



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

Bill Shuster
Chairman

Washington, DC 20515

Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member

October 14, 2016

Christopher P. Bertram, Staff Director

Katherine W. Dedrick, Democratic Staff Director

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

We write to express our concerns regarding the September 29, 2016 New Jersey Transit (NJ Transit) train crash in Hoboken, New Jersey, which killed a young mother on the platform and injured 110 passengers and crewmembers. While the cause of the accident is under investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board, numerous reports have surfaced of New Jersey's blatant neglect of New Jersey Transit infrastructure and trains, and fines totaling nearly \$500,000 for significant safety violations.

Indeed, an investigation by *The New York Times*, published yesterday, found that NJ Transit has been in constant decline over the last several years and now suffers from frequent delays and rising fares while its crumbling rail tracks and aging trains are in need of billions of dollars in improvements. *The Times* found that this decline is a direct result of serious mismanagement and neglect, affecting hundreds of thousands of commuters daily.

According to the article, under the Christie administration, the State subsidy for the railroad has plunged by more than 90 percent and "the railroad's finances have been dealt a blow." The direct State subsidy to the railroad's operating budget plummeted to \$33 million last year from \$348 million in 2009. Each year the railroad's executives are left to figure out where they will get the money to keep the trains running while Governor Christie continues to push for more and more of that money to be diverted to road-building projects. This approach forced the railroad to underinvest in infrastructure needs, and ultimately created an unreliable and unsafe system.

At this moment, there is an \$86 billion backlog to bring our Nation's public transit systems to a state of good repair. The horrific tragedy in Hoboken and the deterioration of NJ Transit only underscore the need for increased investment in our transit systems. Safety must be our number one priority, and that is something that we believe the Christie administration ignored.

A cursory review of NJ Transit commuter rail safety statistics, available to the public on the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) website and easily accessible by any government official,

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shows that accidents and incidents on NJ Transit have skyrocketed since 2010: NJ Transit had 2,418 accidents and incidents from 2010 to 2015 compared to 1,496 accidents and incidents during the 2004-2009 period – a shocking 62 percent increase in NJ Transit train accidents and incidents. As a result, more people have died and injuries increased by a staggering 82 percent on NJ Transit's commuter rail operations since 2010.

Given the State's troubling record, we urge the Department of Transportation to take immediate actions to ensure the safe operation of NJ Transit. We understand that the FRA has conducted a safety audit of NJ Transit. We request detailed information on the audit, including the dates of each inspection, the number of violations detected, a description of each violation, the fines that may be assessed for each such violation, and the settlement amounts. We also request copies of any letters or other documents and communications between the FRA and NJ Transit since January 1, 2016. Please provide all requested information no later than November 14, 2016.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact us or have your staff contact Jennifer Homendy of the Committee staff at 202-225-3274. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,


PETER DeFAZIO
Ranking Member


MICHAEL CAPUANO
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines,
and Hazardous Materials


ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress