
Public Hearing

before

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON NEW JERSEY TRANSIT

“The Committee will take testimony from New Jersey Transit bus, rail, and light rail riders concerning the quality of services and rider concerns”

LOCATION: Hoboken Terminal
1 Hudson Place
Hoboken, New Jersey

DATE: November 13, 2019
5:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Stephen M. Sweeney, Chair
Senator Loretta Weinberg, Vice Chair
Senator Joseph Cryan
Senator Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr.
Senator Christopher ‘Kip’ Bateman
Senator Kristin M. Corrado
Senator Thomas H. Kean, Jr.



ALSO PRESENT:

Patrick Brennan
Philip M. Mersinger
*Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aides*

Mark Magyar
*Senate Majority
Committee Aide*

Ted Conrad
*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*



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Chair

LORETTA WEINBERG
Vice-Chair

JOSEPH CRYAN
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New Jersey State Legislature

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON
NEW JERSEY TRANSIT
STATE HOUSE ANNEX
PO BOX 068
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PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Senate Select Committee on New Jersey Transit will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, November 13, 2019 at 5:00 PM in The Historic Waiting Room, Hoboken Terminal, 1 Hudson Place, Hoboken, New Jersey, 07030.

The public may address comments and questions to Patrick Brennan, Philip M. Mersinger, Committee Aides, or make bill status and scheduling inquiries to Kimberly Johnson, Secretary, at (609) 847-3840, fax (609) 292-0561, or e-mail: OLSAideSNJT@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 committee will take testimony from New Jersey Transit bus, rail, and light rail riders concerning the quality of services and rider concerns.

Those individuals presenting written testimony are asked to provide 20 copies to the committee aide at the public hearing.

Issued 11/8/19

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Jonathan Katz Private Citizen	3
Brian Kudowitz Private Citizen	3
Leonard Resto President New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP), and Member National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP)	5
Kevin Garcia Manager New Jersey Bus Campaign Tri-State Transportation Campaign	18
Atoya Wilkins Private Citizen	18
Roger Heitmann Treasurer Board of Directors Riverview Neighborhood Association	23
Tina Hahn Private Citizen	27
Vincent Fedor Private Citizen	28
Orlando Riley State Vice Chair ATU Local 819	31
Martin Heraghty President/Business Agent ATU Local 824	33

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
David Peter Alan, Esq. Chair Lackawanna Coalition, and Member Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Authority Committee	40
Jeffrey M. Goldman Private Citizen	45
Ron Hine Executive Director Fund for a Better Waterfront (FBW)	45
Albert L. Papp, Jr. Council of Representatives New Jersey Rail Passengers Association, and Director New Jersey National Association of Railroad Passengers	48
Barbara Gombach Weinstein Private Citizen	50
Brian Hornak Private Citizen	52
Tiffanie Fisher Member City Council 2nd Ward City of Hoboken	54
Nicola Maganuco Private Citizen	58
Jerome Johnson General Chairman SMART-TD Local 60	61
Liz Ndoye Private Citizen	67

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Chip Hallock President and Chief Executive Officer Newark Business Partnership	69
Anthony Russo President Commerce and Industry Association of New Jersey (CIANJ)	71
Richard Weinstein, Esq. Private Citizen	72
APPENDIX:	
Testimony, plus attachments submitted by David Peter Alan, Esq.	1x
Witness slips and comments submitted by Hearing Attendees	21x
pnf:1-77	

SENATOR STEPHEN M. SWEENEY (Chair): Okay; we're going to get started.

First, I want to thank the people who are here; I want to thank my colleagues in the Senate.

And I'm just going to do a real quick statement, and then we're going to get started.

Look, we're here not to cast any blame on any Administration. We're here to look for solutions, so there are commuters -- you get in a position, so when they show up at a bus or if they show up a train, they know it's going to show up on time, and they're going to be able to get wherever they have to get when they're supposed to.

The system we have right now is not reliable and it's not acceptable. So with that, our hope is we're going to have a handful of hearings, and by the time of the Governor's budget address we have some solutions.

We have to find a reliable, dedicated source of funding for New Jersey Transit; I think everybody recognizes that. We also know that New Jersey Transit is required to do a five-year budget. And I can tell you, right now, the next four years don't look good unless we find a reliable source of funding.

But again, this is not to cast blame; we want to hear from you. The Senators are more than free to ask questions. But, most importantly, New Jersey's lifeline is New Jersey Transit. This economy is really relying on that, and we're looking to find ways, not just to maintain what we have, but to expand transportation, and finish the Hudson-Bergen Line, and some of the other transportation priorities that we have this state.

And with that, we will start calling--

Oh, attendance, please; roll call.

MR. BRENNAN (Committee Aide): Senator Bateman.

SENATOR BATEMAN: Here.

MR. BRENNAN: Senator Corrado.

SENATOR CORRADO: Here.

MR. BRENNAN: Senator Diegnan.

SENATOR DIEGNAN: Here.

MR. BRENNAN: Senator Cryan.

SENATOR CRYAN: Here.

MR. BRENNAN: Vice Chair Weinberg.

SENATOR LORETTA WEINBERG (Vice Chair): Here.

MR. BRENNAN: And Chairman Sweeney.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Here.

And Senator Kean is on his way.

MR. BRENNAN: Yes.

SENATOR SWEENEY: He got caught up-- You'll find this hard to believe, but there's some traffic up here.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Is he taking the train?

SENATOR SWEENEY: If he took the train, he'd be late.

(laughter)

Our first witness is going to be Len Resto, the National Association of Rail Passengers.

Len? Is Len here?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF COMMITTEE: He might not have gotten here yet because of a delayed train.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Well, unfortunately, our first person to give testimony -- his train was delayed. Symbolic, right?

Okay; Brian Kudowitz and Jonathan Katz.

And for the record, if you can state your name, and where you're from, and if you represent any organization or you're just representing yourself.

JONATHAN KATZ: We represent ourselves; we live in Englewood, New Jersey.

My name is Jonathan Katz.

BRIAN KUDOWITZ: Brian Kudowitz.

So we wanted to speak specifically on the issue of how New Jersey Transit does long-term planning of its routes through residential areas.

Just specifically, as an example, both of us live on a very narrow, completely residential block in Englewood, New Jersey. And two different New Jersey Transit bus routes traverse that block; and it is the sole outlier on those routes in that it is the only block that is completely narrow, whereas the other blocks are all major arteries, wide thoroughfares that can handle large volumes of traffic. And our block has approaching, now, about 400 different New Jersey Transit buses passing two different directions every single day. And it's a very small block; many children on the block. And we see it as something that poses an increasing danger to our families. Again, because it is that outlier, the other blocks are all much more suited to heavy volume of traffic.

Just as an example, if you look back at New Jersey Transit published schedules, you can see about a 15 percent increase in bus volume over the last 10 years; 30 percent over the last 15 or so years.

So again, as we look at that, there's just, for us, a curiosity -- and I'm sure we're not the only ones -- as to how New Jersey Transit planned an entire route where you have one, let's say, at most a fifth-of-a mile-stretch of a narrow block included in a route that has such a heavy and increasingly heavy flow of buses throughout the day.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Anything else?

MR. KUDOWITZ: That's all I had to add, unless Mr. Katz had anything to add.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Any members here?

SENATOR CRYAN: Can I ask the bus number?

SENATOR SWEENEY: Sure.

SENATOR CRYAN: What bus numbers are on your route?

MR. KUDOWITZ: Sure; so the primary one is the 166, which has three varieties: the 166 Turnpike Express, which primarily serves Leonia and Palisades Park; there's 166 Express; and then there's the local. And then there's also a 756, which is a completely different line.

SENATOR CRYAN: Thank you.

MR. KUDOWITZ: Sure.

SENATOR DIEGNAN: What's the name of your street?

SENATOR CRYAN: Oh, yes, what's the name of your street?

MR. KUDOWITZ: Sure; it's Van Nostand Avenue, specifically between Broad Avenue and Grand Avenue as cross streets. It's a very narrow portion of the entire route.

SENATOR CRYAN: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: So you're looking for an explanation why they would pick something like that to travel, right?

MR. KUDOWITZ: Right; or at least how the decision process is made, in terms of longer-term planning -- looking for alternatives. Again, because if you look at the last 15 years, a 30 percent increase; I'm anticipating, over the next 15 years we'll see a similar 30 percent increase. It's unsustainable to safety on the block.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Well, I agree with you. Because what we're seeing is -- it's only going to expand, you know? This region of the state is growing rapidly and it's starting to have much more traffic here.

So it's a good question.

Anyone else? (no response)

If not, thank you, gentlemen.

MR. KUDOWITZ: Thank you.

MR. KATZ: Thank you very much.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Next, is going to be our commuter who was delayed by a late train, Len Resto.

LEONARD RESTO: Thank you.

Good evening, distinguished panel. I'm very, very grateful for your having invited me.

My name is Len Resto, and I'm President of the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers. It's a rail advocacy group that's been in existence since 1980, advocating on behalf of all Transit users, be they rail or bus, despite our name being *Railroad* Association.

I was delayed in getting here because of a train cancelation. There was, unfortunately, a fatality at Mountain Station on the Morris and Essex Line; an apparent suicide. And so trains were running at least 30 minutes late, and that was being announced.

What was not announced was that the 3:13 train, that I was going to get, would be canceled. That announcement came at 3:15, and it just said, "The 3:13 is canceled." No reason given -- one would suspect it had to do with the events at Mountain Station -- but there was no reason given. And what you had at the station was about 20 people, all discretionary riders, who now have to decide how are they going to get where they want to go.

SENATOR CRYAN: Where were you?

MR. RESTO: I was at Chatham.

SENATOR CRYAN: Chatham.

MR. RESTO: Yes, at the Chatman Station.

So one gentleman, who had to go to a doctor's appointment, called an Uber to get to where he wanted to go, because there was no announcement saying that there was a 3:51 train that would be the next train. People were kind of left to figure this out on their own.

And then when I went to my iPhone to check the website to see if there was any information on the 3:13 and the reason for the cancelation, there was none. It didn't even show up.

So you know, this is what we go through on a daily basis, and it's just unacceptable.

So with that explanation, I wanted to read a statement on behalf of our organization.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Before you go into your more formal part, do you have any suggestions on the communications and how all of that can be improved? Because it is a regular complaint that I see on social media.

MR. RESTO: Yes, on the communications aspect, I think New Jersey Transit managers have to travel the system at each station, and they have to see the quality of the announcements.

So for instance, "The 3:13 is canceled" is not helpful to anyone, because they don't know what their options are. They should be told, "Passengers are going to be accommodated on the next train," which would have been the 3:51. The announcements inside the station building were completely unintelligible. You had to go outside on the platform in order to understand what was being said.

When I finally got the train and had to change at Summit -- when you go to the station building itself, they have music playing, which is a nice thing for people who listen to music. But when the announcements come on, the music doesn't stop. So you can't hear a thing; you have to go back outside in order to hear it. I mean, it's like Keystone Kops; it's incredible. And this has been a problem at New Jersey Transit since it was created 40 years ago. It has not improved; I have no confidence that it will improve, because it just -- you tell them until you're blue in the face, "You have to do better," and they recognize it, and it keeps happening.

So I have absolutely no confidence that communication will get any better. So it wasn't on the website; the announcement was just, "The train is canceled," and that was it. You know, you're left to your own devices. It's disgraceful.

SENATOR CRYAN: So do you use the app?

MR. RESTO: Yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: Has it improved? I know they've invested in the app.

MR. RESTO: It wasn't on the app.

SENATOR CRYAN: Do you use-- I understand the app has been updated.

MR. RESTO: Yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: So have you noticed an improvement in communications from the investments in the app?

MR. RESTO: There's a little bit of improvement on it; but certainly to the extent that we need to be with communication, we're nowhere near.

