
Panel Meeting

of

ASSEMBLY LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT LEGISLATIVE PANEL

*“Status update presented by Jeffrey A. Warsh, Executive Director,
New Jersey Transit Corporation; discussion by Panel on three alternate
light rail alignments in Bergen County, and adoption of a resolution”*

LOCATION: Freeholders Conference Room
Hackensack, New Jersey

DATE: December 4, 2001
2:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF PANEL PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Rose Marie Heck, Chairwoman
Assemblyman Alex DeCroce
Assemblyman Joseph V. Doria Jr.



ALSO PRESENT:

H.R. “Rusty” Lachenauer
*Office of Legislative Services
Panel Aide*

Michael Kazimir
*Assembly Majority
Panel Aide*

John F. Fuller
*Assembly Democratic
Panel Aide*

***Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey***

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROSE MARIE HECK (Chairwoman):

The Light Rail Panel, as you know, has been in existence for just about 10 years now, Joe and Alex, with the same three people. And we're very proud of our accomplishments over the years. And some of the people who started with us are right in this audience and attended many of our meetings.

We have worked together in a bipartisan manner and a very successful manner, I might add. And we've seen the fruits of our labor thus far, and, certainly, we're going to see more things to come. And the Panel will continue to be very active.

It was my feeling and the feeling of the Panel that we should hold a December meeting and move some things along. Money, as we all know, is needed to expedite all of our projects. And we have to be very careful in these times that we don't let our projects fall behind but take new ways of looking at things and moving our projects along in a segmented manner rather than waiting another 10 years for that money to come through, as we had years ago.

So we're here today to get an update of the Hudson-Bergen Line. And to my right is Minority Leader Joseph Doria.

Would you introduce your Assembly--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: John Fuller is-- Ed O'Connor is on vacation this week, so John Fuller is the aide for the Assembly Democrats.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Okay. And, of course, you know the Transportation Committee Chair, Alex DeCroce, who is also a member -- and Michael Kazimir, who is standing in for Jerry Traino, who's wife is expecting her fourth child.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: God bless.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: He didn't want to be this far away.

And Rusty Lachenauer, who has been with us since the very beginning-- We want to recognize the work that Rusty has done over the years and commend him for all of the work you've done, Rusty. We appreciate it -- and for keeping a history of what we've done.

I do want to begin by commending Jeff Warsh, our Executive Director, for keeping us in the forefront of all the transportation needs of the state. And Hudson and Bergen County, being a very important part of the transportation needs in the state--

As you will recall-- Very briefly, I will tell you that we in the Northeast Corridor were in deep trouble when we first started. We had gotten all sorts of future information that the northeast would be so slow to recoup. And Joe and Alex and I made sure that didn't happen, that we put ourselves on the fast track, and that the Northeast Corridor would come out of the recession and also build a new economic history of success. And part of that success, or a major portion of that success, came out of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Line.

We do want to also commend John Johnston and his group for helping us on this particular project.

But most importantly, and I will say this in South Jersey tomorrow, is the fact that we had great people who volunteered to work with us early on. No pay was involved. And Jim Greller, at that time, was one of our volunteers. He is now with Transit. But also, we had put together an idea, which worked, which is called New Rail Construction. I will go into a long dissertation tomorrow, when we're in South Jersey, to explain to them the

strategy and the blueprint for success that was carried through by our creation of New Rail Construction, so that we focused on all of the new rail projects in one house, so to speak.

At this particular point in time, we're going to leave the dais and come down there so we can enjoy Jeff Warsh's presentation -- status report of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit Line.

Jeff Warsh, please.

We have to sit down there so we can see the show, so to speak. I think it's a PowerPoint.

J E F F R E Y A. W A R S H: Well, first of all, I want to thank the Assembly Light Rail Panel and Chairwoman Heck and members DeCroce and Doria for the opportunity to, once again, make a presentation before the Assembly Light Rail Panel. It's our hope that the next powers that be in the Assembly see fit to continue, by rule, the Assembly Light Rail Panel, which the Chairwoman properly lays claim to a whole lot of progress to.

(Begin PowerPoint presentation)

This just sets out the original -- the existing alignment of Hudson-Bergen. And just by way of briefing, as to where we've been by September 11-- It's nice to make an appearance before a panel that knows the ins and outs of Hudson-Bergen.

You can be particularly proud of the role that Hudson-Bergen Light Rail has played since September 11. I was out there myself for the ensuing couple of weeks as we adjusted to a torrent of New Yorkers that were suddenly displaced. And now that we've had a few months to gather data as to where they're all coming from, it seems as though of the 19 percent of the

financial district employees in Manhattan that were dislocated -- 8 percent of them came on to the Jersey City waterfront and, of course, were heavy users of Hudson-Bergen Light Rail. Another 2 percent went to Newark, and then the remaining 8 percent -- it's 18 percent -- so the remaining 8 percent have gone to the suburbs, principally Edison, Princeton, and Summit -- Edison, Woodbridge, Princeton, and Summit.

We saw, literally overnight, about a 60 to 80 percent increase in Hudson-Bergen's passenger loads. And what that caused, literally overnight -- and kudos to 21st Century Rail, our design, build, operate, maintainer, for how quickly they were able to move with Kinko-Sharyo. So what we had to do was--

At that point, we were running 13 singles. It went, literally overnight, to 7 doubles and 6 singles, going from 13 to 20 cars. That, of course, not only increases our ability to carry more passengers in a timely manner but also increases our cost, as per formula under design, build, operate, maintain.

For the first couple of months, the first issue that we had to deal with quickly was for those people that were coming off of PATH, who either -- they were already working on the Jersey City waterfront or they were freshly dislocated to the Jersey City waterfront -- would have taken World Trade Center to Exchange Place. With that, too, being out, they were now coming over at Pavonia Newport and walking across the street to the Pavonia Newport Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Station and then traveling three stations south, typically to Exchange Place. But they were doing that without any desire to pay a fair. So we had a decision to make quickly on the ground. And I was

there and made that decision that as long as they had a 10- or 20- or a 40-trip PATH ticket, they'd be able to ride for free. And we left it day-by-day for the first week or so until we could adjust. And then we said, "We're going to do this for two months." Internally we made that decision. We were going to go to two months.

And then, around the middle of October, we started to roll out a customer education program, if you will, that let them know that we were going to start to collect by November 1. We were losing \$50,000 a week beyond the initial operating subsidy to Hudson-Bergen. That was not a situation that we could ever endure -- never mind endure in our current financial straits.

So, starting November 1, we started to charge again. And what that caused is, of course, a lot of those same folks who were traveling for free got off the system. And again, what we ramped up, we could also ramp back, and now we're back down to running 13 singles again. We're now back to running 13 singles. And those 5000 or 6000 people who were on the system are now off -- are doing it principally in two ways. Either they're walking from Grove Street four blocks south to -- excuse me, four blocks east, I should say, to Exchange Place, or they're taking the -- Suzanne Mack and the Hudson TMA set up something called PATH link, which is a Lafayette and Greenville run operation that goes the four blocks from Grove to Exchange Place. And they're carrying about 1500 people, during the a.m. and p.m. rush, a day. And that seems to be working out well.

We do anticipate, as we go further into the winter, that we're going to experience inclement weather spikes. Four blocks is a short walk when

it's beautiful. And since the horror of September 11, if you think about it, we've only had about two rainy days. And none of them were particularly cold. So we anticipate cold weather and inclement weather spikes in general and are going to have to be very nimble with the equipment. And we know Kinko-Sharyo can turn out almost double the cars in a day. We think that we can make the adjustments day by day as we proceed.

I'm going to cruise through this stuff. I think this presentation is done more for regular folks. You know where we are at this point.

