

This rebuttal of criticisms from various heavy rail ARC advocates was prepared by Joe Versaggi, who is also on the Council of Representatives of the National Association of Railroad Passengers from New Jersey and a veteran user of the region's rail, subway, and bus lines.

MYTH: This is a diversion from what rail passengers want & need.

FACT:

A logically incorrect statement since the ARC project is dead and you cannot be diverted from something that doesn't exist. There is no one in any position of authority at either FTA or NJ-DOT willing to modify the ARC project in order to proceed with it. Furthermore, Amtrak has removed its HSR plan from ARC re-negotiations.

Passengers want more capacity and less congestion. That is what Subway-to-Secaucus provides, removing people from congested facilities of New York Penn Station (NYPS) and Times Square, while rerouting them on their way across 42nd Street.

MYTH: You'd have to build more tracks for Midtown Direct.

FACT:

For NJT, it would be "BAU" (Business as Usual). MDT would continue via Swift Interlocking as now.

MYTH: A major overbuild of Secaucus Station is required plus you'll mess up Amtrak trains by using the center tracks for train turns or have to add more tracks to Secaucus to avoid that, since you'll still only have two tracks east of Secaucus.

FACT:

Repeat: "BAU" for NJT on the upper level with no trains terminating there. Furthermore, on the lower level, the Bergen and Main Line trains can be consolidated onto the Main Line platform, while the Bergen Line platform can be turned over to the #7 as its terminus. This proposal is officially silent on Portal Bridge, though we think that troublesome PRR relic has got to be replaced.

MYTH: Other station improvements required: for large transfer volumes, costly major improvements to Grand Central Station, Times Square Station and Fifth Avenue Stations on the #7 line will also be required.

Similar MYTH: The #7 is already a heavily used subway line and cars are crowded all day.

FACT:

The "large transfer volumes" is nothing new as many New Jersey commuters are already riding the #7 having come from NYPS and PABT. That myth could also apply to subway lines that should never be routed between Brooklyn on the one hand and The Bronx or Queens on the other, while some Manhattan station platforms have to absorb passengers from both directions.

Because the #7 would begin its run at Secaucus, NJT rail and bus passengers choosing (not requiring) to transfer at Secaucus could board an empty #7 train every 3 to 4 minutes, likely get a seat, and might be on precisely the same train they and the PABT bus passengers are now boarding at Times Square to reach Grand Central. This choice would also enable them to bypass both the congested NYPS and Times Square station facilities. They are the same IRT

cars that they now ride on the 7th Avenue subway, the #7 and the 42nd Street Shuttle. They also hold down all service on the Lexington Avenue subway, the heaviest used subway in the city.

MYTH: Forecasts of 85% more transfer to the “E” train at NYPS under a no-build option, while the northbound “E” train’s load factor is a comfortable 60%. If riders transfer to the #7 at Secaucus, many will now have to transfer twice, once rail-subway and one subway-subway.

FACT:

It does not matter if the “E” trains runs at 60% of capacity since the people barely fit on the 34th Street northbound platform as it is. But if people want to take the "E", they can keep doing so at NYPS. Nobody is throwing them off a NYPS-bound train at Secaucus. The Fifth Avenue station on the #7 is 11 short, city blocks south of the 5th Avenue/53rd station on the "E". Many working in the upper 40's would simply no longer bother with the “E” if coming from Secaucus. No "subway-subway" transfer is required.

But this is the pot calling the kettle black since ARC advocates have no plans to expand NYCT station facilities or service frequency even under the rosy scenario of 25 more NJT rains per hour.

MYTH: The NYC subway has no right to operate in New Jersey

FACT:

There is such a thing as legislation, or Metro North, a NY State-chartered public benefit corporation, would have no right to operate beyond Port Chester, NY to deep into Connecticut. We are not bound by institutionalism nor 17th century political boundaries. Precedent has been set by the TA's S89 bus operating to Bayonne.

MYTH: Subway-to-Secaucus would be an interstate operation and therefore be subject to FRA regulations.

