



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Whitman Calls on Washington to Settle Amtrak Dispute, Avert Strike; Forms Emergency Transportation Council

Governor Christie Whitman today called on Amtrak workers and federal officials to resume negotiations and avert a strike. The Governor called for this action on behalf of the thousands of New Jersey commuters and businesses that rely on Amtrak's rail system to get to their jobs and conduct business. The Governor also announced the formation of the Emergency Transportation Council to implement state contingency plans in the event of a strike.

"A strike would be devastating to New Jersey's commuters and businesses that rely on these rail lines," said Whitman. "We'll do everything we can, but this is a federal strike, and it requires a federal solution."

"We've come too far to have a national railroad strike chip away at the 196,000 new jobs we've created in New Jersey," said Whitman, noting that New Jersey was recently dubbed by Rutgers University economists the "economic dynamo" of the northeast. "We urge both sides in this dispute to end this catastrophe before it starts."

The strike, which has been called by the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE) representing Amtrak workers, could take effect as early as October 22. In addition to a suspension of Amtrak service, a strike would affect NJ Transit commuter service since the agency utilizes the Amtrak-owned Northeast Corridor.

Governor Whitman today called on President Clinton, the Congressional Leadership, Amtrak President Thomas Downs and the General Chairman of the BMWE, Jed Dodd, urging the parties to work toward an agreement quickly and avert a strike. The Governor has also formed the Emergency Transportation Council to implement contingency plans in the event of a strike. The council consists of New Jersey's Commissioner of Transportation, Commissioner of Commerce and Economic Development, Attorney General, Adjutant General, and the Chairman of the Board of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Governor Whitman has also reached out to governors of New York, Delaware, Pennsylvania and Connecticut to urge them to put pressure on all parties involved at the federal level to bring the contract negotiations to a quick

resolution, and to coordinate regional contingency plans in the event of a strike.

A strike could affect up to 65,000 commuters who ride NJ Transit trains on a daily basis. In addition to the Northeast Corridor, commuter service would be disrupted on the North Jersey Coast Line, the Raritan Valley Line, the Midtown Direct, the Atlantic City Line from Cherry Hill to Philadelphia, and the shuttle between Princeton Junction and Princeton Station. Disruption of service could also cripple commercial freight movement through the corridor, impacting hundreds of companies that rely on the rail system to ship and receive products and materials.

Suspension of rail service along the most heavily traveled corridor on the East Coast could also result in substantially higher volumes of motor vehicle traffic on the corridor's road network as NJ Transit and Amtrak riders are forced to find alternative modes of travel.

In the event of a strike, the NJDOT and NJ Transit will implement contingency plans to provide public transportation to those affected by the strike, including using public and private bus lines, redirecting use of the train lines which can continue operation, and creating temporary park and rides.

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