



In brief: Commuters can now see if trains, buses are delayed, canceled



Commuters can now check NJ Transit's performance and causes for delays online. ERIN ROLL/STAFF

As promised in August at the Bay Street Station, NJ Transit has launched its online dashboard, which will report on-schedule performance, mechanical reliability and the causes for delays and cancellations.

On Aug. 19, Governor Phil Murphy announced the new mechanism, created by executive order, that is expected to improve service and transparency of the agency.

The dashboard displays data from January 2017 through October 2019 for Rail operations, as well as current data for Bus, Light Rail and Access Link, and will be updated each month with data for the previous month's service.

"Since day one, we promised NJ Transit service improvements for the countless New Jerseyans who rely on it every day," said Governor Phil Murphy. "With the new 'Progress by the Numbers' dashboard, our commuters, members of the media, and the general public will be able to see key performance metrics that will be updated on a monthly basis, enhancing customer experience and rebuilding a once-storied mass transit agency."

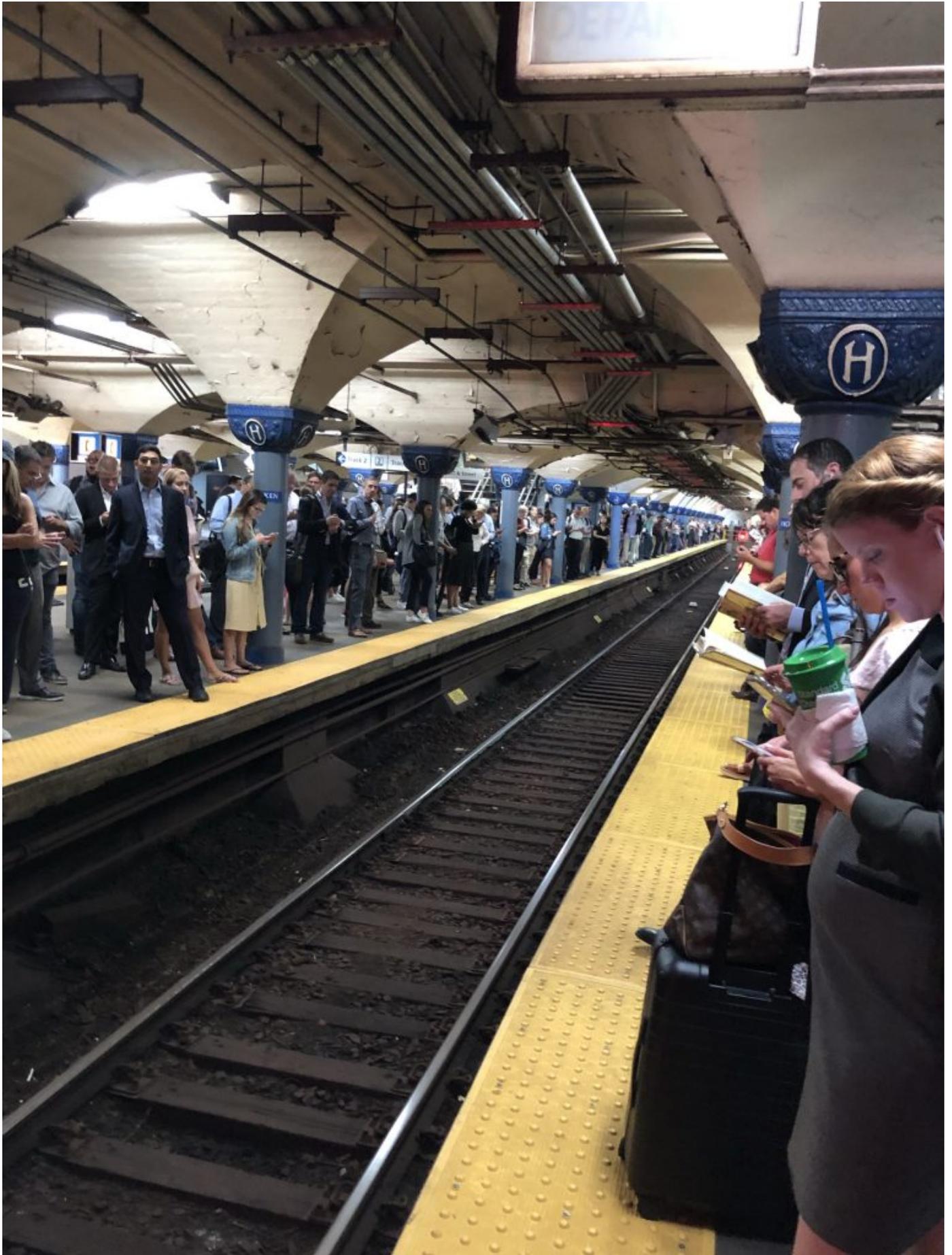
NJ Transit President and CEO Kevin Corbett the data site at njtransit.com/performance is easy to use and easy to understand.

