

# RESTO: Port Authority still on wrong track

Len Resto 9:48 a.m. EDT July 30, 2016



The decision by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to proceed with a new bus terminal in Manhattan, west of the existing terminal, is short-sighted at best. The Port Authority gave in to prominent state legislators not wanting any new bus terminal in Secaucus because, according to them, New Jersey residents want a one-seat ride to New York City.

Such thinking springs from those who do not have a daily ride there. Most daily riders who go to the current bus terminal already have a two- or three-seat ride to their ultimate job destinations. The change of seats happens to occur in Manhattan.

Bus riders living in New Jersey, for example, who work in the mid-60's on Madison Avenue in Manhattan will take their bus to the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Once off the bus, they must make a 7- to 10-minute walk to the Times Square subway complex and take the "R" train to 60th Street and Fifth Avenue or to Lexington Avenue, where they may transfer again to the 6 train to get them to 68th Street if they work on upper Madison Avenue. A three-seat ride. On a nice day, if riders want to get some exercise, they can take a nice 30-minute or brisk 20-minute walk. If we're talking a three-seat ride, why would it matter where the three seats are?

Even most of those working in the far East 40s will make the trek from the bus terminal to the 7 train for the ride to Grand Central Station and then use the Third Avenue-42nd Street exit for a two-seat ride, or even worse, trek to the M-42 bus stop for the usual 15- to 20-minute ride east in a "bus only" lane that, unlike 34th Street of late, is almost never enforced by traffic police.

[MORE: New York bus terminal gets thumbs up from New Jersey \(/story/news/local/new-jersey/2016/03/25/new-york-bus-terminal-gets-thumbs-nj/82249062/\)](#)

The Port Authority's overinflated \$10 billion plan (excluding an oculus) to construct a behemoth bus terminal farther west will lengthen the trip time for *all* New Jersey riders. The 7- to 10-minute walk to the Times Square Station complex will become a 15-to 18-minute walk. The 20- to 30-minute walk from the East 60s becomes a 30-to 45-minute walk.

The Port Authority also will tie up valuable real estate space, which could be collecting taxes for the state and city of New York, to stores buses for use in the evening or morning rush hour. Apparently, New York has either agreed to give up revenue to become a parking lot for New Jersey buses, or, buses will be sent back to New Jersey for storage as is the current practice. Hundreds of buses are deadheaded each day back to parking lots in New Jersey and then returned to the Port Authority Bus Terminal for the evening rush hours home. That certainly doesn't help mitigate traffic in the Lincoln Tunnel area, nor air quality for the region's citizenry.

Port Authority Commissioner Scott H. Rechler's opposing view of a regional solution was 100 percent spot on. With a modern economy, the upcoming construction of the "Gateway Project" the replacement of Portal Bridge and the overhaul of New York Penn Station, we needed to think of these projects in their entirety, not as separate interests. We needed to think of them as part of a complete transportation network and not in silos, (e.g. rail, bus, ferry, light rail, etc.). A larger, higher-capacity bus terminal will hold more buses; however, how do you get more buses through the Lincoln Tunnel? The answer is very simple: you won't. The express bus lane is already at 115 percent of capacity. With more and more millennials forsaking a driver's license, bus passenger loads will only increase, introducing additional queue time and delay.

[EDITORIAL: Move ahead with new terminal \(/story/opinion/editorials/2016/07/25/port-authority-bus-terminal/87543272/\)](#)

When you ask riders if they would rather have a one-seat ride or a quicker commute, the answer in more than 90 percent of cases is for the quickest route. Time is money; seats are seats. Before MidTown Direct allowed NJ Transit's Morris & Essex Line trains direct access into New York's Penn Station, daily riders made the trek to Hoboken and transferred to PATH. No one complained about the two-seat ride. Yes, the one seat is better because it essentially goes to the same place PATH would bring them. But, it isn't the "one-seat" ride that makes them happier. It's the fact that it gets them there faster on most days. It's the quicker commute, not the fewer number of seats that riders want.

Rechler's view of a bus terminal in Secaucus could have worked if New York and New Jersey, with the help of the MTA, came together to extend the 7 subway line from its current Hudson Yards terminus to Secaucus. Instead of switching to subways in New York City, passengers would switch in Secaucus and for many the three-seat ride would have become a two-seat ride because the "7" can get them to both Times Square and Grand Central —

the East Side of Manhattan, where most work.

The 7 subway to Secaucus could make the trip in about 20 to 25 minutes, which on almost every day right now is less time than it requires the caravan of buses to traverse the distance from the current bus terminal to Exit 16E on the New Jersey Turnpike using I-495 and the Lincoln Tunnel. New Jersey political leaders, whom I surmise do not use our transit systems on a daily basis as I do, should have polled and spoken with die-hard daily commuters before claiming to represent the “wishes of their constituents.”

[SWEENEY: Don't stall on new bus terminal \(/story/opinion/columnists/2016/03/22/port-authority-bus-terminal/82129750/\)](/story/opinion/columnists/2016/03/22/port-authority-bus-terminal/82129750/)

Rechler's idea was not to have riders switch to NJ Transit trains for a ride to New York Penn Station. He was seeking a regional solution. A \$10 billion concrete monolith is not a regional solution. Unwittingly, our legislators have just made the New York daily trip to work and back home worse than it is today.

Wait until one of the current Hudson River tunnels has to be shut down for desperately needed repairs. What we needed was a mindset that, like it or not, New Jersey and New York are inexorably linked. Our legislators needed to give us “out of the box” solutions for today's issues. They've managed to solve a 21st century problem with a failed early 20th-century solution at an unbelievable price tag.

If our legislators want to truly help our daily riders, they can start by substantially increasing the funding for NJ Transit and other modes of transportation so we can have modern equipment and can keep infrastructure in a state of good repair, all while taking New Jersey off the “most expensive transit fares in the country” list. They can also ask the Port Authority to reconsider the bus terminal decision. We urge them to.

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