

Congressman Rothman Gets Historic Commitment for Hudson-Bergen Light Rail System

Finally Putting the "Bergen" in the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail System

(Washington, DC) — Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (D — NJ), a member of the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, announced his work in getting a historic commitment from New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, the State of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Transportation and New Jersey Transit to build a light rail commuter train system on the Northern Branch line, between North Bergen and Tenafly. On Saturday, July 18, 2009, 13 years after the start of construction on the Hudson County portion of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail System, and nearly nine years since that segment's completion, this agreement commits the State of New Jersey and New Jersey Transit to building the Bergen County portion.

"The time has come to put the Bergen in the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail system," said Rothman. "Northern Branch service is important to residents along this 11-mile corridor, and will provide rail transport to 24,000 passengers daily, from North Bergen to Tenafly, filling the mass transit void that is so obviously present in eastern Bergen County."

The Federal Transit Administration's release of the revised Northern Branch Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will trigger local public hearings as soon as this fall. The hearings will give communities along the planned service route an opportunity to raise any additional issues that need to be incorporated into New Jersey Transit's service plan. New Jersey Transit expects preliminary engineering to begin in 2010, followed by construction to start in 2011.

"This is a big project with an estimated price tag of \$900 million," said Rothman. "The State of New Jersey received over \$475 million in fiscal year 2009 federal funding, plus \$425 million from the Stimulus Bill, all for rail projects. I will work hard to make sure those federal funds keep coming. But now this project has become a priority of the New Jersey state government which allocates those federal monies given to New Jersey, as well as our state's own Transportation Trust Fund dollars. That is why this weekend's commitments by the Governor and New Jersey Transit are so significant."

Rep. Rothman, along with local and state officials, has worked for over a decade to bring commuter rail service to the Northern Branch. The process was stalled as officials decided whether to use diesel trains, a less expensive option, or light rail trains. "That decision was made for us recently when Colorado Railcar Manufacturing, the manufacturer of the diesel equipment that met safety standards, went bankrupt," said Rothman. "When I found out about the bankruptcy, I immediately called the Governor and New Jersey Transit and said this ends all debate. We should now turn immediately to the light-rail option and get a commitment from the state to pay for the entire project."

At full operating capacity, the Bergen County light rail service is planned to operate from early morning through late evening hours, 7-days a week, with trains departing every 6-12 minutes in the peak travel periods. A trip from the Northern most portion of the line, in Tenafly, will take 21 minutes to Tonelle Avenue, in North Bergen; 25 minutes to Port Imperial for ferries to New York; and 37 minutes to Hoboken for Path and New Jersey Transit commuter rail connections.

###

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 21, 2009

CONTACT: Carrie Giddins, 202-225-5061; 202-420-1524 (cell)