

NASSAU COUNTY  
BUS TRANSIT COMMITTEE

December 8, 2016

3:00 P.M.

BEFORE: SHELDON SHRENKEL, CHAIRMAN

1     A P P E A R A N C E S :

2             SHELDON SHRENKEL, CHAIRMAN

3             SAMUEL LITTMAN, ESQ.

4             LIVIO TONY ROSARIO

5             AARON WATKINS-LOPEZ

6             JACLENE D'AGOSTINO

7             JOEL BERSE

8             DAWN FALCO

9             JEAN DUROSEAU

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 MR. SHRENKEL: Good afternoon.

3 Thank you all for coming. Welcome to  
4 the Nassau County Bus Transit Committee  
5 Meeting. Today, we have a public  
6 hearing. We have two sessions. We  
7 have the afternoon session and we have  
8 an evening session which we anticipate  
9 should be starting by 6:00.

10 I would like to introduce our  
11 members. I'm Sheldon Shrenkel. I'm  
12 the chairman of the committee. To my  
13 far left, we have Mr. Aaron  
14 Watkins-Lopez. To my immediate left,  
15 Ms. Dawn Falco, my immediate right,  
16 Mr. Jean Duroseau, Mr. Tony Rosario,  
17 and our counsel to the committee,  
18 Mr. Sam Littman.

19 Please let the record state we are  
20 anticipating possibly two members who  
21 will be joining us who are running  
22 late, Mr. Joel Berse and Ms. Kathy  
23 Comerford.

24 By a show of hands, I would like  
25 an acknowledgment of receipt of the

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           minutes from our last meeting of  
3           September 22nd. The minutes were  
4           distributed on October 17th. Would  
5           everyone please raise their hand if  
6           they acknowledge they received a copy.

7           Please note the record of being  
8           unanimous. Every member present has  
9           received the minutes.

10           This afternoon, we're going to  
11           have a presentation of the CEO from  
12           NICE Transportation, Mr. Michael  
13           Setzer. After Mr. Setzer's  
14           presentation, we will allow the public  
15           to speak their mind with their  
16           comments; however, we limit those  
17           comments to three minutes, so please  
18           try to think your thoughts out before  
19           you come up to the podium, and be  
20           considerate that another person has to  
21           go next. Also, please understand that  
22           we do have a second public hearing this  
23           evening.

24           With that, I would like to welcome  
25           Mr. Setzer.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 MR. SETZER: Good afternoon,  
3 Mr. Chairman, members of the committee.  
4 Can you hear me all right?

5 MR. SHRENKEL: Yes, sir.

6 MR. SETZER: I've got a few slides  
7 to help set the stage for some  
8 decisions and for the public hearing.  
9 So with your permission, I will just  
10 jump right in.

11 So the agenda for this afternoon  
12 is to review the current funding  
13 environment, and that will take a look  
14 at what we can foresee today for next  
15 year's budget, the 2017 budget. I will  
16 make some recommendations and then I'll  
17 sit down and the public will provide  
18 their input on this.

19 So I would like to begin with the  
20 funding environment in which we operate  
21 today. Here's a bunch of headlines  
22 from various media, some local, some  
23 from around the country. The point of  
24 this is that the difficult funding  
25 situation that prevails in Nassau

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 County is not unique to Nassau County,  
3 and in fact, it's fairly common around  
4 the country.

5 Even in our sister counties,  
6 Suffolk and Westchester, local funding  
7 has been insufficient to maintain  
8 service. Suffolk County, as you  
9 probably know, reduced service  
10 significantly earlier this year and may  
11 do so again. Westchester County had a  
12 small service reduction in April of  
13 this year.

14 Going outside the New York Metro  
15 area, you would find similar situations  
16 in many places. Not every place, but  
17 in many places, the most dramatic of  
18 which is probably Washington, D.C.

19 Washington, D.C., they have cut  
20 bus routes already in a very  
21 significant way, 14 bus routes as you  
22 see in this one headline here. They're  
23 in the process of reducing nighttime  
24 train service, and mind you, this is  
25 the third largest transit system in the

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 United States. Only New York MTA and  
3 Los Angeles Metro are larger.

4 Similarity among these systems and  
5 the many others is that in every one of  
6 those cases, local funding comes from a  
7 general fund where it is in effect  
8 balanced off against other important  
9 things like public safety and public  
10 health, public education and so forth.  
11 And often times when that's the  
12 occasion, public transportation just  
13 doesn't have the same emergency feel to  
14 it, and public transportation ends up  
15 being the one where the cuts are the  
16 heaviest. That is the situation here  
17 in Nassau County.

18 As you're all aware, I'm sure,  
19 Nassau County has a fairly serious  
20 fiscal situation of its own, and in its  
21 interaction with Nassau Interim Finance  
22 Authority. Budgets going back and  
23 forth, cuts being made, and one of the  
24 victims of these cuts is public  
25 transportation. So that's the

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 environment in which we have this  
3 discussion.

4 I would like to remind you of a  
5 couple of things before we move into  
6 2017. One is that NICE Bus, by which I  
7 mean the partnership between Nassau  
8 County and Transdev has done a great  
9 job so far of making what dollars the  
10 county does have available go as far as  
11 possible.

12 The chart that you're looking at  
13 is a chart that was prepared by Nassau  
14 County OMB. It's not our chart, it's  
15 their chart. The blue column  
16 represents the operating budget for  
17 NICE bus. The orange column is the  
18 hypothetical Long Island Bus budget if  
19 Long Island Bus were still doing it.

20 If they ran exactly the same  
21 service at their costs, it would be  
22 that much higher. So for instance in  
23 2015, on the right side, you see  
24 there's a 43.5 half million dollar  
25 difference between the cost of NICE Bus

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 doing this and the hypothetical cost of  
3 doing it the way it was done before.

4 Now, Nassau County didn't have  
5 that 43.5 million dollars to spend. So  
6 the difference between the blue column  
7 and the orange column is the service  
8 that would already be gone except for  
9 the partnership between Nassau County  
10 and Transdev.

11 Here it is on a per hour basis.  
12 You have seen this before, per platform  
13 hour. Again, the blue is the cost of  
14 NICE Bus operating one hour of fixed  
15 route service, and the orange is the  
16 differential if it were operated with  
17 the old cost structure.

18 So if you go to 2015, there's 40  
19 something dollars there. Again, Nassau  
20 County didn't have that 40 dollars to  
21 spend in 2015, so that really represents  
22 service that wouldn't be on the street  
23 at all today except for the NICE Bus  
24 low cost approach.

25 I want to do one more comparison,

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           and that's with another similar  
3           operator. That's with the Bee Line,  
4           which is Westchester County's service,  
5           which is also a partnership between the  
6           county and a private operator, and  
7           they're looking at it on a per mile, or  
8           per hour or per passenger basis. You  
9           see a 15, 20 percent difference in the  
10          cost.

11                 So for all of the challenges that  
12          we face and the one very difficult  
13          decisions we're about to discuss, be  
14          mindful that you still have the most  
15          efficient operation in the metro area,  
16          one that has preserved the county's  
17          dollars and preserved the county's  
18          service as long as possible.

19                 One more thing, just to remind  
20          you, five years ago, six years ago,  
21          this is the math that the MTA published  
22          after demanding an additional  
23          \$26 million from Nassau County. The  
24          demand was rejected by the county  
25          because I presume they didn't have the

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           money, and their response was -- the  
3           MTA's response was to remove all of the  
4           lines that are shown here in red; in  
5           other words, to take about half of the  
6           transit map away altogether.

7           So again, as difficult as this  
8           situation is, it would have been much  
9           worse, much earlier, except for the way  
10          we have approached this.

11          Let's move ahead and look at what  
12          we can reasonably foresee for 2017.  
13          Mind you, the budget process. Our  
14          fiscal year actually starts January 1st.  
15          We bring to you a budget recommendation  
16          in the middle of February, and you act  
17          on that by the end of March, and the  
18          purpose of that sort of lagging was  
19          to have better information when you  
20          actually are asked to make a budget  
21          decision.

22          This year, that timing is  
23          particularly problematic, and I hope  
24          you'll see why in just a moment here.  
25          I also want to remind you of the -- we

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 look at this slide every year, the  
3 balance budget mandate. The language  
4 in the contract, which is also in the  
5 public law under which the contract was  
6 adopted says, in effect, that after all  
7 revenues have been accounted for, we  
8 must reduce -- we must adjust the hours  
9 of service to meet that revenue.

10 We have no way to deficit finance  
11 and operation. We have no way to  
12 borrow, no way to operate service other  
13 than that provided by the revenue that  
14 the county has available. So that's  
15 what always leads us to this situation.

16 Right now, best information that  
17 we have, is that there's about a  
18 \$12 million difference between the cost  
19 of operating the current service, the  
20 service that's on the street today, and  
21 the revenues available to Nassau County  
22 in 2017.

23 I'll detail this for you in just a  
24 minute, but basically the components of  
25 that \$12 million gap are that our costs

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           will go up by about three and a half  
3           percent or \$5 million dollars next year,  
4           and I will show you what the components  
5           of that are.

6           At the same time, operating  
7           revenues will fall by about \$7 million.  
8           5 million and 7 million is 12 million.  
9           Cost going up, revenue going down,  
10          something has to give. These are  
11          estimates based on what we know now.  
12          It's conceivable that the situation  
13          could get worse.

14          This 12 million is an early  
15          forecast. Maybe it's really 11 and a  
16          half million or maybe it's really 13  
17          million, but 12 million is a good  
18          number to work with right now based on  
19          the information we have available to  
20          us.

21          It could fall a little bit more,  
22          and you'll see why in a minute, and  
23          major unknowns remain as we meet today,  
24          both on the revenue and the expense  
25          side, and let me show you those in just

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 a second here.

3 Expenses are rising next year  
4 primarily because of people cost. As  
5 we discuss every year, our business is  
6 about two-thirds people cost, wages  
7 salaries and fringes. I'm assuming  
8 they'll go up next year.

9 We have a labor contract that  
10 expires in the middle of April, and so  
11 we haven't begun to negotiate it, but  
12 I'm assuming it's not go going to  
13 reduce our labor costs.

14 There are some non-personnel  
15 costs, fuel would be one of them, which  
16 will probably go up next year. Not  
17 that fuel isn't still a really good  
18 bargain compared to historical rates,  
19 but it's not quite the bargain that it  
20 was this year. The cost locked in this  
21 year is simply not available for next  
22 year, so there will be some creeping up  
23 there.

24 The third component may be a  
25 little bit of a surprise. If you

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 recall, at the beginning of 2016, we  
3 reduced a bunch of service for similar  
4 reasons, and then the county found  
5 another 3 million and said we'll  
6 reinstate that service.

