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More than a Dozen Federal, State, and Local Elected Officials As Well As Labor Advocates Join In Calling On Port Authority To Withdraw Proposal To Eliminate Overnight PATH Service

JERSEY CITY – More than a dozen federal, state and local elected officials, as well as **labor advocates**, joined at a press conference today calling on the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to **withdraw their proposal to eliminate overnight PATH service**.

The proposed service reduction was released in a report by the Port Authority between the Christmas and New Year's holiday and claims a \$10 million annual savings. However, according to ridership numbers provided by the bi-state agency, as many as 390,000 riders will be impacted annually by the loss of service from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. on weeknights, with hundreds of thousands more affected if weekend overnight service is also eliminated.

Attending the press conference at the Grove Street PATH station in Jersey City were:

- U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ)
- U.S. Congressman Albio Sires (D-NJ8)
- N.J. Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto (D-32)
- N.J. Senator Nicholas Sacco (D-32)
- N.J. Senator Brian Stack (D-33)
- N.J. Senator Sandra Cunningham (D-31)
- Newark Mayor Ras Baraka
- Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer
- Harrison Mayor James Fife
- Weehawken Mayor Richard Turner
- Guttenberg Mayor Gerald Drasheff
- West New York Mayor Felix Roque
- Kearny Mayor Al Santos
- East Newark Mayor Joseph Smith
- Ken McNamara, President of CWA Local 1037
- Ray Greaves, Chairman of the New Jersey Amalgamated Transit Union State Council
- Analilia Mejia, Director of NJ Working Families Alliance.

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Mayor Fulop, who immediately criticized the measure upon its release, called it one of the worst ideas to come out of the Port Authority in the past six years and said it was further illustration of how out of touch leadership at the agency is with its ridership and the public.

“To have this group of more than a dozen elected officials, from the city, state and federal level, all calling on this measure to be withdrawn, speaks volumes,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “We already saw both houses of the New York and New Jersey legislatures approve bi-partisan reform measures for the Port Authority, and now we have consensus here as well. What will it take for the Port Authority to hear what the public and their elected officials are saying?”

In his remarks, Mayor Fulop cited the critical role that the PATH train system and other mass transit has played in economic development of Jersey City and the northern New Jersey region, and how a reduction in service is counterproductive to New Jersey’s economic future. He also pointed out how the measure hurts the most vulnerable commuters, the working-class employees who rely on overnight PATH service to get to and from work.

“The fact is that is going to have a huge impact on working families who rely on this service,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “Whether it is nights, weekdays, or weekends, New Jersey’s future economic growth relies on an increase in mass transportation and PATH service, not a decrease. Instead of reducing operating hours, the Port Authority should be finding ways to add and improve service.”

The PATH train system connects New York City with Jersey City, Newark, Harrison and Hoboken and has averaged 73 million annual riders over the past five years, making it one of the most-used systems in the country. According to the Port Authority, from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. on weeknights, 1,500 people use the PATH service.

“The notion of using Port Authority reform as a ‘Trojan Horse’ for transit cutbacks is ill-conceived,” said **U.S. Senator Menendez**. “More than anywhere else in the nation, our region depends on transit for our economic viability and quality of life. As long as the Port Authority is going to charge New Jerseyans \$14 to cross its bridges and tunnels, a viable transit alternative is essential.”

The bi-state agency, with a 2014 budget of \$8.2 billion, states its mission is to “identify and meet the critical transportation infrastructure needs of the bistate region’s businesses, residents, and visitors ... while strengthening the economic competitiveness of the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Region.” However, many of the speakers questioned if the Port Authority had lost sight of its mission.

“New Jersey’s past, present, and future rely on a transit network that is reliable and affordable,” said **U.S. Senator Booker**. “It is part of our state’s quality of life and critical to the economic health and viability of our state. It’s clear the PANYNJ has strayed from its original mission and suffers from less than ideal transparency and accountability, which has chipped away at the public’s trust. I’m disappointed that bipartisan reform proposals offered by both the NJ and NY legislatures were vetoed. I have serious concerns about any cutbacks of PATH service, a service many depend on to get to and from work. Access to mass transit is key to the growth we are seeing in some of our Hudson County communities. New Jersey commuters and residents deserve to be heard on this issue before any decisions are final.”

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Echoing the remarks of Senators Menendez and Booker, Congressman Sires, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee pledged to use his role in Washington to halt any elimination of overnight PATH service.

“The 8th Congressional District contains the majority of Port Authority managed properties all of which are used 24 hours a day by hard working New Jersey residents,” said **Congressman Sires (D-NJ8)**. “I am extremely concerned with the report presented to Governors Christie and Cuomo by the special panel of board members of PANYNJ to privatize PATH and suspend overnight services. As a member of the U.S. House Transportation committee, I will work with the local, county, State elected officials and my colleagues in Washington to ensure that the recommendations concerning PATH operations mentioned in the report to Governors Christie and Cuomo do not take place.”

The group of elected officials all criticized the proposal, saying the need for reform at the Port Authority was meant to create greater accountability, not limit service and penalize riders.

“Port Authority reform was never about cutting rail service for the hard-working people of Hudson County and this region,” said **Assembly Speaker Prieto (D-32)**. “It was about bringing more transparency and accountability to this troubled agency that for far too long has caused headaches for area commuters. I will not stand idle and let the Port Authority cut needed services and inconvenience residents and hurt businesses.”

As part of the Port Authority’s proposed 10-year, \$27.6 billion capital spending plan announced in February, the agency is moving forward with a \$1.5 billion plan to link the PATH train system to Newark Liberty International Airport.

“We have more than \$2 billion worth of economic development in the pipeline, ranging from the new Prudential skyscrapers in our downtown to new homes in all of our neighborhoods, and residents and workers will be harshly impacted by this move,” said **Newark Mayor Baraka**. “Vast numbers of Newark residents – late-shift workers, night-shift workers, and college students, depend on PATH to get to and from jobs, classes, and events. Closure of the PATH service at night will also have a terrible impact on Newark Liberty International Airport and its passengers, which is very much a 24/7 facility, with airliners flying in and out from all across the world, at all hours, day and night.”

The speakers in attendance all also pointed to the disproportionate economic disadvantage this latest proposal would have on New Jersey.

“The terrible idea to cut overnight PATH service needs to be publicly withdrawn from consideration immediately,” said **Hoboken Mayor Zimmer**. “Even the uncertainty that the Port Authority is not fully committed to 24/7 PATH service puts New Jersey at a competitive disadvantage versus our neighbors across the river who have 24/7 mass transit access within New York City. As a result, our State will lose jobs, economic growth will be undermined, and taxpayers will bear the burden of a significant loss of sales and income tax revenue.”

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