

## NJ Transit Announces Budget, Modernization Plan

NEWARK – The NJ Transit Board of Directors adopted a \$1.7 billion operating budget and a \$1.29 billion capital plan on June 9 to increase seat capacity and modernize the bus and rail fleets as ridership reaches historic levels.

The 2009 fiscal year budgets will support major capacity-enhancing projects, fund improvements at bus and rail facilities and support the purchase of transit vehicles to replace aging equipment, NJ Transit officials said.

The operating budget will provide funding for maintaining current levels of transit service to accommodate "record-high" ridership while accounting for increases in the cost of fuel, power, parts and materials, officials said. Since the 2005 fiscal year, the cost to maintain stations has risen 48 percent, the cost of vehicle parts has increased 63 percent and fuel costs have more than doubled.

The capital budget supports an ongoing effort to modernize the state's fleet of revenue vehicles, including the purchase of 1,365 new buses, 326 Multilevel rail cars, 110 electric multiple-unit rail cars and 53 electric and dual-powered locomotives. The capital budget also includes investment in capacity and expansion of the system, including the Access to the Region's Core tunnel project (which would serve the Raritan Valley Line) to double rail capacity under the Hudson River and the extension of

the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail to 8th Street in Bayonne. Funding also will be provided for the acquisition of additional rail cars to meet growing demand.

The board also approved the purchase of 26 dual-powered locomotives to replace its aging diesel fleet, awarding the contract to Bombardier Transit Corporation. The locomotives can operate in both electrified and non-electrified territory at a total cost of approximately \$310 million, including design, engineering, manufacturing, training and spare parts, with the option to purchase additional locomotives in the future.

The first dual-powered locomotives are expected to arrive in 2011, with complete delivery anticipated in late 2012.

NJ Transit also launched a new e-mail alert service last week. Bus customers can now receive up-to-the-minute travel information for their specific trip through the My Transit alert system, which sends a text alert directly to customers' cell phones, pagers, PDAs or e-mail whenever there is a delay affecting their designated itinerary. Previously, My Transit alerts were available only to NJ Transit rail customers, and more recently expanded to light rail and interstate bus customers. The alert system currently has approximately 30,000 active subscribers.

Bus customers can sign up to receive free My Transit travel alerts at njtransit.com.

## C-Span Bus Coming to Union County College

CRANFORD – The C-Span Campaign 2008 bus is coming to Union County College on Tuesday, July 22 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., courtesy of Comcast Cable.

Republican State Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean Jr. (LD-21, Westfield) and Cranford Mayor Robert Puhak will make an appearance.

Visitors will be provided with a hands-on demonstration of C-Span's production vehicle and its coverage of the entire political process. Children and adults alike are invited aboard

the mobile production studio where the C-Span staff will discuss topics such as the three branches of government, the U.S. Constitution and political participation, bringing these real-life topics to life using the network's public policy video resources.

The 45-foot mobile production studio is on the campaign trail to promote and enhance C-Span's political coverage, touring state capitals and traveling to major political events such as the upcoming Democratic and Republican national conventions.



TALKING FAIR TAX... Pictured at a July 9 meeting are Barry Hinckley, Fair Tax state director for Massachusetts; Jim Bennett of Summit, Fair Tax co-director for New Jersey; Rep. John Linder (R-GA-7), sponsor of the Fair Tax bill, and legislative assistant Sara Showers, who pilots the bill through Congress and coordinates with the bill's 75 sponsors. Mr. Bennett later met with Henrietta Trezz, legislative assistant to Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), for a briefing on the Fair Tax.

## Campaign Release, 7th Congressional District Stender Speaks Out On New Job Loss Numbers

FANWOOD – The Department of Labor has released its updated June Jobs Report, showing that already in 2008, 483,000 Americans have lost their jobs – 62,000 in the month of June alone. According to the report, the economy must generate 100,000 new jobs just to stay stable (*Washington Post*, July 04, 2008), according to Assemblywoman and Democrat Seventh Congressional District candidate Linda Stender.

"Instead of improving, economists expect job loss numbers to grow to reach over 6 percent early next year. The unemployment rate is now at 5.5 percent, Ms. Stender said. "Sixty-two thousand Americans lost their jobs in the month of June alone. Meanwhile, families are struggling to afford the rising costs of everything from gas to food to healthcare. Small businesses

are coping with high fuel costs and lower profits. Too many parents are forced to choose between filling up a tank of gas or taking their child to the doctor, and now more parents are losing their jobs and facing financial ruin.

"Yet while our economy moves dangerously toward a recession, the Bush Administration continues to spend \$12 billion a month on a war a majority of Americans oppose. I call upon my opponent, Republican Leader Leonard Lance, to support a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq so we may bring our troops home safely and soon, and refocus on domestic priorities. We need real change to get our country back on the right track and moving in a new direction."

## GOP Calls on Stender to Return Rangel Donations

TRENTON – Republican State Committee Chairman Tom Wilson called on Seventh Congressional District Democrat candidate Linda Stender to return contributions from Rep. Charlie Rangel (D-NY) following a *New York Times* story that he got "sweetheart" deals on four Harlem apartments.

"Linda Stender has filled her campaign coffers with over \$20,000 in contributions from Charlie Rangel and plans to accept even more as a recipient of his annual birthday fundraiser at New York's swank Tavern on the Green

restaurant scheduled for August 6.

"Stender likes to tell everyone how she's not a typical politician and that she will stand up to Washington corruption but unless she returns the \$21,000 from Rangel and his political action committee that's fueling her campaign and remove her name for his upcoming fundraiser, she just proves that she is another typical double-talking politician that's incapable of changing Washington," Mr. Wilson said.