7 So we reinstated some services in  
8 April, the bulk of it June and some of  
9 it in September. So we got less than  
10 12 months expense for those services.  
11 Going forward to next year, if we  
12 maintain all those services, that would  
13 add about another million dollars to  
14 the budgets just because we're running  
15 it for the entire year.

16 So again, the \$12 million is the  
17 difference between what's available and  
18 what it would cost to keep service  
19 exactly as it is today for another 12  
20 months. The big challenge or the big  
21 change is on the revenue side.

22 So if you allow me to just touch  
23 on each one of these lines very  
24 briefly. The top line, of course, is  
25 the big one. That's state operating

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           assistance, \$66 million. My  
3           assumption going -- I think you  
4           should -- you may want to just consider  
5           these reasonable assumptions as we go  
6           along here, and these are assumptions.  
7           This is an estimate. We don't have  
8           this data yet.

9           The assumption is that for 2017,  
10          we should not count on more than we got  
11          this year, and the reason for that is  
12          this year, we got the same amount as  
13          last year. The political dynamics are  
14          about the same, no better in Nassau  
15          County's favor.

16          So I think it would be quite  
17          optimistic to assume a significant  
18          increase in state operating assistance.  
19          We'll keep working at it, we'll keep  
20          looking for it, and perhaps there will  
21          be some additional state assistance for  
22          this coming year, but it's not going to  
23          be 12 million or 6 million. It might  
24          be a million or 2 if you're an  
25          optimist.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 The best year that we ever had as  
3 far as increase in state operating  
4 assistance was 5 million, and that was  
5 the year that the committee was chaired  
6 by the senator from Nassau County.  
7 That's not the case anymore. So for us  
8 to think that this will solve our  
9 problem is extremely optimistic.

10 The second line is the local match  
11 that the county must provide in order  
12 to get that 66 million. So I assume  
13 that's not going to go down, but I also  
14 assume that it's not likely to go up  
15 since the current -- well, let me go to  
16 the next line.

17 The next line is the one where the  
18 big change is. In addition to the  
19 minimum local share that the county  
20 provides every year -- during 2016, the  
21 county provided almost \$6.8 million in  
22 discretionary county funding.

23 When the county passed its budget  
24 in October, that went down by  
25 3 million, and earlier this week and

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 back and forth between the county and  
3 NIFA, where NIFA demanded more cuts, an  
4 additional 3.8 million for a total of  
5 6.8 million came out of the budget.

6 Now, that hasn't been approved  
7 yet. NIFA still has to act on that  
8 budget, but considering that history,  
9 it's very unlikely that NIFA is going  
10 to demand that they put money back into  
11 the budget.

12 So again, my assumption here is  
13 that that zero is probably going to  
14 stand. I would be happy to find out  
15 that it's not, but in my view, that's  
16 the reasonable assumption right now.

17 Next few lines are a lot less  
18 important. The federal money is by  
19 formula. That's a pretty safe  
20 assumption. The matches for the  
21 federal money are small and by formula.

22 Passenger revenue is the other one  
23 where we could see some change. As you  
24 probably know, the MTA is currently  
25 holding hearings about raising its

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           fare. Our custom here, though we're  
3           not obligated to, but our custom has  
4           been to follow whatever the MTA does  
5           with MetroCard rates, and so once the  
6           MTA's decision is known to us, we'll  
7           bring to you some recommendation about  
8           that. Again, it's conceivable that  
9           there could be a little bit of an  
10          increase here.

11                 The two increases that the MTA is  
12                 currently considering, however, would  
13                 produce about a million dollars at the  
14                 very best, and maybe less, depending on  
15                 which one they adopt and how they  
16                 implement it.

17                 So that million would be very  
18                 welcome, but it's still well short of  
19                 the \$12 million gap. The last line is  
20                 advertising revenue also, very small  
21                 amount not likely to increase in any  
22                 significant way.

23                 So that's the revenue picture, and  
24                 that's really the reason combined with  
25                 the growth in costs that we're looking

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 at a \$12 million gap for next year.

3 The unknowns, the big unknowns,  
4 one of them, the first one, you're used  
5 to because every year it's like this  
6 the STOA amount for Nassau County,  
7 State Transportation Operating  
8 Assistance for Nassau County is  
9 developed in Albany as part of the  
10 state's budget process.

11 We typically don't have any idea  
12 what it will be until the very end of  
13 March when the state legislature adopts  
14 a budget. I don't know any reason to  
15 think it will be known any sooner than  
16 that this year.

17 So that unknown we're accustomed  
18 to, but in addition to that we have  
19 the MTA fare change that I just talked  
20 about which we see every year, and so  
21 we're sort of accustomed to that. But  
22 two other brand new things, one, that  
23 there's a new -- will be a new labor  
24 contract in April or sometime  
25 thereafter, and that is completely

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 unknown at this point. We have not  
3 begun to negotiate it.

4 It will probably add a significant  
5 impact on the expense side which is  
6 unknown right now, but I've assumed in  
7 the rising expense of \$5 million that  
8 I've talked about before. I've assumed  
9 some increase in labor rates and I  
10 really don't want to get into detail  
11 because that's a number to be  
12 determined at the bargaining table, not  
13 here.

14 Then lastly, we do not have an  
15 approved Nassau County budget at this  
16 point. Ordinarily there's a budget  
17 approved in October, and that's -- so  
18 this is another unknown that we're not  
19 accustomed to looking at right now.  
20 The combination of those four creates a  
21 very un-clear picture for right now.

22 So if we have an unbalanced  
23 budget, we really have only three kinds  
24 of tools. One is to increase revenues  
25 as we just discussed. The second is to

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 look for non-service costs, and we will  
3 do that when we look for a non-budget  
4 recommendation in February.

5 We will look for every way we can  
6 to reduce non-service costs, and if we  
7 do some service reductions, it's  
8 possible that we'll have a very large  
9 reduction in the neighborhood of a  
10 million and a half from being able to  
11 consolidate operations into fewer  
12 facilities.

13 The last thing we can go to if the  
14 first two lines don't solve the nine  
15 budget, the last thing we must do  
16 according to contract and according to  
17 law is go to the service loss. We have  
18 to reduce service. I believe that will  
19 be the case this year.

20 So we are about to make a  
21 recommendation to you to approve today  
22 the elimination of nine low ridership  
23 routes in January. That's the only  
24 action, the only which we're asking for  
25 the committee to take action. But I

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           want you to be aware of the rest of the  
3           overall environment, in the absence of  
4           some more relief from some source  
5           between now and the budget  
6           recommendation, that we have to  
7           consider further reductions in April.

8           Not recommending them to you today  
9           and I'm not asking you to act on them  
10          today, but I think it's only fair to be  
11          aware that that's the possibility out  
12          there.

13          Those reductions would be much  
14          more significant than the January ones,  
15          and they would call into question the  
16          Able-Ride service area and how much  
17          Able-Ride service we would provide  
18          also. Again, no need to make that  
19          decision today, but that decision could  
20          be before you in another six or  
21          eight weeks.

22          I do want to remind you in  
23          thinking it's reasonable to say,  
24          listen, since we don't know so many  
25          things, why don't we wait until we do

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2           know those things before doing anything  
3           drastic. And if the gap were smaller, I  
4           would be very much in favor of that and  
5           be recommending that, but given the  
6           size of the gap and the unlikelihood  
7           that it's going to be taken care of by  
8           somebody else, I want to begin early  
9           with some prudent actions, because if we  
10          can reduce some non-performing routes  
11          now, then we get 12 months worth of  
12          savings out of it.

13                 If we wait until we know  
14          everything, it's mid-April. There's a  
15          process to reduce service. It's not  
16          instant, so mid-year before we can do  
17          any reductions, and that means going  
18          twice as deep in order to get the same  
19          amount of savings once we get out of  
20          January reductions.

21                 These are the routes that we would  
22          recommend eliminating in January.  
23          These, we would eliminate in their  
24          entirety. Most of these are the routes  
25          that were eliminated at the beginning

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2           of the this year and then reinstated  
3           after the county came up with some  
4           additional funding.

5           I am certain that there are people  
6           saying don't you realize how silly this  
7           is. You take them away, you put them  
8           back and then you take them away again,  
9           and I get that. It does seem silly or  
10          foolish, but understand, that the  
11          reason they were eliminated at the  
12          beginning of January is that they were  
13          poorest performing routes, meaning they  
14          serve the fewest people, meaning they  
15          require the greatest tax subsidy.

16          When we put them back during the  
17          year, all of the customers didn't come  
18          back just as you would expect. So  
19          those previously poor performing routes  
20          are now even poorer performers  
21          financially. Some of them are doing  
22          quite well in terms of -- remember, we  
23          did these with some -- some of them, we  
24          did with small buses and some different  
25          styles of operating. They actually

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 worked very well, and for the people  
3 that are using them, they're very --  
4 the customers are very pleased with  
5 them. I would love to be able to let  
6 them grow some more, to leave them in  
7 place, but given the financial  
8 situation, I don't think that's  
9 sustainable.

10 If you go over to the right side,  
11 there's a column that says passengers  
12 per day. So you can see all of these  
13 are fairly small routes in terms of the  
14 number of people they serve.

15 Then the last column is subsidy  
16 per passenger. That's how many tax  
17 dollars are going into each one. So if  
18 you just read across that first line,  
19 the Elmont FLEXI, 150 passengers per  
20 day. That's probably 75 individuals  
21 taking round trips or something like  
22 that.

23 So that means for each 150 trips  
24 taken a day, a person puts their  
25 MetroCard in and pays \$2.75 or maybe a

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           discounted amount, and the taxer payers  
3           150 times a day put in \$24.72. That's  
4           about \$3,600 per day tax dollars going  
5           to this.

6           Now, for those 75 folks, this is  
7           great service and they will miss this  
8           service a lot if we eliminate it, but  
9           given the scarcity of tax dollars,  
10          \$3600 a day in order to maintain  
11          something for 75 people just isn't  
12          sustainable, I don't think. I wish it  
13          were, but I don't think it is. That's  
14          a policy decision of course, but those  
15          are the basic economics of this.

16          Read down that column a little  
17          further, Freeport shuttle, almost \$37 a  
18          day times 35 trips. Again, great  
19          service for those 20 or so people who  
20          use it, but very, very expensive and a  
21          very inefficient use of taxpayer  
22          money.

23          Much more troublesome than the  
24          January cuts are these -- this  
25          potential service reduction package

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2           that we have designed for April. So  
3           the first five routes would be -- if we  
4           use this approach, those first five  
5           routes would be eliminated entirely.

