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Congressman Gets Funds To End Gridlock On Route 17, Develop New Bergen Rail Service, Pay For Extension Of Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, & Continued Construction of Newark-Elizabeth Rail Link

Washington, DC - Building upon his recent appointment to the powerful House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation and Treasury, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today announced that he was able to secure millions in federal funds to ease traffic congestion in Northern New Jersey. As part of the final component of the Fiscal Year 2003 budget, which Congress approved last week and President Bush signed into law late yesterday, Rothman was able to obtain \$69.2 million to continue construction on the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail system, \$60 million to continue building the Newark-Elizabeth Rail Link, \$2.25 million for the development of a new rail service in Bergen County, and \$100,000 to design ways to end gridlock on Route 17.

"For too long New Jersey residents have been stuck in what seems like endless lines of traffic, especially on Route 17 during rush hour," Rothman said. "With the funds I have secured, engineers will be able to design a way to expand that section of Route 17, south of Route 4, that is currently just two lanes wide and is a primary reason for the traffic backup."

The 1.9 mile stretch of Route 17 between Fairview Avenue in Paramus and Essex Street in Hackensack is the only part of the heavily traveled highway with only two lanes. This causes severe congestion at Route 17's interchange with Passaic Street, and long back-ups on Passaic Street as well. Using his position as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Rothman secured \$100,000 to conduct an engineering design study of how to alleviate the traffic buildup.

Rothman also secured \$2.25 million to design and plan a series of light rail stations, regional park-n-rides, and a variety of infrastructure elements such as bridges, tunnels, signals, transfers, and shuttle service links in Bergen County. Additionally, Rothman helped secure \$69.2 million as part of the federal government's commitment to the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail system. Currently, rail service extends as far north as Hoboken, with service expected to reach Weehawken in 2004. Rothman also helped secure \$60 million for the continued development of the Newark-Elizabeth Rail Link.

"In order to free our roadways of congestion, we must develop mass transit rail systems that will give commuters efficient and reliable alternatives to car transportation in order to get where they need to be on time," Rothman said. "I was delighted to secure federal funds that will help pay for a new Bergen rail network and to extend the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail network and Newark-Elizabeth Rail Link, which will improve the quality of life for Northern New Jersey residents."

The transportation money was included in the final spending bill for Fiscal Year 2003 that the House approved by a margin of 338-83 and the Senate approved by a margin of 76-20 last week.

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