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RAPID TRANSIT  
FOR  
Northern New Jersey

*Annual Report*  
1928

NORTH JERSEY TRANSIT COMMISSION

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REPORT  
OF THE  
North Jersey Transit Commission  
TO THE  
SENATE AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE  
STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
1928

Office: 30 Journal Square, Jersey City, N. J.

*Commissioners*

DANIEL A. GARBER, *Chairman*

WALTER M. DEAR, *Vice-Chairman*

H. HATCHER, *Secretary*

JAMES O. BETELLE

BERTRAM H. SAUNDERS

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HERBERT S. SWAN

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DANIEL L. TURNER,  
*Consulting Engineer*

GLENN S. REEVES,  
*Assistant Chief Engineer*

SPAULDING FRAZER,  
*Counsel*

ELMORE LEFFINGWELL,  
*Director of Public Relations*

February 27, 1928.

*To the Senate and General Assembly  
of the State of New Jersey,*

*Through His Excellency,*

A. Harry Moore, *Governor:*

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 157, Laws of 1926, the North Jersey Transit Commission herewith transmits a report of its activities during the calendar year 1927.

In dealing with the inadequate passenger transportation which is hindering the development of metropolitan New Jersey, the Commission, pursuant to the terms of the statute, is continuing the studies, investigations and negotiations set forth in its earlier reports.

The Commission increasingly realizes the growing impatience of the public with the discomforts, indecencies, delays and money losses caused by present means of travel and is prosecuting its work with due regard to the urgency of the problem. The studies completed and in progress are those which tend to the speediest formulation of sound proposals. All effort is bent towards presentation at the earliest practicable date of such recommendations of physical plan, means of finance, amplified legislation, and attendant matters as will stand expert scrutiny, and enable the Legislature to authorize construction. In so huge and complex a task, intelligent progress must rest upon painstaking work.

The Act creating this Commission divides the problem of rapid transit for North Jersey into (1) better transportation for some 350,000 daily commuters between their homes in this state and their work in New York, (2) the provision of rapid transit between the separated communities of northern New Jersey.

The first of these is an acute present problem, the solution of which is vital to the welfare of an army of our citizens. The second is increasingly seen as a necessary measure to encourage the unified development of our metropolitan counties and to enable this region of the state to realize its fullest possibilities.

It is with keen satisfaction that we report a significant achievement during the past year in respect to the commuter problem and an important step in the planning of rapid transit connection between major population centers in North Jersey.

At the instance of this Commission, following the Act passed by the last Legislature giving the Port of New York Authority rapid transit powers, a conference was held with the Authority Commissioners for the purpose of defining the scope of the rapid transit activities of each of the two agencies and to avoid duplication of work.

The North Jersey Transit Commission in its reports previously had set forth the difficulties of a New Jersey agency dealing with a transit scheme extending beyond the state boundaries. This point was discussed by the two commissions and decision reached that the bi-state character of the Port of New York Authority enabled it to function admirably as a coördinating agency between the various official bodies severally engaged in the study of the commuter problem in different parts of the Metropolitan District of New York and New Jersey, and that a single-state agency was better adapted to the handling of transit problems between the cities of its own state.

Further negotiation brought about a contract between the two commissions under the terms of which financial support was jointly provided for a conference board of all the transit agencies in the Metropolitan District. As a result there came into being the Suburban Transit Engineering Board upon which all sectors of the District are represented as

well as the railroads serving it. The personnel of the board is entirely technical and is made up as follows :

**New Jersey Sector**

DANIEL L. TURNER, Consulting Engineer, North Jersey  
Transit Commission

**Westchester Sector**

CHAS. MACDONALD, County Engineer, Westchester County

**Long Island Sector**

W. FRED STARKS, County Engineer, Nassau County  
ALBERT O. SMITH, County Superintendent of Highways,  
Suffolk County

**City of New York**

ROBERT RIDGWAY, Chief Engineer, Board of Transportation

**The Port of New York Authority**

BILLINGS WILSON, Deputy Manager

**Railroads**

R. E. DOUGHERTY, Engineering Assistant to President, New  
York Central Railroad

*Representing:*

New York Central Railroad  
New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad  
New York, Ontario & Western Railroad

R. C. FALCONER, Engineering Assistant—Vice President,  
Erie Railroad

*Representing:*

Erie Railroad  
Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad  
Lehigh Valley Railroad

R. K. ROCHESTER, General Manager, Long Island Railroad

*Representing:*

Pennsylvania Railroad  
Central Railroad of New Jersey  
Long Island Railroad  
Baltimore & Ohio Railroad

Heretofore these various sectors and the different railroads were working separately, each on its own part of the general commuter transit problem. Now, for the first time they are all cooperating through this central agency and the complex question is being studied as a whole. This suburban board is the unofficial agency of the transit commissions, railroads, and allied bodies in both states represented thereon and derives its powers and financial support from these participating agencies. It is a new arm through which the separate groups can work in unison on a common problem.