We made the most recent decision back in April 2001 to accelerate to Pavonia Newport. We were all there for that very, very cold morning when we initiated that service. And I don't think any of us realized how significant it was. At that point, we were attempting to reach a mall. In retrospect, we reached a new area -- a new port of entry, if you will -- a new point of entry for New Yorkers making the reverse commute to the Jersey City waterfront.

We're now at about 12,500 people a day at this point in time. So, while we did increase in the immediate aftermath of September 11 and have dropped down some since then, we still have a very hefty ridership at 12,500 a day, which was forecasted at 16,000-plus when we reach Hoboken. And that's something that we intend to do by-- We're looking at September of next year. And Senator Torricelli's been good enough to take the lead for our congressional delegation and is looking, at our behest, for an additional \$6 million of economic stimulus money. And perhaps we can reach Hoboken two months earlier than the current schedule, should we get \$6 million funded.

Still to this date, some of the most successful service we have on the line is what 21st Century Rail named themselves, the Bayonne Flyer. I don't think we can come up with them.

I'm sure, Mr. Minority Leader, you would agree that -- a great name.

And more importantly, and a point that needs to be underscored as we continue to have a debate as to where alignments would go, is that -- and I've said many times -- being a politician isn't necessarily a bad thing. And it certainly isn't a bad name. If it wasn't for a Joe Doria and the City of Bayonne digging in as hard as they did and getting a receptive ear with this Light Rail Panel and others, it never would have gone to Bayonne. We wouldn't have had the 50 percent.

At Day 1 in Hudson-Bergen, it was 75 percent of the ridership. Now we've settled into a pattern where it's fully 50 percent of the ridership. And it's quite obvious to all of us involved that if we didn't have this level of ridership, which has singled us out as a T-21 success story in Washington, I might add, then there's not a chance that we would get funding for continued rounds. So Bayonne is proving to be a major player here.

With respect to the Minimum Operating Segment II alignment, we have, at this point, a final design for the next six miles completed. We're getting ready to award a contract on one of the heftier, more complex pieces of MOS 2, which is the Weehawken Tunnel alignment. About 22,000 tons of rock is going to have to be removed from Weehawken Tunnel not only for proper clearances and conduit but as well for 160-foot deep elevator shaft and related shafts for emergency equipment and conduit, etc.

One of the other things -- if you will, the political capital that Bayonne has gained in this entire process put them in very good stead. And Mayor Doria took good advantage of the fact that the Bayonne market was as strong as it is. And I just think about it -- design, build, operate, maintain -- is we get to adjust as we go along and more aggressively seek markets that we know are going to provide us with the ridership. And we are going to reach revenue service to 22nd Street in the spring of '03, which is about a year to a year and a half earlier than we had anticipated doing that.

And one other -- just a bit of significant trivia, if you will, is Bayonne is the only municipality in the state under special agreement with the DEP that gives the mayor authority to sign permits that are typically required by the DEP. That's something that we're utilizing in this process. It's something that's enabling us to go a little faster. And I think that it should give impetus to that model being spread out into other sections of the state, particularly where we're building. We need to move fast.

We do anticipate that Weehawken Tunnel and Deep station contract award in January of 2002. We've got some excellent bidders that are interested in doing that work. For those folks who know where that site is in Weehawken, you can see that it's going to make a major difference in the downtown shopping area of Weehawken. And that station, despite all the other big stations like Exchange Place and Pavonia and 34th and 45th Street, will be the most heavily used station on the entire line. It is the most densely populated area and most transit dependent, and that's going to be reflected in the anticipated ridership.

These grade separation projects have an interesting history. They were actually DOT projects that were never contemplated as being part of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit design, build, operate, and maintain. They were sent over to New Jersey Transit, specifically to New Rail Construction. Considering the fact that we're already out there, we're already mobilized, we've picked up the project. It's been going extraordinarily well. This project -- both of these projects, Secaucus and Paterson Plank Roads, are important in terms of staging in that they have to be completed prior to us being able to go through Weehawken Tunnel so that we don't interfere with the operation of the Class I freight railroads.

We all know the success story that is Hudson-Bergen. And this was true before September 11. And while it's important that -- it's not covered in the news, but the governors of New York and New Jersey and Connecticut and Pennsylvania, in the wake of September 11, signed antipoaching agreements so that we would not affirmatively go across the river and attempt to bring business back to the New Jersey side, which, I think, is clearly the right thing to do. But in this day and age, prior to September 11, we didn't have to try. It was just coming the way of, particularly the gold coast in Jersey City and, I'm sure, MOTBE in Bayonne to follow in short order. So, the waterfront is bustling not only with 15 million new square feet of commercial space and almost 10,000 new residential units in that hotel that you can see, building out on the pier, but, in fact, the pace, from what I hear, is accelerating. And there's one reason for it. It's Hudson-Bergen Light Rail. We can all be proud of that.

Minimum Operating Segment 3-- Just before I go onto this, real quick, I want one thing to be stressed. We've been very up front and out in public about our financial woes and our financial situation as we go forward. And while it's all fitting and proper to talk about MOS 3, Minimum Operating Segment 2, which takes us to Tonelle Avenue in North Bergen, we received a \$500 million full-funding grant agreement from the Federal government last year.

That \$500 million to us, in New Jersey -- it's kind of, "Ah, \$1 billion, \$500 million, not a big deal." It was an enormous lift for our congressional delegation, for our Senators Torricelli and Corzine and, in particular, our members on the Transportation and Infrastructure and Appropriations Committees. So we've received a \$500 million full-funded grant agreement. That was out of \$2.5 billion remaining for the remainder of the T-21 program nationwide. So we took 20 percent of all that was left for one project. That is a heavy lift. And we were told repeatedly to forget about it. There was no chance. Pack up your stuff and go home, New Jersey. Those days are over. There's too many new initiatives in -- with irons in the fire. And, in fact, we got that.

But the really heavy lift is coming ahead. That's \$712 million worth of State match against that \$500 million. And at this point, we've identified roughly half of that. So we have to fight to maintain that half and still need \$340 million -- so another \$380 million towards the \$721 million before we can even talk about funding any of the MOS 3 alignments. Although, we are mindful -- before Dan Censullo jumps up and grabs the microphone -- we are mindful, just as we move from MOS 1 to MOS 2, that

one of the critical features of a DBOM is, if we can avoid, at all costs, demobilizing 21st Century Rail, it saves us about \$40 million, which is about three-quarters of a mile of fully functioning, fully equipped system. So \$40 million is a lot of money. We want to avoid that kind of a demobilization, remobilization cost and move seamlessly into MOS 3, the way we made the transition from MOS 1 to MOS 2.

Am I bullish about that? I am. Is it going to be a heavy lift? They all have been heavy lifts. And we've won all of those. And we believe that we'll get funded for MOS 2 and proceed without missing a beat to MOS 3.

That leads us, of course, in this area, to one of the great decisions that needs to be made. And that's, are we going to go up? I always think-- The way I look at it is, Cross County and the Northern, at some point, in some way, are going to go. The question is, which one gets funded? Which one goes first? And how does it best fit into the system that we're already funded for and building? Stay tuned on that.

Well, Dan, I'm going to hand it over to you and let you pick up with South Jersey.

I'll stick around for questions. And, of course, I'll join -- take your invitation to join the Panel.

DAN CENSULLO: Thank you, Jeff.

The first time I spoke before the Light Rail Panel was a month after I was given this new assignment. And the first thing you asked me was, "Where is the money for the grade separation projects?"

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Could you project, because that is recording the transcript. (referring to recording microphone)

MR. CENSULLO: I will stand over here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Just project.

MR. CENSULLO: And you asked where the money was for the grade separation projects. And I said I didn't know. And I thought I said the wrong thing. We did get the money for the grade separation projects. And as Jeff said, they're critical. They're well under way. They'll be finished in May, as they should be.

And that's been the secret, I think, of why we've been able to get money for MOS 1, MOS 2, and now seeking money for MOS 3. It's delivering. It's delivering on time. And it's delivering within budget.

