

INSTITUTE FOR RATIONAL URBAN MOBILITY, INC.

George Haikalis
President

One Washington Square Village, Suite 5D
New York, NY 10012 212-475-3394
geo@irum.org www.irum.org

Statement at August 16, 2011 PANYNJ Public Hearing on Toll and Fare Hikes

The Institute for Rational Urban Mobility, Inc. (IRUM) is a NYC-based nonprofit research and education center concerned with reducing traffic congestion and improving the livability of dense urban areas.

IRUM calls on NJ Governor Chris Christie and NY Governor Andrew Cuomo to withhold approval of PANYNJ's proposed toll and fare hikes until this interstate transportation agency returns to its core mission to facilitate coordinated rail freight and passenger transport in the NY-NJ Port District. The PANYNJ Commissioners must first re-examine the key goals of this agency and then propose tolls, transit pricing strategies and operating assistance measures that *ease*, not *burden* interstate commerce in the Port District.

The current proposal presented by PANYNJ leadership does not offer a coherent approach to reducing motor vehicular congestion and pollution. Nor does it improve the economic viability of the metropolitan region in the face of growing worldwide competition. Instead, it simply proposes to tax stateline travelers and use the proceeds from these fees to fund separate, uncoordinated transportation investments, divided equally on a dollar-for-dollar basis between the two states. Furthermore, the legitimate state legislative bodies charged with the task of raising revenues, and allocating them are bypassed.

A more sensible approach would be for the PANYNJ to return to its original charter mandate, and develop and implement a coordinated plan for rail freight and passenger capital investments and operating strategies that would ease congestion and facilitate commerce. Such a plan would spell out short-term service improvements -- like increasing frequency of regional rail service, integrating fares and operating *through* regional trains between the states at Penn Station, where this infrastructure is already in place -- and longer term investment strategies -- like adding new regional rail capacity across the Hudson River and linking Penn Station with Grand Central, producing a truly world-class metropolitan railway system.

George Haikalis, President, IRUM