6           If you look down at the passengers  
7           per day column there, you see we're  
8           affecting significantly more people,  
9           and they're significantly more  
10          efficient in their use of taxpayer  
11          dollars if you look at the subsidy per  
12          passenger column. But when we arrange  
13          all of our routes in the order of  
14          efficiency, these are the next ones up.  
15          There aren't easier things or less  
16          painful things to reduce before we get  
17          to these.

18          From the N21 on down, we're not  
19          reducing the route -- we're not  
20          eliminating it rather, but we're  
21          reducing. So for example, the N21, it  
22          wouldn't operate on weekends. It  
23          wouldn't operate on -- in midday. A  
24          peak hour only route.

25          This is a good route, as you can

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           see by the number of people affected,  
3           even by the weekend and off peak  
4           numbers, and its subsidy is higher than  
5           the rest, but not as high as the ones  
6           in the January cuts.

7           So these are next -- if we have to  
8           do this all with service cuts, these  
9           are the next ones to go. The January  
10          package, that's worth about a million  
11          and a half if we get 12 months out of  
12          it.

13          This package is worth about 6 and  
14          a half million in expense offset by a  
15          million and a half in fare-box revenue  
16          that we won't get, so about a  
17          \$5 million net coming from this package  
18          in service reductions.

19          I need to say very clearly that I  
20          think nobody in this room, not members  
21          of the committee, certainly not people  
22          who work for NICE Bus are happy about  
23          looking at this chart at all. As  
24          professionals, we like to service, we  
25          like to carry passengers and we hate to

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 do this kind of thing, but as I tried  
3 to say at the beginning, in the end,  
4 after we've done everything else, this  
5 is what's left, this is what we must  
6 do.

7 This is what the map looks like.  
8 The lines in blue are lines that remain  
9 untouched. The lines in red are the  
10 lines that are either eliminated or  
11 significantly reduced.

12 Maybe even more painful is this is  
13 what, if we follow the federal  
14 three-quarters of a rule,  
15 three-quarters of a mile rule, these  
16 are -- the bubbles are areas where  
17 Able-Ride eligibility would be  
18 affected, not necessarily eliminated.

19 For instance, in Great Neck, five  
20 days a week instead of seven. In some  
21 of these areas, not in the midday. In  
22 some of these areas will be complete  
23 elimination.

24 So if the choice is to  
25 eliminate -- is to stick with the

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           policy that we follow now, which is to  
3           follow the federal minimum,  
4           three-quarters of a mile from any fixed  
5           route bus stop, then there would be  
6           effects here. There's a million or so  
7           worth of savings on this page, and as  
8           much as we hated the cuts on the  
9           previous page, we hate these just as  
10          much even though it's a smaller number  
11          of people affected.

12                 So our recommendation to the Bus  
13          Transit Committee today is that you,  
14          after hearing from customers, that you  
15          approve the elimination of those nine  
16          routes in January, and that you also  
17          reflect in the minutes that you have  
18          received, some public comments that are  
19          before you that we've received in  
20          writing, plus the ones you are about to  
21          receive and that you've also received  
22          the Title 6 analysis, which is at your  
23          place.

24                 The remainder of the picture that  
25          I just tried to paint is for

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 consideration later unless something  
3 positive happens that allows us to  
4 either not go forward with those cuts  
5 or reduce those cuts in some way.

6 Mr. Chairman, that's the end of my  
7 presentation, and I would be happy to  
8 respond to questions or receive  
9 comments from the committee.

10 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you,  
11 Mr. Setzer. I've been here before last  
12 year, and we faced a similar problem  
13 with not such a drastic budget cut, but  
14 a significant one. I assume the routes  
15 that you have chosen pretty much  
16 correspond to the prior year.

17 MR. SETZER: The January cuts are  
18 virtually all cuts that you looked at  
19 before, that's right. The April ones  
20 are new.

21 MR. SHRENKEL: As you stated, you  
22 know, the issue is really getting money  
23 from the county and getting money from  
24 the state, and now we have NIFA in the  
25 equation, and on the expense side from

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 NICE, it's your coming negotiations  
3 with your union. You didn't present --  
4 is it -- is the \$2 million in salaries  
5 or is it health benefits included or --

6 MR. SETZER: It's mostly in wage  
7 rates and some in salary. If we  
8 provide wage increases for one group of  
9 employees, we try to maintain some kind  
10 of equity for employees who aren't  
11 represented.

12 MR. SHRENKEL: Well, certainly  
13 everyone likes to see people get a  
14 raise when they work hard. There's  
15 only so many dollars to go around, and  
16 I think it's incumbent upon as  
17 corporations are doing today. They  
18 don't make bonuses if the company is  
19 not making money, and in this case,  
20 there's just so much dollars to a given  
21 budget, a given pie.

22 Hopefully, in your negotiations,  
23 you will work hard in trying to make  
24 the union understand that the dollars  
25 may not be there. I understand this is

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 a game of -- some people call it a game  
3 of chicken.

4 We certainly don't want to see  
5 workers go out on strike, but  
6 nevertheless, I certainly as a member  
7 of this committee am wanting to see  
8 less service cuts. I think everybody  
9 has to share in the difficulties of  
10 economic times including some of NICE  
11 employees.

12 So that is my comment, my  
13 recommendation. As I said,  
14 negotiations are not always easy.

15 MR. SETZER: Right. Point taken,  
16 sir.

17 MR. SHRENKEL: Are there any other  
18 comments from committee members?

19 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: Good after  
20 noon, Mike.

21 MR. SETZER: Good afternoon,  
22 Mr. Watkins-Lopez.

23 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: A couple of  
24 questions.

25 MR. SETZER: Sure.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: When did you  
3 realize there was a \$7 million deficit  
4 in this budget?

5 MR. SETZER: Well, the first  
6 \$3 million part of it when the county  
7 approved the budget in October. The  
8 additional 3.8 just became a reality  
9 earlier this week, although, I was  
10 aware of the possibility.

11 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: Secondly, as  
12 you said before, this is not the first  
13 time we've been here.

14 MR. SETZER: Right.

15 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: This is also  
16 not the first time we bring up the  
17 wages. When you signed a contract with  
18 the drivers, did you not know what you  
19 would have to pay them every year? Was  
20 there no way of being able -- was there  
21 no foresight into how much it was going  
22 to cost every year with the wages, and  
23 the increases, and the salaries and the  
24 healthcare? Did you not know this  
25 before this year?

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 MR. SETZER: I don't know what  
3 next year's wage rate will be.

4 MR. SHRENKEL: I'm not talking  
5 about next year, I'm talking about this  
6 year. Did you not know in 2015 how  
7 much you would have to give the  
8 drivers?

9 MR. SETZER: Certainly. We have a  
10 labor contract negotiated for five  
11 years, so yes, that was a known factor  
12 through 2016. It is unknown next year.

13 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: That's fine,  
14 but then how come it has been a  
15 surprise factor for the last five  
16 years. Every time you come to this  
17 committee, you will see labor cost,  
18 labor cost. How is it -- how have you  
19 not been able to project these labor  
20 costs beforehand?

21 MR. SETZER: Mr. Watkins-Lopez, I  
22 think you misunderstood what I said.  
23 It is a surprise -- not a surprise. It  
24 is an unknown for next year. It has  
25 not been an unknown for this year.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 If I can continue on with that  
3 point just a little bit. I think our  
4 employees deserve to be fairly  
5 compensated. They are not overpaid.  
6 They need to be compensated fairly.

7 We have to compete for our  
8 workers. It's not an easy job. We  
9 complete with many other transit  
10 operators, so I'm quite prepared to  
11 defend the pay raise and benefit  
12 packages that our employees receive.

13 MR. SHRENKEL: Absolutely. I just  
14 feel that every year, we come to this  
15 room, we have this conversation with  
16 you and it's you that blames it on the  
17 workers.

18 MR. SETZER: There's no blame at  
19 all in my comments.

20 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: Okay. Next  
21 thing, what is your contingency plan  
22 for the rapidly dropping ridership?  
23 Because you're already down from 120  
24 riders when you came on to about 91  
25 that Newsday had reported. That's

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 \$30,000 in riders.

3 On top of that, you're now  
4 basically saying you want to cut over  
5 20 routes. How do you plan on making  
6 up this money if you don't have the  
7 ridership and you don't have the  
8 routes?

9 MR. SETZER: The fare-box,  
10 Mr. Watkins-Lopez, provides about 40  
11 percent of the flat funding for the  
12 operation. As we reduce routes, we  
13 also lose some of that ridership, but  
14 the net -- the fact is to reduce  
15 expenses more than to reduce revenue.

16 The way to add riders is to have  
17 enough funding to add service. Much of  
18 this system is over -- is overloaded,  
19 is heavily loaded, let's say. There is  
20 no capacity on existing service, so  
21 ridership will go up when and if we can  
22 expand service.

23 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: We're not  
24 expanding service, so what is your  
25 contingency when you lose these riders?

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 How do you get -- because essentially,  
3 you're also cutting off a lot of the  
4 capillary routes to the main arteries,  
5 the n4 and the n6, so on and so forth,  
6 the moneymakers.

7 If people can't get to these money  
8 making routes, how do you plan on  
9 getting them there?

10 MR. SETZER: Well, I would like to  
11 make two points. First of all, there's  
12 no such thing as a moneymaking bus  
13 route, not in Nassau County, not in New  
14 York City, not anyplace. Every route  
15 is subsidized by the tax payers  
16 virtually everywhere in the western  
17 world.

18 So it's not a matter of finding  
19 profitable bus routes. It's a matter  
20 of using the available subsidy dollars  
21 as effectively as possible.

22 Now, your question is what is the  
23 contingency plan for this lost service  
24 which really amounts to how can you get  
25 two people into one bus seat, and there

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           is no plan to do that and it's not  
3           possible. The answer is steady  
4           sufficient funding so that this system  
5           can grow to meet needs rather than to  
6           shrink.

7           MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: Now, also in  
8           the past, we haven't seen any new  
9           revenue streams, we haven't seen any  
10          new grants for operations, and you have  
11          usually said that that's the county's  
12          job. Is there anyone at NICE that  
13          works with the county to procure more  
14          monies?

15          Who do we need to talk about  
16          looking into getting more grants for  
17          our bus system, because it's been five  
18          years, and we're still banking on STOA.

19          MR. SETZER: Well, I think you're  
20          mistaken. We use a lot of federal  
21          funds in both the operation and the  
22          capital. We do work closely with the  
23          county in looking for those  
24          opportunities.

25          The other thing that you have to

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 consider is that federal grants are  
3 never free money. They're usually  
4 50/50 grants, and so they start with a  
5 50 percent local match.

