'd like some timing on when that supplemental DEIS will be available, and when you think we need the first commitment of funding showing up in our State budget in order to go after the Federal matches. If you could just give me an answer on when the supplemental DEIS-- And thank you for being here. And again, the idea of when we need this first funding, and do we need the total amount or can it be done in phases?

RAE HUTTON: Good afternoon, Senator.

We anticipate that the supplemental will be submitted late in the fall -- after a public hearing, and after--

SENATOR WEINBERG: Say that again, Rae. I'm sorry.

MS. HUTTON: We anticipate that the SDEIS will be submitted late this fall. As part of that process, we will have a timeline and there will be a determination of the project's elements and the funding plan. So we will be working on the supplemental DEIS at that point, and the long-term plan will be part of that.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And the funding? My question is, when does the State have to show, in the budget or in the capital budget, a commitment to this money, or does it need to be the total amount if we were going for money in this coming year's budget -- Fiscal Year budget?

Does it need to be the total amount, or can it be phased in before we go for the Federal money?

MS. HUTTON: Okay, the first step, as I said, is the EIS, because we need to fulfill the Federal requirements to qualify for Federal funding. And after those determinations are made, then we will be working with the State Legislature to identify and secure funding at that point. But we have to go through the first step first, because we need to have the FTA qualify the project for Federal funding. We've always anticipated that the Northern Branch project--

SENATOR WEINBERG: Well, let me just backtrack. In order for you to "identify the funding," we have to have funding in the budget. So my question becomes, for the new Fiscal Year budget, for what we are going to be advocating for, do we need to show a commitment for the entire amount that the State needs to match the Federal government, or can we do one portion at a time? In other words, a portion from North Bergen to Ridgefield, without having the money for the rest of it, or do we need the total shown?

PAUL WYCKOFF: The short answer to your question, Senator, is no, we do not need the full amount shown. And, in fact, while we're going through the SDEIS process, the design elements -- the scope of the project is being finalized so we know what funding will be necessary when we reach that stage.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. That's not the answer I would have preferred, but it is the answer. Thank you.

Okay, that's all the questions I have.

SENATOR SACCO: Just adding to that, when we did it in Hudson it was similar, and it moved very, very expeditiously, really. You almost, I guess-- The Administrations involved -- the money just always seemed to be set for the next phase. And I'm trying to think how long it actually took to complete it -- but I think 2004, the last stop in North Bergen -- or 2002? I'm not sure; 2004 or 2002 -- it was somewhere around that time. I know we took a ceremonial ride from that station through Union City into Hoboken.

MR. WYCKOFF: I think 2004, or even just a little bit later, Senator.

SENATOR SACCO: (Indiscernible) And when did actual construction begin? It was planned in 1987; was it 1994?

MR. WYCKOFF: About 1997 when the first shovel hit the ground.

SENATOR SACCO: It actually went into the ground. So it took 10 years to get into the ground from the initial meetings.

MR. WYCKOFF: Correct.

SENATOR SACCO: Okay.

MR. WYCKOFF: We're on a very-- It seems like forever to all of us, but we're on a very similar timeline for the Northern Branch. The scoping started in 2007, I believe.

SENATOR SACCO: The question I have is, are we using existing lines right now -- the tracks that are in place?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Yes, but we need to get a right-of-way from CSX, as I understand -- correct?

MS. HUTTON: Correct.

MR. WYCKOFF: Correct -- CSX and a bit of New York's Susquehanna and Western, Senator.

SENATOR SACCO: That's the little-used line, I think, that runs through North Bergen, right? On the outside of the trestle, if I'm not mistaken, up on 85th Street. I believe that's it.

So with the lines in place, because that was the situation -- there were no lines before; everything had to -- for the most part -- you had to open up the tunnel to Weehawken. The Weehawken Tunnel was defunct and you had to open up that. You'd be surprised how much of it is underground. When you hit Union City, you come up through stone to get to the platform.

So hopefully everyone stays focused and we'll see this in our lifetimes. (laughter)

SENATOR WEINBERG: Senator Sacco, thank you for helping us stay focused by hosting this hearing, and hopefully--

SENATOR KEAN: I have some good vitamins for you. (laughter)

SENATOR WEINBERG: --New Jersey Transit is convinced how serious we are.

MR. WYCKOFF: Senators, New Jersey Transit has heard the message loud and clear. We're also-- We know how much anticipation there has been about putting the *Bergen* in Hudson-Bergen Light Rail. As you know, there has been a tremendous amount going on with the State and with transit over the last couple of years. But I think we've demonstrated our commitment to this project by maintaining -- pushing it ahead through the Federal process. It's all gone a bit slower than I know

everyone would like; but it's a very thorough and comprehensive process. And as Rae Hutton said, we should be in a position to submit the supplemental by the end of the year -- by late fall.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Thank you -- thank you again, Senator.

SENATOR SACCO: Okay, thank you Senator Cardinale. Thank you for substituting; and Senator Kean, who is not here.

Senator Weinberg, thank you.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Do we have to vote on some bills, or no?

SENATOR SACCO: We did them already.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Oh, you did that already? (laughter)

SENATOR SACCO: We had great bipartisan support. We passed all the bills.

Thank you very much for attending. John, thank you.

MR. WYCKOFF: Thank you, Senators. We'll leave our testimony behind.

SENATOR SACCO: Thank you.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)