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NEWS RELEASE

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Whitman Signs Bill to Reduce Train, Bus Fares for Seniors

Gov. Christie Whitman today signed legislation to provide senior citizens age 65 and over and handicapped citizens with around-the-clock reduced bus and rail fares at the Hoboken Transit Terminal in Hoboken, New Jersey.

"Many seniors, as well as citizens who are handicapped, live on fixed incomes," Gov. Whitman said. "Ready, inexpensive transportation services are essential to their health, safety, and welfare."

"Currently, senior citizens age 62 and over and handicapped citizens pay one-half the regular adult rate on bus and rail fares during off-peak hours. But they can't always make their appointments - particularly medical appointments - to conform with off-peak travel," she said.

"With this law, we will reduce bus fares at all times for senior citizens 65 and older and for citizens who are handicapped," said Gov. Whitman. "Our seniors are one of our fastest growing populations, and we want to do all we can to ensure that older adults continue to be a vital part of our communities."

The reduced fares will go into effect by Jan. 1, 2000. Seniors who are age 62 through 64 will continue to receive the current discount for travel during off-peak hours.

The legislation, A-374, was sponsored by Assemblymen Louis A. Romano (D-Hudson) and Rudy Garcia (D-Hudson) and Senators Nicholas J. Sacco (D-Bergen/Hudson) and John A. Girgenti (D-Passaic).

Making transportation more affordable is just one of a number of actions Gov. Whitman has taken to help the state's senior citizens. She recently presented the first checks in this year's Homestead Rebate program, which will provide almost \$300 million in rebates to more than 1.3 million qualified seniors. When her New Jersey Saver property tax relief program is in full effect in 5 years, every senior who now gets a homestead rebate will get a larger check than they would have received from the Homestead Rebate program. Last week, Gov. Whitman signed legislation to increase the amount of retirement income that may be excluded from taxation under the New Jersey Gross Income Tax. Phased in over four years, it doubles the amount that currently can be deducted for those 62 years of age or older, or those who are eligible for federal disability benefits.