6 Well, the issue that we're talking  
7 about that brings us here today is that  
8 the county's fiscal situation is what  
9 it is. So thinking that there is more  
10 money to match local grants is -- I  
11 don't understand it. I don't get that.

12 If there were, we would be happy  
13 to look for more grants or we would be  
14 happy to use that money in some other  
15 creative way. We are actually quite  
16 effective in pursuing federal and state  
17 grants.

18 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: What  
19 happens -- so what are we going to do  
20 with the new buses that we bought? Are  
21 they just going to go to Able-Ride?  
22 But if Able-Ride gets cut -- you know,  
23 we did just spend a lot of money on  
24 these new buses. Are they going to go  
25 to Able-Ride for now after we cut the

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 FLEXI Ride services?

3 MR. SETZER: Do you mean the  
4 smaller buses?

5 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: Yes, the  
6 smaller buses.

7 MR. SETZER: The smaller buses  
8 will probably be uses for Able-Ride,  
9 yes. We still have a lot of very over  
10 age buses that need to be retired, so  
11 we can make very good use of them in  
12 Able-Ride. The same thing with newly  
13 received 40-foot buses.

14 If we reduce the size of the  
15 fleet, that's something that allows us  
16 to retire some half a million mile,  
17 12-year, 14-year-old buses which would  
18 be a good thing. It would actually  
19 reduce our maintenance expense  
20 somewhat.

21 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: So before  
22 April, will you be moving some of these  
23 smaller buses onto the lower ridership  
24 routes, or no as well?

25 MR. SETZER: I don't know because

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 I want to see what else happens with  
3 funding. That could be part of a  
4 recommendation when we come to you with  
5 a budget in February. It depends on  
6 what happens to the overall funding  
7 picture.

8 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: You are aware  
9 that there is a very good possibility  
10 that you will be getting less STOA  
11 money than before?

12 MR. SETZER: I recognize that.  
13 STOA money is not provided according to  
14 formula, so it's entirely up to the  
15 appropriate arms of the budgeting  
16 process in Albany, so anything is  
17 possible.

18 We've never, at least in my  
19 experience, seen a reduction in STOA  
20 money. I'm aware that there are those  
21 other counties who would like to take  
22 some of ours, but certainly, it's  
23 possible. I'm not banking on that, but  
24 it's possible.

25 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: Thank you.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 MR. SHRENKEL: Mr. Setzer --

3 MR. SETZER: Yes, sir.

4 MR. SHRENKEL: -- in the past, we  
5 had a Nassau County cap X budget for  
6 new buses --

7 MR. SETZER: Right.

8 MR. SHRENKEL: -- and at one  
9 point, what we did, we took some of the  
10 money out of cap X and we put it into  
11 operations. Do we have any flexibility  
12 with this coming in 2017? Is there any  
13 new cap X coming in?

14 MR. SETZER: Mr. Chairman, that's  
15 certainly something we would look at if  
16 there was an opportunity. The cap X  
17 that you're thinking of was an  
18 additional state allocation of 3.8  
19 million or capital, which we were then  
20 able to, by moving some other funds  
21 around, effectively turn into operating  
22 assistance.

23 If there were some additional  
24 state money, but that also would be in  
25 the state budget, which we won't know

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 until the end of March --

3 MR. SHRENKEL: Wasn't there a  
4 county cap X or a county cap X  
5 contribution at one time?

6 MR. SETZER: I don't recall that  
7 there was, but I don't always -- in a  
8 couple of years after the budget was  
9 adopted, the county came forward with  
10 some additional funds.

11 MR. SHRENKEL: I seem to recall  
12 that there was a switch and we got some  
13 extra money from the county by virtue  
14 of, you know, forging buying new  
15 equipment.

16 MR. SETZER: I do think,  
17 Mr. Chairman, that you're thinking of  
18 the state money in 2015. There was an  
19 extra 3.8 million that they added to  
20 our -- each of the downstate systems  
21 got an additional allocation, one time  
22 capital.

23 We turned that into operating  
24 assistance, but that was the source of  
25 that. That's all that I recall. If

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 that happens again this year, that's  
3 certainly something to be considered in  
4 an overall solution.

5 MR. SHRENKEL: Of course, you  
6 know, one of the optimistic sides, and  
7 I read this in the newspaper. I didn't  
8 speak with the county executive, but he  
9 was hoping that some of these  
10 eliminations are sort of tentative  
11 suspensions, and if money is found,  
12 perhaps they can come to you --

13 MR. SETZER: That's my hope too.

14 MR. SHRENKEL: -- and restore  
15 some of these routes.

16 MR. SETZER: I think that's  
17 probably the hope of everyone in this  
18 chamber.

19 MR. SHRENKEL: Are there any other  
20 questions for Mr. Setzer from committee  
21 members?

22 Mr. Setzer, thank you.

23 MR. SETZER: Thank you.

24 MR. SHRENKEL: Please feel free if  
25 you choose to -- we're going to call on

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           the public comments. If you feel that  
3           any given one is necessary, just raise  
4           your hand, and of course, you can, you  
5           know, respond to it, but it's your  
6           option. Or you can come back to us  
7           later on and just pick the significant  
8           ones you think that absolutely should  
9           have the answers. I leave that to your  
10          discretion, all right?

11                 MR. SETZER: Understood.

12                 MR. SHRENKEL: Gentleman in the  
13           back with the sign, did you have your  
14           hand up?

15                 MR. MENDEL: Yes, sir.

16                 MR. SHRENKEL: When you come to  
17           the podium, please understand, state  
18           your name and who you represent,  
19           whether you represent yourself, an  
20           organization and the area of what, you  
21           know, you're speaking about.

22                 Again, please remember that your  
23           comments are limited to three minutes  
24           and, you know, if I raise my hand, that  
25           means, you know, finish your last

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 sentence.

3 MR. MENDEL: What if I can't see  
4 your raised hand?

5 MR. SHRENKEL: Well, then, you  
6 will just hear me from my mic and I'll  
7 say thank you very much.

8 MR. MENDEL: I will say this to  
9 you, and sir, Mr. NICE, I apologize to  
10 you on behalf of more than you'll ever  
11 know.

12 MR. SHRENKEL: Speak into the mic.

13 MR. MENDEL: To the gentleman,  
14 Mr. NICE, I apologize to him more than  
15 you'll ever know because the last thing  
16 I ever want to do is see anybody lose  
17 their job bid, God forbid, or be  
18 insulted.

19 What I will say to you is this,  
20 and hopefully I get my other comments  
21 in, I speak to your drivers all the  
22 time. Nobody wants to work there, the  
23 buses are always braking down. You  
24 can't keep people there, number one.  
25 Number two, the gas. Gas has been cut

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 in half over the last three or four  
3 years. I don't know where those  
4 profits go.

5 Number three, what you had said  
6 about when you talked about the  
7 advertising, you said, well, I don't  
8 expect much of an increase there. I  
9 don't understand that. To me, you have  
10 to beautiful buses running up and down  
11 everywhere. There are people who pay  
12 companies to put their signs on trucks  
13 to drive all over.

14 My suggestion might be maybe you  
15 get together with the advertisers,  
16 maker some really interesting signs,  
17 you know, that maybe light up a little  
18 bit, make some different deals, and if  
19 you help the Hispanic community, and  
20 God forbid even think about cutting  
21 anything. You should add lines.

22 The Hispanic community will  
23 respond and deal with the advertisers,  
24 number one. That was my comment to  
25 him.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 MR. SHRENKEL: Sir, did you state  
3 your name for the record?

4 MR. MENDEL: My name is normally  
5 mud, but it's David Mendel.

6 MR. SHRENKEL: Are you  
7 representing yourself, Mr. Mendel, as a  
8 rider or --

9 MR. MENDEL: In a way, I'm  
10 representing myself because the truth  
11 is I'm doing this so everybody can  
12 think what a great guy I am, that I  
13 have a voice to use.

14 I've been everywhere fighting  
15 about this because I hate the fact that  
16 you people can even think about cutting  
17 the buses for these poor people, mostly  
18 Hispanic people that work 13 hours a  
19 day for \$9 an hour.

20 If any one of you who decides to  
21 even think about cutting this, if you  
22 took the bus two days, and if you took  
23 those buses two days in the rain and  
24 you had to make a transfer, you would  
25 do anything in the world to add the

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 buses.

3 The buses don't need to be cut,  
4 they need to be added to bring much  
5 more money into the county, give these  
6 people who wait out in disgusting rain  
7 and snow, can't tell when their bus  
8 is going to come, and you just  
9 suggested, well, we'll cut this for a  
10 while and then we'll bring them back.

11 What about the poor people who  
12 depend upon these things? And please,  
13 I never ever mean to be rude, but I'm  
14 going to say this to you. You built a  
15 bicycle path, a bicycle path from  
16 Seaford to Tobay Beach. A bicycle path  
17 that must have cost millions of dollars  
18 and that flops around 90 percent of the  
19 time, the outside part of it.

20 You built miniature golf courses  
21 around the new parks. You built the  
22 parks, you have free concerts, you have  
23 signs. In my next life, I want to come  
24 back as a sign maker. How dare you  
25 even think about cutting back on these

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 buses for these poor people.

3 I will make one other suggestion  
4 to you, and again, I will make one  
5 other suggestion to you. I was in,  
6 unfortunately, the security and alarm  
7 business, and what I will tell you is  
8 this, it's illegal for businesses  
9 without full fire systems to house  
10 smoke detectors, which is ridiculous  
11 because it's always been about false  
12 alarms.

13 So what I will tell you, the alarm  
14 systems are so much more sophisticated  
15 now that if you charged every business  
16 that, believe it or not, is not allowed  
17 to have a smoke detector, if you  
18 charged them \$50 and now their place  
19 is going to be safer, they would be  
20 very, very happy to pay it.

21 Number two --

22 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you, Mr.  
23 Mendel. You have run out of time.  
24 You're on overtime.

25 MR. MENDEL: You tag fire

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           extinguishers -- each year, a fire  
3           extinguisher in every business has to  
4           be tagged and certified. I actually  
5           did it, and I'm a moron. I passed the  
6           test.

7           Millions upon millions of dollars  
8           are spent by these people tagging fire  
9           extinguishers for all these different  
10          companies. If you had a county company  
11          do it, it would raise a lot of money.  
12          It would do a lot of good.

13          MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you,  
14          Mr. Mandel.

15          MR. MENDEL: I appreciate it. You  
16          have the nicest day possible and I hope  
17          I wasn't rude. And besides that,  
18          everything's fine.

19          MR. SHRENKEL: Again, please let's  
20          not run over. We're not going to set  
21          examples that occurred previously. We  
22          don't want to be rude either.