## Freeholders Question Ownership of Dikes

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

ELIZABETH – Union County Freeholders last Thursday questioned the ownership of dikes along the Rahway River in Cranford.

The freeholders will vote on a resolution at its Thursday, July 24 meeting to allow Cranford workers to enter county property and repair the dikes along Riverside Drive.

County Counsel Robert Barry said a survey of the dikes would be the best method to use to determine whether the dikes lie on Cranford or county property.

Freeholder Bette Jane Kowalski said, "Cranford is not in very good shape financially. But they are hoping they will get the money" to complete the project.

"And I hope I win the Lottery," Freeholder Dan Sullivan responded. "It's just remarkable to me that [after] all these years...we are still asking who owns what." He said he wanted to see "all this finger pointing back and forth to stop."

The reparations of the dikes was raised following the April 2007 Nor'Easter. A report on the storm by the township's engineering department determined that 66 homes sustained flooding above their first floors, while another 425 homes had their basements flooded. The storm produced eight hours of rain over a 24-hour-period in Cranford. Total property damage was estimated at \$2.3-million.

A report by Hatch Mott MacDonald, a Millburn-based engineering firm hired by the township, states that the "stability" to the dikes are part of the third and fourth phases of the Northeast Quadrant Stormwater Management Project.

Freeholder Kowalski, a Cranford resident, said fixing the dikes is not alone going to solve flooding problems in the township.

"That is why we have reached out to state and federal authorities for assistance in remediation of the flood problems throughout the Rahway River (watershed)," Ms. Kowalski said. "Cranford needs to understand that they can't do this alone," adding that they will need assistance from the federal government, state and county.

"When you have that many levels of government involved, the wheels of government run slowly," she said.

Ms. Kowalski said the county has received a \$375,000 federal grant to develop a "hazard mitigation plan." She said the county held an initial meeting on July 8, attended by a dozen county towns, to begin the process of developing that plan.

In other business, the County of Union is expected to take action at its Thursday, July 24 meeting on an agreement with NJ Transit to provide 11 bus shelters for the county's Route

22 pedestrian shuttle service.

According to Steve Merman, director for the division of planning & community development, the bus lines will be placed at bus stops on the east- and west-bound sides of the highway. The shuttle was initiated in October 2007, following a number of pedestrian fatalities along the highway.

The shuttle serves employees and customers of large retailers in Union, Springfield and Kenilworth. There are no traffic lights, crosswalks or pedestrian bridges along the stretch of highway.

The stops to receive shelters are: Route 22 eastbound, South Springfield Avenue at Pearle Vision, Lawrence Road at Toyota Land, Fadarm Road at Fortunoff and at Carpet City, all in Springfield; Jefferson Avenue at Target, Springfield Road South at Pet Smart and Ball Avenue at Burger King, all in Union Township.

Route 22 westbound shelters in Union Township will be placed at Hudson Street at F&M Warehouse, Springfield Avenue at Union Plaza, Monroe Street North at Pep Boys and at Travel Lodge, Brown Street at David's Bridal and Hillside Avenue at the Nissan dealership.

Mr. Merman said the county is seeking to have NJ Transit add shelters for bus stops on the center aisle.

Frank Guzzo, director of human services, said a resolution would be on the board's July 24 agenda to move to begin implementing recommendations in a study produced by the John C. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University.

The Union County Economic and Workforce Competitiveness Project multi-phase plan assesses the current economic, educational and workforce barometers of the county.

The Heldrich Center recommended that the county develop a countywide economic growth strategy and a workforce development plan that would include the establishment of a health career center and use of the county's retail skills center to train workers in sales and customer-service jobs in the "high-wage wholesale trade sector." Also recommended was the creation of a "sustainable organizational structure to implement economic and workforce plans."

## Courtney to Participate In Scholar Program

WESTFIELD – The Saint Joseph's University Summer Scholars Program selected Stefanie Courtney of Westfield to participate in its 10-week program. Courtney is working with Clint Springer of the biology department on a scholarly project, *Ecophysiology of Pinus rigida* (Pitch Pine) in the New Jersey Pine Barrens.

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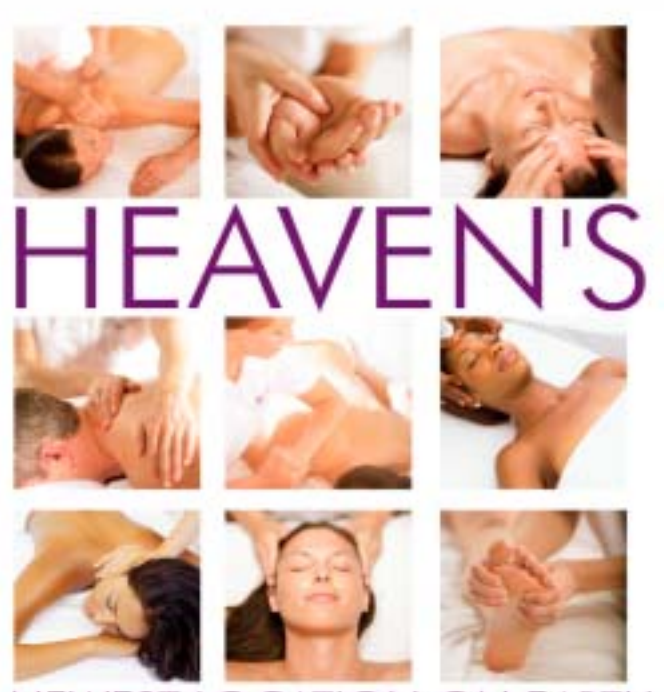
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