And as you are about to find out tomorrow, there is another project under way running parallel with Hudson-Bergen, and it's the Southern New Jersey Light Rail project. And it's a 34-mile project between the cities of Camden and Trenton. It's an \$850 million project fully funded by the State. And the State is finding that money, concurrently with finding the \$720 million that Jeff spoke about for the second phase of Hudson-Bergen.

This project notice to proceed was given in December of 1999. And we will be in revenue service in the spring of 2003. The project connects the City of Camden with the areas of interest that you see. The one on the bottom, Rutgers University, I think, is probably the one that's most interesting because Rutgers has a significant outreach program in Camden. They are buying real estate, rehabilitating real estate, at a tremendous level. And Camden's landscape is beginning to change in select areas because of it.

The Entertainment Center, the Battleship New Jersey, Campbell ball field, have all attracted many, many thousands of people over this past

entertainment season, people who will be able to ride light rail as a result of our system.

In Trenton, at the other end, we have a ball park, an arena, and we also have a major transportation connection, because we wind up right across the street from the Northeast Corridor rail station at Trenton for connections to Amtrak, Transit, and Septa.

We are finished with about 70 percent of the design engineering, 40 percent of the construction. The major part of this project -- it's an old railroad right-of-way 32 miles long. It had 17 bridges on it, many of which had to be either repaired or replaced, and we're considerably along with that project now. All of the grade crossings, of which there are 50 -- we pass through 19 communities. So it's not like Bayonne and Jersey City. There are 19 mayors, there are 19 councils, 19 areas of interest. It's quite a different character of a project down there. And we are upgrading all of the grade crossings in the project.

Our shop and yard facility is, as you can see, well under way. It should be completed by April. It will give 200 new jobs to this area -- 200 permanent jobs.

Our vehicles -- 20 of them are being manufactured in Germany and Switzerland -- Bombardier-- We will have our first vehicle delivered in April of 2002 for a start of revenue service roughly one year later.

Local development is beginning and not on the scale of cost the way it used to in Hudson and Bergen counties, but it is beginning. People are beginning to make reference to the southern New Jersey light rail system and using it as a point of reference for planning, in the development of their

communities in all of these smaller cities, as well as, of course, Camden on the Waterfront, where the largest investment is being made.

We are also in the study process. We've completed an EIS for a one-mile extension of this system through -- down East State Street in Trenton to the doorstep of the Capitol. The EIS is completed, and we are beginning to study locations of utilities for relocation. It will be a substantial effort.

And lastly, I wanted to mention Union County Light Rail. Under the public-private partnership legislation, the DOT and private partners have entered into a letter of intent, and we are beginning to progress preliminary design with the private partners for this system for midtown Elizabeth to Newark Airport.

That's it. If there are any questions, we'll be happy to respond.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you. I think the Panel is pretty well informed about all the projects. We keep track of it, because we consider those all our babies. And we certainly want to see Bergen progress as well.

We'll all go to the front now.

Jeff, you'll join us?

MR. WARSH: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You know, when we first began this project, it seemed to a lot of people it would never happen. But we had a great belief that we would make it happen, and we did make it happen.

Again, with a lot of volunteers who mostly came from Bergen County, but it included Pat from your office, yourself, Alex, myself, and a number of people, and some of whom have left this world, I'm sorry to say --

but who added their expertise to what we were doing. It is very important to be very bold.

Al, you know that.

We have to be very bold in our projections and move with the times -- the times that we're in, and you've seen that in the projects that are under way.

When we started with the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, our friend Bill Haines was Senator. And in order to bring peace between the north and the south, we received his imprimatur for the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Line. And we gave him our promise that we would be supportive of the revitalization of southern New Jersey. And believe me, they need it and needed it. This is a testament to his perseverance, even though he passed before he saw the beginning of this. When we commit to something, we continue that commitment.

And today, looking at where we are in history and where we are financially, we still believe that the three alternate routes are each important to the County of Bergen.

However, and this is a big however, we feel that we must proceed with a priority list. And looking at this from the perspective of movement and making sure the project continues to move-- It is my belief, and we will hear from the other members, that continuing the MOS 3 up the northern will be very important not only to the project but to the ridership and to the prospect that we will receive the funding, and we won't hurt anything as we're going along.

And then the second phase, which will come years from now because it will not come that quickly, will be to look at the network to the Cross County line. And we know there are a myriad of problems with that, not the least of which is the public-private funding. And we have to understand that perhaps some changes in the public-private perceptions will have to take place. And the privates will have to look at putting up more dollars or investment in getting this job done on a public-private basis, unless and until all of our other projects come to monetary fruition so we can reinvest via the State of New Jersey.

I think it will happen. I believe it will happen. And this Light Rail Panel, whether it's reconstituted by the 210th Legislature or not, will continue to exist. I promise that.

And, Joe, I think you're committed to that.

And, Alex, I think you're committed to that.

That we will continue the work we started 10 years ago -- to move light rail, because it is the way of the future. It is the mode of the future. And our hopes, our desires, our enthusiasm for this project is what has carried it through. When we look at the design, build, operate, maintain, that was not done by legislation, it was done by a purposeful idea that came to fruition with all of the minds coming together, including the State House at that time, with Brian Clymer and with Frank Wilson and, ultimately, I will jump to Weinstein, because we had a kind of a-- We had an interim standstill from my point of view, as far as the desire to see light rail move as rapidly as it should have.

And Jeff Warsh was right in his assessment of the grade separations. We also had a problem as far as New Jersey Transit, and the

Executive Director was concerned because we were told -- the Panel -- many times, including in appropriations meetings, that the grade separations were in the process and progress was being made. That was not factual, and we did not find that out until a couple of years later because we were being danced around by Transit.

I am happy to say that once Jeff Warsh took over, and Stanley helped as well -- give credit where credit -- he helped us to, in that regard -- to make sure that it was done. And Weinstein made sure that it came over from DOT, back into New Rail, who absolutely dedicated themselves to moving it, because we all knew that we would never get into Bergen unless we did the grade separations. Every one of us knew that from the outset. Ten years ago we knew that. And we were warned about this. So all of those delays came out of some people's ego and some people's non -- or inaction, let's say.

Now we're at a point where I believe that we have to rededicate this entire project and make certain that Bergen gets a piece of the pie quickly and without too much delay.

I think you'll note that in the Transportation Committee, we have a bill assigned to that to bring together buses, because we work in intermodal transportation modes. And we really would like to see this area begin to help Hackensack, the county seat, the City of Hackensack to have the loop, which Mayor, you traveled with Weinstein last year and the mayors of all the towns -- mayors or their representatives from Hasbrook Heights to Woodbridge, Carlstadt, East Rutherford, Rutherford to place a second line going that way and to make sure that the buses would be made in a light rail transportation

mode to promote the idea of light rail, because it would take a number of years before light rail came into being in this area anyway.

So I'm hopeful that our chairman will help us to move that bill through committee and on to the -- and our Speaker will help us to move it to the floor of the Assembly and on this Senate side -- moved before this 209th Legislature becomes no more. It's really very important. And we all know the importance of moving projects along.

As far as I am concerned, I think that the county executive, having worked with him and with Chet Mattson and -- I know the freeholders are in earnest about the work of the light rail -- that we have never lost our confidence in all of the routes.

However, in order to move ahead in Bergen, we have to take the option of extending MOS 3 -- that straight line -- and, in my opinion, not to lose the Vince Lombardi Park and Ride, because park and rides are so very important to the ultimate being of light rail -- because, Jeff, you spoke about all the needs that we had and all of the on-again, off-again ridership. And we know that it will be a tremendous impact if we get all the population coming from the northern-- And I would like to see it go up to Tenafly. I really would. That straight line moving up to Tenafly would be of advantage to the people of Bergen County. And, in some cases, I'm sure that we would be able to move some shuttles here and there to make public transportation more inviting, because the car, as much as we have fallen in love with it -- and if anybody's been watching Channel 13, PBS, and looking at the dreams of Robert Moses, who actually created some wonderful things but also a monster of a highway in -- a traffic jam--

So, the best hope for all of us is public, mass transportation -- commuter passenger rail, which will serve not only the commuter but serve us culturally, serve us with our students getting back and forth to colleges, and if we bring that bus also into Hackensack, we will serve Bergen Community College and give us the ridership-- And I'm sure that you will agree, we need the ridership to sell this to the feds.

