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MNRCC Protests Cancellation of Pascack Valley Line Trains

The Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council (MNRCC) strenuously objects to NJ Transit's decision to temporarily cancel Metro-North express trains 1618 and 1639, as well as the regular operation of Friday-only outbound train 9653. We understand and support the legal requirement to install Positive Train Control (PTC) technology on cars and locomotives by the end of 2018 and recognize the equipment availability issues that may result from this effort. NJ Transit's decision to substantially degrade the quality of service on the Pascack Valley Line, which is already less well served than other parts of the region, without additional alternatives for riders is simply unacceptable.

This decision harshly affects Metro-North's Pascack Valley Line riders in several respects. First, it reduces AM peak hour service by more than 11 percent and PM peak hour service by more than 12 percent. Second, it cuts the number of express trains available to our riders in half, from two to one in each peak period. Finally, the changes eliminate a late afternoon Friday train on all but a few days. This train is essential for riders whose religious practice requires that Friday travel be completed by sunset.

This is not the first inconvenience that Metro-North's West of Hudson riders have endured, as there have been frequent cancellations of express trains in recent months and Tropical Storms Irene and Sandy led to lengthy service disruptions. The time saved by riding express trains is important to many commuters, and an extended loss of this service could cause these riders to shift to other transportation options. The outcome could be enduring loss of ridership resulting in further degradation of service.

"Better options are needed to serve our riders" said MNRCC Chair Randolph Glucksman. "The solution to PTC-related equipment availability issues must be more than cancelling trains for the remainder of 2018. We look to NJ Transit to fulfill its commitments to provide adequate service to Metro-North's West of Hudson service area and to work cooperatively with Metro-North and the MTA to provide Pascack Valley Line riders with the level of service on which they rely."