Beginning now, the data includes:

- Total number of rail cancellations, including reasons such as manpower shortages, equipment or infrastructure issues, unpreventable external events such as weather or trespassers, and cancellations due to earlier delays;
- Rail on-time performance and mean distance between failure of the NJ TRANSIT rail systems;
- Bus, Light Rail and Access Link on-time performance;
- Bus and Light Rail mean distance between failure data; and
- Additional information determined important to NJ TRANSIT customers to gauge the company's performance.



Welcome to Montclair: Train drama: glad its over



By KIRSTEN LEVINGSTON

For Montclair Local



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As much as you love summer, this year Sept. 9 couldn’t get here fast enough. That’s the day the [NJ Transit](#) “service changes,” launched in mid-June, finally came to an end. And the day you realized how good you have it. For that period NJ Transit eliminated Montclair’s weekday midtown direct trains — the ones that carry rush hour commuters directly into NYC — so it could repair tracks. Instead of making a beeline to Penn Station trains carried commuters only part way, to Hoboken.

Once you arrived in Hoboken you picked your next adventure. For starters, when you stepped off the train a crowd of commuters moving in unison, briskly and purposefully, absorbed you. Like a living organism it pulsed forward, propelling you to a fork in the road where you chose how to continue the journey into the city: either as a mole person — traveling underground on the PATH train; or as a sailor, boarding a ferry to cross the Hudson. To avoid the remote possibility of contracting scurvy, you went for the PATH.

[READ: WELCOME TO MONTCLAIR; SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL?](#)

[READ: AS MONTCLAIR GROWS, SO DO ITS PARKING PROBLEMS](#)

As crowded as the Hoboken NJT platforms could be, at least they were out in the open with air, sun, and peeks of sky. Once you descended into the earth to access PATH trains your pupils dilated to take in the only light available — the glow of fluorescent tubes. Claustrophobics were not happy — the morning crowd rolled six and seven people deep from one end of the PATH platform to the other. Despite the efforts of a few whirring, but decrepit, fans hanging above, the only time the cavern's heavy air circulated was when trains pulling in and out of the station made it swirl. A dusty smell hovered. The cracked paint on the walls and pillars was shades of blue. You wonder whether that color was chosen to convey design or mood.

In the belly of the PATH you had to figure out which train would get you where you needed to go — the World Trade Center line with its downtown stops, or the 33rd Street line, the subterranean version of 6th Avenue. Selecting one of the four or five platforms upon which to stand was important, as each train line alternated from track to track. Standing in the wrong spot resulted in watching your train roll up on a platform across the way and you making a mad dash up stairs, over tracks, and back down again to board. Hard-to-find signage explained which train was next to arrive on which track, but you never quite figured out that system.

The most consequential decision you made when riding the PATH was predicting which doors on the train would open first. The setup was such that passengers boarded from both sides of the train. BUT, doors on one side of the train opened before the others, giving riders on that side a 3 or 4-second jump on grabbing a seat. During the morning rush if you were not on the early-open side you were out of luck. After a few rides into the city standing in a packed train car, you vowed to position yourself on the side where doors opened first, standing on the platform's narrow front end that could accommodate only a few people. Less competition that way.

While not quite a last chopper-out-of-Saigon scenario, as the train approached you could smell desperation rising in the musty air. Would there be room for you on the train? Would you get a seat? You'd flashback to childhood experiences of "musical chairs," when your heart raced in anticipation of that moment when the music stopped. Humming a revised version of that Chorus Line song — "God, I hope I get it, I hope I get it, How many people does [this train car hold]" — you'd watch as the PATH pulled closer, gradually reducing speed. By the end of the summer you'd figured where to stand to align with the doors when the train stopped. Like a 100-yard dasher, you had to anticipate the starter gun's pop. When the doors parted you did what you had to do as bodies darted, hip checks were thrown, and bags blocked seats before butts did. Once seated you glanced up as the train pulled away, seeing the forlorn faces of those who didn't make it, praying that you would not be them tomorrow.

As fall begins and this drama ends, you want to hold on to its most important lesson. The next time an NJT train is late or canceled, or Penn Station is hot and crowded, you'll still be grateful.

Montclair's direct train service is a gift.