And, Joe, maybe you can add something. And then Alex.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I was just going to-- As we were discussing this, I need to have my memory refreshed--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: --as it relates to Bergen County. There's the Northern route, and then there was two other alternatives, right, or one?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I have it in your folder, as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: This here? I didn't see that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: West Shore-- And you can see it-- I'll show you this.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I'm just trying to get an idea. The West Shore is the other--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: The Cross County.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Okay. And then the third was the Cross County, which would take you--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Well, actually, if you look at your notes, the Cross County will require rights-of-way to be purchased from two railroads. It's in the notes -- a discussion of the three alternate routes.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Okay. Here they are. I'm sorry.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Do you see it?

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I see it now.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Okay. MOS 1, MOS 2 -- also is -- you can hold it adjacent to that -- next to it.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Has any work-- Maybe I can ask Jeff this. Has any work been done yet on any of these routes in -- like in preparation or EIS's or anything?

MR. WARSH: We have-- We're following through with a process that will position us in T-21 reauthorization at the Federal level for Federal dollars. So we have completed a major investment study -- the West Shore major investment study that looked at West Shore commuter rail. It's called West Shore as the overall rubric, but West Shore Commuter Rail, Cross County Light Rail, and Northern Light Rail--

Once the MIS is done, the next step is to launch the three draft environmental impact statements on each of the lines. That is proceeding now. It is close to completing its scoping effort. The first six months is a scoping effort, where you go out to the public and you hold public hearings as to what they want studied in the actual statement. So that scoping effort is almost complete. We take a little break for a couple of months during the holidays so that people actually have a meaningful opportunity to provide input. And that will start up again in the actual full 12- to 18-month process in the end of January, early February.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: What's the time line for the MOS 3 to begin?

MR. WARSH: Well, we would need to get a full-funding grant agreement and then proceed. We're looking at starting the construction of MOS 3 no later than the middle of '05, I guess. Dan?

MR. CENSULLO: (speaking from audience) The end of '04, before we finish MOS 2.

HEARING REPORTER: Excuse me, Madam Chair, could--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Could--

MR. WARSH: Dan, if you could just approach that microphone and just indicate yourself back into the record.

MR. CENSULLO: Yes, Dan Censullo, New Rail Construction.

The optimistic plan would be one which would see us complete all of the environmental work and the preliminary design for MOS 3 by mid 2003, allowing us time to submit, with good credibility, a full-funding grant application to the feds at the time the T-21 bill is reauthorized and fresh money becomes available.

It is our hope that by the time a full-funding grant agreement application is approved by the feds and perhaps we get additional Federal moneys, we will then be in a position to award a subsequent contract for final design and construction in mid 2004 for construction to begin in the latter part of that year prior to MOS 2 ending, which is scheduled for June of 2005. And we get some of the benefits of the overlap.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: So that you don't have to remobilize.

MR. CENSULLO: That's correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: I'm sorry. Question.

We're in EIS right now?

MR. CENSULLO: We've begun the scoping process for the EIS for three -- each of the three alignments, as Mr. Warsh indicated.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: But you've been authorized to move ahead on one line? Is that what you're telling me?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: No.

MR. CENSULLO: No. We've not been authorized to do anything.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Where does that final authorization come from?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: The Panel, I would think.

MR. WARSH: We go through a whole process. At the end of an EIS process, you move to the FTA with a locally preferred alternative, just like you did an alignment.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: So it has to be locally preferred by the-- In this instance, it would have to come from the towns involved or the Board of Freeholders in Bergen.

MR. WARSH: There will be a whole list of indications that the FTA would look to. We would have to demonstrate that we have a locally preferred alternative, which is the grantee agency -- State of New Jersey -- the grantee agency and the impacted communities. And at that point -- only at that point, if the FTA signs off on the results of the EIS, you then get a record of decision. And our goal is to get a record of decision (indiscernible), just like we got on Hudson-Bergen where all three of these -- which still leads the decision as to which one proceeds and gets funded as a prioritization decision.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Let me, as a point of information, add to this. I'm going to refresh your memories. When we, the Panel, met to decide on the Hudson-Bergen line, we put through a resolution.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I remember that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Do you recall that?

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: With no one else's agreement, we decided. We had some input, but we decided then and also then, at St. Peter's--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I remember that meeting.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: --if you recall that meeting room, to do the Southern New Jersey Light Rail, when it was dying on the vine, because there was so much--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Controversy.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: --controversy in South Jersey, that we decided to take a portion of that line and move it ahead. And that was Burlington, Camden, Mercer, because the group, for themselves, put such hardship on everybody else. We said we wanted to see it begin and that other people would come on line later and that a lot of people would end up wanting it, but moneys would be tight because everybody would want it.

We have seen that success story with the first portion of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, and we're seeing a good start on the MOS 2, the second portion. We certainly want the MOS 3 to move ahead but not without guaranteeing that Bergen gets a piece of that pie.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: There's no question. I think we all realize, and we all agree that Bergen has to. I mean, we've all said that, Rose.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: No, I know that.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I think the real-- I mean, I think that it's essential that Bergen County have a light rail, because it's beneficial to not only Bergen County but to all of the other intermodal connections that are involved--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: The entire line.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: --the entire line. And that's the ultimate solution.

My only question here is, and I'm just asking because I'm basically not as conversant with the Bergen County issues as you are, obviously, because, you know, you represent the area. I'm just trying to get in my mind how we go about doing this and how much input-- Like in Hudson, I remember the county executive, together with the board of freeholders, together with the communities, all participated in the process and made the recommendation. And I know I fought very hard to get Bayonne in.

So my question is, if we do this today, then does the county recommend to us, or do we recommend to the county? I'm just trying to get my mind clear on where we are on that?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: We can do it either way, but my feeling is, to expedite the whole situation, and we've done this in the past, was the Light Rail Panel to move its own resolution.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Take action.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: But at the same time, in the end, the county has to -- the board of freeholders has to agree.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Correct. Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Do we know where they are right now? Does anybody know?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Well, they--

D O U G L A S M. B E R N: We passed-- If I could just say--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And this is the Director. If you'd like to come forward so that they can tape you, Mr. Bern.

And then you can come up, Chet.

MR. BERN: Thank you.

I'm Doug Bern. I'm the Chairman of the Bergen County Board of Freeholders. Welcome to our meeting room. And thank you very, very much for having the hearing here this afternoon.

I had a statement. I won't go into the text of it, but only to say that we did approve a resolution naming the northern branch as a locally preferred alternative after a series of meetings with local communities, with mayors, and council members.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Excuse me, I didn't hear that. Would you please repeat it?

MR. BERN: Okay. I was addressing your question.

First I welcomed you, and I hope you enjoy our meeting room here today.

With regard to the County of Bergen setting a policy under the county charter, it's the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders that sets the policy and then directs the executive and his staff to implement the policy.

After conducting a series of meetings with mayors, council members, our Federal representatives, State representatives, we did decide upon a locally preferred alternative. That's the nomenclature in a lot of the funding formulas. And we designated, as Assemblywoman Heck did today -- or announced her choice-- The county freeholders unanimously designated the Northern Branch as our locally preferred alternative. That's the one we want to go forward first.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: That's what the board of freeholders--

MR. BERN: Yes. The freeholders already did that. We circulated that resolution.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: But again, for clarification, you like all three.

MR. BERN: We absolutely like all three.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: But you're prioritizing.

