

NJTransit Board Meeting

Lackawanna Coalition Statement

12 June 2019

The logo for the Lackawanna Coalition, featuring the text "Lackawanna Coalition" in white serif font on a dark red rectangular background with a white border.

We are concerned about the plans for a NJ Transit gas-fired power plant in Kearny. Of course we agree that trains need reliable power, but we think that there are better ways to achieve that and also help the surrounding communities. We note that private utilities have much more experience in generating power. What does this project actually accomplish? The just-released Draft Energy Master Plan has a goal of full renewable energy by 2050; why is a state agency proposing a central gas power plant in direct opposition to this administration goal? What portion of the \$410 million FTA resiliency money is for building the central power plant, and what portion for the microgrid and redundant cables? Does the Transportation Trust Fund have the capacity for the required match of 25% local money (about \$137 million)? Is the scale of the project appropriate for NJ Transit's needs alone, or is it designed to generate excess energy and create an income stream? NJ Transit has ongoing financial needs, but creating of NJT Power and Light with our tax dollars is not the solution.

The DEIS indicates that the NEC and M&E lines would use 70–75Mw of traction and load power, with excess power sold to the PJM grid when economically justified. It quotes a sales figure growing from 8% to 19% (of 104–140Mw) between 2020 and 2049, leaving an unexplained difference in the vicinity of 20 to 30Mw. If there is no clear use for that power, perhaps building a smaller facility, focussing on a solar microgrid alone, would save money for both the FTA and the TTF and still cover NJ Transit's needs. The NJTransitgrid, as described, has 2 parts: a 140-Mw methane-fired power plant and a 4Mw solar microgrid. Why are those proportions not reversed to be more in line with the Draft Energy Master Plan?

Operating costs for the central gas plant are expected to be between \$16.6 and \$19.5 million, covered by power-purchase agreements. The project includes 32000 sq. ft. of office space and 30 full-time positions; this is a distraction from NJTransit's mission of providing transportation, where we expect NJT management to place its focus. We need NJT to improve rail and bus service, and leave power generation to the expert, experienced utility companies. We have been hearing ever since the storm about the Sandy damage to the Hudson Tunnels. Instead of the large NJTransitgrid, we suggest using available resiliency funds to use the the L-trains' Canarsie Tunnel system to repair the Hudson Tunnels, and use the remainder for a third tunnel so that we will not have to wait 10 years to have two working tunnels running trains into and out of New York Penn Station—we recommend using FTA resiliency money to actually protect and increase transportation capacity.

David Anderson
Technical Director