23          MR. MICHNO: Hopefully, the clock  
24          will work this time. I'll try to  
25          remember.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 My name is John Michno,  
3 M-I-C-H-N-O. I live in Westbury, New  
4 York.

5 These cuts are actually worse than  
6 the MTA proposed because they're  
7 affecting Westbury now, and Westbury is  
8 a low income area. This is pathetic.  
9 That's what I have to call the way the  
10 county treats bus riders. You restore  
11 service only to take it away six months  
12 later.

13 You are playing with people's  
14 lives here. It's almost as if this is  
15 some sadistic game with people who  
16 depend on buses. This is one of the  
17 most corrupt bus operations I have ever  
18 seen or experienced.

19 All of you, except one, don't even  
20 rely on the buses. You do not realize  
21 just how your actions are affecting  
22 innocent people. We did not create  
23 this budget mess. We are always asked  
24 to sacrifice while the county's  
25 wealthiest residents are not.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 Every day, I see more and more  
3 luxury cars on the road, and somehow,  
4 Nassau County cannot afford to run a  
5 quality bus system. Taking away this  
6 service will once again leave people  
7 stranded and forced to rely on walking,  
8 friends or taxis, the latter of which  
9 has seen booming business under Ed  
10 Mangano. It's no wonder why so many  
11 have signs thanking him.

12 Eventually, you will pay for what  
13 you are doing to us. Mangano is under  
14 indictment by the FBI, and it will come  
15 out how this contract for the bus  
16 system screwed the people of Nassau  
17 that and its poor citizens. This was a  
18 bad deal from the beginning.

19 MTA knew what they were doing when  
20 they knew more money would be needed to  
21 preserve the current level of service  
22 and maintenance in 2011. NICE has  
23 never provided as much service compared  
24 to MTA Long Island Bus. On average,  
25 routes were less frequently.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 Take the n27, for example. Used  
3 to be every 30 minutes all day, but now  
4 it's not. You guys have empty buses  
5 all over the place. That's hardly  
6 efficient. Then there's the breakdowns  
7 because you provide much less service  
8 and maintenance than the MTA, so riders  
9 have to deal with missing buses.

10 The condition of the fleet is  
11 criminal, buying new shuttle buses for  
12 a service that's discontinued in less  
13 than a year. Painting buses in a new  
14 fancy paint job, but not replacing  
15 parts until it breaks down. Driving  
16 riders and fare revenues away by these  
17 cuts and poor reliability.

18 I guess I too will be relying on  
19 the train even more now after these  
20 cuts are in effect. I will have to ride  
21 the train now all the time, and it  
22 costs me more. I know this is all part  
23 of the mentality to make things so  
24 miserable for the lower incomes and  
25 disabled on Long Island so we just

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 leave.

3 Well, I am going to stand before  
4 you and continue this fight against the  
5 agenda. You have no business running a  
6 bus system. Hand it over to the MTA  
7 and let it be run like the Long Island  
8 Railroad. If Nassau doesn't want to  
9 fund the system, then they have no  
10 business owning it.

11 MR. SHRENKEL: Lady in the back,  
12 please.

13 MS. CURRAN: Thank you for having  
14 me. I'm Nassau County Legislator Laura  
15 Curran, and I would like to share a  
16 solution, the way that we can get the  
17 \$6.8 million dollars back to the buses,  
18 and this is something that I've shared  
19 with NIFA and with the budget office  
20 here in the county.

21 We should look at fund balance.  
22 We have a precedent for this. Last  
23 year when the routes were cut, we went  
24 into the fund balance for \$3 million  
25 and we restored most of those routes,

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 and it breaks my heart to see those on  
3 the chopping block again.

4 So I'm saying let's use money in  
5 fund balance. Fund balance is way over  
6 what it needs to be. The county has a  
7 policy to have levels of unreserved  
8 fund balance at no less than 4 percent  
9 and no more than 5 percent of prior  
10 year expenses.

11 Actually, right now, the county is  
12 \$3 million more than the 5 percent  
13 number, so we're actually more than our  
14 policy dictates. If we were going to  
15 go to the 4 percent number, we would  
16 have \$31 million extra and still have  
17 our fund balance at the appropriate  
18 amount.

19 So there really are options to  
20 avoid these draconian cuts. NIFA  
21 doesn't not like us to use fund  
22 balance; however, there's precedent.  
23 We did it last year. Not very much  
24 money.

25 It seems a shame really that we're

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 money that we can't use, and meanwhile,  
3 we're hurting our most vulnerable  
4 people by cutting buses. It just  
5 doesn't seem right.

6 If Nassau County is going to  
7 become economically viable in the 21st  
8 century, we have got to keep our young  
9 people here. They're not using cars as  
10 much as their parents. They're not  
11 buying cars at the same rates.

12 We've got to promote smart growth  
13 development and make our streets more  
14 navigable, right, if we want to survive  
15 as a region, that's what we have to do.  
16 In a robust transportation system,  
17 public transportation is key to  
18 accomplish all of those goals.

19 So I would urge NIFA and the  
20 county, if you hear me, please consider  
21 fund balance. We have more than we  
22 need. In fact, we have more than our  
23 policy dictates. It's real money that  
24 we're sitting on, a big pile of money  
25 that we're sitting on.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 So that's my case. Thank you very  
3 much.

4 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you,  
5 Legislator, and my comment is I  
6 certainly agree with you. You are, of  
7 course, in the mix and I don't think  
8 it's a political matter of a party  
9 divide, so I would tend to think every  
10 legislator should want to use that  
11 money and I would possibly think that  
12 the county executive would want to use  
13 it also.

14 So I guess it's a matter of the  
15 legislature and all parties to try to  
16 convince NIFA to use those fund  
17 balances.

18 MS. CURRAN: I agree. This cuts  
19 across party lines. It's in all of our  
20 districts. It's the entire county.

21 MR. SHRENKEL: This is not  
22 political. This is about people losing  
23 ridership.

24 MS. CURRAN: I think really it's  
25 NIFA. NIFA needs to hear this message.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you for  
3 putting it on the record and making it  
4 public.

5 MS. CURRAN: I appreciate the  
6 opportunity. Thanks.

7 MR. SHRENKEL: You're welcome.  
8 Man with the hat.

9 MR. LEE: My name is Andrew Lee.  
10 I'm from Queens, New York here in  
11 Nassau County. I live by a couple of  
12 NICE Bus routes along Hillside Avenue  
13 and Northern Boulevard and also on  
14 Jericho Turnpike.

15 The buses that go into the  
16 terminal, 165th Street terminal, like  
17 almost every week is usually this  
18 crowded, but I just saw the cuts for the  
19 first time.

20 It's like there's no way you can  
21 cut the N22A during the rush hour  
22 because I see a lot of people on the  
23 N22A during the rush hour between  
24 Jamaica and Mineola because that's when  
25 most of the people come from the 179th

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           Street subway. And speaking of the  
3           179th Street subway, last Friday there  
4           was a missing N22 line, and then I was  
5           on a 43 going to 179th Street, Hunter  
6           College, and then I asked the bus  
7           driver, I said, have you seen the N22  
8           and he said no.

9           When I got up to the 179, it broke  
10          down. It was one of those ill XM40  
11          buses, and this is interesting, because  
12          every two weeks along Hillside Avenue,  
13          Jamaica Avenue and Northern Boulevard  
14          now, there's always going to be a  
15          breakdown somewhere.

16          One time, three breakdowns in 16  
17          hours on Hillside and Jamaica Avenue.  
18          That's really unacceptable, really  
19          unacceptable, and because -- and there  
20          are a lot of riders that travel between  
21          the subway station and parts of Nassau  
22          County.

23          I can't -- I'm afraid to go out  
24          here at times to Nassau County because  
25          I might be stranded let's say if I come

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           from the beach or I come from  
3           Eisenhower Park playing volleyball.  
4           What gives? And now a \$12 million  
5           deficit? Here we go again. Here we go  
6           again. How are we going to fix it?  
7           How are we going to fix it until we get  
8           to apocalypse levels. Thank you.

9           MR. RASKIN: Good afternoon. My  
10          name is George Raskin, R-A-S-K-I-N.  
11          I'm with the Long Island Bus Riders  
12          Coalition.

13          My own personal view is you  
14          haven't approached the possibility of  
15          raising fares. I know that goes down  
16          hard, a lot of people do have trouble  
17          with that, but you should at least  
18          consider that in how much it can help  
19          with the cuts, the budget cuts by  
20          raising the fares a little bit.

21          I don't have personal research on  
22          it, but I would think the people with  
23          the bus company could look into that.  
24          If it were to increase the fares some,  
25          how much of the cuts could be saved?

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 Sometimes I wait on the bus almost  
3 an hour, almost an hour and a half  
4 sometimes. The bus, the number 1 bus  
5 on Sundays, there really could be some  
6 things done to improve service. I  
7 don't have a lot of comments, so I'll  
8 cut it at that. Thank you.

9 MR. SHRENKEL: I have one for you.  
10 It would be interesting to know if the  
11 Bus Riders Union can come up with some  
12 statistics of who would be willing to  
13 pay higher fares, and if so, how much,  
14 and I think that information should be  
15 transmitted to NICE Transportation.

16 We have three hands. Yes, sir.  
17 We will get to you next.

18 MR. LEVITT: Good afternoon. I'm  
19 Dr. Lou Levitt representing the  
20 Amsterdam at Harborside in Port  
21 Washington. We are a senior residence,  
22 300 people, a nursing home, a hospice  
23 center, assisted living center, and  
24 we're located on West Shore Road in  
25 Port Washington. We have appeared

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 before the committee before and I will  
3 summarize briefly the case I made then.

4 We're very appreciative of your  
5 interest, and we received the  
6 assistance of NICE, who in response to  
7 our testimony, developed a proposal to  
8 expand service on West Shore Road.

9 We're working together with the 70  
10 businesses who occupy two industrial  
11 parks on West Shore Road, and these  
12 businesses are expanding and are in  
13 need of a work force. They are among  
14 the largest tax payers in Nassau County.

15 The proposal we made is based on  
16 this, our employees who are similar to  
17 the employees of the new hotel that's  
18 going up in that area really cannot  
19 afford to work for us at the salaries  
20 that we pay, which are more than the  
21 going wage. So we have an unstable  
22 work force that relies on cars, and in  
23 some cases, walks 2 miles in order to  
24 get to work.

25 The proposal that NICE submitted

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 connects the two Long Island Railroad  
3 stations and uses Roslyn as a  
4 connecting link to at least five other  
5 bus routes in Nassau County.

6 So if that proposal were funded,  
7 it would make for some very serious  
8 growth in job opportunities in Nassau  
9 among a population that really needs  
10 it. We need it badly as well. So  
11 that's the proposal.