SENATOR CRYAN: And there's no music on the app.

MR. RESTO: No; at least, not music that I like. I'm partial to Motown. (laughter)

SENATOR SWEENEY: Any questions? Because he's going to--

Read your statement, sir.

MR. RESTO: Okay, thank you.

So my statement is -- recently, before the opening of American Dream -- the new Mall complex at the Meadowlands -- I saw an advertorial on TAPinto Elizabeth that was titled, "NJ Transit: Moving Forward." And the byline was, "NJ Transit is finally running like a business."

And my reaction was, "Really?" It was an advertorial; it was sponsored content, even though the signatory, allegedly, to this advertorial, was Jim Kirkos, the President of the Greater Meadowlands Chamber of Commerce.

So you know, I look at this -- and I know that one of the recommendations made by the consultant who Governor Murphy engaged to

study New Jersey Transit was to find out how NJ Transit could operate as a company, as a corporation. So I look at this and I say, “Would a corporation’s board of directors, with more vacant seats than filled seats, be allowed to conduct business?” And no corporation’s shareholders would stand idly by and allow a company to be run by a board of three people. That’s not a board, that’s an autocracy, and it’s disgraceful.

And the Governor has made nominations to the Board, which haven’t been acted upon by the Legislature for various reasons. And, you know, whether or not the individuals nominated are competent in transportation, or are daily users, or regular users of the system, that I don’t know. I know that I wanted to be one of the directors, but that didn’t happen. But I have no idea where that stands, and people are just fed up with the seeming inaction of the Legislature to act on that.

If you look at NJ Transit’s bylaws, it states that a quorum consists of two members; two members. No corporation would allow any board to have two members constitute a quorum. That has to change. There is no corporation that would designate, as a Chair of the Board, an appointed Chair who is also the DOT Commissioner, which is an inherent conflict of interest. That should not be; no corporation would tolerate that.

Would a quasi-public agency refuse to meet with advocates, despite repeated attempts to secure such a meeting? The New Jersey Association of Rail Passengers, and other advocates, met quarterly with the top brass at NJ Transit since the days of Jeff Warsh as Executive Director. That was during the governorship of Christine Todd Whitman. The last meeting we had took place on December 17, 2017, under then-Executive Director Steve Santoro, and that included the top brass of NJ Transit. So

that meant the Senior Head of Rail, the Senior Head of Operations, the Senior Head of Bus. It included all senior managers: planning, capital planning, strategic planning -- all of those departments were represented.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And that was two years ago?

MR. RESTO: Two years ago, December 2017.

I have personally asked President and CEO Kevin Corbett to meet with him. And I actually did that in person at the New Jersey League of Municipalities in 2018. And his response was very friendly; he said he was eager to do that, and then nothing ever happened. And it still hasn't happened.

And, you know, I see that they did name a Customer Advocate, which was one of the recommendations made by the organization that Governor Murphy had doing an audit of New Jersey Transit. But respectfully submitted, we are the advocates for those people, because think of this. You have a Customer Advocate who's charged with criticizing the agency he's employed by, and his paycheck is signed by the very agency he's giving advice to, or pushing for the customer. You can't have that. We have absolutely no problem with the gentleman being the Chief Customer Experience Officer; but the advocates are ourselves, and we need to have access to the President and CEO of New Jersey Transit, as well as their senior management staff. Because that's the only way we're going to get out of this mess; it's the only way we'll get out of this mess. We can't move forward without that.

You take a look at the shortage of engineers and bus operators. Let's take, for example, Amazon. If you ordered something from Amazon, would you expect your package not to be delivered for days because they didn't have enough drivers? They'd go out of business. But cancelations are

routine. Look at the cancelation I endured today just to get here. Monday, Veterans Day, there were four cancelations on the Pascack Valley Line. The Newark Light Rail system has become so unreliable because there were cancelations due to operator *availability*, when it should be operator *unavailability*, because if the operator was available, it'd be running. It's just totally unacceptable.

Another aspect -- and would a corporation, knowing of an increase in retirements of key public-facing personnel, allow for that to grow to the point where there's a dire shortage of engineers and bus operators?

Would a corporation allow for a disparity in pay scales with surrounding Transit agencies to be such that in a full-employment economy people choose to work elsewhere, at other Transit agencies? I had a friend of mine, as an engineer of New Jersey Transit, looking to retire to Florida. His wife pushed the issue, they moved to Florida; but he wasn't ready to retire, and he got a job as an engineer with the Bright-Line in Florida at a 23 percent increase in pay.

So where would you work? It's not -- these are not tough questions, they are not tough decisions to make.

Would a corporation that's installing potentially life-saving Positive Train Control circle the wagons, as NJ Transit did on PTC whenever advocates asked a question at a Board meeting? It wasn't until news of PTC being delayed by five months, just recently, that NJ Transit wouldn't report that to the public. It took the Governor having to sign an Executive Order ordering them to provide this information, which is something that a Board does as a matter of routine. The MTA, at every single Board meeting, not only gives a verbal update on PTC, they also give a written one. It just is --

there is such a lack of transparency that it is just absolutely mind-boggling. And it goes back to three people on the Board, being run as an autocracy, and that just has to change.

One other thing, and this was-- The Governor was partially culpable in this, along with New Jersey Transit, but they misled the public on Positive Train Control when they announced that PTC was done December 31, 2018; we met the deadline. My next-door neighbor said, "Oh, great. Come Monday, the trains will back." I said, "No; they met the Federal Railroad Administration deadline to get an extension to December 31, 2020, to complete the rest of the fleet." That was in the fine, fine print at the bottom.

That's not fair to riders. They should be leveled with; they should know what's going on. You would be amazed at how tolerant riders will be if you tell them the truth.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Excuse me one second, please.

We normally put a time limit on how long people can speak when we have a lot of speakers.

You know, Senator Weinberg would like to address the Board issue. And if you could wrap up after that, then we'll take your statement.

MR. RESTO: Sure.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Senator Weinberg.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Yes, thank you.

I have stated this publicly and, certainly, I have stated it to the Governor's Office.

We were not in full agreement with the first group of nominees.

Some of them -- I don't want to give numbers -- but some of them did not have the requisite background. So we are in negotiations with the Administration to put forth names of people who have a background, such as advocates like your organization, train riders, bus riders themselves.

MR. RESTO: I'd be happy to be considered.

SENATOR WEINBERG: I'm not offering you the position, right here (laughter), but we are working with the Administration.

MR. RESTO: Great.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And I'm hoping that this will be done by the end of the year.

And you are correct about the too small numbers on the Board. I think the issue around the Chairmanship is something we did not discuss in the Reform Bill, and it might be something that we revisit.

So thank you for that input.

MR. RESTO: No, thank you.

I just have 10 very short recommendations, if I may read them. I know that you're--

SENATOR SWEENEY: If you can be brief; otherwise you can submit them to us.

MR. RESTO: I will be brief.

Again, fill the Board of Directors; change the bylaws so that there are 13 Directors, and 7 constitute a quorum; have the Chair of the Board of Directors be someone who is chosen from the members of the Board, not appointed to be the DOT Commissioner; schedule regular meetings with the rail advocates; speed the implementation of PTC, and the hiring of engineers and bus operators in order to stop cancellations; fix the pay scale so that the

lowest levels are being paid so that they don't take jobs elsewhere; establish transparency; boost ridership by reinstating off-peak fares.

And to the Legislature, I would ask that we find, again, a stable source of funding to allow NJ Transit to engage in mid- and long-term planning so they don't have to raid capital to cover operating expenses.

So we're hoping that this time this legislative panel will yield results; and we are happy to help you in any way we can.

And that's my statement, and I thank you very much.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Any questions from anyone?

SENATOR CRYAN: Do you mind if I ask him--

SENATOR SWEENEY: Please; Senator Cryan, please.

SENATOR CRYAN: You sure?

SENATOR SWEENEY: Please, Senator.

SENATOR CRYAN: Okay; just a couple of quick ones, because you are an advocate.

So I do know from someone who represents part of the RVL Line -- like a couple of us do here -- that the restoration of off-peak was given with the primary reason being because there were more engineers who graduated. It's my understanding that there are 41 engineers either who graduated since 2018 or will be as part of the eight classes that are ongoing, for a total of a 111 through 2021.

You're obviously an advocate who's interested and focused on this issue.

MR. RESTO: Yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: Is that adequate, in terms of the engineering need?

MR. RESTO: I think they have to go for more, because you have to allow for people who have time off, vacations, illnesses, etc. What's happening now is if you have engineers who want to take a day off -- and no one begrudges them their time off -- they don't have enough people to backfill.

SENATOR CRYAN: You know this better than I do, but from an engineering standpoint it's fairly clear, at least to me, that there's a genuine effort to get more engineers.

MR. RESTO: Yes, there is.

SENATOR CRYAN: Okay. And I don't know the adequate number either; I was hoping you could -- you might shed light on it. I'm sure New Jersey Transit will be sharing that with us along the way.

MR. RESTO: YES.

SENATOR CRYAN: My other question to you is the PTC. As I understand it, there are 472 trains done; another 412 to go -- right? -- with a two-year schedule.

Now, you're an advocate; does that sound right? Is that about right, in terms of--

MR. RESTO: That sounds about right. We were hopeful that that could be accomplished sooner, because I think we were led to believe that--

SENATOR CRYAN: Okay; is there a way to do that sooner, that you know of? I apologize to the Committee, but it--

MR. RESTO: No, I think that-- You know, if they could get help from neighboring agencies, like SEPTA--

SENATOR CRYAN: Okay.

MR. RESTO: -- or what have you, that they can reach this target.

SENATOR CRYAN: Thank you.

MR. RESTO: Yes, Senator.

SENATOR CRYAN: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Senator Kean.

SENATOR KEAN: Thank you, Senate President.

Mr. Resto, it's good to see you.

MR. RESTO: Good to see you, Senator

SENATOR KEAN: It's always good to see a constituent.

I have recommended you, as you know, to the North Jersey Railroad Passenger Advisory Committee--

MR. RESTO: Thank you.

SENATOR KEAN: --and we will continue to push that, as you well know.

I guess the question -- I've got a couple different questions.

On the issue of the engineers. I think one of the things that so many commuters find so frustrating -- which is part of this communications issues -- is, an engineer can literally give an hour's notice, take the day off, and one individual decision causes a systemic breakdown of the entirety--

MR. RESTO: Absolutely.

SENATOR KEAN: --of everybody trying to get to work or back home to their families. And that has been a problem in the contract going

back three years. It rears up with frequency during certain days and certain times of the year.

And I think, from the public's perspective, and families who want these individuals to come home or go out on a timely basis, and have predictability in their lives -- that ability to, in the contract, take these extra days off with no notice -- it's crippling the system. That's not a fault of an actual piece of equipment; it's not anything else -- more engineers than necessary. It's an individual making a decision, and then there's no downside penalty. We have a contract coming up this December, when they need to renegotiate this in real time so that you're not impacting the passengers every day.

MR. RESTO: Yes, and that is a real problem. I'm glad you brought up that point, because many times the "notice" that NJ Transit has is, there's a train waiting to go out and an engineer doesn't show up, and they have to cancel the train. But they announce the cancelation 15, 20 minutes later, even though they know that that train isn't going to leave the station.

So on the Morris and Essex Line, you have a train in Dover that's supposed to arrive in Chatham 25 minutes later. They know that train isn't going to run, but yet they'll wait that 25 minutes to make the announcement, and it's because an engineer didn't show up. You can't run a business that way, you know, that you just say, "You know what? I'm not going to show up today," or give an hour's notice. That's not acceptable; that does not happen in corporate America because when it does, the consequence is someone else will have your job.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Okay, anyone else? (no response)

If not, thank you.

