

United States Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs  
Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation and Community Development  
Testimony of James Weinstein, Executive Director  
NJ TRANSIT Corporation  
Thursday, Dec. 20, 2012

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Senators.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to outline the unprecedented damage Superstorm Sandy inflicted on NJ TRANSIT and, just as importantly, to describe the need to rebuild a more resilient transit system for the future.

NJ TRANSIT is the nation's second-largest transit agency, and Sandy hit us hard. NJ TRANSIT took sound steps to mitigate potential harm. Nonetheless, the transit system suffered extraordinary damage to critical bridges, electrical substations, track and signal systems, and rolling stock.

In addition, under Governor Chris Christie's leadership, we worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Transit Administration and other partners to immediately implement extensive interim emergency bus, ferry and other services to continue to deliver essential regional transportation services while the region's transit systems were being restored.

But Mr. Chairman, Sandy has shown we cannot merely restore our rail and other infrastructure to its previous state. That would only leave us vulnerable to the next super storm.

We must go further and make the rail and other transit modes more resistant in the face of future super storms. Those steps will require additional resources.

We have identified some \$1.2 billion in resiliency and restoration needs -- resiliency projects that would be eligible under the Federal Transit Administration's Emergency Assistance program. Moreover, these projects are targeted to improve the transit system's ability to withstand storms of all types, not just super storms that mimic Sandy's punishing surge.

Let me outline a few of these projects for the Committee now.

As you may know, more than 300 rail cars and locomotives were damaged during Superstorm Sandy. To prevent that from ever occurring again, our top priority is ensuring we have sufficient, stormproof rail yards to safely store locomotives and train cars, out of the reach of flood waters and also out of harm's way from falling trees, electrical wires, utility poles and other storm-driven debris.

To that end, we estimate it will cost some \$500 million to construct new rail yard and inspection facilities, including a new yard at a site along the Northeast Corridor in New Brunswick that is currently owned by Amtrak. This facility will provide a centrally-located site for safe storage, and allow locomotives and rail cars to be rapidly re-inspected and put back into service once a storm passes.

The Meadows Maintenance Complex in Kearny -- the "MMC," -- is our prime rail inspection, maintenance and repair facility, and is also a major site for rail equipment storage. The Rail Operations Center called the "ROC," sits in the same complex and is the central nervous system for the railroad, controlling all dispatching and signaling system-wide. We are seeking \$200 million to raise power and other systems for the MMC and the ROC above foreseeable flood levels, as well as to install berms and other anti-flood control structures, so that we can safeguard the most critical portions of the complex, and ensure that the parts,

generators, and repair machinery and other equipment at the MMC can ride out any storm in place, as they must.

Mr. Chairman, Sandy badly flooded the historic Hoboken Terminal, as well as portions of the Frank R. Lautenberg Station in Secaucus. We estimate it will cost \$125 million to restore and strengthen these and other key locations against storms. This money will fund projects involving both temporary and permanent flood and storm water controls.

Sandy was at her most wrathful along the Jersey Coast. I'm sure you saw the pictures of boats and even metal shipping containers left on our North Jersey Coast Line rail bridges by the storm. Sandy also ruined electrical substations along the coast and in Hudson County and elsewhere which are vital for supplying the catenary wires that power our electric trains.

So we are seeking \$275 million to restore the Coast Line, and construct seven new, raised electrical substations and to improve the Coast Line's resiliency by constructing sea walls by bridges, building sheathing to prevent washouts at bridge approaches and raising bridge control houses.

Mr. Chairman, you are very familiar with our light rail systems. Both Hudson Bergen and the Newark Light Rail were impacted heavily when flood waters rushed in. Repairing the light rail systems and making them more resilient will cost an estimate \$25 million.

Finally, we are seeking \$75 million to cover the cost of substitute bus and ferry emergency service provided after the storm, as well as to restore, expand and enhance communications during a disaster. Real-time communications are vital, whether our customers are at a station, on a train, on a bus, on the Internet or using

a smart phone. This is not only a customer service issue; it is a safety issue, whether a disaster is a result of Mother Nature or an act of man.

Mr. Chairman, we recognize that there will be local match requirements for the funding we are seeking and we are fully prepared to work with our local Metropolitan Planning Organization partners to make whatever changes are needed to our existing capital program. We are also ready to expedite implementation of these projects, including by using fast track design-build contracting.

Mr. Chairman, I would note that these cost estimates are just that – estimates that may well evolve over time as we progress the work that lies ahead.

Before I close, I want to thank the Administrator Rogoff and the FTA, as well as the leaders and staff at FEMA and the U.S. Department of Transportation for their assistance and support during this trying time. They have been true partners in the recovery effort. And I want to thank Gov. Christie, for his continued emphasis on bringing New Jersey back to a state of normalcy for the people of the Garden State.

I also want to again express my thanks to our hundreds of thousands of daily customers, for their patience and understanding while NJ TRANSIT, and, indeed, the entire state of New Jersey continues to rebuild after Sandy.

Finally, I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman and the committee for your interest and for the opportunity to speak today. Repairs and resilience both take funding. Money invested in preventing future storm damage will limit the bill for future storm relief – as well as ensuring that our transit systems have a better chance of avoiding service interruptions.

We appreciate the committee's interest and any assistance the Committee, Congress and Administration can provide in helping us renew New Jersey's transit system, and improve it for the future.

Thank you and I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.