MR. BERN: We would like very much to see a network combining all three, but we also understand that with Federal funding being very limited and a funding formula that favors continuations of lines rather than "new starts" -- and with all of the other analysis of all the other obstacles involved, we felt that the first one out of the gate -- the first priority should be the Northern, followed by, perhaps, Cross County, and then the heavy rail -- because I think there sometimes is confusion over the West Shore Line -- really heavy rail -- commuter rail. That's going to have to wait, evidently, for another

tunnel, perhaps under the Hudson, to really be viable. So the light rail choices were really two: the Northern and the Cross County. And we think, given all the other aspects of it--

We have the resolution here for you that was passed unanimously. The Northern in our choice to be the first one or the “locally preferred alternative.”

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: And that was passed unanimously by the board?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

MR. BERN: Yes, and you have the text of that resolution in your hand now.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: October 3.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: And you have resolutions from each of the municipalities involved?

MR. BERN: Excuse me?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: You have resolutions from each of the municipalities?

MR. BERN: We have resolutions from all the municipalities along that particular branch. We achieved that early on. And they were all supportive. I think there’s 10 municipalities.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: My concern, frankly-- You’re all aware that there is an EIS presently undergoing.

MR. BERN: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: And I would not be opposed to this, except I’d like to make it subject to the EIS being completed, because we

could find out that we're supporting a particular branch, only to find out that the EIS doesn't see eye-to-eye with that proposal.

MR. BERN: That's fine. We felt that we had to -- that it was timely to set forth a priority. There may be issues with respect to all three lines, particularly the two light rail lines. But given the nature of the support--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: I think the Northern Branch is the one that's probably going to be selected in all probability.

MR. BERN: Excuse me.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: I think the Northern Branch probably will be selected in all probability.

MR. BERN: It also, as a matter of priority--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: But I also think--

Excuse me, Chairman. I also think we should give the engineers the opportunity to complete the EIS so we know exactly where we are on this one.

MR. BERN: All of those issues should be fleshed out.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Because this was a controversial one, as I recall.

MR. BERN: There was some controversy, but let me say that in the end, it was the unanimous choice of the board of freeholders, because we did sort through a lot of the issues -- not necessarily the technical issues that you're pointing to. Those certainly have to be flushed out, as well, for the -- for New Jersey Transit to go through.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Well, I'm one member. If they vote me down, it's--

MR. BERN: But we are-- We also should keep in mind that the Northern is the one line that goes to an area that's not served by any other mass transit options. Those communities are crying out for relief from congestion and--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Add to that, again, a point of information -- that most of the ridership will be coming from the northern towns.

MR. BERN: That's correct.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: So, this would be an asset to also improving the passage or the acceptance of the MOS 3, given the notes that I read.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Ridership is very important.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes. And I have no problem saying subject to the EIS -- moving a resolution subject to--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I think we should say subject to. I agree with that -- subject to the EIS.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: And I also think what we can do, so we don't preclude the others, is say to prioritize -- Northern, and then--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: And then, from what you're saying, Freeholder, Cross County--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: The Cross County.

MR. BERN: The Cross County next. And West Shore certainly should--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: And then the heavy rail west side.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely.

MR. BERN: We want them all in the picture. We need them all.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely. Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: That way, we don't exclude any of them so that in the future, those will still be part of the Hudson-Bergen--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Oh, yeah. I have no problem with that.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: --Light Rail, because the issue of the funding is the continuation. It's easier to get it than if it was a new program.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely. Absolutely.

MR. BERN: And we've even talked -- and I know Chet Mattson and some of the professionals we brought on board to assist the municipalities in planning for park-ride facilities, etc.-- If we can have a spur to the Cross County -- if funding becomes available -- if the EIS so dictates, we would love to see that, together with the initial line. But we know that there's a limited pie and, to be realistic, we have to set priorities.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: And you have to move quickly.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: That's why I'm laughing. There's limited-- You know that.

MR. BERN: Absolutely. And that's what dictated our designation of a preferred alternative.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: And also, you have to move quickly, because otherwise somebody else gets into the pie.

MR. BERN: We have to make a move quickly, but yet there are technical issues that it's always going to be subject to.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: If we put that in, subject to the EIS studies and also prioritize--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Well, in essence, it is in perform or required and preliminary design work necessary to seek Federal funding. But we can do it in a second paragraph.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: We can do it in the second paragraph.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: The Northern--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: I would just say the resolution is subject to the prioritization of the three lines, being Northern, Cross County -- is it--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Cross County.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: We can enumerate them.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: And any other--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: All subject--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: All subject to the EIS project.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: And recommendation of the EIS process.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes, that will be the second paragraph. All subject. That's fine. But the priority would be the Northern--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: All subject to the completion--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: --to be included with the MOS 3.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: All subject to the completion of--

MR. BERN: Satisfactory completion of the EIS or something.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Completion of the EIS and recommendations of the EIS.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: EIS -- subject to the completion and recommendations of the EIS with the Northern Branch, first priority, Cross County, second, and the West Shore, third.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes. I believe that's within the subject matter that I've handed you today but not in the resolution, because my main thrust today was to make sure that the Northern be considered as we're doing the MOS 3, because it's a continuation -- if it's done as a continuation of the MOS 3, it has a better chance of moving along more rapidly and not, again, being disassociated from the original work.

MR. BERN: Absolutely. That's what we've learned. Not a new start.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I think that's a good point. That's important, Madam Chairwoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely, because if they demobilize, as Jeff said -- I think it was Jeff. I'm not sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Yeah, Jeff said \$40 million.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: The \$40 million that would be added to the project would be used in a better way.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: They can build three-quarters of a mile, he said.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That's right.

MR. BERN: I want to thank you very much for coming today. It's a major step forward for Bergen County.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Thank you.

MR. BERN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: We appreciate that.

Chet, did you want to come forward?

Oh, you, Adam, or Chet?

C H E S T E R P. M A T T S O N: Adam Strobel first and then me, please, Madam Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Okay.

Adam.

A D A M L. S T R O B E L: Madam Chairwoman, thank you very much, and members.

I'm Adam Strobel. I'm County Executive, Pat Schuber's Chief of Staff. I apologize that I'm not appearing before you with my suit jacket on. I apologize for that.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: It's 65 degrees out. It's okay.
(laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: It's summertime.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Summertime.

MR. STROBEL: I just want to put for the record -- just to reiterate some of the things that the county executive has been working on to advance light rail into Bergen County. As you may know, he has been

intimately involved with light rail and transportation issues for quite some time in his early stage as county executive and continues to do that today.

In October of this year, the county executive had put forth a proposal to the members of the public, as well as the Legislature, as well as members of New Jersey Transit and the Governor's Office, to talk about how Bergen County could interconnect the different possibilities of rail segments within Bergen County.

We have been confronted, at many stages through our efforts, with the notion of east side of Bergen County versus central Bergen County versus northern Bergen County. That's one of the things the county executive did not want to foster, but over the course of time, that evolved. And we believe, and he firmly believes, that that's the wrong type of approach that should not be taken here, but rather setting forth a proposal back in October to talk about an integrated network approach to be able to connect all three lines with existing lines, as well, to provide a true intermodal connection throughout Bergen County.

We are very enthusiastic about the DIS process, which we're now under way. We obviously are looking at all possibilities and look forward to the recommendations made through that process of the professionals back to us. The county executive has not come out with any preferred alternative for himself. He does recognize that the board of chosen freeholders have made their concerns known and their preference.

However, Mr. Schuber has taken the approach that -- I like to see the official process move forward too and be able to try to bring pieces together

and then forge consensus throughout Bergen County and not just make a quick decision right off the bat to beat everybody else to the punch, so to speak.

The Northern Valley Line is a very important line. The Cross County line is very important, as well as West Shore. All three lines are priority projects for the county executive. As you know, it's always the question as to which segment gets built first.