12 We intend to move forward in  
13 contacts with our state  
14 representatives. We have the support  
15 of our local Democratic and Republican  
16 representatives, our county's  
17 legislature -- legislator is very much  
18 with us.

19 We have a request to make of you.  
20 You are a citizen advisory group. You  
21 don't have budgetary responsibilities.  
22 Your job is to make recommendations to  
23 the county exec and to the county  
24 legislature.

25 So we have a resolution we would

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 like you to consider. We have sent  
3 copies to Mr. Littman.

4 MR. SHRENKEL: We've received  
5 that, Doctor. It was sent over the  
6 e-mail.

7 MR. LEVITT: It's two sentences.  
8 I would like to read it out load.

9 MR. SHRENKEL: Please, quickly.

10 MR. LEVITT: Having reviewed the  
11 proposal for public bus service on West  
12 Shore Road submitted by NICE and the  
13 compelling evidence for the urgent need  
14 for this service submitted by the  
15 representatives of more than 70  
16 businesses and the Amsterdam, we the  
17 committee recommend that the service  
18 should be initiated as soon as it is  
19 possible. Thank you.

20 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you.

21 Sir, we're going to get to this  
22 side next. Everybody will get their  
23 turn.

24 MR. WELLS: Good afternoon. I'm  
25 Frederick Wells. I reside at Queens

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 and part of the Long Island Bus Riders  
3 Union.

4 The main reason for some of those  
5 low ridership routes is for network  
6 coverage because if you don't have the  
7 network coverage, people don't depend  
8 on your system. The elimination of the  
9 N80 and N81 route is -- even though it  
10 was low ridership, it's vital because  
11 it services major job areas and  
12 colleges.

13 One, for example, one of my former  
14 employers, Slomin's, which is on Lauman  
15 Lane, that's where the N80 passes  
16 through. The N80, it runs past PSE&G  
17 and some of those major job sites,  
18 maybe Cablevision and like Bethpage  
19 Railroad Station.

20 You know, cutting those lines,  
21 people without cars or people that car  
22 broke down who was once able to go to  
23 work will have to quit their job, and  
24 then there you go again. You know, you  
25 have low ridership even if you try to

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 restore the lines.

3 Then, according to -- going to  
4 April, you was talking about  
5 eliminating the N1 on weekends. Well,  
6 for one, the N1, you shouldn't have the  
7 N1 go to Jamaica. It should -- the N1  
8 should be -- should stay in Nassau  
9 County so it could transfer to the N24  
10 in Floral Park instead of straight up  
11 because you need the north-south  
12 coverage.

13 Then in my area was the  
14 Queens/Nassau border. You eliminate  
15 what was once the Dutch Broadway line.  
16 Dutch Broadway line should feed in the  
17 Jamaica subways because that's pretty  
18 much where the travel is going in that  
19 area because the N4 and the N6 needs  
20 help.

21 I understand you're going to buy  
22 these 60-foot buses, to articulate  
23 buses for those busy lines, but that's  
24 not enough. If you want to take cars  
25 off the road -- because eliminating bus

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 service is not going to do it.

3 Putting more cars on the road is  
4 going to cause more traffic jams. If  
5 you want to take cars off the road, you  
6 have to leave the buses alone and try  
7 to add service to the lines that's  
8 vital. Thank you.

9 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you, sir.

10 Mr. Endo, will you come up to the  
11 microphone and introduce yourself, and  
12 with your permission since you too are  
13 part of the Bus Riders Union, I'm going  
14 to ask Mr. Aaron Watkins to read your  
15 comments. Please introduce yourself.

16 MR. ENDO: My name Yuki Endo,  
17 resident of Jackson Heights, Queens.

18 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: "My name is  
19 Yuki Endo, resident of Jackson Heights,  
20 Queens and a member of the Long Island  
21 Bus Riders Union.

22 I depend on NICE Bus, MTA  
23 Subway/Bus/LIRR/MNRR, Bee-Line Bus,  
24 Suffolk County Transit, Academy Bus  
25 X23, X24 and Hampton Jitney bus.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 I am urging NICE Bus to adopt MTA  
3 fare hike if MTA plans to raise fare to  
4 3 dollars, but I do not unlimited  
5 MetroCard fare increase because NICE  
6 Bus has been awful service than MFA.

7 On Friday, November 18th, on my  
8 way to Port Washington for my friend's  
9 birthday, I got off late 3:55 P.M. N81  
10 Hicksville, number 1742 bus at  
11 Hicksville at 5:08 P.M. due to bus  
12 broke down before and witness 5:22 P.M.  
13 N22, number 1657 bus driver skipping  
14 first stop, Hicksville Station, which  
15 made passengers waiting for N22 bus  
16 furious for forcing to wait for next  
17 bus, which is outrageous. You should  
18 not be cutting Elmont FLEXI, Freeport,  
19 Hicksville, Wantagh Shuttles, N45, N51,  
20 weekend N80/81 bus. If you're cutting  
21 N48 Shuttle, you should send some  
22 select N48/49 trips to/from Jericho  
23 Quad.

24 The reason community shuttles are  
25 not working well because not lots of

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 people know they came back under new  
3 name. Don't cut Hicksville-Wantagh N73  
4 shuttle, N80, 81 and N51 bus.

5 Lots of businesses long N20 route  
6 including Americana Mall are asking for  
7 full restoration of direct N20 bus  
8 between Hicksville Station and Flushing  
9 via Great Neck Station because some  
10 folks are spending more time on N20G/H  
11 due to miss connection at Great Neck,  
12 and security at Americana Mall told me  
13 their stores are losing their customers  
14 as a result of N20 split routes.

15 I am also asking NICE Bus to  
16 reinstate former MTA Long Island Bus  
17 route N28 bus, which ones operated by  
18 Roslyn Station and Roslyn Industrial  
19 Park, then extend to Amsterdam at  
20 Harborside, Gulf Link, new hotel, Port  
21 Washington parks, and Helen Keller  
22 Blind & Deaf Center for youths, and  
23 adults in Sandy Point which needs a  
24 bus route. Thank you for your  
25 cooperation."

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you,  
3 Mr. Endo.

4 Yes, ma'am.

5 MS. MCCLAIN: Hi. My name is  
6 Kelly McClain, and I'm with the Long  
7 Island Center for Independent Living.  
8 We're located in Levittown, and we  
9 advocate and work to ensure the  
10 equality for people of disabilities  
11 across Nassau County. Thank you for  
12 allowing me to speak.

13 I just wanted to raise a few  
14 points and to go on record as saying  
15 that this was strongly opposed to any  
16 reductions or cuts in services.

17 As you know, NICE and Able-Ride  
18 are people's lifeline to work, school  
19 and the community particularly when  
20 they have a disability and don't drive.  
21 If you take away their transportation,  
22 you create increased barriers to living  
23 a full life.

24 The impact of the drastic services  
25 reduction in 2011 and '12 are still

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           strongly felt throughout the disability  
3           community. Introducing further cuts  
4           will only increase the marginalization  
5           experienced by the community.

6           So as a service provider for  
7           people with disabilities in Nassau  
8           County located in Levittown, any cuts  
9           to fixed routes in Able-Ride reduce our  
10          consumers' ability to utilize our  
11          services.

12          So I'm just asking that you please  
13          do all you can to avoid further cuts to  
14          these vital services. Thank you.

15          MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you.

16          MR. CONLIN: My name is William  
17          Conlin. I'm speaking for myself. Can  
18          I ask Mr. Setzer a question?

19          MR. SHRENKEL: You can ask him,  
20          but that's on your three minutes.

21          MR. CONLIN: That's kind of funny  
22          though considering you guys were late  
23          20 minutes, so threatening us about 3  
24          minutes when you made us wait here for  
25          you.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 Anyway, Mr. Setzer, your basic  
3 runs on cost per ride, do you receive  
4 money based on each route?

5 MR. SETZER: No.

6 MR. CONLIN: So why is the cost  
7 per ride different on each bus route?

8 MR. SETZER: Let me discuss that  
9 when I've got some other comments.  
10 I'll get to that.

11 MR. SHRENKEL: Why don't you  
12 address the committee with your  
13 questions as if you're talking to  
14 Mr. Setzer, and if he chooses to  
15 respond, you know, after the meeting,  
16 individually, it's up to you. You have  
17 three minutes and that's it. You know,  
18 this is not confrontational.

19 MR. CONLIN: I'm not an expert on  
20 this. That's why.

21 MR. SHRENKEL: Please say what you  
22 have to say.

23 MR. CONLIN: I take the N81 from  
24 Massapequa to Garden City. I work for  
25 Verizon. They just moved 2,000 workers

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 into that building coming from all over  
3 the place including Queens, Suffolk.  
4 They would all love to use the bus.

5 We also have something called  
6 economy check card. I'm a full fare  
7 rider. I'm the kind of person you want  
8 to be taking the bus, and you're now  
9 going to drive me off he bus, which  
10 makes no sense. I'm even willing to  
11 accept the rate increase.

12 Why you guys do not go around to  
13 all the business in Nassau County and  
14 try to get them to sign on for the  
15 economy check card and actually go  
16 after people to come and take the bus,  
17 get them off the road.

18 I have never seen anybody go into  
19 any employer saying how do your  
20 employees get to work, why don't you  
21 use the bus, use the economy check  
22 card. If they're small, maybe you can  
23 group them all together and they can  
24 all get together and use the economy  
25 check card. Verizon happens to be big

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 and they'll pay for it, but all these  
3 other employees mentioned the same  
4 thing.

5 Cutting the buses back is not  
6 going to increase ridership. I'm not  
7 going to come back again. You cut this  
8 bus again, that's it for me. Back in  
9 the car and more traffic. If that's  
10 what you guys want, that's fine. Other  
11 than that, I have nothing else to say.  
12 Thank you.

13 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you.

14 MR. DAS: First of all, thank you  
15 very much for allowing me to talk. Due  
16 to my accent, I will try to read this  
17 letter very slowly.

18 MR. SHRENKEL: Please state your  
19 name and the town you're from, whether  
20 you represent yourself or an  
21 organization.

22 MR. DAS: My name is Ron Das,  
23 D-A-S. I am from Floral Park and I am  
24 representing my wife who is severely  
25 disabled, and the other lady said about

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 not cutting the funding for the  
3 Able-Ride.

4 My wife just wrote a letter to the  
5 Honorable Edward Mangano, the County  
6 Executive. I do want to read this  
7 letter so that the funding would not be  
8 reduced and the service would be  
9 improved.

