New Jersey Transit Rail Stoppage Forum  
February 18, 2016  
Summary of Key Points

The goal of the New Jersey Transit Rail Stoppage forum was to discuss the potential risk of a rail stoppage, the impacts such as transportation disruption would have on the metropolitan area, and to identify strategies and measures that organizations can adopt to mitigate potential impacts.

The panelists that participated in the forum were:

- **Ray Burney**, Labor Management Expert, Former Senior VP Administration, Metro-North Railroad
- **Paul Wyckoff**, Chief of Government and External Affairs, NJ Transit  
- **Robert Fucito**, Vice Chair, Executive Board, Contingency Planning Exchange (CPE) / Executive Director, Global Head of Resiliency, JP Morgan Chase  
- **David Garland**, Board of Directors, Association of Contingency Planners (ACP) NY Metro/ Director, Disaster Recovery & Regulatory Compliance, BCM, CME Group

**Ray Burney** set the context for the discussion from a labor relations perspective, highlighting the following points:

- NJ transit and the coalition of unions have engaged in a bargaining process for several years which ends on March 13.
- If parties cannot reach a resolution, they are entitled to lock doors and tell employees to not come to work and they could strike.
- In 1983 New Jersey Transit had a 4-6 week strike.
- Since then there haven’t been long strikes in the northeast.
- Based on past experiences the following could happen:
  - They may extend the period for negotiations
  - If they strike they may shut down the whole system
  - They may choose to have smaller targeted strikes, like a line or a station for several hours
  - So there is a range of actions they could take and it’s impossible to predict at this point what they may do.
- Sympathy strikes are very unlikely to take place since other regional rail services have agreements in their contracts that do not support this type of action.
- At NJ Transit only passenger and commuter rail employees are part of the current negotiation process and other transit services like bus and light rail are not part of it and would not be affected.
- A resolution would be likely to happen right on the cusp of that date.
Paul Wyckoff provided background information about the magnitude and importance of New Jersey Transit services and discussed the ways the agency is preparing to address potential impacts. He summarized New Jersey Transit services as follows:

- About 200,000 people use NJ Transit to travel to New York City every day with matching outbound trips
- About 60% of these trips happen in the 4 hour morning and evening peaks (6-10 a.m. and 4-8 p.m.)
- About 90,000 travel by rail to Penn Station New York
- About 18,000 commuters take NJ Transit rail to Newark or Hoboken and get on PATH to travel into NYC
- About 84,000 people travel by bus service to the Port Authority Bus Terminal
- About 5,000 people reverse commute from NYC to NJ every day
- Based on these figures, a rail stoppage would leave more than 100,000 customers and rail users without their typical daily travel transit option of choice

NJ Transit has been conducting contingency planning for some time and will provide alternative transportation options as feasible in the event of a rail stoppage. Important points to consider include:

- Specific information about additional service would be announced in the next couple of weeks
- Adding bus service cannot compensate completely for rail services since we are limited by infrastructure capacity – there are limited ways to cross the Hudson River and travel between New Jersey and Manhattan
- A rail stoppage would affect other commuters significantly due to extreme congestion on the roads and other indirect factors
- NJ Transit has been working with other agencies to plan for a potential strike and mitigate the impacts
- NJ Transit does not have the resources to completely make up for rail commuters with buses
- NJ Transit has not had a strike since 1983 so there is little experience among NJ commuters about what do during a transit strike
- It is important to stress mitigation measures such as allowing employees to work from home, implementing flexible hours and promoting car-pooling
- NJ Transit bus drivers would not be affected by a rail strike
- It is important to communicate with employees and the general public that if there is a NJ Transit rail strike, resuming full service will take some period of time, depending on the duration of the strike, since there are regulatory actions that need to be taken before service can be resumed, including inspecting tracks, signals and other infrastructure
Robert Fucito provided a resiliency perspective from the private sector. Some key points from his discussion are:

- Based on the experience of the MTA strike in 2005 it is very important to understand the impacts to an organization starting with some demographic analyses
- Given that over 200,000 commuters rely on NJ Transit to get to NYC, over 100,000 people rely on NJ Transit rail, and an additional several thousand use NJ Transit to commute from NYC to NJ, a rail strike would have a significant impact on companies of all sizes
- It is important for a company to obtain information about how many members of its staff live in NJ or commute from NJ
- Companies that have emergency notification features may be able to use polling features to ask employees if they use NJ transit rail
- Once a company has assessed the number of employees affected and the department that are likely to be impacted, they can activate telecommuting, alternate sites and related measures
- Companies should also consult third party providers about how they might be affected and ask them if they will have difficulties providing services in the event of a NJ Jersey Transit rail strike
- During the MTA strike in 2005, private companies added buses and moved people to alternate sites. This is not likely to be of the same magnitude
- A company might have a lot of employees affected by a NJ Transit rail strike, but the impact on critical functions needs to be assessed and these functions may not be impacted as much when they are examined in detail
- Companies may want to secure hotel rooms in advance for critical functions

David Garland also discussed measures the private sector could take to mitigate the impacts of a potential NJ Transit rail stoppage. Some key points from his discussion include:

- In order to implement valid plans a company needs to know who will be affected
- No matter what plans a company puts in place, communication with employees is key
- Commuters may not know what to expect since there hasn’t been a strike since 1983
- Everyone should expect longer commutes even if they do not use NJ Transit rail services since there will be added road congestion and bus congestion
- It’s a luxury to have several weeks to plan for this and this allows companies to make plans like adding buses and routes
- The same is true of identifying and establishing alternative work sites for companies that may not have them in place
- Working from home is practical for some employees but not for everybody
- The equipment that employees will need to work from home should be available and tested to ensure they have what they need so that it can be a real substitute
• Flexible work hours can also be implemented for some employees, for example 11 AM to 7 PM, in order to avoid street congestion for people that travel by car, etc.

Additional takeaway points from the discussion that followed the panelist presentations:

• Ferries will be an important alternative for some commuters and can carry significantly more people, but for some it may be difficult to get to the ferries
• PATH is pretty full during peak hours so it may not be able to carry that many more commuters
• During the MTA strike in 2005 there were policies implemented by NYC regarding high occupancy vehicles and lane use so it will be interesting to see how the NYC responds in terms of traffic control and this policy aspect will impact how companies provide direction and guidance to employees
• NJ Transit is coordinating with and working with NYC and State DOTs, NJ Turnpike Authority, PANYNJ, etc. in terms of policy responses
• NJ Transit Light Rail services will not be affected, in fact these services would be enhanced in the event of a strike, although there is limited capacity that can be added to those systems
• In the event of a strike Metro-North trains will not be able to use NJ Transit rail tracks and Metro-North is currently analyzing how to make provisions for those customers
• Attempt to reach out to private bus drivers/services? Yes, this issue is being looked at. More details
• NJ Transit will provide updated information on social media and more detailed information about schedules and alternate services through its web site: http://www.njtransit.com/hp/hp_servlet.srv?hdnPageAction=HomePageTo
• In the event of a strike we would expect pickets at major hubs and rail stations and parking spaces
• Vendors can sometimes provide/function as an alternative site/facility and this is worth exploring

Next Steps

The Metropolitan Resilience Network (MRN) will continue to follow this topic and facilitate information exchange and preparedness in the coming weeks through the following actions:

• A Dedicated Transit Status Dashboard on our Metro-Ops Situational Awareness Platform (including both appropriate data feeds - Twitter, RSS, etc. - as well as any resource documents that can inform effective planning and decision making)
• Future Web Forums as / if needed
• An informal Working Group to identify key issues going forward and if need be take joint action on common concerns
• Ongoing information sharing and dissemination and other activities as appropriate

Additional Resources:

• Port Authority of New York and New Jersey: http://www.panynj.gov/
• Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA): http://www.mta.info/
  o Metro-North Railroad/MTA: http://www.mta.info/mnr
  o Long Island Railroad/MTA: http://www.mta.info/lirr
• Amtrak: https://www.amtrak.com/service-alerts-and-notices
• New York City Emergency Management: http://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/index.page
• Association of Contingency Planners (ACP) / NYC Metro Chapter: http://nycmetro.acp-international.com/
• Contingency Planning Exchange / New York Chapter: http://cpeworld.org/about-cpe/chapters/new-york-chapter.html
• International Center for Enterprise Preparedness (InterCEP): http://www.intercep.nyu.edu/