MR. RESTO: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Next, we're going to have Kevin Garcia, Bus Coordinator for Tri-State Transportation Campaign; and Atoya Wilkins, a bus commuter.

Is Atoya here?

And Kevin, just so you know, I should have said this in the beginning, we're going to limit people to five minutes, okay?

So you're on.

KEVIN GARCIA: Perfect.

So as was stated, my name is Kevin Garcia; I'm the Campaign Manager for Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

We advocate for equitable, safe, and multimodal transportation networks in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

One of my jobs is to talk to bus riders and figure out what are the issues and improvements that they'd like to see. And a lot of times bus riders tell me the same stories: how their buses are stuck in traffic, their buses are not showing up, they're delayed. And improvements tend to be the same -- that they want more buses on their routes and that they want better shelters beyond a simple bus stop sign in the ground.

But I have Atoya here, who is a New Jersey Transit bus rider from Elizabeth, to tell her story.

ATOYA WILKINS: Good evening; thank you.

My name is Atoya, and I am a resident of Elizabeth, and have lived in different towns within New Jersey state.

I'm a mother of five, of which four children use public transportation for work, as well to get around.

I rely mostly on the 48, the 62, and the 115 buses. I am hoping that New Jersey Transit can acquire more funding in order to purchase more buses. Regularly, I have to wait longer than the designated wait time for my bus to get anywhere after work.

I walk to the Mills (Indiscernible) to basically catch the 115; and at times, that bus does not come until an hour-and-a-half past schedule, and that's time wasted.

Even when using the New Jersey Transit app, I am not given an accurate bus arrival time. This is precious time that I could use to be resting, or with my family.

I also worry for my daughter -- who is also here this evening -- because she usually gets off work at 3 a.m. in the morning, and she would have to wait an hour for the bus to come.

As someone who works non-traditional work hours, I need more buses on my route and extended operational hours; not just for my work commute, but also to get to my doctor's appointments for my son, who is also special ed and has special needs as well.

Currently, it costs me about \$2.55 to get my son to the doctor. But at times, the buses are not on time; so therefore, I will have to use Lyft or Uber, which will be \$20 out of my pocket to get my son to the doctor on time. Because as we all know, if we're not at the doctors at a certain period of time, then we have to basically pay for cancelation fees.

One of the issues I see with buses is the slow onboarding. Many times I see bus riders taking too long boarding the bus, and asking bus drivers the cost to ride the bus. I once lived in Atlanta, where MARTA riders board quicker because MARTA buses have tap cards for boarding.

Furthermore, the zonal fair system is complicated. Just like MARTA, New Jersey Transit should have a flat rate to reduce the confusion of the cost to ride the bus and get riders on quicker. New Jersey Transit should look to emulate this system.

As someone who has lived in different parts of New Jersey, I've seen similar bus stops throughout my travels. I've seen and waited at bus stops that are just a sign in the ground. Riders need better bus stops that include shelter to be protected from the rain and the snow, and heat lamps to stay warm during the cold winter season. We're tired of waiting in the cold or the rain, just to show up to work frozen or drenched prior to our time.

So I need more buses on my route so that my children and I can rely -- to get where we need to go; and we need shelter so that we're waiting comfortably and safely.

I need New Jersey Transit to do better.

Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Senator Cryan.

SENATOR CRYAN: Thank you.

And Atoya, thank you; Kevin as well.

A couple quick comments; actually, Chair, through you, I'd like to -- if we could make sure the Committee understands how New Jersey Transit actually reports on-time performance for its buses. I think there's a lot of inconsistency with that.

Atoya talked about her hour-and-a-half. I think one of the milestone marks is 5 minutes and 59 seconds between destinations, so I think that would be one of the things for the Committee here.

And Atoya, as we chatted about a little bit, it's my understanding, from some of the prep materials we received, that there's 772 new buses coming, and I think 240-and-change are actually in service.

Through you, Chair, I'd like to know how those are allocated. So how is that capacity decided upon? Who makes that decision, and how does that actually work so that folks like Atoya get a shot at a new bus?

And my last thing is this. We had a forum last week in the City of Elizabeth, and one of the discussions-- The shelter issue is a big deal.

MS. WILKINS: Yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: People stand and freeze; and it turns out there was some confusion of how shelters are actually done. I know I'd like to see a uniform policy come out of this, because it turns out -- as we chatted about before the hearing -- that municipalities have to request a shelter. And in the forum I was at, there were local government officials who literally did not know that. So we have to work, maybe, a little bit because we can't have you cold, we can't have you aggravated when you go to work, right?

You talked about-- You work at Newark Airport, or is it your daughter?

MS. WILKINS: My daughter works at Newark Airport; I work for IKEA.

SENATOR CRYAN: Okay; and you work for IKEA, right? So--

MS. WILKINS: Yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: And those off-hours and things -- we need to work on that experience.

Atoya, I just want to say thanks. This goes through, time and again, the anecdotes of how long you wait. And we actually should realize,

even though we're in a rail terminal, more folks use buses than rail from New Jersey Transit -- which I know this Committee knows; some of the public seems surprised when we say that.

We have a lot of work to do there.

Thank you.

MS. WILKINS: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you, Senator.

Anyone else? (no response)

We would like to enlist your organization in working with us for some recommendations. Listen, we know what we have doesn't work. We need to get new buses that have multiple doors, we have to embrace technology, and we want to go to electric. You know, we're all talking about electrics; Senator Weinberg talks about that. We're in the process of purchasing buses. We should be buying buses that are going to meet the needs so you onload and offload quicker.

So we will be reaching out to your organization to provide insight from a commuter's view.

SENATOR CRYAN: By the way, real quick -- I understood that the tap was actually a pilot now; I learned that last week -- that to your suggestion, Atoya, and to Kevin, the tap system that you talked about--

MS. WILKINS: Yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: -- is actually underway.

MS. WILKINS: Okay.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Senator Kean.

SENATOR KEAN: I'm sorry; and through you, Mr. Senate President.

Thank you all for being here today.

Can we also, if I may, through your organization -- technology for-- Are the current routes really the most efficient and effective for the commuting public? Because it seems to me they don't necessarily update the routes or change the routes, a little bit, within changing needs, changing job opportunities, things like that. So if you're looking at a bus route -- which really is a very dynamic entity, which is the vehicle -- can we look, through the Chairman, to add that, as well, on the list of issues to talk about?

SENATOR SWEENEY: All right; thank you, Senator.

Anyone else? (no response)

If not, thank you.

MR. GARCIA: Thank you, Committee.

MS. WILKINS: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Next, we're going to bring up Roger Heitmann, Riverview Neighborhood Association, Inc.; and Tina Hahn.

Is Tina here? You can come up to the table, Tina.

And just for the record, state your name and what town you live in.

R O G E R H E I T M A N N: My name is Roger Heitmann; I live in Jersey City Heights. And I am a Board member of the Riverview Neighborhood Association. We're a grassroots organization, a 501(c)(3) non-profit.

Last summer, we began to see a lot of chatter on Facebook about bus service in Jersey City Heights. And as a result of all of that, we decided

to put out a petition and get as many people as we could to sign that petition regarding bus service. We ended up gathering about 800 signatures.

We also did a study of the bus service in the Heights, specifically the 119 and the 87 bus. We presented our petition to Assemblyman Mukherji last year, and he was able to get a meeting with Director Corbett and Director Corbett's bus managers. We had that meeting last fall.

We've had mixed results since then. We have gotten a few extra trips on the 119 bus, which goes from Jersey City Heights into Manhattan. We've also gotten some improvement with some of the transportation issues coming from the Heights down into Hoboken, regarding traffic signals and so forth.

But, by and large, we don't see a whole lot of improvement. And every time we have a meeting with New Jersey Transit bus managers, they always seem to have the same excuses or problems; and that -- as has been mentioned before, the lack of bus drivers and the lack of buses. And also the situation with the lack of space in the Port Authority Bus Terminal.

And so that seems to be something we can't overcome, for whatever reason, at this time. I know they are purchasing more buses and everything, but it still seems to be an insurmountable problem at this point.

In addition, where I live there's a lot of development. We're in the process of building about at least 15 high-rise buildings in the Journal Square area, and there's more to come. That's only the beginning. And yet, there doesn't seem to be any plan to handle all of those additional commuters who are moving to Jersey City because of the proximity to New York.

Now, folks in Hudson County and in Bergen County have the problem of being a bedroom community. And people move to our counties

because they expect to be able to get into Manhattan to their jobs. And yet, there doesn't seem to be any plan for those additional residents. And, in fact, when I presented my petition to Director Corbett, his response was, "Well, New Jersey Transit is not in the business of planning for future development."

And so I was very disappointed by that statement, because it's inevitable that this is going to happen. We all see it, we all know it. We see the buildings going up every day. And yet, there's no-- It's like management by crisis. There's no plan to accommodate all these additional residents who are moving in.

And -- I don't want to take too long -- but we already have a problem with overcrowding on the 119. Buses are passing people by, leaving them at the stops. People are missing appointments at work, they're missing meetings. You know, all this is going on, on a daily basis. Even though we've had trips added, it's still not enough.

So I don't know what the answer is except to get some kind of a plan together. And one of the ideas I had was -- I think the developers should buy into this because they are building all of these buildings, and all of the residents, or many of them, are going to be using public transit. So why don't we have a Transportation Trust Fund that these developers can pay into to contribute? Because they're all marketing their buildings as being easy transportation to Manhattan, and they're profiting by this.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Sir, we have to-- If you can wrap this up.

But we've talked in the past about counties putting together master plans for the needs of mass transportation. Because, as you've seen in Jersey City, you're building all those buildings. Those people are there

because they think they can take mass transportation, and it's not really there.

We have the same thing in Hoboken, where we sit right now, where they're planning a mass expansion; but there's no transportation for that.

So whether it's county-based, working with New Jersey Transit, or some other solution-- No, we are in the business of planning for future growth in the state, and New Jersey Transit needs to be part of that. So I agree with you.

Does anyone have anything for this witness?

SENATOR CRYAN: I have one; I'm sorry, I have one thing.

Because I have a Bill that actually just dropped to ask developers to pay into.

Fair's fair. If you're going to build 1,300 units, you should also have an obligation and put a sign out that says, "We're next to a train, or you can take, for example, the 114 bus in Union, New Jersey." And you ought to contribute to what that transportation route needs.

Roger, you're right on point.

Senate President, we just dropped a Bill on this, because developers should be part of the solution, in terms of -- fair's fair -- to Transit, a little bit, right? We all have our frustrations. But you can't build 3,000 units, put a sign outside that says, "I have bus routes to New York City," and not provide any sort of heads-up cost profile or anything that goes with it.

It's an idea to talk about the planning and have it properly done. I couldn't agree with you more, Roger, on that point.

MR. HEITMANN: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Tina, your name and town you're from.

TINA HAHN: Thank you.

Tina Hahn; I'm a Hoboken resident.

So thank you very much, Senator Sweeney, for speaking about the growth we're experiencing here.

I echo many of the comments of what they're experiencing in Jersey City, in that Hoboken has seen significant growth and it's only going to continue with the many buildings that we have coming on board. In particular, when you look at the bus -- and our route being the 126 -- we need to find a way to handle additional capacity.

It's my understanding that we can't add buses during the week, so we need other solves. I've heard extended buses could be an option. I would love your opinion on that, and if we can do that.

We also need more service on the 126 on the weekends.

In regards to the trains -- while many residents in Hoboken are not taking the New Jersey Transit trains that are coming in from other parts of New Jersey, we are severely impacted by the failure of that system when the direct service to New York is not happening and everything is being rerouted into Hoboken. Our PATH system is just stretched to the max, so it puts major stress on us.

So if you're a Hoboken resident, you're looking at -- we're getting pushed on the bus side, we're getting pushed on the train side; something has to give.