Transit transparency: Monthly reports will tell you how your commute is going



Gov. Murphy signs Executive 80 at the Bay Street Train Station in Montclair on Aug. 19 which will require NJ Transit to release monthly reports on delays and cancellations. DEBORAH ANN TRIPOLD/ STAFF

BY JAIMIE JULIA WINTERS

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For commuters who depend on NJ Transit to get them in and out of the city every weekday, they will soon know just how bad — or good — their commute actually is.

Governor Murphy was at Montclair's Bay Street Station Monday to announce that NJ Transit will become more transparent in letting commuters know how the agency is performing with delays and cancellations. Performance reports will be shared monthly on the agency's website beginning in October.

Murphy blamed the Christie administration's underfunding of NJ Transit for understaffing, and delays and cancellations experienced by the mass transit system's 144,475 weekday riders.

On a sweltering Monday afternoon, Murphy sat outside the Bay Street Station and signed Executive Order No. 80, requiring NJ Transit to release a monthly report of cancellations and delay numbers through the agency's website. The postings will also include reasons behind the delays and cancellations, whether due to manpower, trespassers, weather or mechanical failures.

This summer has brought yet another hassle for Montclair commuters. The typical commute for many NJ Transit riders here — a direct train to New York Penn Station through Bay Street Station — has been diverted to Hoboken to make connections, due to Amtrak repair work that took out two tracks at Penn Station. Direct service will resume in September.

"[The monthly release of numbers] will keep NJ Transit honest, focused and on task," Murphy said, giving NJ Transit credit for its "courage" for going live with the numbers. "The good, the bad and the ugly will now be available to the public," he said.

Increased transparency will not only hold NJ Transit accountable, Murphy contends, but will also show that the transportation agency is moving in the right direction.

From 2009 to 2016, NJ Transit experienced a 90 percent reduction in state operating subsidies, while it saw a 23 percent increase in ridership from 2002 to 2017. The results of those two opposing trends were fare increases, minimal capital investment, mechanical failures, safety concerns, loss of engineers and overall customer dissatisfaction.

NJ Transit officials said that since 1990, the agency has diverted \$7 billion that could have been invested in new rail cars — most of which are nearing 50 years old — as well as track upgrades and rail line extensions. NJ Transit was also federally mandated to install Positive Train Control technology beginning in December 2018, increasing costs.

"Improving communication with customers has been among the most important objectives in our efforts to improve NJ Transit performance, safety, and reliability," said Murphy.

NJ Transit is addressing infrastructure needs, badly needed capital projects, equipment availability and an

operator shortage, said president and CEO Kevin Corbett, acknowledging that they “still have a lot of ground to make up.” Five hundred new bus operators have been hired and 100 new engineers are expected to graduate in October, Corbett said.

In 2020, NJ Transit will be rolling out a five-year capital improvements plan, Murphy said.

Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg (D-37) said she would use Corbett’s speech as a checklist to follow up on improvements promised.

NJ Transit has bus routes in 386 municipalities and rail service in 116 towns.

The agreement will ensure that NJ Transit will be held accountable for administrations to come, said Transportation Commissioner and NJ Transit Board Chair Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti.

Montclair resident Devorah Serkin, who has experienced the diverted commute over the summer, said although public transportation is not perfect, she has hopes that it will improve.

“I am in no rush to go out and buy a car,” she said.



Some Montclair NJ Transit riders to be diverted to Hoboken beginning in June



*Amtrak announced that it would be closing several sections of track in Penn Station for repairs this summer.
PHOTO BY ERIN ROLL/STAFF*

Beginning June 17, NJ TRANSIT will be temporarily diverting select Midtown Direct rail service on the Montclair-Boonton Line (MOBO) to Hoboken, in order to accommodate vital Amtrak repair work that will take two tracks at Penn Station New York (PSNY) out of service. Other temporary service adjustments will include a limited number of Midtown Direct reverse-peak trains will operate from Hoboken. Work is expected to be done by Friday, Sept. 6. Regular weekday Midtown Direct service will resume on the Montclair-Boonton Line on Monday, Sept. 9.

NJ TRANSIT strongly advises customers to stay up to date during these service adjustments by visiting njtransit.com/inform. Customers may also download or update the latest version of the NJ TRANSIT mobile app and activate custom push notifications; sign up for My Transit alerts; monitor NJ TRANSIT's main Twitter handle ([@NJTRANSIT](https://twitter.com/NJTRANSIT)), as well as individual rail line Twitter accounts (below); and check the website at njtransit.com.

