



For Immediate Release: May 20, 2015

Contacts: Doug O'Malley (917-449-6812) Janna Chernetz (609-271-0778) Jon Whiten (917-655-3313)

Broad Coalition Joins Riders in Protesting NJ Transit's Proposed Fare Hike, Service Cuts

Groups and Riders Sound Off on Latest Proposals

Newark – New Jersey For Transit, a new diverse 18-member coalition will be at tonight's public hearing in Newark to denounce NJ Transit's proposal to raise fares by 9 percent and cut bus and rail service in the state. Led by Environment New Jersey, New Jersey Policy Perspective and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, the coalition is calling for more equitable, sustainable and responsible transportation funding, while bringing attention to the benefits that affordable and efficient trains and buses bring to New Jersey's economy, environment and everyday working people.

"The NJ Transit fare hikes and service cuts are a direct result of the state's failure to address its broken transportation funding structure. Transit riders alone should not be responsible for fixing it," said **Janna Chernetz, Senior New Jersey Policy Analyst for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign**. "The Governor and the Legislature can and must stop this fare increase. Doing so means finding a short-term revenue source to fill NJ Transit's \$60 million operating hole, a mere 0.18 percent of the state's budget."

The failure to properly address New Jersey's transportation funding crisis hits the most economically disadvantaged New Jersey residents the hardest. With 40 percent of Newark residents lacking access to a vehicle, the need for robust transit access could not be more compelling.

"In neighborhoods throughout Newark we need to be prioritizing equitable access to and affordable public transportation," said **Joseph Della Fave, Executive Director of Ironbound Community Corporation**. "Public transportation reduces the need for the thousands of cars that go in and out of our community daily and contribute to Newark's high asthma rates. Affordable and accessible public transportation is part of the solution to improving the environment and public health."

Two North Jersey train departures are on the chopping block: Pascack Valley Line train #1043, the 1:35 a.m. departure from Montclair State University and Montclair-Boonton Line train #1601, the 12:45 a.m. departure from Hoboken. Of the proposed six bus service cuts, one serves North Jersey, the elimination of the 872 service between Mack-Cali (Parsippany) and Livingston Mall.

Environmental advocates in the coalition note that by not investing in public transit, the state is making it much harder for everyday New Jerseyans to make environmentally conscious choices – with devastating long-term impacts on air quality and smog levels across the state.

“These fare hikes and service cuts are another blow by the Christie Administration against mass transit in the state – commuters will pay more for less service,” said **Doug O'Malley, Director of Environment New Jersey**. “Riding the train or catching the bus is the best way to reduce our carbon footprint – but not when you can't afford it.”

NJ Transit's proposal also raises safety concerns among the most vulnerable road users.

“Raising transit fares forces more people off of public transportation and into their cars, increasing congestion and making the roads more dangerous for those who walk and bike to work,” said **Cyndi Steiner, Executive Director of New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition**.

The state has dramatically raided NJ Transit this decade. The state contribution to NJ Transit in 2009 was \$348 million; the proposed 2016 budget has only \$33 million coming from state funding. The budget includes funds raided from the Clean Energy Fund and \$295 million from the Turnpike Authority that was supposed to be dedicated to the cancelled ARC tunnel. Instead of nearing completion of additional capacity in and out of New York, commuters are stuck with old infrastructure and a broken system for funding transportation.

“Governor Christie is asking those who can least afford to pay to fill a budget gap created by his own poor choices and neglect,” said **Robert Duffey, Policy and Communications Director at New Jersey Working Families Alliance**. “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 New Jersey could and should make to avoid fare hikes, prevent service cuts and reinvest in building the strong transit system working families deserve.”

New Jersey's per-gallon gasoline tax – last increased in 1988 - has fallen so far behind that now every single state but Alaska has a higher tax. The result is that the real value of New Jersey's gas tax has fallen dramatically over the past few decades, strangling the state's ability to invest in the essential public assets those taxes pay for, including public transit. Our leaders have dug a hole that is hundreds of millions of dollars large and constantly growing the longer they fail to act.

“Without adequate resources raised in an equitable way to pay for public transit, the state of New Jersey has turned to a mostly captive audience instead: riders. Unlike the gas tax, the cost of a NJ Transit train ticket has not only kept pace with inflation since the 1980s, but actually outpaced it,” said **Jon Whiten, Deputy Director of New Jersey Policy Perspective**. “Quite simply, now – not next year, not after the next election, but *now* – is the time for this to stop. Transit riders can no longer afford to pay the price for New Jersey's inaction. We did not create this mess, and we cannot be the only ones here to clean it up.”

#####

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 current 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.

For more information, visit www.twitter.com/nj4transit.