FACT: Active, physical connections to an FRA-regulated railroad and historical precedent determine FRA involvement, not interstate operation.

WMATA and PATCO are interstate operations, even had or did have non-revenue physical connections with the “Class I’s”(as does the NYCT), yet were never FRA-regulated operations. PATH is due to its legacy of its predecessor the H&M Railway, as a subsidiary and sharing trackage with the Pennsylvania Railroad. The MTA’s Staten Island Railway, from B&O heritage, is subject to some FRA regulations but is now completely land-locked from other railroads.

MYTH: IRT cars are small and slow rendering this proposal unmarketable as a traffic generator, and would take at least 3 times as long as an NJT ride.

FACT:

A top speed of 50MPH on an IRT train verses 60MPH on a NJT train for 4 miles would result in negligible time difference. Between a Secaucus stop to the curve approaching the Bergen Portals, less than a mile, there is almost no opportunity to exceed 60 MPH, particularly with a long, heavy multi-level train. Not considered is the better acceleration / deceleration capabilities of an IRT train.

NJT between Secaucus and Penn Station takes about 10 minutes. To say that an 18% reduction in top speed would triple such trip times to 30 minutes defies 9th grade Algebra. The #7, as a local, through many sharp curves and severe grades, takes 30 minutes to go between Flushing and Grand Central, which is much farther than the distance between Times Square and Secaucus.

These are the same IRT cars that many ride between Penn Station (NYPS) and Grand Central (GCT). 7-car trains of identically-sized PATH cars carry twice the market share of NJT Rail on their two branches to Manhattan during each rush hour period, including many NJT riders transferring at Newark and Hoboken.

MYTH: Crowding on the subway will not permit bus ridership to switch to rail, which will worsen energy efficiency of rail.

FACT:

That ignores the fact that most of them get on crowded subway on the west side of Manhattan anyway, typically spend about 20 minutes on their feet between Penn Station and their office, a fact glossed over by the "one-seat-ride" consumer fraudulent sales pitch offered by ARC advocates. The energy inefficiency of a 296,000 pound dual-powered locomotive hauling 6 coaches, half empty much of the day, as is the case with most Montclair Midtown Direct trains, is hardly energy-efficient.

MYTH: This plan will keep rail use to a minimum with no room for increase whatever.

FACT:

The addition of 15 to 20 11-car IRT trains per hour means an added seated capacity of 7,500 to 10,000 passengers per hour, and a total capacity increase of 20,000 to 30,000 per hour, particularly with bus passengers intercepted at Secaucus Transfer & Lincoln Harbor. ARC Tunnels would not access the latter, nor leverage HBLRT, nor assist intra-Jersey commuting patterns.

MYTH: The Place for a subway connection is Penn Station where every subway line, except the Lexington is within a block.

FACT:

That is precisely the most hated portion of any rail passenger's journey. For those who have actually studied the market, the most important subway connections are the IRT 1,2,3 and the IND 53rd Street (E train) corridor. ARC Advocates fail to address the distribution of additional passengers offering no expansion in subway platforms at the two adjacent 34th Street stations. It is unfortunate that their thought process ends with the commuters train's journey in Manhattan.

Since 70% of NJT riders work within a 10-minute walking of GCT, the IRT is more important, but subjects them to an additional transfer at Times Square to either the Shuttle or the #7. This also renders the "one seat ride" claim a myth, and maintains bus share of market to be double that of rail. The "E" train's narrow 34th Street platform is accessed from only the south end, producing terrible pedestrian congestion problems. If one chooses to walk north through the mezzanine, then up to the platform, they also risk missing their train, or needlessly run upstairs when they hear a train only to find out it was a "C" train. The ARC Tunnel's 34th Street Station would also provide access to the "M" train on the 6th Avenue, but it only runs only 60% as often as the "E" during the rush, and not at all overnight or weekends. That means during the PM

rush, those rail passengers would be more likely to let multiple "E" trains go by and wait longer at the crowded and hot Lexington and Fifth Avenue stations for the "M".

