

October 14, 2019

Letter: Fighting for Peak One Seat Rides

By Mayor Shelley Brindle

Finally — the efforts of the Raritan Valley Line Mayors Alliance are beginning to pay off, and restoration of the off-peak one seat ride is set for Nov. 4.

And while I'm thrilled with today's announcement, I remain frustrated that it took this long only to regain the service we previously fought to obtain, which still doesn't benefit 80% of daily commuters. The RVL Mayors shouldn't have had to fight this hard to get the service we should've already had.

I'm glad both Governor Murphy and Congressman Malinowski are committed to working with the RVL Mayors Alliance and other advocacy groups to obtain future RVL peak and weekend one seat ride service. We all know it's as critical to our quality of life as it is to our economic future.

I'm particularly pleased that Congressman Malinowski is not only leading the fight to get funding for the new Gateway Tunnel project at the federal level, but is also in the fight alongside us in Westfield to deliver peak one-seat rides ahead of new tunnel completion.

The tragic reality is, instead of praising just off-peak one seat ride resumption today, we could've celebrated the completion of trans-Hudson tunnels last year. But in a disastrously irresponsible decision, former Governor Christie canceled the ARC Tunnel project. A decision met with silence from too many in his own political party — some of whom took part in today's event as an attempt to claim credit for solving a problem they created.

These past two years, you've seen the pragmatic and nonpartisan approach I take to governing. As elected officials we have a responsibility to proactively fight for you every day, which is what I've committed to doing as Westfield's full-time Mayor. It's why I initiated, along with Mayor Colleen Mahr and Mayor Bob Fazen, the RVL Mayors' Alliance.

I saw first-hand that Westfield leadership was regularly absent from the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition (RVRC) meetings — and I mean real leadership, not just showing up for photo-ops during election season. I recognized the urgent need to create an active grassroots group of bi-partisan Mayors to demand immediate action, and keep the pressure on until we got the results we needed. Today was a good first step, but we're not satisfied yet.

With your continued support and advocacy, we will continue this fight for better service and peak one seat rides — because that’s what Westfield deserves. And if you watched the live-stream, you heard the Congressmen say it too:

“The most important measure we need is adding peak service for the 23,000 commuters who use the Raritan Valley Line. I am not going to stop fighting, and I am not going to stop being in Governor Murphy’s face, until those morning and evening rush hour commuters get the benefit of this service as well. And it is only fair because we frankly have more riders than a lot of other NJ Transit Lines that have many trains going directly to NYC today.”

Thanks to Governor Phil Murphy, Congressman Tom Malinowski, the 32 bi-partisan Mayors of the Raritan Valley Line Mayors for their support and persistence, and everyone who showed up at our rallies, signed petitions and called our legislators.

Thanks also to those that played a big role behind the scenes for the RVL Mayors, including volunteers Rupal Obaray, and former NJT Associate Executive Director and Westfield resident Martin Robbins; to those that have continued to advocate since the early days when the RVRC was founded, including former Westfield Mayor Tom Jardim, Kathleen Miller Prunty, and former Somerset Freeholder Peter Palmer; and to the current RVRC leadership including Union County Freeholder Chair BJ Kowalski, and former Freeholder Bruce Bergin. #letsdothis



