



***For Immediate Release:***  
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## **Fiscally Irresponsible and Unfair Transit Fare Hikes Go Forward, Thanks to Governor Christie & the Legislature** *NJ Transit Board Approves Fare Hikes & Service Cuts Despite Overwhelming Public Opposition*

**Newark** –New Jersey For Transit, the coalition calling for more equitable transportation funding, denounced the NJ Transit Board approval of the 9 percent fare hike and service cuts. Despite overwhelming opposition, NJ Transit, Governor Christie and the legislature failed to take any action to thwart the need for the proposed fare hike and service cuts.

The 2016 state budget, which included a mere \$33 million in state subsidy for NJ Transit, was signed by Governor Christie on June 26 with no resistance from the legislature. This paved the way for the need to move forward with the NJ Transit fare hike as well as the continued raid of the Clean Energy Fund of \$62 million and redirection of \$295 million from the Turnpike Authority that was supposed to be dedicated to the cancelled ARC tunnel.

The fare hikes and service cuts highlight the severity of the multi-faceted transportation funding crisis in New Jersey. “The transportation funding structure in New Jersey is broken in terms of capital and operating needs. NJ Transit fares already outpace inflation by 25 percent and New Jersey riders pay the highest fares in the nation. Come 2017, the Transportation Trust Fund will not have enough money to pay for even its debt service stifling New Jersey’s ability to fund much needed capital improvements to expand mass transit and repair its crumbling roads and bridges,” said **Janna Chernetz, Senior New Jersey Policy Analyst for Tri-State Transportation Campaign**. “Unfortunately the state is nowhere near finding a way out of this crisis as once promising legislative efforts broke down immediately after the governor presented his budget and the are little signs of political will to reengage the conversation.”

“There’s no surprise about today’s board vote. After Gov. Christie’s transit budget was rubber-stamped by the Legislature, these fare hikes and services were inevitable,” said **Doug O’Malley, Director of Environment New Jersey**. “It’s time for our state leaders to stop pretending like looking the other way is an answer. Transit riders are going to take a bath, and Trenton is to blame. The only question is how are we going to solve our transportation crisis so transit riders don’t face a worse crunch next year.”

But the fare hikes do nothing more than keep the lights on in a dilapidated building. The fare hikes and service cuts do not address the state's pressing need to expand service as transit ridership is growing and continues to set records.

"These transit fare hikes work against a multi-modal transportation system. By providing transportation options, we ensure a transportation system that eliminates single points of failure," said **Cyndi Steiner, Executive Director of the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition**. "With no gas tax increase or other sustainable revenue source for New Jersey's transportation needs, we are now staring several points of failure squarely in the face: the Amtrak tunnels, the Portal bridge, and the silent but deadly failure that most drivers experience every day: near gridlock congestion and the nation's longest commute times."

The Governor's and Legislature's failure to address transportation is a significant blow to an already floundering state economy, which ranks near the bottom at 46<sup>th</sup> in the nation.

"Today's vote is the end result of the abject failure of leaders at all levels of government to even just sustain - to make no mention of improving - the Garden State's foremost economic asset. Building a strong state economy isn't easy, but it's also not rocket science: invest in the assets that make your state competitive," said **Jon Whiten, Deputy Director of New Jersey Policy Perspective**. "By ignoring this simple formula and instead focusing on easy, politically safe policies like tax cuts and tax breaks to highly profitable corporations, New Jersey's leaders are making our great state a less attractive place to live, work and do business."

"The fare hikes and the service cuts hurt all New Jerseyans, especially those of low to moderate incomes. Fare hikes and service cuts directly undermine work options for the lowest-wage and most vulnerable workers in our state. This shifting of costs to those least able to pay is unfair, and the consequence is to reduce economic opportunity and increase the cost of living and working in New Jersey," said **Serena Rice, Executive Director of the Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey**.

"These transit hikes are a tax on the working poor and members of NJ's struggling middle class and will be a barrier to much needed jobs, college classes and other opportunities. By shortchanging public transit in the budget this year, the governor and the legislature have shown how out of touch they are with hard working New Jerseyans. Without affordable public transit our state and its people cannot succeed," said **Dena Mottola Jaborska, Associate Director of New Jersey Citizen Action**.

"NJ Transit just sold out the commuters of New Jersey. Today they rubberstamped the outrageous fare hike and cut back in services. This is only the beginning of the attack on bus and train riders in our state. This will force people back into their cars and increase traffic and pollution. These changes are the start of the dismantling of the best transit systems in the country," said **Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club**. "Thousands of people came out against this fare hike and NJ Transit basically told them to take a hike. Raising fares and cutting services hurts commuters, the economy, and the environment. This is the start of the financial disaster and added misery for commuters. NJ Transit has turned their backs on commuters. This administration didn't come up with other sources of funding for New Jersey commuters and now NJ Transit has voted to do the same."

But the pain is felt not only in the wallet but in also in transportation access across New Jersey.

"The bulk of the transit cuts are heavily weighted on low and moderate income communities in Central and Southern New Jersey," said **John Boyle, Research Director of the Greater Philadelphia Bicycle Coalition**. "The City of Beverly which has an 18 percent poverty rate will lose all weekend and late night bus service."

"Many Newark residents rely on public transportation as a means to get anywhere from: getting their kids to school, going to work, or even basic recreation, especially for the 40 percent of Newark residents without access to a vehicle," said Daniel Joseph Wiley **Community Organizer for Ironbound Community Corporation**. "By raising fares, and cutting service, basic needs to communities like mine are being put in jeopardy."

The New Jersey For Transit coalition is calling for the state to fix its transportation funding crisis, borne in large part from a political reluctance to increase gasoline taxes, and dedicate an adequate amount of money to NJ Transit. The coalition, which includes transportation, environmental, consumer, anti-poverty, grassroots and labor organizations –is being led by Environment New Jersey, New Jersey Policy Perspective and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign.

"The NJ Transit Board should be serving the public not the politicians. Shame on Governor Christie for pushing, and Democratic legislators for not fighting back against, these service cuts and fare hikes. The result will make it harder to work, increase air pollution, and serve as a tax increase to all but especially those who can least afford it," said **David Pringle, NJ Campaign Director for Clean Water Action**.

New Jersey for Transit coalition will continue to push for equitable funding will not stop after today's vote. "Governor Christie continues to lavish billions in corporate tax cuts while passing costs on to New Jersey's families, said **Robert Duffey, Policy and Communications Director for New Jersey Working Families**. "Today's tax hike was totally avoidable, and we won't stop fighting until the scales are tipped back in favor of working people."

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*New Jersey For Transit is a broad-based coalition focused on the need for investment in affordable, efficient high-quality public transit in New Jersey. Its members are: AAA New Jersey, The Amalgamated Transit Union, The Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey, Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, Clean Water Action New Jersey, Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers, Environment New Jersey, Fair Share Housing Center, Ironbound Community Corporation, New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition, New Jersey Citizen Action, The New Jersey Commuters Action Network, New Jersey Policy Perspective, New Jersey Public Interest Research Group, New Jersey Sierra Club, New Jersey Working Families, South Jersey Urbanists and Tri-State Transportation Campaign.*

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