

SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1859

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 12, 1997

The Senate Transportation Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 1859.

This bill requires that rights-of-way of railroad lines used for rail passenger service by New Jersey Transit or railroad companies subject to Title 48 of the Revised Statutes shall contain a marker along the right-of-way at every one-tenth of a mile interval indicating the mileage so that the marker may be used to identify the location of the train in the event of an emergency. The marker is to be installed within a one year period.

The bill also provides for New Jersey Transit to develop an emergency response access plan within six months which would evaluate the emergency accessibility of various sections of the State's rail passenger lines and what steps should be taken to improve accessibility. Particular consideration is to be given to the construction of access roads to the railroad rights-of-way and construction of suitability paved and graded roadways and pathways, using crushed stone and other suitable material, along the right-of-way adjacent to the tracks. The plan is to be submitted by the New Jersey Transit Board of Directors to the Commissioner of Transportation, along with recommendations for funding to be included by the commissioner in the annual report of proposed projects for Transportation Trust Fund Authority funding.

This bill addresses some of the problems found in response to the train accident which occurred in February of 1996 in which three people were killed and more than a hundred were injured. One problem was that the location of the train was not able to be determined by a passenger attempting to call for assistance on his cellular telephone. A second problem was that, because of muddy conditions on the adjacent right-of-way, emergency rescue vehicles had difficulty reaching the train to render assistance to the victims.