The push for the Northern Line-- There is no argument from us that it could be in the potential starting leg of this, but I think what we would also like to see is the connection of the Cross County line leading out to Hackensack, because it does provide other options and connective possibilities for the system.

If we look exclusively at the Northern Line by itself, independently, it does not connect with others throughout the county. It may not provide the best light rail transportation options for the county.

But I just want to convey those points to you. I know Chet Mattson can go into greater details as to how we arrived at that. But I just wanted to give those important -- those comments to you as you deliberate.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I'm going to add to that. If you recall, Hackensack was not the original stopping point -- Hackensack. Jack and I pursued that piece. And we also learned, through our work with New Rail and with New Jersey Transit, that there was already a spur in Hackensack. And we know that all of this is to our best advantage.

Before you get up, Chet, I'm going to read my report. And as you know, I believe in the networking approach, but I also believe that we are in a money crunch situation. And that's why I put my report together.

I'm going to read it to you, Adam. And I know you've read it, because I've given it to you. "New Jersey Transit is currently studying several options for new rail service into Bergen County, including light rail service on the Northern Branch and/or the Cross County Line and commuter rail service on the West Shore.

"Bergen County desperately needs additional rail transit capacity to relieve pressure on our congested roadways, to allow commuters to reach the expanding waterfront areas of Weehawken, Hoboken, and Jersey City for job opportunities and connections to trans-Hudson transportation, and to relieve the severe strain on the Lincoln Tunnel Express Bus Lane.

"While planning on all three, options should, most definitely, continue towards development of a comprehensive network of improvements. The quickest means of relieving the problems we face today, problems that will only get worse in the near future, is to aggressively pursue light rail on the Northern Branch, perhaps even to Tenafly. If we combine the Northern with the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, Transit's third operating segment, the Northern Branch alignment, will draw on a significant population base, which, when combined with commuters using the Vince Lombardi Park and Ride facility, will maximize utilization of the investments already made in the HBLRT's first two segments. And the Northern Branch is doable in the short term, with relatively little local freight traffic on the line, when compared to the Cross County, which will surely face numerous regulatory hurdles, even with the introduction of new equipment and ideas. This will, again, take time to resolve.

“The West Shore also needs a significant amount of additional study to fully understand its impacts on the capacity at the Secaucus Transfer and the real benefit of its implementation prior to increasing trans-Hudson capacity.

“Bergen County must receive priority movement in the area of light rail, but dollars are now at a premium, especially since September 11, 2001. In order to move this project quickly, it is essential that we join the Northern with MOS 3. Then we can pursue the Cross County network into Hackensack and then on to Passaic County.

“The Pascack Valley line, as I have reported over the past several years, is a must for us to pursue at this juncture in time. This commuter-passenger rail line should and must be extended to the Meadowlands as soon as possible. It is definitely a project which should be ready to go simultaneously with the Secaucus Transfer opening or as soon thereafter as possible.”

That’s just my little report and my ideas on this. But there are other pieces of information here, and we’re gathering this as we go along.

But none of us-- We’re not at odds. Not one of us are at odds with the other. It’s a question of how quickly we can get this done and how we can do this in an economic and expeditious manner.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Well, if we don’t get the money, we’re not going anywhere.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That’s right.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: That’s the biggest problem.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That’s right.

Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: I would also like to add to the resolution that it be subject to Federal funding requirements.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Yes, that's understood.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Whatever they may be.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That's understood. Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: That's no problem. I have no problem with that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Me neither.

Do you want him to go over that, Rusty?

MR. LACHENAUER (Panel Aide): Well, we have several additions to the resolution that -- as it now reads. And what I have so far is a second paragraph that would read or, essentially, have the following statement: However, the resolution acknowledges that the various light rail projects in Bergen County are prioritized as follows: number one, Northern Branch; number two, Cross County; number three, West Shore Line.

The final priority of light rail projects in Bergen County is to be established following the completion of the required Federal and environmental impact studies and preliminary design work.

I'm wondering if that's--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Yes, that's what--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: That's fine. But I also think you should make it also subject to any Federal funding requirements deemed necessary.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: So you would add just and subject to.

MR. LACHENAUER: And Federal--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: And subject to any Federal--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Funding requirements deemed necessary.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Deemed necessary.

That's understood, but it's fine to add it.

MR. LACHENAUER: So, the required -- the final priority of light rail projects in Bergen County is to be established following the completion of the required Federal impact studies, preliminary design work, and any Federal funding requirements pertinent.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: I'll move it.

MR. MATTSON: Oh, could I please address the--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: You've got a couple of people. You got Mayor Zisa there and Chet.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Well, you know -- as a courtesy, because this was not a hearing today, but again, a hearing, per se-- It's a meeting of the Panel. But out of courtesy, I would accede to Jack -- Mayor Zisa and then Chet Mattson.

But, Chet, you know we've given these presentations before, and we've heard them before. But I'm ready to do it again.

Jack, did you want to go before Chet or after?

MAYOR JOHN F. ZISA: I'll yield to the county.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yield to Chet? Okay.

MAYOR ZISA: I understand the pecking order.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Is that all right, Adam?

MR. STROBEL: That's fine.

Thank you very much for your time.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you, Adam.

MR. MATTSON: The added point that we'd like to make from the county executive's perspective and from those of us who've worked on the MIS over the last three to five years is this: the major investment study is completed. It did not end with a recommendation that we entangle ourselves in a difficult choice of order for things. When we look at the way to provide rail to Bergen County, we all saw the value of going up the Northern Branch as an extension of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, if you will, even though it was originally intended to go over to the Vince Lombardi and spread into the county from there.

What we did conclude -- and Bergen County didn't conclude this, New Jersey Transit concluded this after three years -- was that the way to approach adding segments of rail in Bergen County was to put together portions of lines and combinations of stops on lines to get the best ridership and to get the best penetration into the transportation network, road, and rail.

For that reason, we like that you are interested in the Northern, but we think it's premature to make judgments before the DEIS is even begun about what's going to be funded first, second, or third. It's the idea that you're establishing an order before we know exactly what the possibilities are that upsets us, not that we would go up the Northern or not. That is not the issue.

The issue is this: the MIS did not study parking or station locations attached to parking. The ridership numbers come from a computer

model that preceded the beginning of the MIS. When you build a rail line, you have to have stations, and you have to have places for people to park at them.

In Bergen County, the land in all of our municipalities, at the center of town, where the stations would be built, is used up. So we have to go about this through a redevelopment process, which we have now engaged all the towns on all three lines in a discussion of, not between Bergen County and others but between New Jersey Transit and the team they have here working on the DEIS.

We think that we would like you, if you must decide that you have to chose a line when the major investment study did not recommend that that be done, then you consider extending your focus for a first segment simultaneously, up the 7.7 miles of the Northern from its hub in Fairview, where the Hudson-Bergen will join in, plus another 5.5. miles west to Hackensack. Why? Because along that route -- that short 5.5 miles, the West Shore comes in. And we can provide bus and rail service that helps the West Shore until the 15 -- 12 or 15 years or more that pass, before the tunnel can be built under the river. We hoped that we wouldn't have to leave the West Shore out of it until then. We don't think it's necessary to.

In addition, if we extend over to Hackensack -- we established a base of 15 stations. And we can pick between and among the 15, as the DEIS shows, where you can put parking. Because ridership based on a computer model, as opposed to parking -- the towns are required to put in place, as part of the Federal funding process -- is premature at this juncture.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: If I may, Chet, I thought that's what we covered in the resolution, to make it subject to the completion of the EIS, as well as being subject to Federal funding requirements.

MR. MATTSON: Yes, you did that.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: As far as a choice--

MR. MATTSON: And we like that, but the idea that you designate one leg, instead of the possibility of two that can liberate a tremendous amount of ridership and network transit is, we think, premature. We think that the whole center of the county loses out by a judgment that you make before we can assemble this information.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: That's not what the chairman of the freeholder board just said, though.

