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## **NOW ARRIVING: PASSENGER RAIL FOR BERGEN COUNTY**

**RIDGEFIELD, NJ** — Governor Jon S. Corzine and Congressman Steve Rothman announced today that they are teaming up to deliver passenger rail to Bergen County with an extension of light rail service.

Joined by NJ Senator Loretta Weinberg, Assemblyman Gordon Johnson, Bergen County Executive Dennis McNerney, and Ridgefield Mayor Anthony Suarez, as well as other state and local officials, the announcement came after the conclusion that another long-studied rail technology being advanced by NJ TRANSIT did not offer a practical alternative for Bergen residents in the near term.

“The time has come to put the Bergen in Hudson-Bergen Light Rail. The twin facts that NJ TRANSIT has settled on a mode of service and Governor Corzine is here pledging his personal support for the Northern Branch gives me renewed hope that the dream of passenger rail will be realized for Bergen County,” said Rothman.

“We can no longer wait for emerging technologies that make the perfect the enemy of the good. Light rail will enable thousands of Bergen residents to get to work on the Waterfront, or make easy connections to PATH and ferries into Manhattan,” said Corzine.

Bergen light rail will provide significant environmental benefits, including reduced carbon emissions, taking 8,500 cars off the road each day. The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail system has been a catalyst for economic development and a national light rail transit model with nearly 45,000 passenger trips daily, with a 24<sup>th</sup> station under construction at 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Bayonne.

NJ TRANSIT submitted a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to the Federal Transit Administration last year that studied both light rail and re-emerging Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) types of equipment. However, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the only manufacturer of DMUs that met American safety standards for operating in mixed freight/passenger territory filed for bankruptcy. A global search for another manufacturer that could meet strict Federal Railroad Administration safety requirements led NJ TRANSIT Executive Director Richard Sarles to conclude recently that the possibility of new DMUs rolling off the production line is several years away at best.

“The seismic shift in the economy has impacted many sectors, including the rail manufacturing industry,” said Sarles. “We understand the Governor and Congressman want us to move forward with a proven approach expeditiously and we are declaring the preference for light rail as part of the federally-required process for building the project.”

Sarles also acknowledged the Federal Transit Administration’s efforts to advance multiple NJ rail projects, noting that NJ TRANSIT has received the Record of Decision for the Mass Transit Tunnel; the MOS FONSI for the Lackawanna Cutoff; completed environmental review for the Edison Station Parking Expansion Project, the Lower Hack Bridge Phase II project, and HBLR’s Danforth Interlocking project over the last several months.

“We appreciate the leadership of FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff and hard work of the Regional Administrator and staff to continue to effectively move many projects forward at once,” said Sarles.

FTA’s release of the revised Northern Branch DEIS will trigger local public hearings as soon as this fall. The hearings will give communities along the planned service route an opportunity to raise any additional issues that need to be incorporated into NJ TRANSIT’s service plan. NJ TRANSIT expects preliminary engineering to begin in 2010.

“With the support and cooperation of the relevant federal agencies, we expect to put shovels in the ground in Bergen County in 2011,” said Corzine.

At full operating capacity, the light rail service is planned to operate from early morning through late evening hours, seven days a week, with trains departing every 6-12 minutes in the peak travel periods. A trip from the northernmost portion of the line will take 21 minutes to Tonnelle Avenue, 25 minutes to Port Imperial for ferries to New York, and 37 minutes to Hoboken for PATH and NJ TRANSIT commuter rail connections.

“I commend the Governor and Congressman Rothman for their personal leadership in advancing a light rail system that we can build now,” said NJ Senator Loretta Weinberg. “Light rail will offer a welcome alternative to congested roadways with frequent, fast, and affordable trips that cost less than a gallon of gas.”

Light rail ridership is estimated to be about 24,000 passenger trips daily. While the cost estimate for extending light rail has not yet been finalized, preliminary estimates set the price at about \$800 million to \$900 million. The Northern Branch project is included in the joint long-range capital program of the NJ Department of Transportation and NJ Transit, benefitting from a mix of federal and state Transportation Trust Funds.

NJ TRANSIT is the nation’s largest statewide public transportation system providing more than 895,000 weekday trips on 240 bus routes, three light rail lines and 12 commuter rail lines. It is the third largest transit system in the country with 165 rail stations, 60 light rail stations and more than 18,000 bus stops linking major points in New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia.