

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 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