As he said, many people are coming here for better transportation options. So we just can't continue to be squeezed from both

sides on this. We really need these things to be solved and have long-term solutions.

And then, in closing, I just really want to emphasize that with the many problems being outlined tonight, I just want to make sure that New Jersey Transit is absolutely not considering bailing out Newark Waterway in regards to their lack of planning for their ferry and maintenance refueling facility.

And I just thank you, in advance, for really supporting the people of Hoboken in protecting our waterfront for public use.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Anyone further? (no response)

If not, thank you.

MS. HAHN: Thanks.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Okay, next is Vincent Fedor and Orlando Riley. Orlando is with the ATU Local 819.

State your name and where you're from, please.

V I N C E N T F E D O R: My name is Vincent Fedor, Bayonne, New Jersey.

Happy winter, everyone.

I appreciate this Committee coming into being. And I want to thank *nj.com* for listing it; that's how I found out about it. And if *nj.com* can also, in their articles, put down the advocacy groups that are being mentioned today, so that commuters and others can look into finding out about those organizations and getting their voice heard.

So I'm specifically going to be speaking about the 119 bus, and also the 81 bus. So the 119 goes from Bayonne to the Port Authority in New

York, going through Jersey City and then eventually to Hoboken, slightly, and Weehawken. And the 81 is between Bayonne and Jersey City.

So the 119-- So the app, the NJ Transit app, when it works properly, is very helpful. The updated one is really great because you can put down very specific routes that are your favorites, etc. The problem is when the GPS in the *MyBus* aspect of the app doesn't list the bus properly; so you have the route -- you can download the actual route of the bus -- and the bus schedule, and it's not matching where the buses are coming from. So sometimes, most times, you will see what time the bus is coming; but other times, there's just an asterisk with no bus number. And when that -- and it has a time when it's arriving, and nothing arrives.

So my question is, who's designing the GPS? Can the bus driver shut off their GPS because they don't want to be in trouble for being late or not showing up for a route?

Most times that I've noticed -- it's happening outside of the commuter times. So as we all know, Transit is not just for commuters. It's for people who are leaving ShopRite with full bags of groceries waiting to get home, it's people with kids getting to school, etc.

I'm just looking at my notes here.

So the New Jersey Transit app for the *MyBus* aspect a lot of times is not working, so that needs to be addressed.

When there are no-shows -- I sign up for alerts on these different bus lines, and I never received any alerts. So again, that brings up my point to -- is the bus driver aware that they're not showing up? And so no one above the bus driver's authority is aware of this happening; and so then it will

look like, to the people who are in management, that the buses are actually working on time.

It's really bad at the Port Authority Bus Terminal for the 119 coming back to Bayonne, because the buses don't show up. And there's an office there-- And the big problem is that -- and I didn't realize this until recently -- New Jersey Transit is not responsible, in a lot of ways, for the buses because they are Academy buses. So I guess they're outsourced to Academy. I don't how many other buses are that way, but there's a small office that -- when people are in there who work for Academy, in the 119, they just kind of shrug their shoulders when you ask about anything with the buses. Because the buses were showing up on the *MyBus* app, and they say, "Well, that's New Jersey Transit. You know, that's not who we work for."

So there needs to be some kind of correlation between Academy and New Jersey Transit. And who do we reach out to in Academy when we have problems?

The buses, also, on the 81 and the 119 -- many times the quality control of the bus itself is in question. Because the buses will have windows open that you slam shut and they just reopen again. It's kind of not bad when it's spring and fall, even though today is fall. But eventually, it's going to get very cold; and when it's raining, etc., it's very surprising to me that they allow these buses to be sent down without there being quality control done on the windows.

It's also really dangerous because you're in the 119 coming through the Lincoln Tunnel, and the windows won't remain closed, and you're breathing all those fumes in.

SENATOR SWEENEY: We're going to have to ask you to wrap up.

MR. FEDOR: Sure; I understand.

Also, when we're writing to New Jersey Transit -- we have the option on the app to be able to write to them -- I don't hear back from them -- not days, not weeks, sometimes months; and the answers that I get are just these really vague, nothing-being-done issues. And it's very, very disappointing.

So I have other issues; and my question right now is, how do I bring these issues to a formal presentation?

SENATOR SWEENEY: Well, you actually brought these issues to a formal presentation. (laughter)

MR. FEDOR: No, my other issues that I haven't talked about yet.

SENATOR SWEENEY: And I think you've given us a lot of questions that we're going to be asking New Jersey Transit also. Because if they are subcontracting with someone, they still have to have the same equipment. And really, this is the first time I'm hearing how this app is not working, because it has been promoted so well.

So I appreciate-- We have your e-mail information--

MR. FEDOR: Yes.

SENATOR SWEENEY: --and our staff will reach out for further information, if that's okay.

MR. FEDOR: That's appreciated.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

MR. FEDOR: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Next, Orlando; and your name and where you live, Orlando.

ORLANDO RILEY: Good evening, Chair; good evening, Committee.

My name is Orlando Riley; I'm Vice President of ATU Local 819.

I'm here with two more colleagues, Martin Heraghty, who's from Local 824, and Pablo Gonzalez from 820.

We represent New Jersey Transit bus operators, mechanics, clerical people. We represent over 6,000 extremely hard-working citizens of New Jersey.

And I just would like to say, we thank you for organizing this meeting so that we can hear from the riders, who are our priority as Transit employees. But I would like to state that I know sometimes our riders think that we aren't making progress, but we really are. As being on the front lines, we really knew what was going on with New Jersey Transit, and we were losing employees at an alarming rate. New Jersey Transit is a career, a job; it's not a place where you go for one year or two years. So we would have people leaving who have been employees for 20, 30 years and we weren't replacing them to keep up with that pace.

When the new Administration came in, they recognized that we had a problem, and they worked with the unions and we hired over 500 operators in a short period of time to start this process.

So we understand that the citizens and the passengers -- they are frustrated and they don't think things are moving. But we're here to tell you that we have seen a lot of progress. There is a lot more to be done; and as long as we have your help and the administration's help, we will make New Jersey Transit once again the top transportation agency.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Anyone?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Yes.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Senator Weinberg.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Can you address the issue of the one-door buses versus the two-door buses?

MR. RILEY: Can I-- I'm sorry, can I do what?

SENATOR SWEENEY: The Senator asked if you could address the one-door buses to the two-door buses. What's more efficient for a driver loading and unloading -- a bus driver?

MR. RILEY: It depends on where that bus is servicing. So it's not really a simple question.

Martin may be able to answer.

MARTIN HERAGHTY: Martin Heraghty, from Local 824 in Monmouth County.

We actually have commuter MCI buses, and there is one door because it's a cruiser-style vehicle.

But I understand what you're saying. The passengers -- to enter the front of the bus and exit the back would be a better flow and a lot better operation. It basically would make sense to possibly put in better orders for future buses and more capacity in the buses themselves.

MR. RILEY: Yes, that would make sense.

SENATOR SWEENEY: And just so you know, we would appreciate-- Look, you're a national organization. What's the best practice? What's the best equipment, as we go forward?

You know, again, we're not casting blame on anybody; we're looking for solutions. So what are better buses to get people on and off

quicker? Do you know what I'm saying? And it might not be one-size-fits-all; it might be that in an urban area it's one bus, and in a suburban area it's a different bus.

But again, we would be very happy-- And we'll reach out to you, so you can provide us some input as the people who operate the buses.

MR. RILEY: Exactly; that's not really a question that we probably can answer right here. But, absolutely, we feel that when the actual bus operators and the frontline employees are involved in that process, it makes it much better, because they're the ones who are dealing with the public.

SENATOR SWEENEY: That's why we would love some input from your organization.

MR. RILEY: And we would be happy to give it.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Any questions?

Senator Cryan.

SENATOR CRYAN: Thanks; I have a couple.

I want to follow up on the gentleman before you, who talked -- and the folks -- Atoya over there as well.

How do bus drivers report that the bus is running late? How does that actually happen?

MR. RILEY: Well, there is a GPS system that's on the buses. And the gentleman before us even had a question about -- can operators turn off the GPS. Absolutely not; they have no control over any GPS functions on the bus.

SENATOR CRYAN: Okay.

Second is on the bus driver shortage, right? We all-- It's hard to get folks with CDLs, right?

MR. RILEY: Correct.

SENATOR CRYAN: Between-- Go ahead; were you going to comment on that one? Was that--

MR. HERAGHTY: So it comes down to three things: It's manpower, manpower, manpower. The reason why we're here today is because of manpower. Before the Governor had taken it apart, the company was failing. The manpower issue has been addressed, with the 500 new operators who have been hired. But as people are retiring, people who come into the company, they're staying for 20, 25, 30 years. It's not about turnover, it's about when they retire, a new employee takes some time to drive that 18-ton vehicle in a safe manner.

SENATOR CRYAN: By the way, how long does it take to be a bus driver?

MR. HERAGHTY: Approximately four to five weeks of training to get your Commercial Driver's License air brake endorsement, and also your passenger endorsement. So from the day you're hired, it's about a month to a month-and-a-half prior before you're actually out on your own in full service. So there's a bit of a gap there; you just don't get the job and tomorrow you're driving the bus. Of course, there's the safety, there's training, the zones, the lines. You have to be broken in and learn how to do the job properly and in a safe manner.

SENATOR CRYAN: Is there still a shortage of bus drivers?

MR. HERAGHTY: I would say, currently, right now, we're probably at par; but we definitely want to be hiring for the future. Currently,

in my garage, I have about 10 people retiring this January, and we need to replenish them. So as the people are leaving, we need to bring new people in.

SENATOR CRYAN: In prepping for this -- and I'll stop here, Steve -- but I understand that every bus New Jersey Transit owns is actually out in the fleet. Is that correct?

MR. HERAGHTY: I don't understand the question.

SENATOR CRYAN: In other words, the buses that New Jersey Transit -- actually, your Transit buses -- all of them are out every day. Is that correct?

MR. HERAGHTY: Yes, correct.

SENATOR CRYAN: Okay. I'm trying to equate that to-- But there's no shortage of bus drivers, and all the buses are out. That's correct?

MR. RILEY: It's not quite that simple.

So if I understand you right, you're saying that there shouldn't be a shortage because all of the buses are out?

SENATOR CRYAN: It sounds that way, right?

MR. RILEY: No, because you have buses that go out for a period of time, they come back in, they're sent-- You have operators who work different shifts, different times. So it's kind of like a rotating-type of a system.

SENATOR CRYAN: I got you; OKAY.

Thank You.

SENATOR SWEENEY: And I have one question, and then I'm going to send it to Senator Diegnan.

You said-- Look, obviously we need more buses and more bus drivers, right?

MR. RILEY: Correct.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Because would you state we're basically running enough bus drivers for the buses we have, but we need more service? So the Agency really needs to do expansion of service, not just status quo.

MR. RILEY: Expansion is correct, and expansion of operators also.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Yes, that's what I was talking about.

MR. RILEY: Correct.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Senator Diegnan.

SENATOR DIEGNAN: I don't know if this applies to bus drivers or not, but a prior commentator pointed out, or made a reference to our salaries are not competitive with other states. Are we competitive? I mean, is it hard to get folks to be bus drivers? Are we competitive with New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut? How are we doing in that regard?

MR. RILEY: Well, we're behind, but nationwide it is hard -- it's extremely hard hiring bus operators right now. It's extremely hard.

SENATOR DIEGNAN: But are our salaries less than surrounding states?

MR. RILEY: Yes.

MR. HERAGHTY: Yes. Just currently, we actually had a new contract, where the rates were actually more competitive than they were before -- which was actually -- it was a hindrance for hiring a person. If you can hire someone at \$16 an hour, and they can make more in the private sector, they're not going to come to New Jersey Transit. That has been

corrected. The year for top-rate is four years, and the other benefits have actually grown. That attracts people to the industry, and they want to have a career.