"We weighed every option in order to impact the least number of customers while maintaining as many peak period seats as possible," said NJ TRANSIT Executive Director Kevin Corbett. "These service adjustments are never easy, but the necessary renewal work that is being performed by Amtrak is vital to the reliability of the system, especially in and out PSNY, which is of immense importance for NJ TRANSIT and the region."

A.M. Peak Period PSNY Arrivals Diverted To Hoboken Arrivals:

- MOBO 6206, currently arrives at PSNY 7:40 a.m., will arrive at Hoboken 7:32 a.m. and be renumbered 206.
- MOBO 6210, currently arrives at PSNY 8:20 a.m., will arrive at Hoboken 8:09 a.m. and be renumbered 210.
- MOBO 6214, currently arrives at PSNY 8:59 a.m., will arrive at Hoboken 8:49 a.m. and be renumbered 214.
- MOBO 6216, currently arrives at PSNY at 9:50 a.m., will arrive at Hoboken 9:42 a.m. and be renumbered 218

P.M. Peak Period PSNY Departures Diverted To Hoboken Departures:

- MOBO 6263, currently departs PSNY at 4:52 p.m., will depart Hoboken 4:54 p.m. and be renumbered 263.
- MOBO 6273, currently departs PSNY at 5:31 p.m., will depart Hoboken 5:36 p.m. and be renumbered 273.
- MOBO 6279, currently departs PSNY at 6:10 p.m., will depart Hoboken 6:22 p.m. and be renumbered 279.
- MOBO 6283, currently departs PSNY at 6:41 p.m., will depart Hoboken 6:47 p.m. and be renumbered 283.

P.M. Peak Period PSNY Arrivals Directed to Hoboken Arrivals

MOBO 250, which currently departs MSU at 4:33 p.m. toward Hoboken, will depart at 3:41 p.m. and is renumbered as train 246. Customers have two alternative options:

- MOBO Midtown Direct 6248, departing MSU at 4:13 p.m. and arriving at PSNY at 5:08 p.m. Hoboken customers can transfer from Train 6248 to Train 430 at Newark Broad Street. Train 430 departs Newark Broad Street at 4:57 PM and arrives in Hoboken at 5:13 PM.
- MOBO Midtown Direct 6252, departing MSU at 5:07 p.m. and arriving at PSNY at 5:57 p.m. Hoboken customers can transfer from Train 6248 to Train 430 at Newark Broad Street. Train 432 departs Newark Broad Street at 5:56 PM and arrives in Hoboken at 6:13 p.m.

Bus Service

NJ TRANSIT bus service will be enhanced along three routes which travel along the Montclair-Boonton line to/from Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT) — Bus Route Nos. 324, 191 and 192 — to accommodate an anticipated increase in customer demand during the summer track work.

DeCamp bus service is another travel option, however DeCamp is NOT cross honoring NJ TRANSIT passes/tickets. A DeCamp bus ticket must be purchased.

Ticketing/Fares for Montclair-Boonton Line Customers

Montclair-Boonton Line fares will be adjusted to offset the cost of PATH or NY Waterway (NYWW) ferry travel options into New York City during June, July, August and September. This provides customers with the ability to choose the alternative travel option which best suits their commute to New York City. The adjusted fare amount will be based on the customer's origin and the destination stations on the Montclair-Boonton Line. For detailed fare information, please visit njtransit.com/inform.

PATH Option

Montclair-Boonton Line customers may purchase their PATH tickets at the large PATH Ticket Vending Machine in Hoboken Terminal or any one of the New York City PATH stations.

NY Waterway Ferry Option

Montclair-Boonton Line customers choosing to take ferry service into New York City during the summer may purchase a rail-ferry monthly combination pass at any of NJ TRANSIT's Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs), Ticket Offices or the MyTix feature on the mobile app. Customers who prefer to buy one-way ferry tickets can purchase them at an adjusted fare by displaying their valid Montclair-Boonton Line ticket at the designated ticket window located in Hoboken Terminal.

Sale Dates

- Montclair-Boonton monthly passes with the adjusted fares will be available for purchase beginning May 19 at 5 p.m.
- Weekly/One-Way/Round Trip/Ten-Trip/Reduced Fare tickets with the fare adjustment will be available for purchase beginning June 13.
- Adjusted Montclair-Boonton Line rail tickets and passes will be valid only for rail service on the Montclair-Boonton Line.

As a result of operating with fewer tracks in PSNY, some trains in/out of PSNY may be required to utilize shorter platforms and will be required to have fewer cars. To make maximum use of the limited track space at PSNY, some trains that currently operate with 10 cars will be reduced to 9 cars.