10 This is my letter to Mr. Mangano.  
11 Dear Mr. Mangano, as you have always  
12 extended your help to those in need  
13 with Nassau County services.

14 My name is Christian Das. I live  
15 in Floral Park. Today, December 8,  
16 2016, I had appointment to see my  
17 therapist at Stars Rehabilitation  
18 Center at 1554 Northern Boulevard,  
19 Manhasset.

20 I book my reservation with  
21 Able-Ride on Tuesday in order to have  
22 the transportation. I gave all  
23 necessary requirements for booking,  
24 such as traveling with my personal care  
25 assistant, which is a PCA, extra wide

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 wheelchair and lift on the bus.

3 The scheduled time after the  
4 pick-up was over. I called Able-Ride  
5 was told me that it would pick up at  
6 12:45. 12:45 came and gone. The first  
7 when the driver eventually came in, he  
8 told me that we were just an add-on in  
9 the van, he cannot take the wheelchair,  
10 he cannot take PCA, and he also said  
11 that a bus is coming to pick us up.

12 He also mentioned he already had  
13 the passenger and he has to go. We  
14 found him rude and argumentative.  
15 Please note, this is not the first time  
16 I have had a chronic problem with  
17 Able-Ride. Not too long ago, I had to  
18 cancel my therapy appointment due to  
19 miss handling and dereliction of duties  
20 by the Able-Ride staff.

21 MR. SHRENKEL: Try to sum it up,  
22 please.

23 MR. DAS: That's it. That's the  
24 final sentence. Mr. Mangano, I am  
25 requesting your intervention so that my

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           next appointment on Thursday,  
3           December 15th and all of the future  
4           appointments will be -- will not be a  
5           fiasco like this one due to the  
6           incompetency of the Able-Ride staff.

7           I look forward to hear from you.

8           Signed, Cristian Das. Thank you.

9           MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you.

10          Please under that all your  
11          comments are part of a public record  
12          being taken down by a public  
13          stenographer, and those minutes are  
14          available to the legislature, members  
15          of the legislature, the County  
16          Executive, and of course, the committee  
17          can review it and look at them again,  
18          and certainly NICE Transportation.

19          Let's get some people on the right  
20          side who have been patiently waiting,  
21          and I appreciate it.

22          Sir, in the first row. Thank you.

23          Q. Steve Edmundson, Oceanside Civic  
24          Association, and I used to work for Nassau County  
25          as well.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 Sorry to say, there's only one person  
3 from the county government here when we have 19  
4 legislators. I don't know where the rest of them  
5 are.

6 Long Beach has a bus service, and they  
7 actually take all types of denominations of money,  
8 dollar bills, quarters, whatever. I don't know  
9 when you get on a NICE Bus system, you got to have  
10 exact change, and then on Sunday with the horrible  
11 bus service. The bus is like a sardine can when  
12 people are loaded up on the bus of the N15 all the  
13 way to the door, which is a safety and health  
14 hazard. I mean it's crazy.

15 You guys ought to come out and ride  
16 these buses. I know Mrs. Cohen, the legislator,  
17 has been on the bus, I know Salaj has been on the  
18 bus. I don't know how you people get elected or  
19 appointed to this board, but you should come out  
20 and ride these buses and see what's going on in  
21 the County of Nassau. Thank you.

22 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you, sir.

23 Yes, ma'am woman.

24 MS. ALICE: Sister Mary Alice,  
25 Mercy Medical Center. My third time

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 out here. I'm out of words. I went on  
3 the website to remember what was  
4 promised to us in 2012.

5 We were told that our choices  
6 would no longer be limited and we  
7 wouldn't have to suffer any slashing  
8 services, that January 1, 2012 is going  
9 to mark a new year of reliable service  
10 for riders and job opportunities and  
11 reduced costs for tax payers.

12 Mr. Mangano told us that through  
13 this public private partnership, Nassau  
14 County will provide reliable bus  
15 service that tax payers can afford, and  
16 that this county's bus system is a  
17 vital transportation link for thousands  
18 of riders who use it to commute to  
19 work, to get to school, to visit the  
20 doctor, to shop or take other important  
21 daily trips.

22 We were told that this is saving  
23 us \$32.4 million. I don't know where  
24 that went. That it's going to restore  
25 draconian MTA cuts planned for route

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           cuts, that it's going to preserve  
3           Able-Ride services rather than MTA cuts  
4           that we experienced, that it's going to  
5           replace an MTA board with a hundred  
6           percent Nassau resident board.

7           I don't know why public  
8           transportation can't happen in a county  
9           such as Nassau County, 3rd richest  
10          county, I think, in the United States.  
11          I don't know why transportation can't  
12          be delivered. It makes no sense to us  
13          people, ordinary folk.

14          I don't blame anybody, but I do  
15          think that everybody is responsible,  
16          the county, the bus system, whomever.  
17          I think they're all responsible, and  
18          honestly, I think it's a disgrace that  
19          we can't provide public transportation  
20          for people who need it, and it is  
21          beyond my ability to believe it. It's  
22          my third time here. That's even beyond  
23          my ability to believe it.

24          I would like to thank Ms. Curran.  
25          She has been a help each time I have

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 tried to write to people. Thank you.

3 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you.

4 MS. DARCY: Good evening. I'm  
5 Michele Darcy, Nassau County Finance  
6 Director for the Minority Legislature,  
7 and the only reason why I'm speaking  
8 today is to let the audience members  
9 know that I represent minority  
10 legislators, Legislator Minority  
11 leader, Kevan Abrahams.

12 I've been taking notes on everyone  
13 one of your comments. We plan to  
14 address your concerns, to meet with  
15 Mr. Setzer and NICE Bus, and we  
16 actively meet all year long, and I work  
17 for Legislator Curran, who is here  
18 today.

19 We also have Dan Small. He's been  
20 here since the beginning. He works for  
21 Legislator Birnbaum. So we just want  
22 you to know that you're all represented.  
23 Thank you.

24 MR. SHRENKEL: Yes, ma'am.

25 MS. WACHSBERGER: Good afternoon.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 My name Maura Wachsberger,  
3 W-A-C-H-S-B-E-R-G-E-R. I'm here  
4 representing myself and the hundreds of  
5 people with disabilities who attend the  
6 program that I work at, CPF Nassau.

7 First of all, my nephew lives in  
8 Syosset, and the first round of cuts,  
9 he was a victim of, and he's sitting at  
10 home depending on his elderly father to  
11 take him anywhere he wants to go, which  
12 is just ridiculous.

13 As a Nassau County tax payer,  
14 myself, I find it appalling that we  
15 can't find funds to give people  
16 transportation. I'm here with people  
17 from CP Nassau who rely on Able-Ride to  
18 go to their program, to go home to  
19 visit their families. Many of them  
20 live in group homes.

21 I also find it appalling that New  
22 York State is telling us that everybody  
23 with a disability should have a job.  
24 How can they have a job if they don't  
25 have transportation? And that's all I

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 wanted to say. Thank you for  
3 listening.

4 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you very  
5 much.

6 MS. BROWN: Good evening, ladies  
7 and gentlemen. First off, my name is  
8 Emily Brown. I am a licensed social  
9 worker with YAI, the Young Adult  
10 Institute in Port Washington, which is  
11 a group home for elderly seniors with  
12 developmental and intellectual  
13 disabilities. I would like to thank  
14 you for your time. I know it's been a  
15 long day, so let's get started.

16 By eliminating the route to Port  
17 Washington, you are hereby eliminating  
18 the ability the individuals that I  
19 support to be independent. We have  
20 several residents, both of whom are  
21 present here today, who utilize  
22 Able-Ride so they can go to work, go  
23 shopping for themselves and attend  
24 doctors' appointments.

25 We have residents who also use

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           Able-Ride to visit their loved ones who  
3           are further along the island. By  
4           eliminating Able-Ride, that is  
5           completely diminished and they have to  
6           rely on their elderly siblings or staff  
7           which often cannot take them to take  
8           them to take them.

9           I speak for YAI when I say that  
10          independence is of utmost importance to  
11          what we do and what we stand for. So  
12          today, I implore you to think about  
13          that when deciding the fate of the  
14          Able-Ride routes. Thank you, and I  
15          hope you have a wonderful afternoon.

16          MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you.

17          Before we have our next comment,  
18          we have another committee member, Joel  
19          Berse, who is kind of going to be  
20          sitting with us to listen to the  
21          comments.

22          MR. CRISMAN: My name is Kevin  
23          Chrisman, and I'm a rider of Able-Ride  
24          and I also represent my friends and  
25          colleagues from CP Nassau, and I have

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           written comments that, at the end, you  
3           can tell me where to submit. I wish  
4           this were being videotaped because what  
5           I would do is turn to everyone and  
6           raise their hand and ask if they would  
7           rather not have a bus, or take a fare  
8           increase to have a bus so they could  
9           actually get employees, because I know  
10          that I would.

11                 It's been said before, it's really  
12           impossible for people with disabilities  
13           to have richer, fuller lives if they  
14           can't get anywhere on buses that other  
15           people use that are supposed to be  
16           accessible. And the only other thing I  
17           would like to say -- I'm glad someone  
18           else mentioned it because I would have  
19           forgotten -- that not much has improved  
20           since 2012. In fact, the service has  
21           gotten worse. So I'd pay more money for  
22           better service. Thank you very much.

23                 MR. PENNER: Good afternoon. My  
24           name is Larry Penner. I'm a transit  
25           advocate and historian. I go back to

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2           the days of skank (phonetic) busing and  
3           the private operators that were taken  
4           over by the county in 1973, so I have a  
5           good institutional memory.

6           What we have is a four-way dance  
7           between fares paid by the riders known  
8           as fare-box revenue along with funding  
9           provided by Nassau County, the state  
10          and the federal government.

11          The fare-box revenue presentation  
12          proposed cuts you saw today in my  
13          professional opinion having worked in  
14          the transportation field for 31 years  
15          was fair, professional and honest.

16          No one in this room probably  
17          remembers, it was 53 years ago that the  
18          county took control of all the bus  
19          routes from private operators. Over  
20          that time, the county, state and  
21          federal governments combined have  
22          invested over 700 million dollars in  
23          capital improvements and operating  
24          subsidies easily well over  
25          \$1.5 billion.

1                   12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2                   The NICE service has continued to  
3                   be one of the best bargains in town,  
4                   believe it or not. Since the 1950s,  
5                   the average cost of riding a bus in the  
6                   county has gone up at a lower rate than  
7                   either the consumer price index or  
8                   inflation.

9                   The MetroCard introduced in 1996  
10                  affords a free transfer between NICE  
11                  Bus and Transit Authority bus or  
12                  subway. Purchasing a weekly MetroCard  
13                  further reduces the cost, and if your  
14                  employer offers transit check, that  
15                  covers even more of the.