As I mentioned before, when someone walks in the door at New Jersey Transit, they're most likely going to stay 20 to 30 years, their entire adult career. And that's very important, being that there's not a high turnover. But once people do retire after 25 years of service, we need to replenish them, and I think we were lacking that at the time.

So the company and the union actually had cooperation and teamwork, where they got together and they actually had hiring campaigns across the state; and we've kind of brought it up to par. But we need to think about tomorrow, and we need to get out that new service that's needed for the state that's coming up that-- You can see, that's the reason why we're here for the forum.

SENATOR DIEGNAN: Okay, thanks.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Anyone further?

Senator Kean.

SENATOR KEAN: Thank you, Senate President.

First of all, thank you for taking the time today and participating in this conversation.

I think the first question I have is from a -- when we're looking at the training for rail engineers and operators, there was a concern that it would take 20 months to train, and that was longer-- And because it took so much longer for New Jersey Transit, that could be one of the issues.

Is there a similar issue with bus operation training within -- versus the other states?

MR. RILEY: So your question is, is the length of training a problem for us?

SENATOR KEAN: Yes, on par with your counterparts in other states.

MR. RILEY: I don't think that's a major issue; no. But sometimes you have individuals who come in, and you've invested time into that individual or individuals, and then they may decide to leave. And now you have to start over again with new employees.

So I don't think that's a major issue; the major issue with us is just getting people to come in, not the time.

SENATOR KEAN: And a CDL for buses -- is that 18 years of age?

MR. RILEY: It is 21.

SENATOR KEAN: So I guess that was my question. So if you had-- Is there anything like an apprenticeship-type program where if you were trying to figure out a way to train somebody to, maybe, do it a year or two early-- Because you lose people who want to pursue this as a career, if you're waiting until they're 21, right?

MR. RILEY: Exactly; and that is something that we've been talking to the company about -- about apprenticeship programs for operators, as well as mechanics also.

SENATOR KEAN: Okay; because I think there could be some intriguing opportunities there--

MR. RILEY: Absolutely.

SENATOR KEAN: --to make sure you get the career pathway started earlier.

Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: I agree with apprenticeships; thank you, Senator.

SENATOR KEAN: Well, that was part of the conversation; that's why I wanted to bring it up.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Thank you, gentlemen.

MR. RILEY: All right; thank you for your time.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Next two up are Laura Peterson and Sofia Messina. Are they here? (no response)

Well, listen, there were some comments; I'll read the comments.

Laura Peterson, "Wi-Fi on trains -- come into the 21st century. Staffing issues? Hire personnel. Your current staff is often rude and miserable."

That's Laura Peterson.

The next one I can't read, so I'll go onto the next.

David Peter Alan, Lackawanna Coalition; and Emily Eichenholtz.

Is Emily here? (no response) If not, I can read hers.

"Train schedules have changed, so in order to make it to school I have to arrive one-and-a-half hours early. Why are trains not more frequent in the a.m.?"

But with that -- David, you're up.

DAVID PETER ALAN, Esq.: Thank you, Senator.

Good evening. I'm David Peter Alan, Chair of Lackawanna Coalition. I live and practice law in South Orange. I'm a registered patent

attorney, and a member of the New Jersey, New York, and U.S. Supreme Court bars.

For almost 20 years I've been Chair of the Lackawanna Coalition. I'm also the longest serving member of SCDRTAC, the Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Advisory Committee. And nationally, I have ridden every bit of rail transit in the United States. I have been on the Board of the Rail Users Network, a national organization run for many years; and I am a contributing editor at *Railway Age*, which has been serving the railroad industry since 1856.

I am also thoroughly familiar with New Jersey Transit, since I depend on New Jersey Transit for my own mobility -- for all of my mobility. I ride the entire system, at every time of the day, every day of the week.

I was commuting 40 years ago when New Jersey Transit was founded; and I knew the founders, Senator Frank Herbert and Commissioner Lou Gambaccini. They were great men who had a vision for mobility in our state, and they put it into action. I commemorated New Jersey Transit's 40th anniversary with an article in the August issue of *Railway Age*, which I submitted as Exhibit A in my exhibit pack. New Jersey Transit today is nothing like its founders envisioned. It is secretive, it is high-handed, its governance is non-existent. It has never been more unreliable.

And you heard from my colleague Len Resto -- he got caught up in it today.

We have suffered massive service cuts over the past four years; and now the trains that are still on the schedule are canceled so often that we can never be sure when they will come to pick us up -- if they even do.

It is true that Atlantic City rail service and the Princeton DNKY came back six months ago, and the Raritan Line got its one-seat-ride trains back last week. But these improvements have never come as far north as the Morris and Essex Lines, or the Pascack, or the Main-Bergen, or the Montclair-Boonton. Nothing that has been removed from the schedule has come back yet, and the Gladstone Line still has no regular rail service on weekends. Management has never been forthcoming about when we will get any of these trains back, and has never given us any legally enforceable assurances that they will ever run again.

In short, things are even worse than Mr. Resto said they are.

There is a high-handed management, there is less transparency than ever. New Jersey Transit is still underfunded. Employee morale remains terrible, governance is a cruel joke, and there are no Transit-dependent persons on the Board helping us, the riders who depend on New Jersey Transit. And management does what it can to interfere with our credibility as the advocates for your riders.

You people in the Legislature are allowing this, and please don't allow it anymore. I can tell you more -- and this is information you need if you're going to help us -- please hear me out.

Governor Murphy campaigned on more transparency at New Jersey Transit; today there is less. We are told very little about what's happening with Board items. I hope to go over to the Board to make a statement tonight when I leave here; one of the items is more than \$8 million dollars to WSP -- probably the highest-priced engineering firm in the country -- for something called *Enterprise Asset Management*, whatever that means.

Money is not being spent in ways that help us get better mobility. And we at the Lackawanna Coalition and the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers are calling for a moratorium on this sort of capital spending until we get all of our trains back, and all of lines run reliably as they used to do. Every time I ask, or another advocate asks for even the smallest service improvement, we are always told that New Jersey Transit doesn't have the money. They are still chronically underfunded. We appreciate the \$50 million that you got for us, Senator Weinberg; we need it desperately. But we're still only up to a 2 percent increase, and that is nowhere near enough to run the kind of service that we the riders of New Jersey, and the visitors to New Jersey, and the business community of New Jersey deserve.

It is up to you to fight for funding. They say you didn't -- maybe you didn't fight enough during the Christie era; but you need to now, because we really need the money or we're not going to have decent Transit.

Before Governor Murphy took office, his Transition Chief ordered that people be fired from New Jersey Transit. Yes, I and several other people objected to that. The purge was not as bad as it could otherwise have been. But there was still a climate among New Jersey Transit--

SENATOR SWEENEY: Sir, if you could wrap it up. We have your statement, and we're going to put it in our record. But if you could summarize.

MR. ALAN: Well, I think it's important that -- you have to hear this. The climate, the employee morale is terrible. On top of that, decision-making -- I attempted, when you were talking about reform, to get you in the Legislature to think about getting at least some Transit-dependent persons

on the Board and to make New Jersey Transit independent. I submitted language to my Assemblyman John McKeon; nothing ever came of it. It's now in your packet as Exhibit C in my exhibits. Nothing is being done. The Board is a joke, and it's not a funny one.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Sir, listen, we need to summarize. We have other people.

And just for the record, as Senator Weinberg addressed this earlier, we're getting closer to nominees who are Transit advocates to fill the Board, because we think that's extremely critical, and that should be happening shortly.

MR. ALAN: I look forward to being considered for that, Senator.

SENATOR SWEENEY: All right; thank you, sir.

MR. ALAN: I believe I have the credentials that qualify me, and I depend on Transit. Which, right now, the counties have Boards of Chosen Freeholders; you have a Board of chosen motorists, and that's just plain wrong. And we have a management that took a manager and calls him a *customer advocate*. That's designed to discredit our efforts as genuine customer advocates, and causes public confusion.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Sir, the purpose-- Listen, sir, we have to wrap up now. The purpose of this hearing is to have voices heard; we're not trying to hide anything. We have your information, and we will be reaching out to you.

MR. ALAN: I hope you do; you know where to find me. I will do anything I can to help. If you don't do something, our Transit will get even worse. Please help us.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Anyone? Any questions for this witness? (no response)

If not, thank you, sir.

SENATOR CRYAN: Thank you, David.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you, David.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Well said.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Jeffrey M. Goldman, Pascack Valley; and Ron Hine, FBW.

J E F F R E Y M. G O L D M A N: Good evening.

SENATOR SWEENEY: If you could state your name and your town.

MR. GOLDMAN: Jeffrey M. Goldman; I live in Paramus. I'm a rider of the Pascack Valley Line since 1982, when I moved to New Jersey.

The train -- that particular line I consider one of your neglected lines. There are essentially a couple of lines in Bergen County. We have ancient equipment; oftentimes the doors don't open. This morning, there was actually -- I've never seen this before -- a sticker on the door that said "Out of service."

In the course of my employment, I have occasion to sometimes take Metro-North and the Long Island Rail Road. I realize they have -- especially the Long Island Rail Road -- service difficulties; but at least their equipment is good. Everything is sparkling new, and they have multiple seats. We have -- I think it's a terrible Line. The conductors are nice people, but there are many times where now, the last couple of years, trains are routinely canceled. You get to the train station; sometimes there's an e-mail and sometimes there's an announcement on the overhead loud speaker that

“Such-and-such a train is canceled.” And we know that the next train that comes is going to be packed, and it’s not a pleasant way to start the day.

Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you, sir.

R O N H I N E: My name is Ron Hine; I’m the Executive Director of the Fund for a Better Waterfront, which is based right here in Hoboken, New Jersey.

I’d like to address New Jersey Transit’s relationship with New York Waterway, a private company that operates ferry service between New Jersey and New York City.

According to a 2009 report by New Jersey Transit, NJT and the Port Authority have invested over \$200 million in ferry facilities in Weehawken, Hoboken, and Manhattan. And since that time, the ferry terminal here at the Hoboken Terminal has been built. So you can add the cost of that to that number.

Since the 1980s, New York Waterway has enjoyed this sweetheart deal in leasing these facilities for its private ferry operation. In 2017, New York Waterway arranged another deal: New Jersey Transit was to buy a prime piece of Hoboken waterfront real estate for over \$11 million -- the Union Dry Dock property. New Jersey Transit was then to lease it back to New York Waterway for use as a ferry maintenance and refueling facility. But it was only the vigorous opposition from Hoboken Mayor Ravi Bhalla, and the entire Hoboken City Council, and a long list of organizations and individuals that prevented New Jersey Transit from passing a resolution at their New Jersey Transit Board meeting to acquire this site.

The theme repeated throughout this process is that a private operator appeared to be driving the policy of a public agency. Why would New Jersey Transit purchase Hoboken land for over \$11 million when it owns an 80-acre site right here at the Hoboken Terminal designated for public transportation purposes?

In the alternative, why wouldn't New York Waterway stay in Weehawken, given the fact that the owner of New York Waterway still owns property there, including the 26-acre site where he currently refuels and repairs his ferry fleet?

The New Jersey Transit capital budget contains two budget lines for ferry service, totaling about \$26 million. We were recently told by New Jersey DOT that the State does not subsidize New York Waterway, which is a private company. If this is so, how do you explain these items in the current capital budget?

The other item that is of concern is a recent study conducted by New Jersey Transit entitled, "Ferry Maintenance Facility Evaluation, Hoboken Terminal, South Side." This report is riddled with misinformation and bias, and appears to have been heavily influenced by New York Waterway's people.

I think it is time for the State of New Jersey to be independent in this matter, and put ferry operations between New York and New Jersey out to bid. There are other operators who have much better reputations and could likely provide service at an affordable price.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Any questions? (no response)

Thank you, sir.

