

Rothman Presents NJ Transit with \$ 3.6 Million for Long-Awaited Northern Branch Line

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New Jersey Transit's Executive Director George Warrington Now Says Commuters Could Have Northern Branch Line by 2011

(Englewood, NJ) — Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (NJ-9) presented New Jersey Transit Chief George Warrington with \$3.6 million in federal funds to help New Jersey Transit make the long-awaited Northern Branch Line a reality for commuters in Northern New Jersey. Thanks to this funding, which comes at a time when the federal government is scaling back its commitments to public transportation, New Jersey Transit is announcing that it can complete the design and engineering work necessary to start construction by 2008 and finish the job by 2011.

"This money is a real shot in the arm for commuter rail service on the Northern Line," said Rothman. "Now, George and his staff at New Jersey Transit can move forward on their plans for bringing this much-needed service to the Northern Valley in a reasonable timeframe."

When New Jersey Transit pursued funding for the Hudson-Bergen light rail in 1999, it was estimated that establishing light rail travel on the Bergen portion would cost \$230 million. However, that estimate has grown dramatically each year to the point where light rail construction would cost more than \$1 billion.

With this unaffordable price tag, New Jersey Transit examined ways to open the Northern Branch line using new technology in the form of self-propelled Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) rail cars. Using DMUs, New Jersey Transit believes it can rely on existing infrastructure to make commuter rail on the Northern Branch possible, cutting the projected cost of rail service on the Northern Branch by half.

"Having spent the majority of my life in the Northern Valley, I understand how important it is to bring commuter rail service to Tenafly, Englewood, Leonia, Palisades Park, Ridgefield, and Fairview. That's why I was so pleased to see that New Jersey Transit found a way to put it within reach. And that's also why I am so proud to have secured \$3.6 million from Washington, DC to help New Jersey afford this long hoped-for service," said Rothman.

Rothman secured the money as part of the 2006 and 2005 federal transportation appropriations bills. Specifically, New Jersey Transit will use it to advance the environmental and planning work of the Northern Branch.

"In recognition of the importance of this service for Eastern Bergen County, we have established a very aggressive schedule for this project including completing the design and engineering work next year, procuring equipment in early 2007, and beginning construction in 2008," said Warrington of New Jersey Transit.

Once opened, the Northern Branch line will provide needed transportation options for residents in the northern valley, relieve traffic congestion on some of New Jersey's extremely crowded roads, and bring new and significant economic development opportunities to towns along the line.

The planned Northern Branch is 11 miles long. Proposed stops include Tenafly at the northern most point to Tonnelle

Avenue in North Bergen. Stops in between include: Tenafly Town Center, Englewood Hospital, Englewood Town Center/Palisade Avenue, Leonia, Palisades Park, Ridgefield, and Fairview.

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