

**More than 40 mayors, council members, freeholders and legislators met last week to talk about service on the Raritan Valley Line RVL) with NJ Transit officials, representatives from Gov. Phil Murphy's office, Senator Cory Booker and Rep. Tom Malinowski.**

February 26, 2020 - The Raritan Valley Line Mayors' Alliance organized the meeting for municipal and county officials from 31 towns using the RVL. Among the topics discussed was a status report on the study underway to determine the feasibility of peak time direct rail service. In the Bill S3574, NJ Transit was directed to complete the study by June 2020. Vinn White, Gov. Murphy's Sr. Transportation Planner, and Paul Wyckoff, Chief of Government Affairs at NJT, both stated the study is on track and will be done in June. "The Bill was signed on Dec. 4, 2019 and the study was launched immediately. We realized the importance of getting real data for decision-making" said Mr. White.

Mr. Wyckoff explained the study will look at the line schedules, available slots in NY Penn Station, equipment, finances and what can be done to improve service between now and when a new tunnel will be built. "The information from the study, which is being done by an outside firm, will be public. We want it to be the impetus for a robust discussion and welcome the energy and commitment in this room," he added.

Zach McCue, Deputy State Director for Senator Booker, reiterated the concern that funding for the Gateway Project to build a new tunnel has not been approved by the Trump Administration. "This is a dangerous situation and if former Gov. Chris Christie had not cancelled the ARC Project a new tunnel would be opening later this year," said McCue.

John Marshall, liaison from Rep. Malinowski's office, echoed the sentiment saying "the tunnel is almost 110 years old and continues to deteriorate. The tunnel is vital to commuters and businesses moving goods and people," he said.

Local officials requested the study also look at additional same platform transfers in Newark Penn Station saying that would make it easier and safer to get a connecting train. Currently, RVL commuters are forced to change platforms in Newark which involves going downstairs and back up another flight. There are currently only five trains with same platform transfer. The mayors also talked about the overcrowded trains and asked that the double decker cars be returned to RVL.

In response to the request for weekend service, Mr. Wyckoff explained the difficulty because every weekend one tunnel comes off line for maintenance and repairs.

RVL Mayors Co-Chairs Colleen Mahr of Fanwood, Bob Fazen of Bound Brook and Shelley Brindle of Westfield encouraged the mayors and council members to attend the March 11 NJT Board Meeting at 6 pm at the Newark Headquarters.

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