For interstate transit it is the signal achievement of the year, having minimized the embarrassments of dual state sovereignty. The participation of New York City alone seems to have removed what appeared to be an insuperable obstacle to any rational solution and gives ground for belief that the separate distribution system in Manhattan for suburban passengers from all sectors, which we have proposed in earlier reports, is possible of realization. Under this arrangement New Jersey unaided will not have to bear the cost of such special suburban facilities as might be provided beyond the Hudson; the cost will now be distributed between Westchester, Long Island and New Jersey.

Accompanying this report is the brief report of the Suburban Transit Engineering Board to this Commission and the other allied transportation agencies. We believe that it clearly sets forth the nature of the work being done and the difficulties and magnitude of the task. Therefore as to the interstate duties with which we are charged we wish merely to re-iterate the concluding words of that report:

"The preparation of a complete plan requires careful consideration and exhaustive analyses of the many problems involved. A complete analysis of data already submitted is being made. This work is progressing with all possible dispatch and the various agencies herein associated are cooperating wholeheartedly to the end that a comprehensive plan may be presented at the earliest possible date."

In regard to the second part of its work: i.e., rapid transit between the separated communities of northern New Jersey, the Commission has outlined in previous reports a complete system to provide such service. It seems as though this system could best be developed by creating a series of direct line communications between specific centers, utilizing as far as possible existing rights-of-way. These lines eventually could be welded into a comprehensive rapid transit system for all of northern New Jersey.

The important step already mentioned in transit between North Jersey cities is the definite concentration of work by this Commission upon one of these direct line communications. This is a line direct from Paterson through Passaic to Newark, with a connection to Hackensack through Rutherford.

Our engineers have done much detailed work on this proposed route, and it has reached the stage of discussion with the railroads and communities affected. It would have been set forth in full in this report had the negotiations progressed to the point where the matter could be presented with finality. When conclusions are reached in the matter, it is our expectation to issue a special report devoted to this important undertaking.

The organization of the Suburban Transit Engineering Board having provided a qualified group of experts to study the problem of commuter transit, this Commission has been free during the past six months to direct its own staff to the study of the North Jersey transit problems as distinguished from the interstate transit problems. Pressing as the latter problem has been, and still is, the Commission has become more and more convinced as its studies have progressed that the interests not only of this state but of the entire Metropolitan District would, in the long run, be served best by the development of a well coordinated North Jersey system.

A number of factors contribute to this conviction. Full and careful study of the passenger traffic count made by the North Jersey Transit Commission, showing the origin and

destination of passengers in the district; and confirmation of tentative conclusions from these figures by preliminary consideration of similar but not fully tabulated counts in the Westchester and Long Island sectors; the realization through conference with responsible officials of New York City of that City's almost insoluble problem of supplying by ever extending subway construction adequate facilities for the movement of its purely urban passenger traffic; the saturation of our street systems by vehicular traffic because of undue concentration of business and amusements at given points; the study of reports and data of organizations such as the Committee on the Plan of New York and Its Environs, with the conclusions as to the disastrous results from the standpoint of health, of time wasted, of convenience and comfort, of economic development as a whole of the metropolitan area; such factors and others not here necessary to recapitulate, have led us to the conclusion that the economic resources of North Jersey will be capable of full realization only when there shall have been established for the communities to the west of the Hudson River, transit facilities comparable to those of New York City both in frequency of service and increased accessibility of the various communities of the district to each other.

