

The Legislature of Rockland County



HARRIET D. CORNELL
Legislator – District 10
Chair, Special Committee On Transit

**MINUTES
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRANSIT
THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2015
6:30 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT:
LEG. H. CORNELL, CHAIR
LEG. M. GRANT
LEG. N. LOW-HOGAN

MEMBERS ABSENT:
LEG. A. WOLFE LEG.
LEG. C. CAREY

OTHERS PRESENT:
LEG. A. PAUL E. YEGER, ESQ.
R. GLUCKSMAN O. GETZ

CHAIR CORNELL CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6:31 PM

ADOPTION OF MINUTES, MEETING OF FEBRUARY 26, 2014

**MOTION TO ADOPT:
LOW-HOGAN/ GRANT**

UNAN

1. REF. #8055- CALLING UPON NEW JERSEY TRANSIT TO RESCIND THE PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION OF FARE INCREASES; CALLING UPON NEW JERSEY TRANSIT TO RESCIND A PROPOSED SERVICE CUT FOR THE PASCACK VALLEY LINE; CALLING UPON THE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY TO REJECT THE SAID SERVICE CUT; AND URGING NEW JERSEY TRANSIT TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARING IN ROCKLAND COUNTY ON ITS FARES AND ITS SERVICE
(HON. HARRIET D. CORNELL, LEGISLATURE)

ADDED CO-SPONSORS: GRANT, LOW-HOGAN, PAUL

**MOTION TO APPROVE:
CORNELL/GRANT, LOW-HOGAN**

UNAN

Chair Cornell thanked guest Legislator Aney Paul for attending tonight. Chair Cornell stated that, for a number of years, she has worked with the county's consultant and went to many transit meetings with New Jersey Transit (NJT) and Metro North. Both had agreed to create a long-term plan for increased and better service. Service had been added to the Pascack Line and it is disconcerting to read in the paper about a service cut. The west side of the Hudson doesn't have the benefits that Westchester County has on the east side in terms of transit options. It is hard enough to get people to stop using cars and this is a setback. Chair Cornell said she was also disturbed that all nine public hearings are in New Jersey and not one is in Rockland County. She said that that is inexcusable and that public comments must be submitted by May 21, 2015. NJT had been called by Legislative staff last week without a great response. She said that she would follow-up with NJT after the meeting. Randy Glucksman, Chairman of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council and Chairman of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, stated that he had forty years of experience in transit and has presented his opposition to the PSAC regarding the New Jersey

Transit's proposal to eliminate the west of Hudson train number 1601, which arrives in Hoboken at 12:45 a.m. The train prior to train 1601 arrives in Hoboken two hours earlier at 10:42 p.m. Mr. Glucksman expressed concern that riders wishing to attend the theatre, sporting or other events in New York City would be affected by the elimination of train 1601, stating that while west of Hudson residents are subject to the same tax rate as east of Hudson riders, they do not receive the same level of services. He added that no other Metro North line has a two-hour gap in the evenings. People that use that train stay late and have no option to get home. We need more service, not less. With a 12% increase in ridership, it is unconscionable to do this. Mr. Glucksman said that he would be going to one of the New Jersey NJT public hearings. He said that the MTA had spoken years ago when rates were going to be increased and service decreased and had suggested that they had a contract, so no trains had been cut. Mr. Glucksman stated he spoke with MTA Director, Bill Henderson, to see if they would be sending someone to the NJT public hearings. He was told that the MTA would send someone to observe, but wait to respond after a decision. Chair Cornell stated that she would send written comments by May 21, 2015. Mr. Glucksman stated that Metro North would make a recommendation to the MTA after the decision process is made. Chair Cornell stated that people would have to leave theater and sporting events early to make the 10:42 p.m. train. Mr. Glucksman said that another train had once been cut and we never got it back. The current evening schedule is 7:25, 8:20, 9:42, 10:42, and 12:45 p.m., meaning the Pascack Line is the only line with a two-hour gap even prior to the proposed service cut. He added that public transportation needs to be encouraged. If people think they will miss the 10:42 p.m. train, they'll just take a car. No other line has a line that ends at 10:42 p.m. They all go past midnight and some go until 2:00 a.m. Why is Rockland County a stepchild if we pay the same taxes? Orrin Getz, New City resident and New Jersey Rail Passengers Association Member, stated that he has a meeting every ninety days with the NJT Executive Director, but didn't wait that long, due to proposed service cuts. The NJT Board of Directors held a meeting yesterday and they got an earful. Mr. Getz said that the MTA recently increased their fares to us and now NJT is increasing fares. It is one increase on top of another increase. He said there is an issue with the fact that the NJT never came out with a budget, but just say they have a \$60 million dollar deficit and have been using capitol funding to meet the deficits. He said he told NJT that Rockland County would not tolerate the elimination of service. He said that Carl Wortendyke (Rockland County's representative to the MTA) should be pushed and that Susan Metzger (Orange County's representative to the MTA) really speaks out for Orange County. He said that Carl is a holdover, because his term is expired. Normally the County Executive makes a recommendation to the Governor for the appointment. Leg. Low-Hogan asked what the holdup was for County Executive Ed Day making the recommendation to the Governor to replace Carl at the MTA? Mr. Getz said that he didn't know, but it was the County Executive's decision. Mr. Glucksman stated that would be a good question for the County Executive, because Rockland County needs an advocate. Chair Cornell stated that Mr. Wortendyke has been helpful in the past. Mr. Getz said that the MTA would have their next meeting next Monday. He added that there is a Coach bus that runs later, but it is so crowded that you can't get on and would be left stranded. Coach also won't honor train tickets and people would have to pay extra. Mr. Glucksman said that the extra expense for a bus ticket on top of the \$300 monthly train tickets would be a lot for families. Leg. Grant said that the value gap has a long history and this is just insult upon insult. Leg. Low-Hogan wanted all Legislators to get the minutes and be made aware of the comment period.

