

**Philip D. Murphy**, Governor  
**Sheila Y. Oliver**, Lieutenant Governor  
**Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti**, Commissioner  
**Kevin S. Corbett**, Executive Director



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January 17, 2019

Honorable Christopher S. Bateman  
Honorable Robert Smith  
Honorable Patrick J. Diegnan  
Honorable Joseph P. Cryan  
Honorable Thomas H. Kean Jr.  
Honorable Nicholas P. Scutari  
Honorable Michael J. Doherty

Dear Senators,

Thank you for your recent letter to Commissioner Gutierrez-Scaccetti regarding an analysis on the feasibility of implementing weekday peak-period service as well as weekend-direct service on the Raritan Valley Line (RVL). I have been asked to respond to you on this important issue.

NJ TRANSIT, for some years, has been working very closely with the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition, as well as with the Mayors and other stakeholders from along the RVL. As you know, that continuing dialogue led to the implementation of off-peak one-seat trips several years ago. We continue to work with the communities and their elected leaders, and to explore possible avenues for expanding one-seat service. I will have NJ TRANSIT staff update their extensive work on this matter. In the meantime, let me summarize their previous findings of the challenges to meeting this customer request.

The largest long-term challenge has been and continues to be the constraints on trans-Hudson rail capacity due to peak hours congestion in the current Amtrak tunnels under the Hudson River. NJ TRANSIT has 23 "slots" through the tunnels during the peaks, and all have long been filled. Had the ARC Tunnel not been cancelled, that capacity would have been doubled and available at the end of this year. Now, we and our partners, including Amtrak, are pursuing a new Hudson Tunnels program, and the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition and the Mayors have been steadfast allies in this essential effort.

There have been repeated requests to review ridership on the trains now using the Hudson tunnels during peaks, with an eye to redistributing one or more slots to the RVL. The distribution of ridership and customer travel patterns on these trains and lines, including not only the North Jersey Coast Line but also the heavily-traveled Northeast Corridor, has made any reassignment of slots so far infeasible. In summary, reassigning

even one peak hours slot to the RVL at this time would badly exacerbate crowding on other lines.

In terms of financial impact, previous staff work developed cost estimates of several tens of thousands of dollars for one or more peak-hours RVL one-seat trips, due in part to crewing logistics; I also will have staff update their work on this aspect.

Of course, NJ TRANSIT currently is meeting significant short-term service challenges arising from our successful, expedited drive to meet federally-mandated Positive Train Control (PTC) milestones by the end of 2018. Completion of the PTC program will occur over the next two years. At the same time, NJ TRANSIT's shortage of locomotive engineers will also be a challenge for much of this year. The good news here is that, to make up for the lack of new engineers hired from 2011 to 2017, we have more than doubled the number of engineer training classes, and four of these classes will graduate by the end of 2019. This will be a major help. For your information and convenience, I am including with this response a copy of our more recent update on PTC and other service issues.

I want to emphasize that NJ TRANSIT understands – and supports -- the benefits of one-seat rail service, as well as the significant economic and quality-of-life benefits that transit oriented development brings.

I appreciate your interest in and support of NJ TRANSIT and transportation. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know. You may also contact John Del Colle, our Senior Director of Legislative Relations, for any further questions or information. He can be reached at 973 491-8073, or via email at [jdelcolle@njtransit.com](mailto:jdelcolle@njtransit.com).

Sincerely,

  
Kevin S. Corbett  
Executive Director

cc: Hon. Stephen M. Sweeney, Senate President  
RVL Mayor's Alliance

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