Next, Rita Strickland and Christine Stygar. Are they here? (no response)

Well, there were comments, so I'll read their comments.

Christine says, "Stop canceling trains; no accountability."

And Rita said, "On-time service, more engineers. Tired of no engineers, canceled trains. Dealt with being on train for over an hour last year."

The next two, Albert L. Papp, Jr., Rail Passengers Association; and Barbara Gombach Weinstein from Hoboken.

Name, and where you're from, and you can get started.

A L B E R T L. P A P P, Jr.: Yes, good evening to all of you.

My name is Albert L. Papp, Jr.; I currently reside in Millington, New Jersey, also having lived in Berkeley Heights and Maplewood.

I represent the National Association of Railroad Passengers, now doing businesses as Rail Passengers Association. We're 28,000 members in all 50 states. I've held positions as Vice President and Vice Chair of Legislative Policy and Strategy. I've met with many senators and congressmen, not only from New Jersey but from other states as well.

I am the immediate Past President of the New Jersey Association of Rail Passengers; I remain a Director. Certainly, Mr. Resto's testimony this evening pretty much sums up our organization's position.

I commuted for over 30 years on the M&E, the Morris and Essex lines, from the three towns: Millington, Maplewood, Berkeley Heights. Over that period of time, we've seen service go from, perhaps, the pinnacle to, at the moment, the nadir. Every day the situation is getting worse and worse.

I'd like to address, very briefly, the situation at New York Penn Station.

Over the last week or so, I've been in the City twice -- once to see a play, *The Great Society* -- which I recommend you all see -- about Lyndon Johnson; and then, secondly, *Where's My Roy Cohn?*, a movie in downtown at the Film Forum. This necessitated me taking NJT into the City.

When I got to Penn Station, the amount of crowding on the New Jersey Transit concourse was unbelievable. Over the last several months, New Jersey Transit has removed almost all the seating at Penn Station. There is one area now; you need to show your ticket before you can enter into it.

The other thing I'd like to address -- as I did with the New Jersey Transit Board some four years ago -- was the state of the restrooms, again, in the New Jersey Transit concourse. These restrooms have been undersized from their beginning, way back 15 years ago. There are always lines, there's inadequate maintenance of these restrooms. Yet, there is plenty of space in New York Penn Station -- again, the New Jersey Transit concourse -- for those restrooms to be expanded and moved.

The seating is so slim right now, that when I went in Sunday night, I could barely walk up the steps. Why? Because people were sitting on the steps; they were sitting on the steps.

It sort of gives a perverse meaning to New Jersey Transit's motto, "The way to go." It certainly isn't a way to go -- not in the restrooms, and certainly not on the concourse itself.

The projects that New Jersey Transit is now looking into include the Gateway project. We support the Gateway project; it's composed of two new rail tunnels under the Hudson River; the rehabilitation of the existing

1910 former Pennsylvania tunnels; the replacement of the Portal Bridge, also of the same age, and making four tracks total between New York and Newark, New Jersey. This project is key to the continuing economic prosperity of this region, all right?

The letter that was signed by both Senators Menendez and Booker, recently, to Secretary of Transportation Chao in Washington, D.C., certainly hit the mark. We need these tunnels, we need Federal participation, we need State participation, we need Port Authority of New York and New Jersey participation.

So we would urge your Committee to look not only at the operational deficiencies of New Jersey Transit, but also at the progress, or lack thereof, toward certain capital projects' completion.

Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Any questions for this witness? (no response)

If not, thank you.

BARBARA GOMBACH WEINSTEIN: Good evening, Senators.

My name is Barbara Gombach Weinstein. I'm a 30-year resident of Hoboken and a regular commuter on New Jersey Transit bus and rail; also PATH and Light Rail.

Nine years ago (*sic*) last month, this Terminal was flooded during Superstorm Sandy. In fact, 80 percent of Hoboken was flooded.

You've already heard many immediate concerns this evening about funding, governance, and Transit service; and you'll hear more. Why do I remind you specifically of the devastating effects of that storm

throughout this town? It's because such climate emergencies loom over the entire transportation infrastructure in our vulnerable state; infrastructure in which Jersey Transit, of course, plays a critical role.

My plea to you tonight, Senators, is to do all that you can to ensure that NJT dramatically improves its environmental performance. There is no single solution; this is a systemic concern for a truly green transportation infrastructure.

I'd like to give you just one example to illustrate my grave concern on this score.

Many New Jersey residents were alarmed that the environmental performance of NJT was so poorly addressed in the State's draft energy master plan. That plan is being revised and, I hope, considering how to address NJT's environmental performance more systematically and seriously.

But meanwhile, Senators -- meanwhile NJT is barreling ahead with a project, not three miles upwind of where we sit, in the Kearny Meadowlands. Called *NJ Transit Grid*, it would be a new fracked gas power plant on the Hackensack River. Its goal is to provide a resilient energy supply for a portion of the rail infrastructure during severe storms and other climate emergencies.

The goal is laudable; it should be pursued. But building more fossil fuel infrastructure is not a resilient approach. In fact, the methane released by a fracked gas plant will be a lethal contribution to ongoing climate emergencies in our state.

Of course, I won't enumerate the dangerous health and environmental impacts of another gas plant in this county already plagued with very poor air quality and environmental degradation. Instead, let me

briefly emphasize that there are cheaper and cleaner alternatives to achieve Jersey Transit's goal, in particular a solar and storage approach. I'll repeat -- a solar and storage approach is cleaner and cheaper than a fracked gas plant.

Such projects in California and Arizona have been recognized for beating the cost of natural gas plants. And furthermore, the benefits of this approach include good middle-class jobs in a 100 percent renewable, efficient, and resilient energy economy.

I hope, Senators, that your voices help persuade NJT to seriously consider this alternative to a fracked gas plant in the Kearny Meadowlands.

Thank you, each of you, for your public service, and for your work on the Select Committee on NJT. (applause)

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Any questions? (no response)

Thank you very much.

Next we're going to have Raj Shah, from Bloomfield.

Is he here?

And Brian Hornak; is Brian Hornak here?

Brian? Come on up.

B R I A N H O R N A K: Good evening; how are you?

SENATOR SWEENEY: Good evening.

Your name and where you live, Brian.

MR. HORNAK: Brian Hornak, Hoboken, New Jersey.

I got caught up in the trespasser fatality in the South Orange area this afternoon. I got stuck at Summit. The first time I asked, I was told the train will be in 13 minutes. I told the station clerk, "Okay, 13 minutes was 20 minutes ago." So I let it go.

Then I waited again. I go over to the gentleman next to her, and-- Now, I didn't want to let on that I knew, because I looked, "Now, let's be honest. Is there something going on, something I should know, so that I can cancel my doctor's appointment?" "Well, there's something." I said, "Okay, what is *something*?" And you have to pry, and then you get it, okay? Not for nothing, the -- how can I put this? -- "We'll tell it in the pieces we want, when we want, if we're in the mood" must end, okay? If that's how I was in my private sector job, I would be fired so fast your heads would spin, and you wouldn't even get a job pushing carts.

Now, number two: See this here, folks (indicates)? This gives me ownership and priority in disabled seating areas, okay? We need to stop being politically correct, give the Transit cops -- give the crews the authority to say to passengers, "You need to move; this gentleman, with this, needs that area. You and your carriage need to move," okay?

I have been told by certain crew members that, "My defending you -- I could lose my job if they go to corporate or they go to a politician," which I believe. Because you'll defend them because -- no disrespect intended -- but it's all about the vote. Stop with the need for the vote; do the right thing. Give them the power; let's stop being everybody's buddy and say, "Hey, give them their authority back, give them their power." And you know what? Educate the passengers, okay?

This (indicates) -- I wish I could be without it, okay? But this entitles me to those reserved areas, okay? I shouldn't have to take flak from a passenger who wants their bags there, who wants their strollers there. And a crew member should not have to worry about losing their job for standing up for me. And it happens; come join me someday and you'll see it happen.

You know, not for nothing, you guys have all power. Use it, okay? And with the way New Jersey Transit is going, you have a better chance of righting the Titanic than fixing New Jersey Transit. I'll be quite honest with you, I'll be quite blunt. We can right the Titanic before we can fix New Jersey Transit; and all this money -- oh, I can't use the word, but -- pissed away, and what have we got to show for it?

Just like that tunnel -- we've known for decades that tunnel's no good, right, Mr. Sweeney? Why are we continuing to enable the habit of, "Let it go, let it go, kick it down the road," and then try to play hero. And it's going to cost us more than it should. Am I right, sir?

SENATOR SWEENEY: Absolutely.

MR. HORNAK: Thank you.

We need to turn the tide now. Roll the sleeves up and do it. You know, you can't -- how can I put it -- trying to always be the good cop, and more concerned about votes than issues is getting us nowhere; it's getting us nowhere. And the money that's being spent and invested -- where's the return on the investment? Where is it? Where is it?

And I'm sure if we would have fixed that tunnel decades ago, that number wouldn't be such an abyss like it is today.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Correct.

Sir, you need to wrap up, if that's okay.

MR. HORNAK: Yes, sir; but think about it.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

MR. HORNAK: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Anyone -- any questions? (no response)

Thank you, sir.

MR. HORNAK: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Tiffanie Fisher, Ward 2, Hoboken Council; and Nicola Maganuco.

Thank you.

Tiffanie, if you want to state your name, and Hoboken, just for the record, please.

C O U N C I L W O M A N T I F F A N I E F I S H E R: Sure; it's Tiffanie Fisher. I am the 2nd Ward Councilwoman for Hoboken. I've been on the Council for four years, and was just elected for four more years.

Thanks for everyone coming.

I've spoken at a couple of Senate hearings previously; one that Senator Weinberg was on, relating to the Port Authority Bus Terminal, as well as New Jersey Transit. I believe Senator Gordon hosted it about two years ago.

A lot of the speakers said a lot of, I think, what I would touch on, so I won't repeat it.

I think the biggest issue for an area like Hoboken-- Actually, I'll take one step back. I do want to address the comment about the bus shelters. As an elected official in Hoboken, I am someone who was unaware that all we had to do is reach out to New Jersey Transit to get bus shelters. And the reason why I raised that *a*) because we have the same issue in Hoboken; but I think one of the themes that I've heard throughout tonight, that I think is relevant, is it feels as though there's a disconnect between this large statewide behemoth of an agency and having connection with the local cities that they operate in. And I know that there are some regional efforts; I know that sometimes there are county efforts. I know that the goal is really to connect

with individual riders and get their feedback. But there's a layer of knowledge within communities that is often the local governments. And so -- and having a better connection, I think, in terms of the relationship between the operations and the needs of the community--

Hoboken is probably, if not the fastest growing city in the State of New Jersey, one of the top three. You know, in the last census we had 50,000 people; at the next census, we're expecting to have over 60,000. And a decade later, if the growth continues at the pace that we're looking at, we're expecting another 15,000 to 20,000 people in the city of Hoboken.

So we are at capacity with buses; we hear all the time there's no capacity for additional buses going into Port Authority. I speak with New Jersey Transit quarterly about how we match their operations with Hoboken's growth. Not only the total growth but, kind of, within Hoboken we have different-- We don't grow as much down by the PATH; we grow a lot more on the north end of Hoboken. We have very long bus lines on the north end of Hoboken. New Jersey Transit, on a reactive basis, has tried to accommodate this over the years; but really, kind of, sitting down with Jersey City, our neighbor, all of Hudson County, Bergen County, and really understanding what are, kind of, the broader municipal and regional needs, and what does that growth look like over time. And being able to better marry the operations with our growth.