Chair Cornell stated that Leg. Paul has a lot of constituents that use the train. Leg. Paul stated the following:

"I would like to thank Chair Cornell for bringing this resolution to the Legislature and for giving the residents of Rockland County an opportunity to have their voices heard on this important matter that affects so many. I am strongly opposed to the elimination of the late train on the Pascack Valley Line and the rate increases on both rail lines. Rockland County commuters are frequently asked to pay more, yet get fewer services.

New Jersey Transit is proposing cutting the 12:45 a.m. service, which would mean the last train out of Hoboken, New Jersey stopping at Pearl River, Nanuet and Spring Valley would be at 10:42 p.m. This would not only inconvenience and cause hardship economically to Rockland commuters, it would adversely affect those that rely on mass transit in order to attend theater and sporting events in New York City. How can we say that we want to encourage people to be more environmentally conscious by utilizing mass transit, yet essentially force Rockland County residents to use their cars if they are given no other option?

The MTA must first consent to the cut and I urge them to hear the testimony of the Rockland County residents who will be directly affected. I find it disconcerting that New Jersey Transit did not schedule a single public hearing in Rockland County. If the trains go through Rockland County and Rockland County residents pay for these services, then Rockland County should have input."

Leg. Paul added that, as a nurse, she often worked the late shift and mass transit options for such workers is a necessity. She said her daughter also uses these late trains. Leg. Paul asked to be a co-sponsor of this resolution. Mr.

Getz said that NJT fares are higher than anywhere in the country. Mr. Glucksman said that it costs \$440 per month from Trenton to New York. Chair Cornell thanked Mr. Glucksman and Mr. Getz for their testimony. Chair Cornell stated that she would keep the meeting open to public comments until 7:45 p.m. to allow commuters time to arrive.

Mr. Glucksman stated that he had spoken to Rockland County Superintendent of Highway Charles Vizzetti and County Executive Ed Day about putting signs by the railroad crossing on New Clarkstown Rd. in Nanuet to warn drivers to not stop on the tracks if there is traffic backed up. He felt the signs were necessary to avoid a fatal tragedy like in Valhalla. He said nothing has been done about installing the signs yet.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN 7:11 PM
LOW-HOGAN/EARL**

UNAN

CHAIR CORNELL ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 7:11 PM, BUT PUBLIC COMMENTS WERE ACCEPTED UNTIL 7:45 PM TO ACCOMMODATE COMMUTERS.

“The Rockland County Legislature is committed to full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. To that end, the Legislature is committed to creating an accessible environment for all. To request accommodations that you may require, please call Damaris Alvarez at 845-638-5248 (845-708-7899 for TTY/TDD). Please request these accommodations three (3) days in advance so that we can seek to meet your needs.”

TRANSIT 5.14.15.MIN/PS