MR. MATTSON: No, I'm saying the county executive has-- He made an announcement that he would like to see a combination of stops and stations on lines be the subject of the inquiry.

He called together Senator Torricelli and Congressman Rothman in this room on June 4, and they launched the idea. Since then, we have communicated with every legislator in Bergen County in October saying that our hope is that we can bring the legislative delegation in Bergen County and its strength and its unified points of view to processes like these and the DEIS and the Legislature when it comes time to make funding decisions.

To preempt what all of our legislators can do as a group to come up with a unified approach -- by picking a line first, without having the chance for our conversations now ongoing with our legislators, to bear fruit, we think that's a bit premature.

We like the energy you're showing. And getting to Bergen County makes me the most excited guy in the world. But deciding beforehand where we -- how best to go before we can do this other work and build support -- we think you could make mention of or you can say that the possible first stage could include portions of more than one line, depending on the--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Don't you think the EIS is going to tell us that?

MR. MATTSON: Well, the DEIS will take longer to do it than the opportunity to pursue funding. So, if we wait for the DEIS to be completed, we won't even be able to get the Northern Branch done in time.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: But they have to have the EIS--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: First of all, if this was decided between the executive and Senator Torricelli and Congressman Rothman, why didn't somebody communicate that to the Light Rail Panel, because we're the ones that are making the decision on the light rails? I mean, to send that--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And we recommend--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: --to send it to all the different legislators in Bergen County is fine to keep them advised as to where you're going, but I never heard from a one of them, to tell you the truth.

Did you, Joe?

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Nope.

The other question I have is, before you get any Federal funding, you need the EIS. You're not going to get any Federal funding unless an EIS is completed. So what we're saying here is--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: I think you're protected.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I think what we're saying here with Alex's amendment is that these are the priorities. Everybody understands that they're all important. And I think all of us understand that that Cross County is as important as the Northern. Let's look at what the EIS says is the easiest way to solve the problem. Because the EIS may say there's such major environmental impact that you can't do one or the other. So, if the EIS comes back and creates more problems for one or the other, then obviously you're going to have to go with the one that has the least amount of problems, based on the EIS, to get the Federal funding.

Right, Chet?

MR. MATTSON: Yes, but--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: So, that's what we're saying here, with Alex's recommendation, which I agree with. This basically is saying we all agree Bergen County needs light rail, needs better public transportation, that these are the three possibilities, we put them in the order of what, seemingly, based upon the board of freeholders' recommendation -- from Freeholder Bern -- is the priority of the board of freeholders. But we're saying that, in the end, the EIS, together with the Federal funding requirements, is going to make the final determination.

MR. MATTSON: But there are legislators in the State Legislature, in this work that's going on, who would like to think that the decision isn't going to be made before they can be consulted.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: But this decision is a recommendation of this Panel. It is not a final decision, because based upon-- It's a recommendation only of this Panel--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: To the Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: --to the Assembly, as a whole, which all of the members of the delegation are members of the Assembly from both parties.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: To the Speaker.

MR. MATTSON: So you would say that step you're taking today would allow for the possibility -- that if the work on stations whose parking has to be in place to allow trains to be built--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: That's an EIS issue because that's an environmental issue, because if you don't have proper parking--

MR. MATTSON: No, I don't-- With all due respect, I don't believe it's an EIS issue. You can't do the EIS until the towns in this county have designated station sites forward -- EIS can be done.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: You're absolutely--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: We didn't do that in Jersey City.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: We didn't do it in Jersey City that way or Bayonne. We didn't do it that way.

MR. MATTSON: Well, than the New Jersey Transit people that we're working with say that. And it is our judgment that if we designate a line without parking spaces, then we will lose even more time--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: We're designating three lines in priority order. That's all.

MR. MATTSON: I know. And you know--

My point is one, to say that what we have here is a three-line race to see who gets built first is not what the MIS concluded for us to do.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: But that's not what we're saying. We didn't say that. We're saying that these are the priorities, but it's the -- finally determined by the EIS recommendations. DEIS is going to review all three lines and then the Federal funding priorities. So we're not saying it's competition. That's my--

Alex? Rose?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: That's exactly why I-- First of all, I would not recommend, cold turkey, any line without it being subject to something that's ongoing, such as DEIS. And, of course, we need the Federal funding. So it has to be subject to that.

Trust us. Give us that opportunity to show you that we mean, in good faith, to do what's best. And that we--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I don't think any of us want to cut out any of the legislators.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Oh, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Not at all.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: But we want to ensure that in the 209th Legislature, the Panel meets to discuss to move this, because money is tight. And if we can, expedite this entire project, getting into Bergen, that's what we'd like to do. We don't want to see another 10 years go by, Chet.

MR. MATTSON: God knows we know that money is tight. We just want to make sure that it gets spent to do the best for the county.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That's exactly what we're doing.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Everybody agrees with that, Chet.

MR. MATTSON: Okay. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you, Chet.

Jack -- Mayor.

MAYOR ZISA: Chairwoman Heck, thank you very much for the opportunity. I wasn't familiar with your format. And the ability to speak before you is deeply appreciated.

In hearing your conversation, I know that the Panel has been meeting for quite some time and certainly is to be commended over the last 10-year period in moving light rail in the State of New Jersey. I know that many governmental decisions are put on the scales, and we have to determine what the right thing to do is, what the cost factors are, what the benefits are versus the cost.

In hearing the discussion today, there's one thing that does trouble me as the local mayor, as a mayor that really needs the support, in every way shape and form, that I can get it for this community -- an old community, a community that needs the transportation support, as has happened in Bayonne, as has happened in Jersey City.

The one thing that troubles me is that sometimes we talk about the ridership benefits, and sometimes we talk about the economic benefits. We talked about South Jersey. I hear that the light rail will do wonders to redevelop an old community, to redevelop Camden. I don't know whether or not the ridership is as important in that particular project as is the redevelopment.

To me, in the City of Hackensack, the redevelopment becomes a very key factor, as does the network approach that has been presented by our county executive.

The City of Hackensack has been involved in discussions, and I've taken the position that we need to have light rail in Bergen. We need to get light rail in Bergen. And although I'm one that wants to see the Cross County Line come first, I understand the concept of having to start somewhere.

I would, from where I sit, recommend that your resolution start by saying, "We will listen to the environmental study," and then make a decision. And then come back to the freeholder board and say, "Here's what we've found. Here's what it looks like to us. Is your recommendation still the same?" -- because freeholders come and go. Freeholders come and go, and the constituents that they serve may change from time to time.

I've heard from the chief planner. He's been here for a long time. And the chief planner, as a professional in the field, I think, is asking the same thing. I believe that's what--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I'm going to interject here. Hackensack was not part of his original plan. I presented that plan.

MAYOR ZISA: Yes, you did. And it was--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I presented that plan. Do you really think if I felt we could get into Hackensack tomorrow, we wouldn't do it?

What we're looking at, Jack, is a set of circumstances. And one of the things that I've worked with with you and with my colleagues is to make sure that Hackensack does get noticed, does get its fair share.

And remember that when we look at southern New Jersey, we're talking about 34 miles of right-of-way that existed, in most cases. The point being, that it's serving a lot of older communities, and it was a quid pro quo so

that we would not be embroiled in a battle royale between north and south for 10 years, and then we lose everything.

My feeling, again, is, certainly, I would love to see the Cross County first. But being a person who knows that only so much can be done, and if we start with the Northern-- Cross County, to me, is a guaranteed hop, skip, and a jump, but if we wait for Cross County to get financed by the public-privates, we'll be waiting another 10 years.

This was started 10 years ago, Jack, simultaneously with the Hudson piece. So I do want the Cross County. I do want all of the pieces to connect. But when you look at your budget, and anyone knows this, you have to look at the budgetary constraints. You have to look at the EIS. And you have to look at the numbers so that the feds give the money to us on the east coast, because remember, we woke a sleeping giant with the south. They weren't on line when we first started. We got 80 percent of the funding from the feds because we had the best plan possible.