A couple specific things I'd like to raise, that I've raised previously-- The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail -- we need a third Light Rail station in Hoboken on the north end. It's where all of our growth is. And this is -- you know, we had raised this two years ago in Senator Gordon's hearing that he had. If you're looking at strategic growth for New Jersey

Transit, the lead times to develop different stations throughout the state are pretty long. But I think we should start planning it now; it provides better connectivity for Bergen County. When they want to come down to Hudson County, they can get off at a northern Light Rail Station instead of feeding into a PATH train that's already at capacity. They could get off and get on a ferry a couple blocks away. That Light Rail station will be able to relieve some of the bus requirements for all the growth in Hoboken's north end.

And this doesn't even necessarily mean that New Jersey Transit has to pay for it. Going back, I think, to the comment that Senator Cryan mentioned -- the developer should be contributing into all this. We've always had the expectation that the developers in the north end of Hoboken will end up paying for it. But instead of starting that conversation, the planning part of that -- two years from now, when they're building -- why not be shovel-ready at that moment; and they are just a funding source, where the plans are already done. And the costs of planning are significantly less than the cost of building.

So that's something that I think that we should work on soon; that is a strategic part of the growth of New Jersey Transit.

And then, I'd say the other thing is, within our community is really-- Again, this is having -- whether it's municipal representation, or municipal groups, or countywide groups -- to really be able to sit with New Jersey Transit and help them identify how to best use their lines that they currently have. So for example, we were able to -- we have added some of the articulating buses, which are the -- they call them *bendy buses* in London, when I lived there -- the big, long ones; the accordion buses -- they've added capacity in Hoboken.

SENATOR SWEENEY: If you could wrap up please.

COUNCILWOMAN FISHER: Yes.

But really being able to sit with the local governments and help solve for capacity-type issues that are more -- are probably more symptomatic of Hudson County and closer to New York City than, maybe, some of the other areas.

SENATOR SWEENEY: And just so you know, I met with your Mayor earlier, and he pointed out exactly what you were talking about.

COUNCILWOMAN FISHER: That's because I coached him on it. (laughter)

SENATOR SWEENEY: You did a very good job.

Anyone else?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Just, if I may, just--

SENATOR SWEENEY: For this witness? Go ahead.

SENATOR WEINBERG: --a quick comment.

Thank you for being here.

A comment of personal privilege -- but Councilmember Fisher was one of the very first people who came out and joined us on the quest for the new bus terminal. And I remember that evening quite well.

COUNCILWOMAN FISHER: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: So do I.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So thank you for appearing again.

COUNCILWOMAN FISHER: I'm happy to come.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Anyone for this witness? (no response)

Okay, next -- Nicola; name and where you live.

NICOLA MAGANUCO: Nicola Maganuco; I live here in Hoboken.

I actually learned about this meeting thanks to Tiffanie. So it goes to show you what a great Councilwoman she's been for the community.

A couple things I want to hit one.

I just want to thank everyone on this Committee for showing up and listening to us; it means a lot.

And I do want to echo a little bit about what Tiffanie said, too; our population has grown exponentially. Between 2000 and 2015, our population grew 41 percent; and I'm sure through the ridership levels, it really does reflect that.

I'm a commuter of the 126 bus line. I live in uptown Hoboken. Uptown Hoboken, I think, is probably one of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, only because we're far from the ferry, we're far from the Transit line downtown right here. And we're one of the last stops to be picked up on the bus.

So I've been taking the bus for several years; and I don't know how familiar the Committee is with our bus lines that go through Hoboken, but we have one line, the 126, but it runs through two principal streets, the Washington and the Willow/Clinton. And I noticed, uptown, that our buses are really at capacity. I've taken it from several uptown stops. There are long lines that really curve around the streets; you know, there's hardly any standing room capacity.

So there are a couple things I will advise. Having express uptown pickups, specifically on Clinton Street, because they do get packed downtown. So having an express line that comes uptown first would be great.

I also think we need to start looking at expanding the routes west of Clinton Street for our growing population on our western side of

town. Like I said, we have a growing development in that area, and I think we need to cater. I think there's a possibility to put a line on Monroe or Madison.

So that's a little bit on the bus front.

Something else I do want to mention is, I do support Senate Bill 1354, which I believe is on the Senate floor. It enables municipalities to charge impact fees on developers; a little bit about -- kind of what Tiffanie was talking about.

And something else I just jotted down; sorry. I learned about this meeting today, so I just wanted to jot down all my points.

Oh, by the way, I am the founder of Twitter handle *Hoboken Commuter*. So if you guys want to see firsthand how bad the bus lines get, I encourage you all to just take a look at it on your personal time. There are videos, there are pictures. It's great exposure to see what is going on in our town.

And I'll keep it short.

The peak periods -- our buses get really bad: 15th and Monroe, 12th and Clinton, 9th and Clinton. Please, if you could, try to optimize the schedule; bring uptown bus services -- that would be great.

Thanks.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Any questions? (no response)

Thank you.

Next, I'm going to read a statement from Raj Shah, that I didn't earlier. And this is actually a good idea.

“Would it be possible to add heat to the waiting station and the bathrooms?” I think that’s brilliant. (laughter) “A lot of times, trains are late to Hoboken from Clifton (Main Line), which is another problem. Also, a lot more frequency is needed after hours. I rely on New Jersey Transit for work 100 percent. Thank you.”

Next, I’m going to call up Jerome Johnson, SMART Local 60; and Liz Ndoye (indicating pronunciation), I guess. I probably said her name wrong.

Oh, here she comes.

And Jerome, for the record, name and the community where you live.

J E R O M E J O H N S O N: My name is Jerome Johnson; I’m General Chairman for SMART-TD Local 60. I represent the assistant conductors and conductors here at New Jersey Transit.

Mr. President, esteemed Senators, thank you for this brief moment. I’ll make it quick.

In my 12 years as an officer and my 22 years working here as a conductor -- that’s my craft -- I have seen the good times and I have seen the bad times. There have been a lot of bad times. But I believe that, currently, we are moving in the right direction.

My members, male and female, the frontline employees, take the brunt of the abuse for New Jersey Transit’s failures. But at the same time, I can positively tell them that I can see the horizon getting brighter down the road.

I think the executive team, with Kevin Corbett and Ray Kelly, Vice President of Rail, have a great vision. They’re trying to put it in place

and change people's mindset. Because the way it's been for so long -- it just beat down everybody, and that includes management, that includes the employees -- the Rail employees; that even includes the engineers. And you know, once morale gets beaten down it takes a long time for it to revert back to where it should be, right?

One thing that the Governor always says is, he's not spiking any footballs yet. But I can tell you that the ball is in the field of play.

Senator Kean, if I may, real quick -- I don't represent the engineers, but I work with a lot of them. And you kind of misrepresented them when you said that they can take off of work with an hour's notice, or without any notice. Contractually, that is not accurate, and I just wanted to correct you on that, if you don't mind; with respect, that's just not accurate.

I thank you for the time, Mr. President. Thank you for working with us on that sovereign immunity bill; that was huge for my members. And I want to continue working with you, continue working with the executive team and their management team, the same way, to make New Jersey Transit a better place. We can get it back to where it was, but we are working so well, collectively, now. Prior administrations -- and I mean Transit administrations -- we were just left out. And now labor is involved, and we appreciate that, we appreciate the more open communication.

I just really think everything's going to move in the right direction, but it's just going to take time. We want instant results; that's the world we live in now -- instant results. But I can see the plans coming to fruition, and I just would like to say thank you very much to you, the Governor as well, Mr. Corbett, Mr. Kelly.

And one last thing I would like to say. One of the biggest problems here at New Jersey Transit was -- we allowed a Mechanical Department to run the Rail system. How can a Mechanical Department run a Rail system? And that was part of our biggest failure here, because they were making decisions for Rail, and they don't understand Rail. So now, with Vice President Kelly in there, who understands Rail and has vast knowledge of all the railroad industries, it's going to be a better place. We just have to allow them to do their jobs.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Any questions for this witness?

Senator Cryan.

SENATOR CRYAN: Are you short conductors at all? Or how's your staffing on conductors?

MR. JOHNSON: We always have people constantly retiring; but there are constantly classes. We just have a new class coming out in January; we just had a new class this past October. So they're constantly filling classes right now; I think 25 members per class.

SENATOR CRYAN: One of the other folks who came up before you -- one of the union leaders talked about that there's not enough planning when there's retirement and things like that. Is your message to us that there is?

MR. JOHNSON: No, my message to you is that the prior administrations weren't planning. Like I said, they were from the Mechanical Department, right?

SENATOR CRYAN: Okay.

MR. JOHNSON: But now, since this has all been brought to the forefront, the Training Department is starting to hire more employees. I mean, it's like 25 members for each class.

SENATOR CRYAN: Okay.

The last thing -- there's been -- you've heard some of the comments about enforcement, right? Whether it's where folks sit -- all sorts of things on the train.

MR. JOHNSON: Correct.

SENATOR CRYAN: Any comment to that? You might have heard the gentleman -- I think Vince was his name--

MR. JOHNSON: I did.

SENATOR CRYAN: -- actually make that comment. Could you touch upon the enforcement piece?

And let me ask you one other one. I hear about people talk about -- there's not enough conductors to collect the actual fares.

MR. JOHNSON: Which is accurate.

SENATOR CRYAN: So maybe you could comment on both of those for me.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I can.

As far as enforcement with the disability, with a disabled person -- that is a problem because, unfortunately, some commuters are just selfish. And I mean, I don't know about you, but if it was my mother, or anybody, who was disabled, I'm getting up out of that seat.

But there is fear t when somebody can now automatically go on Twitter or, you know, write a customer complaint about you for trying to enforce something that's just plain old decency, right? You're trying to

enforce it, and somebody can make up a total complaint about you, and now you're being brought up on charges for something that is just not factual.

But I will say this again. The past administration was hard on you like that; this administration is listening to us even more. So, like, if somebody says that, we can actually talk to them and explain to them what happened. That would be good for that passenger who had that problem, to bring it up to the Agency and say, "Look, I had this problem on the train. The commuter wouldn't move; I'm disabled, but the conductor couldn't do his job -- on the train couldn't do his job because of fear of retribution, of discipline," right?

And as far as the ticket collecting -- as far as collecting more revenue, the administration is working with us, as labor. We formed a Revenue Committee, working with the company, to find out the vast issues on why we aren't collecting enough revenue. And there are many reasons. So we put a Committee together, and we're formulating protocol to say what we should do. And also, we're putting in a design -- not a design, we're showing them why the fares aren't collected. There are many reasons: staffing -- which we work with the Training Department, and we condensed the class so they come out in five months instead of waiting the entire 18 months. They become a qualified conductor in 18 months; but now, after five months, they get the on-the-job training. So they're actually in the field now, so we're working with -- you know, we got people out in the field so they can collect the revenue, right?

SENATOR CRYAN: Do you mind if I ask one other one, real quick?

SENATOR SWEENEY: Sure.

SENATOR CRYAN: So the double -- I don't know the right term -- but the double rail cars that everybody wants--

MR. JOHNSON: The multi-levels.

SENATOR CRYAN: Multi-levels.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: Does it require more -- I am sorry for my naivety here -- does it require more conductors to do that because there are more folks?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: Is there a different range, or how does that work?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes; you need more assistant conductors and ticket collectors to work those cars. Because you have to remember, it's not just the revenue, but it's a safety issue, right? So you're moving double-deckers. If you have 10 cars, it's impossible for you to work 10 cars with two people. You know, you have a conductor and an assistant conductor. And you need at least one person per every other car. If you don't have that, you can't collect the revenue, you can't get to the doors, you can't assist the passengers safely. You need more people to staff the train; you have to have that, it's mandatory.

SENATOR CRYAN: So that just shifts me back to the beginning question. Do you have enough conductors? Because it sounds like you might be short.

MR. JOHNSON: It's not just-- We are short; but like I said, we just had a class in October, we have one in January, we have one in April.

SENATOR CRYAN: So you're confident in the plan, moving forward?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, no. The problem is, is that we have to condense the assignments that are out there so that you can properly staff the trains. It's a bigger issue than just having more conductors. You'd have to look at -- it's systematic on the assignments. The assignments are so spread out, you're not using -- you're spreading out everybody on these trains and you're not covering all the trains with these bad assignments. That's the best way I can say it.

SENATOR CRYAN: So one thing the Committee should look at is the assignments as we move forward.

MR. JOHNSON: Absolutely.

SENATOR CRYAN: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you, Senator.

Anyone else? (no response)

If not, the next witness, please.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

L I Z N D O Y E: Hi.

My name is Liz Ndoeye; I am a 40-year resident of Hoboken.

I am here tonight because I am gravely concerned about the pollution problems that I believe will be caused by the proposed Kearny power plant.

New Jersey Transit has stated a need to construct a new power plant in Kearney. It needs this natural gas power fuel plant in order to keep train service up and running during a climate crisis, like Superstorm Sandy.

My question is, why can't we use Superstorm Sandy funding to purchase solar-powered trains and to build a solar battery storage facility, rather than using it to construct another pollution-emitting fossil fuel plant?

I would like to reiterate what Barbara Gombach Weinstein stated. Solar energy would also create more jobs in our state. This is a win-win situation for New Jersey Transit and the people of New Jersey, particularly those of us living in Hudson County, which is highly polluted already.

I request your consideration in this matter, and I thank you for listening to my concerns.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Any questions for the witness?

SENATOR BATEMAN: Just a comment, Mr. President.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Senator Bateman.

SENATOR BATEMAN: Thank you.

Just by way of information, Senator Smith and I have a bill in right now which would prevent that plant from being constructed.

MS. NDOYE: Thank you.

SENATOR BATEMAN: Because we're very concerned about the fossil fuels.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you, Senator.

MS. NDOYE: Thank you. I know that the Governor is looking to make our state fossil fuel free by 2030. Solar energy would be a way to achieve that goal.

Thank you, sir.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Any other questions? (no response)

Okay; next we're going to bring up Chip Hallock, Newark Regional Business Partnership; Anthony Russo, from the Commerce and Industry Association; and Richard Weinstein, Esq., representing himself.

And whoever wants to go first -- just name, and where you live.

CHIP HALLOCK: Good evening, Senators.

I'm Chip Hallock, with the Newark Regional Business Partnership.

We're a 400-member business organization in Newark that informs and advocates for our members in a collaborative effort to continue Newark's revitalization.

Our membership includes a lot of large companies, as well as hundreds of small companies and 40 nonprofit organizations, in the City of Newark. We work with them very closely to help improve the City's overall appeal to residents as well as businesses.

And we want to underscore, there's been a lot of talk about commuters -- and there is among our members, too -- coming to Newark. But we're also very concerned about those nonprofit organizations that have constituents who need the buses to move around every day. It's not a matter of simply getting back and forth to work; it's how they get to school, it's how they get to the doctor, it's how they get to the supermarket.

So I guess the normal resident use, in addition to the commuter concerns, are certainly valid. But we wanted to make sure that we talked about those who rely on Transit just to get around every day.

Newark is certainly in the midst of attracting a lot of residents to downtown; some of who will work locally, but will also commute to Newark City on a daily basis.

In short, mass transportation has played an important role in Newark's history, and New Jersey Transit holds the key to the pace of its bright future.

New Jersey Transit has been starved, as we all know, of financial resources for many years. It was underfunded, and capital spending was diverted just to keep the agency operating. And that's a collective failure of all of us: advocates, elected officials, as well as Administrations.

A very deep hole has been dug. But I'm encouraged tonight -- despite all of the concerns, and really well-stated concerns of commuters and others who rely on Transit -- I'm encouraged by some of those people who are working in the Agency, and see that it is beginning to turn. And I understand it's a very slow turn and a very slow climb out of the hole, but we find that encouraging.

I'll finish up.

On the good side, we do know -- and this has been mentioned already -- that new rail cars and buses have been ordered. We've heard from those on the front lines that new employees are being recruited; engineers and drivers trained. Some long-awaited station improvements have begun; and we've also seen strides -- or by what we've heard tonight -- toward better communication. But certainly, New Jersey Transit needs to continue and accelerate that improved communication to its passengers.

New Jersey Transit absolutely merits more funding. And echoing Senator Weinberg's comments -- I testified, early this year, at the Senate

Budget hearing, that New Jersey Transit needed more than they were asking for, to the tune of another \$125 million to \$150 million in this past budget. We know that there was money added by the Legislature, and we're grateful for that.

Turning around the proverbial battleship -- if I'm allowed to mix the metaphors -- is a slow process. But Senator Sweeney, I commend you and you, Senators -- for being here tonight, for wanting to see New Jersey Transit's improvement progress at a more rapid pace. I think we all do; and given time and resources, I believe our Transit system will get back on track.

Thank you very much for being here, and your attention.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Any questions for this witness? (no response)

If not--

ANTHONY RUSSO: Thank you, Senate President and members of the Committee.

My name is Tony Russo; I'm the President of the Commerce and Industry Association. We represent about 900 companies from virtually every business sector, with offices in Rochelle Park and Trenton.

And I want to just echo what Chip said. I want to first commend you, Senate President and the Senators here, for having this hearing; but also the Governor -- on the focus that, the last two years, both the Legislature and the Governor have placed on fixing New Jersey Transit.

I'm proud of the fact that our members, about two years ago, decided to launch a transportation forum; because we know that transportation, and how we move our employees, and also our products and goods, is important not only for their quality of life, but also our economy.

And I am happy to say that, since the two years, I know Chairman Diegnan has been out, we've had Kevin Corbett out. And the direction that you're going in, trying to fix this problem, I think is only going to help the economy and help the State of New Jersey.

We're seeing two things that have happened within the last five years, and that's the urbanization of New Jersey, right? It's the trend towards walkable communities. A lot of our businesses are moving into Jersey City, Hoboken, Newark because their employees want that quality of life, those walkable communities. And I think what you're doing here is going to be important to achieve that end goal. And that's really important in that we just consider that, in order to do that, we really need to have fixes. And I think the money that you allocated in the last two budgets, and these discussions, will only help that.

So we're here to support you and the Governor in trying to fix our Transit system.

So thank you.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

Any questions for Anthony? (no response)

If not -- sir, name and where you're from.

RICHARD WEINSTEIN, Esq.: My name is Richard Weinstein; I am an attorney in New York and in New Jersey.

And I actually have had some experience in governmental affairs, having worked for eight-and-a-half years for the Environmental Protection Agency in Region 2.

And so, very often, my comments to committees like this -- if I do speak to them, as I did in the case where I spoke in Newark to the Public

Service Commission that held a hearing on the master energy plan -- I concern myself with a little bit of the process that's involved. Who am I speaking to and what can they do for me, if anything?

So I see the names of the different Senators here. It seems to me that -- I don't want to use the word *hodgepodge*, because that has some negative connotations -- but it seems to me that this Committee was formed in some ad hoc manner.

And the reason I bring it up is because, as you know, New Jersey is a home rule -- not a home rule state. New York is a home rule state, and I assume you all know what *home rule* is about. And one of the prior speakers alluded to that, in saying that all the different communities that New Jersey Transit serves have no power over New Jersey Transit.

So you are the ones, and the Governor, who have the power over this Agency. In fact, this Agency is a creature of the Legislature; and all of us know that the details of its powers are set forth by the Legislature's own legislation.

So the question I have is, how did this Committee get formed? I was asking my wife -- who just spoke to you before, Barbara Gombach Weinstein -- how did this Committee form? Who selected the members of this Committee?

SENATOR SWEENEY: I did.

MR. WEINSTEIN: So it's a legislative Committee selected by--

SENATOR SWEENEY: The Senate President.

MR. WEINSTEIN: -- the President of the Senate. Because I've heard rumors--

SENATOR SWEENEY: Excuse me, sir.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Yes, sir.

SENATOR SWEENEY: You asked a question, I'm going to give you the answer.

In consultation with Minority Leader Tom Kean, the three members here, from his side, were picked by the Republicans; the members on this side, from the Democrats, were picked by myself.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Okay; so that's something I didn't know. And excuse me because, as I was going to say, my remarks are somewhat impromptu. But I've spoken before juries many times, and have done that often. So that doesn't faze me.

But New Jersey Transit, as I said, is a creature of the Legislature. And so to that extent, your hearing here has two functions: one, oversight -- and the other is whether or not you should add, in your oversight, pass additional legislation amending the way the New Jersey Transit is running.

Now, I can't -- because, as I said, this is very impromptu -- but I do look at New Jersey statute annotated, and I can see that this Legislature had given specific powers to the body; and you could curtail those powers or you could create powers in other bodies that might better serve the interests of the public.

I haven't done a full investigation of this, but when I do things I would do that -- try to see where, in the Legislature, powers have been given to New Jersey Transit, and maybe are too broad. Maybe they should be curtailed; maybe they should be shared with another agency.

So those are my general marks, and I appreciate that you're holding this hearing.

The two points that I want to bring up are that-- And I commend you to read a letter, if you would -- because it sets the tone of New Jersey Transit -- to the City of Hoboken. It's a letter dated March 31, 2018, and it's from Executive Director Corbett to our Mayor, Ravi Bhalla.

And I want to read to you just one paragraph of it, which is illustrative of this kind of statement.

SENATOR SWEENEY: And after the paragraph, we need to wrap up, sir.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Pardon me?

SENATOR SWEENEY: After you read the paragraph, we need to wrap up.

MR. WEINSTEIN: I understand; okay, all right.

I considered this to be the--

Well, anyway, I can't seem to pull it up. Could you give me a second to get it? I had it, and my phone is not doing it.

So just one second.

Oh, here it is; okay. And this is taken a little out of context, but it gives you a good idea of what it's about.

"To that end, I have recommended that the special Board meeting next Wednesday, the Board of Directors of New Jersey Transit, authorize the purchase of the property known as Union Dry Dock in Hoboken, and the simultaneous lease-back of the site to New York Waterways. By purchasing this property, New Jersey Transit will obtain ownership of the land and gain significant control over the scope and manner of New York Waterways' operations at the site, while ensuring that the most critical ferry maintenance activities are not significantly disrupted.

“With this authorization, we intend to allow New York Waterways to use the Union Dry Dock location for ferry maintenance activities no sooner than June 1, initially in the same limited manner in which they conduct those activities in Weehawken.

“We also intend--” -- and I think I don’t have to go on.

SENATOR SWEENEY: I was going to say, that’s a long paragraph. (laughter)

MR. WEINSTEIN: Yes, I don’t have to go on.

SENATOR SWEENEY: We’re aware--

MR. WEINSTEIN: But it just shows you that it’s almost like a god telling his people what he’s going to do.

SENATOR SWEENEY: We’re aware--

MR. WEINSTEIN: And I think New Jersey Transit, in the case of this, and in the case of Kearny, a fossil plant -- is exercising undue power that you could consider curtailing.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you, sir.

Are there any other questions?

I am aware of this issue; I have talked to your Mayor about it, just so you know.

MR. WEINSTEIN: Okay, good. I appreciate your taking the time, and thank you for telling me your mandate.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Thank you.

The last speaker-- And we also have 40 comments that will be read into the record; none of them positive, just so you know.

Next, Patty Schmoyer -- if I said it right -- Patty Schmoyer. (no response)

If not, that was the last speaker.

Again, thank you all for coming this evening; and I think we got our eyes opened a little bit. There was some really good information we were not aware of.

So again, thank you so much for being here.

We're adjourned. (applause)

(HEARING CONCLUDED)