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## Star-Ledger Editorial Board – “The Leadership And Employees Of NJ Transit Deserve Credit For Taking Significant Steps To Soften The Blow.”

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As painful as the hikes are, they are necessary, given the governor’s refusal to increase gas taxes. In fact, the leadership and employees of NJ Transit deserve credit for taking significant steps to soften the blow.

The central problem is that the agency is losing about \$150 million in federal aid this year, and another \$150 million due to lower ridership during this recession. Aid from Trenton is actually increasing slightly, though barely enough to make a small dent in that shortfall.

That left Executive Director James Weinstein with terrible options. He began by cutting his own salary by 5 percent, and that of a dozen or so senior aides.

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The employees of NJ Transit are making sacrifices as well. A pay freeze for nonunion workers is already in effect, along with a 7-day furlough. The largest union, representing bus drivers, agreed to a pay freeze as well. So the next time you see a bus driver, thank him or her for chipping in.

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Still, the first fare increase since 2007 is unavoidable.

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Given those realities, a fare increase is needed. Seniors and students can apply for significant discounts, and employers can help subsidize parking with pre-tax income. But today, the board of NJ Transit has little choice but to approve this hike.

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