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Expand New Bergen Rail Service

Gets Colleagues On House Appropriations Committee To Approve Funds

Washington, DC - "Successfully wielding his influence as a member of the powerful House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) last week gained the full House Appropriations Committee's approval of \$3.2 million to relieve traffic congestion on Route 17 and \$4 million for rail stations and park-n-rides in Bergen County. Rothman secured the funds as part of the Transportation Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2004.

"For Northern New Jersey residents, Route 17 is too often congested and a source of great frustration and headaches," Rothman said. "While Route 17 is a critical roadway for many area residents to go to work, the malls, the Meadowlands, or other attractions in our area, it becomes a nightmare when people have to allot themselves extra time to get places because of the high probability of delays on Route 17. These funds will help widen Route 17 to reduce traffic congestion, and improve the overall quality of life for the people of Northern New Jersey."

Rothman secured \$3.2 million for work on expanding Route 17 to allow traffic to flow more freely. Specifically, funds will be used to widen the Essex Street bridge over Route 17 so that more lanes can fit under the overpass. The funds will also go toward designing and engineering a broader solution to Route 17 congestion between its intersections with Route 3 all the way up to Linwood Avenue in Ridgewood.

Also included in the measure was \$4 million for preliminary engineering, design, and analysis of new stations that can connect existing commuter rail corridors, highways, and bus service. Engineers will also work on developing park-n-rides, and a variety of infrastructure elements such as bridges, tunnels, signals, transfers, and shuttle service links throughout the county, which could include elements of new service to the redeveloped Meadowlands site.

"As we look to improve our roadways and free them of congestion, a part of the solution is to expand our mass transit network to offer more people more convenient and high quality train and bus service," Rothman said. "Developing these new stations will allow us to link different forms of transportation - car, bus, and rail - at one point, helping to relieve our overburdened roadways and relieving the frustration of drivers stuck in traffic."

Over the past two years, Rothman has used his position on the House Appropriations Committee to secure \$4.6 million

for rail stations and park-n-rides in Bergen County and \$400,000 to relieve traffic congestion on Route 17. The Transportation Appropriations bill next moves to the House floor.

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