16                  At the end of the day, it all  
17                  comes down to the ability of increased  
18                  funding for additional transportation  
19                  service to service residents.  
20                  Operating subsidies are required to  
21                  increase the level of service and  
22                  reduce the amount of time one waits for  
23                  a bus on existing routes. Same for  
24                  adding more off-peak, evening and  
25                  weekend service. This holds true for

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 those routes currently under discussion  
3 for elimination with their insufficient  
4 revenues to maintain existing service.

5 I took notes during the  
6 presentations today. What union leader  
7 in his right mind negotiating with NICE  
8 Bus is going to take a pay cut or no  
9 increase in salary when he has to  
10 negotiate on behalf of his employees,  
11 many of whom live and work in Nassau  
12 County and pay taxes like all of us.

13 Nassau County has one of the best  
14 capital programs working with the  
15 Federal Transit Administration and New  
16 York State Department of  
17 Transportation. They're so  
18 sophisticated, they tend to replace  
19 their buses when they become 12 years  
20 old, and trust me, they go after every  
21 federal discretionary dollar that's  
22 available. You're getting really a  
23 darn good deal in the organization  
24 they're managing the program.

25 Thank you.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you.

3 Are there any other comments from  
4 anyone? No other comments?

5 MR. PENNER: If you have available  
6 time, I would like another minute or  
7 two if you'll indulge me. I know your  
8 time is valuable. I would like to  
9 share with you, if you give me another  
10 minute or two.

11 MR. SHRENKEL: I'll give you  
12 another minute.

13 MR. PENNER: Before I go on, if no  
14 one else is testifying, I would ask  
15 that you give me more than a minute. I  
16 agree with you everyone is entitled to  
17 three minutes.

18 Is there anyone else who is  
19 testifying? I would let that gentleman  
20 go before me, and then if you would  
21 indulge me.

22 MR. SHRENKEL: Take your minute.

23 MR. PENNER: Just like when you  
24 own a home, there's wear and tear over  
25 time, you replace components in your

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 house, your oil burner, your roof, et  
3 cetera. The bus system in Nassau  
4 County was built with over a  
5 \$100 million in federal, state and  
6 county money for the Rockville Centre,  
7 Hempstead Bus Terminal, the Mitchell  
8 Field Bus provides the Mineola parking  
9 facility and the Stewart Avenue  
10 paratransit facility.

11 All these facilities, just like  
12 when you own a home, every year, NICE  
13 Bus working with Nassau County, state  
14 and federal government has to rebuild  
15 and replace different components of  
16 those systems.

17 I would urge you as members of the  
18 committee, visit the facilities, take a  
19 tour and see what a great job NICE Bus  
20 is doing with the capital funds being  
21 provided through a coalition of the  
22 county, state and federal governments,  
23 and the county legislature broke the  
24 deadlock last summer to provide the  
25 bonding money.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 To remind you, without a local  
3 share, it's 80 percent federal, 10  
4 percent state, 10 percent county. If  
5 the county does not continue to provide  
6 10 percent hard cash local share to  
7 county and NICE Bus corporate, millions  
8 and millions of dollars of federal  
9 assistance.

10 I'm available after the meeting if  
11 you would like to learn more about the  
12 history of our excellent bus system if  
13 you have any time. Thank you.

14 MR. STERN: My name is Howard  
15 Stern, and I live in Port Washington.  
16 I don't think I can rely on Able-Ride  
17 no more, and I'll tell you why. Each  
18 time when I'm on the road with  
19 Able-Ride, they tend not to stop and  
20 think about the other drivers coming in  
21 the opposite direction, and I do not  
22 appreciate that because they put my  
23 life in danger. What should I do then?  
24 I'm asking you what should I do  
25 because -- I just don't think I can

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 rely on Able-Ride no more. I don't  
3 appreciate it at all.

4 MS. FALCO: I'm sorry, I'm just a  
5 little bit confused. When you say that  
6 your life is put in danger, are you  
7 forced to walk across the street or are  
8 you talking about when you're already  
9 riding?

10 MR. STERN: No, I'm talking about  
11 when I'm on Able-Ride and Able-Ride  
12 drivers don't even stop and think,  
13 because they don't look when the other  
14 car is coming in the opposite  
15 direction, and that's putting my life  
16 in danger and I don't appreciate it.

17 MR. SHRENKEL: I think what you  
18 should do in that distance, please, get  
19 the facts of the date, the time of the  
20 incident, and what I recommend, of  
21 course, is that you forward this to  
22 NICE Transportation and they will look  
23 into this matter, I'm sure.

24 MR. STERN: I think I'll do that  
25 from now on.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 MR. BERSE: I just, for the  
3 record, for that gentleman that asked  
4 was a latch key kid that lived in  
5 Brooklyn and moved to Levittown in 1969  
6 and road the 73 with Skank from when I  
7 first moved there at age 11 because I  
8 was riding the city transportation at 5  
9 alone. In those days, you could.

10 So I have a knowledge, and that's  
11 one of the reasons why I was appointed  
12 to this committee of what you're  
13 talking about, and I know there are  
14 other people on this committee that are  
15 involved in other parts of the  
16 transportation system here in the  
17 county that have other knowledge.

18 So you don't have to question the  
19 fact if we know something or somebody  
20 on the committee does, and we do share  
21 with each other whenever issues come  
22 up. So I just wanted you to be  
23 satisfied that you don't have to worry  
24 that we're not informed.

25 MR. SHRENKEL: Please also

1           12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION  
2           understand, two of the members of the  
3           committee have been bus drivers for a  
4           number of years. Perhaps they didn't  
5           like my comment that the union contract  
6           has to be negotiated with strength, but  
7           nevertheless, they serve on this  
8           committee, they serve with distinction  
9           and knowledge and I'm proud to serve  
10          with them.

11                 One more comment. Yes, ma'am.

12                 MS. BESMEL: My name is Sila  
13                 Besmel, and I am here representing YAI.

14                 You know, the people that I  
15                 support may not always be eloquent or  
16                 elegant in the way that they present  
17                 their case, but it's definitely  
18                 passionate. The Able-Ride bus is their  
19                 lifeline to everything that they do.

20                 If any of us could get out of this  
21                 wheelchair right now and not depend on  
22                 it anymore, they would. Trust me, they  
23                 would. So it's very concerting to me  
24                 to see how -- I'm not saying it was  
25                 easy for Mr. Setzer. I'm sure it

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 wasn't -- to propose these cuts to the  
3 Able-Ride because there is no other  
4 choice for them. There is nothing  
5 else. If Able-Ride is not here how can  
6 they live a life.

7 We're all going to be old one day.  
8 We're all going to need something for  
9 somebody, help from somebody, from a  
10 different system. Let's set an example  
11 that there are things that we're not  
12 willing to compromise on. Able-Ride  
13 should be one of them.

14 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you.

15 Are there any other comments from  
16 the committee members?

17 MR. ROSARIO: First of all, I want  
18 to thank the legislator for being here.  
19 That's showing that it's going across  
20 party lines, and it's got to be an  
21 effort, you know, where our hands are  
22 actually tied.

23 As a committee member, that's for  
24 me. I'm torn between the services that  
25 have to be cut. People say that we

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 don't recognize the use of it. Like he  
3 said, I was a bus driver and I saw the  
4 ridership in these bus lines.

5 So it's hopeful that the  
6 legislator is here and maybe we can  
7 start working on the funding because  
8 that's where it's all at. It's about  
9 the dollars at the ends of the day. I  
10 know it affects people, but it takes  
11 money to run these lines to run the  
12 service.

13 Again, that's all I would like to  
14 say. I appreciate all the legislators  
15 being here.

16 MR. SHRENKEL: Thank you,  
17 Mr. Rosario.

18 At this point, I don't think there  
19 are any questions or comments. We have  
20 another public hearing starting at  
21 6:00. Certainly, I think the committee  
22 needs a break. Therefore, I would like  
23 someone to make a motion to adjourn our  
24 meeting.

25 Mr. Watkins-Lopez has a comment.

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 I will hold my motion.

3 MR. WATKINS-LOPEZ: I just want to  
4 remind the public, Nassau County  
5 Legislature is meeting next week and  
6 they are going to be voting on their  
7 budget. We do not have any power over  
8 the Nassau County Legislature or their  
9 budget, but you do as tax payers, as  
10 bus riders, as residents of Nassau  
11 County.

12 So I implore you to go out next  
13 week on the 14th and tell them what  
14 you've told us, because at the end of  
15 the day, they're the ones who are  
16 deciding to cut or give us the money  
17 that we need.

18 So please, if you are free next  
19 Tuesday, the 14th, come back here.  
20 Come to this room and tell the Nassau  
21 County Legislature, all 19 of them,  
22 because only two were really  
23 represented here today, what you told  
24 us. They're the ones with the power  
25 and they're the ones that you need to

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 be telling this to.

3 The meeting, I'm sure pretty sure  
4 is at 1 P.M., if I remember correctly.  
5 I think we actually have better data.

6 MS. DARCY: You're right that  
7 there is a public meeting at 1:00 for  
8 the whole legislature, and there will a  
9 time period in the beginning for public  
10 comment.

11 Just for clarity, because I don't  
12 want you coming all the way here via  
13 bus for a budget hearing that is not  
14 occurring. The budget hearing has  
15 taken place and the legislature already  
16 adopted the budget, and it's now going  
17 to be before NIFA for adoption.

18 There's also a NIFA meeting that  
19 night at 6:30 at the Marriott in  
20 Uniondale as well. So you have a 1:00  
21 full legislative session here that  
22 there is public comment and you can  
23 speak on and advocate for the bus  
24 funding, and then you can also go, if  
25 you wish, to the NIFA meeting at the

1 12/08/16 - AFTERNOON SESSION

2 Marriott in Uniondale at 6:30.

3 MR. SHRENKEL: At this point, I  
4 would like to make a motion to adjourn.  
5 Who would like to make a motion to a  
6 adjourn our meeting? Mr. Rosario,  
7 second.

8 Thank you very much for coming.  
9 Our meeting is adjourned.

10 (Whereupon, the Nassau County Bus  
11 Transit Committee meeting was concluded  
12 at 5:00 P.M.)

13 \* \* \* \*

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

STATE OF NEW YORK     )  
                              :   SS.:  
COUNTY OF SUFFOLK     )

I, ALEX TURTEL, a Notary Public for and within the State of New York, do hereby certify:

That the minutes of the Nassau County Bus Transit Committee meeting are a true and accurate record of the stenographic notes taken by me therein.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 28th day of December, 2016.

*Alex Turtel*



ALEX TURTEL