While realizing from the outset that it was charged by the Act creating it with the study of both phases of the transit situation, the obviously critical condition of the over-crowded interstate facilities, coupled with the insistent demands of those forced to use them, for early relief, stressed this part of its task. Moreover, in the interstate traffic there already existed a well-defined patronage, daily growing in size, and apparently capable, with improved facilities, of indefinite extension. A preliminary study of costs of certain interstate crossings indicated the possibility of establishing lines which might well be self-supporting from the outset, if physical obstacles such as the temporary use of existing New York subways, and economic and political factors, such as the control of rates on the proposed lines by the Interstate Com-

merce Commission, might be so far overcome as to make actual construction feasible. These crossings are outlined in our former reports and are now under consideration by the newly created Suburban Transit Engineering Board.

As to the North Jersey system, on the contrary, it was obvious that before any large patronage could be expected, except as that system should furnish a feeder to the interstate loop, the travel habits of a large portion of our population would have to be modified essentially. In short, not until new centers of economic attraction had been established or old centers rendered readily accessible and the advantages of such accessibility realized by a substantial public, could major patronage be expected; nor, on the other hand would such accessibility be sufficiently enticing unless it were through a continuous service at such short intervals as to compare favorably with the commuter rush hour service. The necessary corollary to these considerations was that at the outset, the North Jersey system would operate at a substantial loss and only begin to retrieve itself when its advantages had been brought home to the residents of the district.

It was but natural then that the report for 1925 should have shown a well defined interstate plan and only a suggestion of a North Jersey system complementary to the interstate scheme. While the 1926 report gave this indefinite North Jersey system greater definiteness, the Commission did not fully emphasize its value for inter-city communication; it was stressed as a feeder for the interstate loop.

Thorough study of the plans thus tentatively advanced, in the light of much sound criticism from the press and the public, has led gradually to the opinion that the two problems of inter-municipal communication within New Jersey and interstate communication with New York must be independently studied with the distinct ends of each problem in view and the ideal solution of each thereafter so modified as to develop eventually a coordinated, combined interstate and North Jersey system.

Having thus arrived at a clear definition of its task, the Commission, as already stated, contemplates first the inter-connection of New Jersey major centers of population with each other through territory capable of industrial expansion and population augmentation, by routes as direct as due consideration of existing conditions and sound economics will permit, leaving until later the rounding out of the comprehensive North Jersey transit system which our studies show to be necessary.

The problem thus presented is: What centers should first be brought into closer transit relationship? Speaking broadly, the several county seats are the major local centers of population. Of these county seats, Newark and Jersey City are the largest. Between the two, the Pennsylvania Railroad, in its Hudson and Manhattan connections already affords a short interval rapid transit service, the chief drawback to which is the extremely high tariff now in effect. Between Jersey City and other New Jersey centers there already exists either direct or exchange connection through the Hudson & Manhattan tubes.

The City of Newark on the other hand although the metropolis of the state and the center of an independent financial and industrial development has very insufficient contacts with neighboring centers. While its outskirts are in actual contact with the outskirts of Elizabeth, infrequent steam railroad service necessitates the almost exclusive use of trolleys and buses for interurban connection. The same situation to an even greater degree exists as to Newark and Paterson, while with Hackensack, the county seat of Bergen County, no direct rail communication exists.

Similarly if we look to the rapidly growing community of Irvington and the towns beyond, we find as to the former no transit other than bus and trolley and as to the latter only the round-about route through the Oranges, necessitated by the barrier of the Watchung Mountain and the limitation on steam railroad grades.

If we turn to the Palisades, from Bayonne to the northerly limit of the state we find a group of municipalities in Hudson and Bergen Counties whose whole dependence for intercommunication is practically upon an overcrowded bus service, centering largely about Journal Square, Jersey City, and confined chiefly to Hudson County. The inevitable result of this situation is the Manhattan-mindedness of this important portion of our state.

It is obvious that if northern New Jersey is to reach the height of its economic possibilities it cannot hope to do so as a mere suburb of Manhattan. The overcrowding of that island has become so great that saturation is not far distant.

Easy means of intercommunication between the different sections of North Jersey must lead to a realization of the tremendous economic resources awaiting development. Without such a system of easy intercommunication, these potentialities can be realized only in the most haphazard way, for it has become axiomatic that population follows transportation, and not that transportation follows population. The income from the increase in property values of New York City as a result of its subway system has been many times in excess of the sum necessary to carry the annual deficit of its subway lines, while the enhancement of values about Journal Square, Jersey City, pointed out in detail in our 1927 report, shows a similar result much nearer home.

