



Testimony on “NJ Transit’s Bus Service Optimization” proposal

June 12, 2012

NJ TRANSIT Headquarters, One Penn Plaza East, Newark

Good evening, my name is Janna Chernetz, and I am the New Jersey Advocate for Tri-State Transportation Campaign. Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit policy organization working for a more equitable and environmentally sound transportation network in New Jersey, New York and Connecticut.

The route changes proposed here today would affect roughly 3,200 bus riders. Approximately 100 of these riders would be left with no transit alternative, while others would need to catch a different bus or add a transfer to reach their destination, making transit less accessible and reliable, as well as less attractive to riders. Leaving commuters either stranded or with a longer commute, should not be considered “optimizing service” and does not support NJ Transit’s goal of providing transportation options to New Jersey residents.

The official rationale for 11 route cuts is “low ridership or unnecessary system redundancy,” but the real reason is that these cuts are a result of Trenton’s failure to adequately invest in transportation in New Jersey.

Last year, NJ Transit required a transfer of \$363 million from its capital budget to plug an operating shortfall. In 2011, that number was \$463 million. Without additional and adequate operating support from Governor Christie and New Jersey’s legislators, Tri-State fears this is only the precursor for more extensive service cuts in the future. Transit riders recently saw reduced service and a dramatic fare increase of 22% in April 2010 which hit New Jersey’s elderly, poor and disabled transit riders the hardest; affecting their mobility, livelihoods and stretching their household budgets even further. These proposed cuts will add to hardship already experienced by riders, with these proposed service cuts disproportionately impacting the City of Newark, where 40% of households do not own a vehicle, depend overwhelmingly on transit as their main mode of transportation. In fact, 1 in 9 commuters (11.2%) in New Jersey rely on public transportation and 1 in 9 households (11.6%) in New Jersey do not own a vehicle.

Unless funding for transit service is prioritized and new transportation revenues sources identified, it is only a matter of time before public transportation becomes the more expensive commuting option for New Jerseyans. New Jersey’s transportation infrastructure and transit system are vital to economic vitality and environmental health and we must prioritize and preserve these key investments.

Thank you.