MYTH: The constant offering of unworkable plans hurts individuals unaware of the "big picture"

FACT:

Subway-to-Secaucus plan is simple and workable. On the other hand, the ARC project is unaffordable and unworkable. Those who cannot grasp the following points are the ones who do not see the "big picture" and have confused that with the "big project":

- dependent entirely on expensive, complex dual-powered locomotives, still untested and unproven,
- the inability of the huge bus market to switch to rail due to station local municipal parking constraints. (Ramsey Park & Ride cannot handle it all),
- the willingness of bus passengers to switch to rail is totally unknown and not surveyed,
- it is insufficient to model Midtown Direct (MD) on very other line without specific market analysis. MD was 10 years ago, when there was still capacity to be had, and where there was poor private bus competition,
- the inability to analyze Manhattan employment destinations, while resorting to Chicago-like commuter railroad model of dumping everyone at the out of the way "Union" rail terminal, thinking nothing of the riders' experience who have to scatter onto local transit.

MYTH: MBTA, SEPTA, Amtrak, and MARC can pool orders as well to cut dual-powered locomotive development costs. Railway Age said AMT (Montreal) asked NJT to join with them on dual-mode locomotive development for a future commuter diesel branch leading through the Mount Royal Tunnel.

FACT:

Only AMT has indicated any intention to buy any such locomotives. Amtrak will order 70 electric units to replace their AEM-7 and HHP fleets, but no dual-powered locomotives are contemplated.

MYTH: MMC's inability to handle new technology is a patently false statement and a needless editorial comment. (MMC is NJT's Rail facility for maintenance)

FACT:

MMC has a long history of disliking and abusing EMU cars. The Arrow-I cars had 8 years of service before being placed into storage and converted to trailers. The Arrow-II cars had 20 years of service after giving erratic performance, were notorious for leaks, and were scrapped. The equivalent cars at SEPTA, the Silverliner III and IV, provide the backbone of their service today. The Arrow-III's were rebuilt, had a couple of episodes of wheels and underbody equipment falling off due to improper inspections, and need to have their center doors locked during inclement weather. They also suffered a botched rebuild due to poor design planning and process supervision by NJT.

MYTH: Growth in horsepower in freight locomotives can lead to development of dual-powered locomotive technology.

FACT:

Freight locomotives do not lead to the development of passenger engines, which are in

excess of 400,000 pounds, have reaches their metallurgic limits of 6 power-axles, are made for maximum traction in the 15-20 MPH range for heavy freight trains, and would make horrid passenger engines. NJT bought 10 lighter, 6-axle E-44 locomotives from Conrail in the 1980's, but never ran them as Amtrak would have limited them to 50MPH. Amtrak's past experience with non-track worthy E60's and SDP40F's were unmitigated disasters. Amtrak's recent HHP locomotive, based on a French freight engine, and LIRR's overweight Super Steel locomotives all have yaw-damper and reliability problems. MMC was also (rightfully) unimpressed with an inspection of a visiting LIRR 3rd rail dual-mode engine on its return journey from Altoona following a rebuilding after 6 years in service.

MYTH: "One seat ride" will dramatically increase the proportion passengers headed to Penn Station or 34th Street from the Raritan Valley Line (RVL).

FACT:

We are not having a contest to maximize that percentage, which is currently just 39%. The other 61% are important to, and we are doing nothing for them. Midtown Direct service from Montclair has an under-utilized Montclair State University Park & Ride station. No source of increased ridership has been identified for the RVL, except for phony Manhattan job growth expectations and that New Jerseyans will take 75% of it. Trans Bridge Lines buses from both the Doylestown and I-78 routes serve only west-of-Raritan riders. The 117 express bus is just 4 frequencies per rush period, runs along US22, which is quite some distance from the RVL, and would fill just one rail car. The 114 local tends to pick up Manhattan riders on the eastern portion of its route where it is also some distance from the RVL. That leaves only the 113, closely paralleling the eastern half of the RVL, but RVL stations have full parking lots, while bus-riders are more apt to walk-on and not use their cars. If they start to drive to the train rather than walk to take the bus, there is no environmental benefit.