The efforts of the Commission during the latter half of 1927 have been devoted mainly to a critical reconsideration of its earlier approach to the North Jersey problem. Neither the time nor the money at its disposal during that period has been sufficient for it to arrive at definite recommendations for immediate construction. Tentative cost figures have been prepared. Income figures are difficult to formulate because of the absence of any real facilities for inter-sectional transit. To predicate passenger estimates on existing patronage of trolley, bus and—when they exist—infrequent and inconvenient railroad lines would be unwise. What may be deduced

from such studies—and especially in regard to the bus—is a confirmation of the growth of user with the growth in facilities. Bus lines, tentatively established, have almost invariably found patronage, and an increasing patronage demanding more frequent trips and increased equipment. What is happening in this small way may be taken as an evidence of what will happen in a much larger way if major facilities be provided.

Geographically the North Jersey district falls into two natural divisions, one including that portion of Hudson and Bergen Counties lying along the Palisades which forms a natural north and south line for intercommunication, with Jersey City as the dominating municipality. A line along this ridge or in close proximity to it with proper intersections would essentially parallel the north and south line of the New York subway system and would afford access for residents of the Palisades section to all of the great undeveloped industrial areas lying to the west. Such intercommunication would soon bring into existence major business undertakings for the convenience of those residents whose needs are now largely satisfied in New York City. Further studies of such a line are in progress and consideration is being given to the possibility of its construction. Buses running north and south from Journal Square now carry a daily traffic amounting to over 50,000 one way passengers or over 100,000 in both directions. This traffic would rapidly increase if a frequent interval rapid transit service were provided.

The connection of this Palisades Ridge line with Staten Island would provide a further source of passengers, furnishing Staten Island with a rapid transit route to Manhattan. Plans for the Bayonne-Port Richmond bridge, as originally drafted by the Port of New York Authority, did not include a provision for rapid transit but upon the suggestion of the Transit Commission whose opinion was invited by the Port of New York Authority, the plans have been modified to make possible the later addition either of rapid transit tracks

or of increased vehicular capacity as future requirements shall demand.

The other geographical division lies to the west of the Hackensack River. Of this district Newark is the great local financial and industrial center. The line already mentioned as planned to connect Newark with Passaic and Paterson and also through Rutherford with Hackensack, will offer these communities a means of intercommunication which will be a salient factor in their right development.

Other routes from Newark suggested are: a line connected with the Newark-Paterson-Hackensack line through the Clinton Hill section of Newark to Irvington or Springfield and thence continuing either to Summit or Plainfield; a branch route extending from Hayes Circle in Newark through the Weequahic section to Hillside and Elizabeth.

In conclusion the Commission believes that, while its studies as to cost and potential patronage have not progressed sufficiently to justify recommending at this time the construction of any portion of this system, during the coming year a program can be developed leading to definite recommendations not only as to the section first to be undertaken but also as to the means of financing it.

As to the financial problem it should be recalled that as a result of a study by Mr. Philip H. Cornick, Specialist on Benefit Assessments, the Commission in its 1927 report, stated:

"Mr. Cornick's recommendation that benefit assessments should be incorporated in any financial plan for rapid transit construction in the North Jersey Transit District points to a method of finance adopted elsewhere in instances detailed in Mr. Cornick's report, and is recommended to the serious consideration of your body and of the residents of the district."

Further studies of the application, in major undertakings, of the benefit assessment plan, made for the Commission by Mr. Cornick during the latter half of 1927, have resulted in a report to the Commission which because of constitutional

limitations throws some question on the availability of this method of finance in actual practice in New Jersey, sound as it may be in theory. The Commission believes that further study must be given this important question before making definite recommendation.

The North Jersey Transit Commission has been handicapped the last half of the year through the enforced necessity of reorganizing its staff. Due to the compact with the Port Authority, the larger part of its force was moved over to the office of the Port Authority. This has meant the rebuilding of a new staff, with all the attendant delays and annoyances. In spite of this difficulty, the staff, without exception, has cooperated splendidly and is now a cohesive and efficient organization. For their loyalty and helpfulness, the thanks of the North Jersey Transit Commission are due.

Respectfully submitted,

NORTH JERSEY TRANSIT COMMISSION,

DANIEL A. GARBER, *Chairman*

WALTER M. DEAR, *Vice-Chairman*

H. HATCHER, *Secretary*

JAMES O. BETELLE, *Commissioner*

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