And Jeff spoke about the next segment where we got 20 percent, which was still a major portion. Now, we have to be careful that we don't get pushed out of the loop by the other--

How many projects are on line, 84?

MR. WARSH: How many projects are new initiatives around the country?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

MR. WARSH: Over 300 at this point.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Over 300. So you have to be -- use common sense.

MAYOR ZISA: Of course, I'm here on behalf of our community. I'm here on behalf of the people that I represent.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Of course. And we are, too.

MAYOR ZISA: And when we have an opportunity to better our community, I have to stand up and fight for that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely.

MAYOR ZISA: We have an ongoing relationship with the current owner of the Cross County Line. We developed a relationship because of the work we're doing here in Hackensack. And I guess you try and strike when the iron is hot. We have a relationship. I don't know what -- who takes ownership five years from now. I know that we've got a working relationship right now with the current owner of that line. And I'm saying to take advantage of that if we can. I'm here to help promote that, if it takes that. And I can only encourage the Panel to look seriously about that piece of Hackensack or coming into the -- that piece of the Cross County line that includes Hackensack and creates a network approach.

And I commend--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Mayor, I think we've covered your concerns. That's why I didn't want to make it a blanket priority. I wanted it to be subject to findings of the EIS, along with the requirements of the Federal funding, because one-two-three may end up three-two-one. I don't know. It could be two-three-two or three-two-one.

I mean, whatever the recommendation is, that's what we're probably going to adhere to. In order to get the funding, we're going to have to.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I agree with Alex in the sense that I know what it's like being in your position. And you're absolutely right. It's frustrating.

The final decision is going to be after that EIS comes out. And what will be the final recommendation, which will be a recommendation that's going to have to come through New Jersey Transit and through the State-- And that's where you'll have another crack at the process. I lost in the battle, when I was doing this in Bayonne -- and in the end, won, because the EIS and because of all the other issues that came up and what the final recommendation that was done by the county together with New Jersey Transit--

So there's a number of steps here before this takes place.

Am I incorrect or correct?

MR. WARSH: That's correct. You're absolutely right.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: So there's a number of other steps that give you the opportunity. Hopefully, maybe by that point, some of the issues dealing with the Cross County can be dealt with so that it becomes, then, maybe a better route immediately.

But I think that, right now, what I think we're saying is these are the priorities, but everything is dependent upon the EISs and the funding recommendations.

MAYOR ZISA: Again, I can only commend the Panel on all of the hard work and the direction that you've taken. And I would only encourage you to continue to keep up the good work and keep in mind that all of the benefits -- it's not just about ridership.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: One question. Who's the owner of the Cross County? You said you're familiar with the owner.

MAYOR ZISA: Well, you know, we've been talking to the individual that is, I guess, part owner, Mr. Walter Rich. He's been the man in dialogue with the City of Hackensack and the County of Bergen with regards to the trestle.

MR. WARSH: The Mayor's talking about the New York Susquehanna and Western which -- the right-of-way is utilized for Cross County -- at least part of the right-of-way is used.

MAYOR ZISA: That would be the line -- I guess the right-of-way that's used through Hackensack on the Cross County Line.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: That could very well end up being the choice.

MAYOR ZISA: Well, I appreciate your diligence in the work so far.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Al Cafiero, on behalf of Senator Cardinale.

ALBERT F. CAFIERO: Albert Cafiero, Transportation Aide for Senator Cardinale.

First of all, I'm sure that the Senator will be pleased to hear that you want to have this resolution.

I'd like to make a few little corrections, though. One, as far as you having the resoulution-- The West Shore is not light rail, it's heavy rail. Can you make that correction?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I mention that in my report.

MR. CAFIERO: But it's not in the--

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: He corrected that.

MR. LACHENAUER: I corrected it.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: He corrected that.

MR. CAFIERO: Oh, you corrected that. Okay.

MR. LACHENAUER: To delete the word light.

MR. CAFIERO: I could say something that none of you have done. I have walked both lines. In fact, I walked the Northern all the way up to Nyack.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: You're younger than we are.
(laughter)

MR. CAFIERO: Next month I'll be 80.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: We drove there.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: God bless.

MR. CAFIERO: And one of the things I'd like to check out-- The EIS is completed as far as the Susquehanna tracks in Fairview for the North Bergen -- for the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail. So you can start getting funding for that immediately and working on that part. That's one of the most costly parts of the segment -- the MOS 3. So get to work on that so we maybe get the whole thing operating by 2006.

Now, as far as the EIS -- the whole EIS, one of the problems with the Cross County is to get to Lombardi, you have to cross wetlands -- prime wetlands. And that's going to take at least seven years, from what I've been told, to get the permits. There's no wetlands to cross on the Northern. And if the MOS 3 is left as it is, all we wind up -- is in the middle of nowhere at the Lombardi. Ending a light rail line at Lombardi is like ending a light rail line in the middle of the Everglades. It's almost as bad, but there's no alligators.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: No alligators.

MR. CAFIERO: Also, one of the things-- I don't believe that the Cross County is a good candidate for light rail. It should be heavy rail. We're going to have a new tunnel sooner or later into the city. And the Cross County -- the Bergen County connector will -- could bring the Bergen Line, the Pascack Line, and the Susquehanna and the West Shore directly to the mouth of the new tunnel.

And the major thing, also, is we need help as far as the express busway's concerned. And you'd get a lot of buses off of that expressway that are coming from the north east -- Bergen County, and you make room for other buses. And that can be done as fast as possible. In fact, the whole thing should be finished by 2006.

Let's go. And I have--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: If you'd like to pass something out -- but I think we have to proceed because some of our members have other appointments -- or a couple of our members have other appointments.

MR. CAFIERO: This is from Senator Cardinale.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you very much.

Is that what you mailed to me?

MR. CAFIERO: That's what--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you. I'll take another copy. I'll put it in this folder.

And, Al, would you give the young ladies a copy? They're doing the transcript.

So do you want to reiterate the resolution.

MR. LACHENAUER: We can get this all retyped and pass it around for you to sign.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You want to type it now?

MR. LACHENAUER: No, not now.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Oh, God. (laughter)

MR. LACHENAUER: No, no.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

MR. LACHENAUER: I would just have the correction made to refer to the various rail projects as opposed to various light rail projects so it reads, the resolution acknowledges that the various rail projects in Bergen County are prioritized as follows: Northern Branch, number one; number two, Cross County; number three, West Shore Line. It is further resolved that the local -- the final priority of rail projects in Bergen County is to be established following the completion of the required Federal environmental impact studies, preliminary design work, and any pertinent Federal funding requirements.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Now, is that the second -- you're keeping the first paragraph--

MR. LACHENAUER: Which is the second paragraph.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Okay. All right.

Do you want to move that?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: I'll move it.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: I'll second it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Okay. Call for a vote, Rusty.

MR. LACHENAUER: On the resolution, Chairwoman Heck?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

MR. LACHENAUER: Assemblyman DeCroce?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Yes.

MR. LACHENAUER: Assemblyman Doria?

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I want to thank everyone who participated.

I thank you all for coming. And again, thank you very much.

And my special thanks to Jeff Warsh for coming and the county executive's representation, and, of course, my friend Dan Censullo and Johnny Johnston.

ASSEMBLYMAN DORIA: Can I just add that this is the last meeting of the Light Rail Panel under the present Chairwoman. And I just want to commend Rose Heck for the job that she's done over the years. Her commitment to light rail and that fact that this Panel has played an important role in guaranteeing that public transportation for the citizens of this state has been implemented and improved--

So, I just want to commend you, Rose. And thank you.

I know Alex joins with me in that.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Yes. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I appreciate that.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)