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SWEENEY, WEINBERG & SARLO VOICE SUPPORT FOR EXPANSION OF HUDSON-BERGEN LIGHT RAIL

Say Transportation Investment Should Make Extension To Bergen A Priority

TRENTON – Addressing the investment strategy for New Jersey’s transportation needs on Thursday, Senate President Steve Sweeney, Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg and Senator Paul Sarlo today said that the long-sought expansion of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail into Bergen County should be a priority for a renewed Transportation Trust Fund.

Working together with their Senate Democratic colleagues on a multi-faceted investment plan, the senators stressed the importance of finally getting the work done on an extension of the rail line into Bergen County.

“The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail extension is a crucial mass transit project for New Jersey,” said Senator Sweeney. “We have to make the investments that will get people to and from their jobs in a faster, more efficient way or we will suffocate any chance we have for an economic recovery.”

Also participating were Bergen County Executive Jim Tedesco, Assemblyman Gordon Johnson and Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle, among others.

The Northern Branch Extension would bring light rail to Bergen County for the first time. The project is an eight-mile extension of the existing, well-used light rail line from its existing Tonelle Avenue terminus in Jersey City to Englewood. The extension would provide high-quality, light rail service to augment commuting options for a densely-populated corridor in eastern Bergen County, reducing bus and auto congestion on area roads and at the George Washington Bridge and Lincoln Tunnel.

“The fact is, the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail is one of the biggest misnomers in New Jersey,” said Senator Weinberg, who is leading the work on transportation. “Right now, Bergen County is not actually served by the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail. The line currently ends in Hudson County. It is time for that to change.”

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We also need a renewed Transportation Trust Fund, said Senator Sarlo. A robust TTF will enable us to repair the dilapidated bridges and highways that cost drivers \$600 a year in extra repairs, and provide the first-class road system our citizens expect.

“Every dollar invested in transportation generates \$3.50 in economic benefits,” said Senator Sarlo. “This is an investment in our economy as much as it is an investment in transportation. The state’s infrastructure is in need of repairs and improvements and we can’t afford to let it go neglected for too long.”

The extension of the light rail would enable commuters to travel directly to jobs on the burgeoning Hudson River waterfront, catch PATH connections to midtown and lower Manhattan, and board ferries to Manhattan in Weehawken, Hoboken and Jersey City.

“The latest Environmental Impact Study said more than 20,000 people would use this rail line every day,” said Senator Gordon. “It would result in 100,000 fewer vehicle miles per day driven on our roads. There’s also a huge economic benefit for the towns here in Bergen County. A Rutgers study suggests completing the extension would help property values in Bergen County increase 18 percent faster annually.”

“The residents of the communities in the region will benefit from the convenience of a light rail system that serves their transportation needs,” said Senator Nick Sacco. “It is also good for the regional economy. The benefits will be felt for years to come.”

“As County Executive of the largest county in New Jersey, I have the privilege of representing the nearly one million residents, as well as thousands of business owners and entrepreneurs, who live and work in Bergen County every day,” said Bergen County Executive Jim Tedesco.

“Investment in transportation infrastructure is an investment in the people of Bergen County and of this region. Extending the light rail through eastern Bergen County to the Englewood Hospital and Medical Center will generate significant economic growth for our businesses and communities and positively impact the quality of life for Bergen County residents.”

The effort is part of *New Jersey: Investing in You*, an initiative of the Senate Majority that is developing legislation to spur long-term economic growth by expanding early childhood education, making higher education affordable, investing in transportation, providing retirement security, developing “Promise Neighborhoods” to provide opportunity to local communities and boosting public-private partnerships.

(Photo: Senator Sweeney, Senator Weinberg, Senator Sarlo, Assemblyman Johnson, Mayor Frank Huttle, County Executive Tedesco, Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle, Freeholder Tom Sullivan, Jana Chernetz of TriState Transportation, Freeholder Tracy Zur, Marty Robbins, the Voorhees Transportation Center.)

