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***Mayor Fulop Joins Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) to Hold Press Conference Announcing Efforts to Fight NJ Transit's Proposed 9% Fare Increase & Service Cuts with support from Newark Mayor Baraka, Paterson Mayor Torres and NJ Working Families***

***NJ Transit Fare Hike, the Fourth since 2002, Would Impact Nearly Half a Million New Jersey Working Families***

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Steven M. Fulop today joined the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) in their **fight against NJ Transit's proposed nine percent fare increase and service cuts** and in support of New Jersey working families at a press conference at the Exchange Place Light Rail Station. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka and Paterson Mayor Joey Torres, as well as New Jersey Working Families, are also joining Mayor Fulop and the ATU in their effort to bring safe, affordable and convenient access to mass transportation for all riders.

Mayor Fulop in partnership with ATU has launched an aggressive campaign, **“Fight the Hike,”** a non-profit entity, to raise awareness around NJ Transit's fare hike and service cut proposal, that would raise fares by nine percent, the fourth increase since 2002, as well as cut to two commuter train lines and six bus lines. ATU's campaign not only highlights the damage the proposal would do to nearly half a million New Jersey working families, but provides real solutions and action items for the public to get involved.

“Fight the Hike” is encouraging New Jersey commuters to make their voices heard, and has a website, [notransithike.com](http://notransithike.com), which illustrates what is at stake, outlines the comprehensive plan to find a solution to the Fare Hikes, has an active petition drive on [notransithike.com](http://notransithike.com) for all concerned residents of NJ to sign. NJ Transit will be holding public hearings for residents to share their concerns, and “Fight the Hike” is encouraging residents to attend the meetings which are posted on the website.

“For Jersey City residents and for people across the state, NJ Transit's nine percent fare hike and service cuts represent a complete assault and an added tax on middle class and working families,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “With increases spiraling out of control, we support ATU and the efforts of “Fight the Hike” to provide affordable, convenient and safe transportation for all riders while at the same time, protecting transit workers.”

NJ Transit commuters already pay the highest fares in the country and increasing fares will serve to cripple New Jersey's middle class and working families. NJ Transit's fare hike proposal will result in costly and challenging commutes for almost half a million riders and one in 10 New Jersey workers.

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“New Jersey should be investing in public transportation, not hiking fares and cutting service when our citizens are among the highest users of public transit in the country,” said **Ray Greaves, Chairman of the New Jersey ATU Statewide Council**. “Our Governor is more worried about rewarding his corporate and wealthy friends rather than ensuring that New Jersey’s hard working commuters have an affordable, safe, reliable public transit system.”

“The Christie Administration is asking those who can least afford it to pay to fill a budget gap created by its own poor choices and neglect,” said **Analilia Mejia, Executive Director of New Jersey Working Families**. “If this misguided fare hike goes through, bus and train riders will have seen their fares go up 30 percent since Governor Christie first took office in 2010. There are better choices the State could make to avoid fare hikes, prevent service cuts and reinvest in building the strong transit system working families deserve.”

Driving down wages and cutting retirement and pension benefits of workers to fix the NJ Transit budget gap only augments the problem of income inequality throughout our state. Alternatively, balancing the budget on the backs of passengers in the form of fare hikes is precisely the type of regressive policy that would impoverish rather than lift up the residents of New Jersey. Asking working people to work more for less and asking riders to pay more for less is a non-starter.

“The City of Newark is greatly concerned by NT Transit’s plans to raise fares on bus, rail, and light rail lines as vast numbers of Newark residents rely on NJ Transit to get to and from jobs, classes, and events, not to mention the growing number of visitors to our city destinations,” said **Mayor Baraka**. “We have more than \$2 billion worth of economic development in the pipeline, an international airport that employs thousands of people, and any additional fare increase at this time will just be an added burden on our working families.”

Recognizing the need to act now and not punt the ball down the line, “Fight the Hike” campaign has presented a three-pronged approach to eliminate the \$60 million NJ Transit budget shortfall. The measures include requiring NJ Transit to sell all vacant parcels of land owned by NJ Transit statewide, establishing Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in urban areas as well as suburbs, and expanding bus and train capacity as ridership increases.

“Mass transit is a vital economic lifeline that allows our residents access to work, schools and links our community with services and opportunities,” said **Mayor Jose ‘Joey’ Torres**. “Raising fares by nine percent, and this ‘do more with less’ mentality, when many of our residents salaries have remained static, will have Paterson families having to choose between paying more for transportation, or providing their families with basic needs. At a time when many of the State’s major cities have been asked to be fiscally prudent, it is important to look for alternative routes that do not affect our citizens so harshly.”

This is not the first time that Mayor Fulop has taken a leadership role in support of mass transportation. In December of 2014, Mayor Fulop was at the forefront of leading a coalition of more than two dozen elected officials to fight and eventually, defeat a proposal by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to eliminate overnight PATH service on weeknights and weekends. Mayor Fulop is also a co-chair of the Mayor’s Commission to extend the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, driving the effort to expand the light rail system into Bergen County.

“As a small business owner and resident of Jersey City, any transit fare hike would have a negative impact on me and my business. My customers use mass transit daily and many of their businesses depend on this service to grow their businesses in Jersey City,” said **Zahra Amanpour, founder of Indiegrove coworking space**. “I support Mayor Fulop’s effort and the ATU and encourage all residents, commuters and small business owners to fight the hike and demand greater accountability by NJ Transit.”

**All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Steven M. Fulop at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699. ////**