

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: October 25, 1999

GOVERNOR WHITMAN TAKES TRAIN TO FUTURE UNION STATION SITE TO HIGHLIGHT BRIDGE BOND REFERENDUM

Governor Whitman today boarded a train and rode to the future site of the new Union Station on NJ TRANSIT's Raritan Valley Line, to highlight the need to fund projects like the station as part of the state's Bridge Bond Referendum.

"It's transportation projects like this one that will be in jeopardy if we do not find additional funding sources," said Governor Whitman. "New Jersey's first-class transportation network can't run on empty. We need to refuel our transportation program so that our trains continue to operate, so that stations like this are built or refurbished, so that our cars, buses and trucks operate on safe, structurally sound roads and bridges."

Voters will be asked on November 2 to authorize the Statewide and Local Bridge Bond Act of 1999. If authorized, the bond money will fund \$80 million for public transportation projects including the Union Station, and the rehabilitation of the Bergen Tunnels and Hoboken Yard.

In addition, \$250 million of the bond money will be used to repair and rebuild county bridges that have been deemed most deficient. Those funds will be administered through the New Jersey Department of Transportation's Local Aid Program. The final \$170 million will fund state highway and transportation projects.

"The money that will go to NJ TRANSIT helps to address the need for new services," the Governor said. "This new station is expected to attract 800 riders each day. Also, work on the Bergen Tunnels and Hoboken Yard are vital pieces of the \$450 million Secaucus Transfer station - a project that will help to interconnect New Jersey's passenger rail system."

The new Union Station will be a 2,000-square-foot station building adjacent to the tracks. The building design allows for passenger amenities including restrooms and a vendor to operate a coffee, "breakfast breads" and newspaper concession stand. Union Township will seek vendors to operate a bank, restaurant and dry cleaners in the station building. In addition, arrangements are being made for local bus routes to stop near the station.

Plans also call for NJ TRANSIT to build a 545-foot high-level, accessible center island platform where passengers would board and disembark from trains. The platform will contain a heated shelter to provide extra comfort to passengers while they wait for trains.

People living in nearby homes will be encouraged to walk to the new station by way of a pedestrian passageway. The new passageway will allow direct access to the station building and the high-level platforms. In addition, commuters can be dropped off at a "kiss & ride" location or park their cars in one of the 500 new parking spaces that will be available.

The estimated cost of the project is about \$29 million with construction set to be completed in the fall of 2001.

