

JOHN H. ANLIAN
Mayor

WILLIAM G. GERKEN
ADAM A. MAC NEILL
MARK C. OLSON
WANDA C. PORTORREAL
Commissioners

TARA S. O'GRADY
Village Clerk



234 Main Street
Ridgefield Park, NJ 07660-2500

(201) 641-4950
Fax (201) 641-1248

www.ridgefieldpark.org

Board of Commissioners

Dear Neighbors, Business Owners and other Village Residents,

We are writing to you today to let you know about a very important matter involving NJ Transit that will have a **CATASTROPHIC FINANCIAL IMPACT** on the Village. In early March, NJ Transit advised the Village that it was in the early stages of investigating the acquisition of the 56-acre property known as the "Skymark" Redevelopment Area. The Village has been actively trying to redevelop this property - located east of Route 95 and south of Route 46 - for decades. Completely contrary to the Village's redevelopment plan, NJ Transit plans to take this property and build a **500-bus garage and maintenance facility on this site for its fleet of loud, aging diesel buses.**

Let us be clear about what is at stake here - NJ Transit is a tax-exempt entity. If NJ Transit takes this property away from Village taxpayers, we will immediately **lose approximately \$1.3 million per year in tax revenue.** In addition, if the property were developed, the Village could expect nearly **\$7 million in tax revenue annually.** **IF NJ TRANSIT BUILDS A BUS GARAGE, VILLAGE TAXPAYERS GET NOTHING.**

After receiving NJ Transit's letter, we immediately objected to the size and location of this project, but also asked to start a dialogue about how an NJ Transit project could be structured to benefit both the Village and NJ Transit. For months, **NJ Transit refused to even respond to us.** Even though the COVID-19 pandemic forced the State into a virtual shutdown, NJ Transit secretly forged ahead with its plans to take this incredibly valuable property. During a time when many of our businesses were closed, our residents were out of work, and our own meetings were being conducted by teleconference, NJ Transit **authorized MILLIONS OF DOLLARS in contracts to architects and lawyers to move full steam ahead with the bus garage.**

We then asked NJ Transit for the plans, studies, reports and other documents that they were using to support this dramatic state-led takeover. **NJ Transit has refused to provide these critically-important documents, in violation of State Law.**

Covid-19 has completely changed the world of mass transit. It is clear that **any and all pre-Covid projections for bus ridership and mass transit use are no longer valid,** and we believe that NJ Transit no longer has an actual need for this new facility, or that it could be scaled down significantly.

With the assistance of Senator Paul Sarlo, the Village and a local developer held a meeting in which we discussed a public-private partnership that would guarantee that the Village received the anticipated tax revenue from the project. NJ Transit responded positively to this idea at this meeting.

However, after that meeting, **NJ Transit again ignored the Village** and in fact filed a condemnation action to forcibly take approximately 40 acres of the Skymark site. Not only that, NJ Transit agreed to pay UBS - the owner of the property - \$20 million more than the property is actually worth. **NJ Transit should be using those funds to support Village taxpayers – not to reward UBS and its team of lobbyists.**

The Village has sacrificed enormous portions of its land for the benefit of the State. In the 1930's it was for Route 46. In the 1950's, Overpeck County Park and the NJ Turnpike. In the 1960's, we gave up more land for Route 80 and the "missing mile" for Route 95. It is time for other municipalities to share the burden for the State's transit-related needs. Tell everyone that will listen that **fairness and equity** demand that NJ Transit must either:

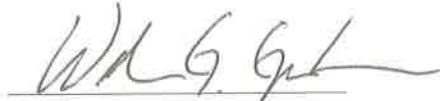
- 1) **MOVE THE SITE** – i.e., find another location for the bus garage, or
- 2) **MAKE IT RIGHT** – i.e., fairly compensate Village taxpayers for NJ Transit's takeover of the Skymark site.

We are actively fighting for you, but right now **WE NEED YOUR HELP**. Please reach out to your elected representatives. Reach out to NJ Transit directly. We have listed the names and contact info for your State representatives as well as important officials from NJ Transit. Write to them. Call them. Email them.

Governor Phil Murphy	609-292-6000	http://nj.gov/governor/contact
Congressman William Pascrell	201-935-2248	http://pascrell.house.gov
Senator Paul A. Sarlo	201-804-8118	sensarlo@njleg.org
Senator Loretta L. Weinberg	201-928-0100	senweinberg@njleg.org
Assemblyman Clinton Calabrese	201-943-0615	asmcalabrese@njleg.gov
Assemblyman Gary Schaer	973-249-3665	asmschaer@njleg.gov
County Executive James J. Tedesco III	201-336-7300	countyexecutive@co.bergen.nj.us
Freeholder Chairwoman Germaine Ortiz	201-336-6276	gortiz@co.bergen.nj.us
Justin P. Davis, NJ Transit (Senior Vice President)	201-232-4703	jpdavis@njtransit.com

It is time for the voices of the residents of Ridgefield Park to be heard. This is too important to our community to let NJ Transit invade our town with its fleet of dirty buses. Let's all work together to ensure a bright, clean, and financially stable future for the Village. Tell NJ Transit to **MOVE THE SITE, OR MAKE IT RIGHT!**

Sincerely,



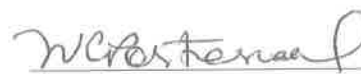
William G. Genken
Commissioner




Adam A. MacNeill
Commissioner



Mark C. Olson
Commissioner



Wanda C. Portorreal
Commissioner



John H. Anlian
Mayor