

## **Regional Rail Working Group**

A Consortium of Transit Advocacy Organizations:  
New Jersey Association of Rail Passengers  
Empire State Passengers Association  
Committee for Better Transit  
Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc.

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### **Comments on Draft EIS for Permanent WTC PATH Terminal -- June 23 , 2004**

#### **New rail transit options should be considered with the tragic loss of the World Trade Center**

The tragic events of 9/11 have created an extraordinary opportunity to reconfigure the region's rail transit system to better serve Lower Manhattan. With a replacement plan for the World Trade Center under review, it becomes possible to consider linking the Downtown PATH line with the #6 Lexington Avenue local subway line – **the PATH-Lex connection**. Both rapid transit lines, which are nearly identical in most physical characteristics, terminate at stations in Lower Manhattan less than 3,000 feet apart. Most other rapid transit lines *pass through* Lower Manhattan, making multiple stops reducing walking time and improving service for transit passengers.

The Regional Rail Working Group, a consortium of transit advocacy groups and individual transit professionals, has developed a wide range of options for **the PATH-Lex connection**. Two representative examples are shown in the attached drawings:

- (1) a simple two-track track connection, where PATH is consolidated into the much larger NYC Transit system with trains from Manhattan's East Side coming directly to the World Trade Center site and then continuing to Newark or Hoboken (Alignment 2.8)
- (2) a cross platform transfer, where the #6 line is extended from the Brooklyn Bridge Station to the WTC site (Alignment 4.1), easing the connection while still maintaining two separate rail systems.

#### **The PATH-Lex Connection benefits transit riders and the public at large**

The advantages of this connection are significant for transit passengers. Residents from Manhattan's Upper East Side, Murray Hill, Gramercy Park, Union Square, NoHo, SoHo and Chinatown neighborhoods could use the less congested #6 Lexington Avenue local to reach workplaces in the World Financial Center and the rebuilt World Trade Center without transferring to congested #4 and #5 express trains at the Brooklyn Bridge Station. Residents from these neighborhoods could also more easily reach the growing workplaces on New Jersey's waterfront in Jersey City, Hoboken and Newark. In turn, this access also benefits New Jersey residents who could access the many workplaces and retail districts that are well served by the #6 local. Extending the reach of the PATH line to East Midtown will also ease travel to Newark Liberty International Airport.

Businesses on both sides of the Hudson would also benefit from this improved access. A direct link from Manhattan's East Side will be an important incentive to market the substantial amount of office space planned for the WTC site and along the New Jersey waterfront. Stores and restaurants in Chinatown in SoHo would gain vastly improved access to customers filling the many new residential towers on the New Jersey waterfront.

## **The PATH-Lex Connection is feasible from an engineering and operating perspective**

PANYNJ and MTA officials have argued that **the PATH-Lex connection** is not feasible because it requires steeper grades and sharper curves than are considered “best practice” for new construction. It also requires underpinning of subway structures, which adds to the cost. Yet, leaving the existing system in place means that trains must negotiate far sharper curves at the WTC terminal and the City Hall loop just south of Brooklyn Bridge Station. Grades of 4.5% are found at many locations in the NYC Transit system and the PANYNJ’s recently completed Kennedy AirTrain has even steeper grades. The underpinning proposed for the connection is quite similar to that required for the recently completed local-express connection of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street tunnel in Long Island City.

Thru routing subway trains from Brooklyn to the Bronx by way of the Manhattan business district has been the operating practice for new lines built in NYC since the five boroughs were consolidated in 1898. This is the norm for most rapid transit systems throughout the world. **The PATH-Lex connection** would simply apply this practice to trains crossing the Hudson River.

Consolidating the PATH system with the much larger NYC Transit system could produce annual operating cost savings of \$10 to 20 million, which would be shared equally by the two states. Capital cost gains could be realized through unified procurement of rolling stock and other supplies. These gains could be realized only after agreements with managers and labor leaders were made and a satisfactory plan for the PANYNJ to compensate the MTA for the incremental costs of operating the PATH service was devised. Similar agreements are already in place between MTA and the States of New Jersey and Connecticut for commuter rail service. Jurisdiction of the PATH system could be readily shifted from the FRA to FTA oversight, since PATH no longer operates on mainline railway tracks.

## **Better planning can produce projects that benefit transit riders and the region’s economy**

After the economic downturn resulting from the calamitous events of 9/11, transit advocates expected public agencies to collaborate on improving transit systems serving Lower Manhattan. Exactly the opposite has happened. While the Downtown PATH line was out of service, many passengers had to use more circuitous routings and often had to pay double fares. Because of the potential revenue loss, the PANYNJ and MTA chose not to integrate the PATH fares into MTA’s citywide MetroCard system to offset this burden.

Furthermore, PANYNJ and MTA officials have been less than responsive to efforts by the Regional Rail Working Group to consider connecting the two systems. It was only through the efforts of U.S. Representative Jerrold Nadler that both agencies even agreed to participate in a nominal discussion of **the PATH-LEX Connection**.

We can, and must do better! The Governors of the two states must call upon the MTA and the PANYNJ to override institutional prerogatives and cooperate through a comprehensive regional planning process with an opportunity for meaningful public input. Only then can the region make up for the terrible loss that occurred on 9/11.