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Report Calls For Unifying NJ Transit, LIRR & Metro-North, New Plan at New York Penn Station

Tri-State Transportation Campaign's report, "[From Here to There: Regional Rail for Metro New York](#)," lays out a blueprint for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and New Jersey Transit to transition the region's disjointed, antiquated commuter rail systems to a unified regional rail network fit for the 21st Century.

*TSTC proposes **The Tri-State Solution**—a small-scale expansion of New York Penn Station and an accelerated timeline for through-running regional rail service.*

New York, NY— A new proposal for expanding and modernizing Penn Station could increase train capacity by more than 65% and allow for through-running revenue service to be implemented on an accelerated timeline, according to a Tri-State Transportation Campaign report released today.

The Tri-State Solution calls for a one-platform, two-track south expansion of Penn Station, which will increase capacity and allow for continued operations while the station's central platforms are widened and tracks are reconfigured to accommodate through-running NJT, LIRR, and MNR service. Implementing through-running at Penn Station will unlock new travel opportunities, such as a one-seat ride from Jamaica, Queens to Newark International Airport, and expand access to jobs and affordable housing throughout the region. For example, a person living in Long Island City or New Rochelle would have a seamless trip to their job in Newark, or their class in New Brunswick.



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Through-running trains at Penn Station is a critical component of unifying and modernizing the region's disjointed commuter rail systems and moving toward a "regional rail" standard, featuring frequent, all-day, bi-directional rail service, high-platform stations with level-boarding, and faster, cleaner electric trains. The need for regional rail service is made more urgent by the region's suburbanization of poverty, a lack of affordable housing, and a growing jobs-housing imbalance. Additionally, subpar access to efficient, reliable, and regionally-connected transit service is contributing to increasing traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions as we face a global climate emergency.

Existing commuter rail service operates as a premium shuttle service for a niche market: suburban commuters, typically of privileged socio-economic status, traveling to and from Manhattan during peak periods. However, the large-scale shift to remote work, and the resultant decline in transit ridership, is challenging the underlying assumptions of the traditional commuter rail business and operations model.

The following are steps that can be taken in the short- and long-term that will move the region closer to a unified regional rail network:

Short-term (0-5 years):

- Establish a network manager
- Restructure fare policies (Freedom Ticket expansion, fare capping, free transfers)
- Unify mobile ticketing apps and enable "through-ticketing" (the ability to buy fares across agency systems)
- Unify wayfinding (signage, maps) across transit agencies
- Share data between transit agencies and departments of transportation
- Coordinate schedules between modes for more efficient transfers
- Increase off-peak and bi-directional rail service
- Pilot through-running NJT, LIRR and MNR service at NY Penn Station

Long-term (5-15 years):

- Permanently establish NJT, LIRR and MNR revenue through-running service
- Coordinate rolling stock procurement between transit agencies
- Automate fare collection
- Expand rail electrification
- Retrofit stations for high-level boarding



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- Build a regional transit hub at Sunnyside Yard
- Expand passenger rail service on freight corridors and abandoned rights of way

“Aesthetic improvements to Penn Station, while necessary and important, will do very little to transform the transit riding experience,” **said Liam Blank, Policy & Communications Manager for Tri-State Transportation Campaign.** “We must push the railroads to think beyond the broken status-quo if we are going to seriously address climate change, traffic congestion, and regional access to affordable housing. Amtrak wants to push off through-running until 2080, but we simply cannot afford to take that gamble. Our region must take immediate action, and this report lays a blueprint for how to do it.”

“Today, the region’s commuter rail networks are uncoordinated with each other and unaffordable for many. Public transit connects the average resident of the New York metro area with 1.1 million potential jobs in an hour—but is cut almost in half for people with \$5 or less to spend on a fare,” **said Steven Higashide, Director of Research at TransitCenter.** “Lower fares, increased service, coordinated schedules, and other changes outlined in this report would make the railroads more useful for millions of people throughout the region. That could usher in a new generation of ridership growth, helping to drive equitable development, shore up transit finances, and reduce transportation emissions.”

“Through running would create a truly regional rail system that would benefit riders in the tri-state area and beyond,” **said Lisa Daglian, Executive Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC).** “There are any number of challenges to overcome, including addressing the need to reconcile the different power sources the different systems use, and purchasing compatible rolling stock and other capital investments such as reconstructing platforms and tracks. The pay-off will be a more equitable transit system that can truly help our region economically – and ecologically – and help attract drivers out of cars and onto trains, reducing congestion and emissions. An added bonus would be the ability to share in and expand discount programs across the broader regional system, reaching even more riders. It’s exciting to think that if these recommendations are enacted, we’ll be able to ride (on one train) from Murray Hill, Queens to Murray Hill, NJ!”

“New York’s public transit infrastructure is our greatest strength but our leaders have yet to leverage its full potential for riders,” **said Riders Alliance Policy & Communications Director Danny Pearlstein.** “For too long, we’ve siloed our transit systems, making travel needlessly



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time-consuming, expensive, and complicated. As we strive to grow transit ridership and confront catastrophic climate change, we can't afford the luxury of inertia. Riders need policymakers to make the most of the tracks, tunnels and stations we have today and regional megaprojects in the pipeline to deliver better, more equitable and resilient service."

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a 501(c)(3) non-profit policy and advocacy organization fighting for sustainable mobility in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. [Learn more.](#)



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