

NJ Transit Board Meeting

Lackawanna Coalition Statement

11 October 2023

**Lackawanna
Coalition**

Congratulations on Rail's 40th

A few of us members of the Coalition joined families and rail fans out to get a glimpse of history on October 1st at Hoboken Terminal for the display of historical rail cars. It was a beautiful day to be outside, sunny yet reasonably cool, and those of us who grew up on old black-and-white movies set on trains, who hummed “On the Twentieth Century” when the ’40s-style musical was on Broadway, enjoyed peeking into the past, including the chance to go aboard a couple of the historic cars. The day certainly brought to life local rail history and provided additional motivation for protecting and expanding current passenger rail.

Abandoned Bus Lines

We were pleased to see NJ Transit picking up the CoachONE and A&C routes, but want to point out that as activity has increased dramatically since the pandemic cuts, the goal should be to return to prepandemic schedules—including restoring full frequency to the #9 and #14 in Jersey City and those routes, along with the #80S and #8, running late into the evening. Although the current replacement route is not technically a cut, stores are no longer closing at 8 p.m. as they did 3 years ago, more folks are travelling at all hours (even more midday and weekends than at the traditional rush hours), so full service is necessary.

Renaming the branches of the 24, with the southbound 24A now the 24E (Elizabeth Avenue) and the southbound 24B the 24J (Jersey Street), and northbound, these being the 24S (Scotland Road) and 24H (Harrison Street), surely led to some confusion this week, which hopefully will resolve with time. To NJT's credit, they increased the span of service on the #31, especially in the evening, even over what Coach ran prior to the cuts in July, but the schedule is a difficult one to keep with traffic, so the unreliability continues, and we encourage management to look into improving that.

Working Toilets on Board

Members have reported some trains with toilets in closed-off rail cars only, or worse, with non-working toilets or no toilets. We encourage you to consider this an important customer service issue and ensure that each train has one or more easily accessible working toilets. Infrequent riders may not even be aware that each train should have a restroom and think to ask for it.

Transit Weekend, Oct. 21 and 22

The Lackawanna Coalition is participating in 2 important events related to rail travel and sustainability during the 3rd weekend in October. First, the Rail Users' Network, of which the Lackawanna Coalition is an organizational member, is hosting its Fall Miniconference on Saturday, October 21 at 12:30 p.m. It is titled *Passenger Rail & the Environment—Natural Allies: Environmental benefits of passenger rail/rail transit in North America*, and is a Zoom event, free to members and available to new members with their introductory membership to run through 2024. David Peter Alan will be giving the closing remarks at this conference, which includes a public forum.

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Next, Lackawanna Coalition Chairperson Emeritus David Peter Alan, Secretary Daniel Chazin, and I have been invited to hold a panel discussion on Transit—The Sustainable Alternative, moderated by Legislative Director Vito Havrilla, on Sunday, October 22 at 11 A.M. at the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County in Teaneck. It is also viewable on Zoom.

Educational Programs at LC Meetings

The Lackawanna Coalition starts each of its meetings—generally held on the 4th Monday of each month at 6:45 p.m. at the Millburn Town Hall—with an educational or entertaining information program, which is then followed by our monthly business meeting. We have just set our schedule of presentations for our fall season:

- ❖ **October:** David Peter Alan, Travelling on VIA Rail in Canada
- ❖ **November:** Advocate Alan Drake, An International Perspective on Rail Travel
- ❖ **December:** LC Treasurer Brad Payeur, International Experiences in Rail Travel (invited)
- ❖ **January:** David Peter Alan, SCDRTAC's 40th Anniversary


Chairperson, Lackawanna Coalition