



## Restoring Staten Island's Rail Connections

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*Staten Island's Old North Shore Rail Right of Way*

**[Update 9/20]: Last night at a community meeting with City Councilmember Michael McMahon (D-North Shore) a disgruntled citizen made this statement:**

**"The poor people of the North Shore, all they have is the bus, and if they don't have a bus, they're walking," he said. "It's inexcusable that all the politicians of Staten Island can't figure out how to open up the railroad."**

In my continuing series on Restoring New York City's region rail network, today I will touch on NYC's forgotten borough, Staten Island. While Staten Island is the smallest borough in population, it has almost half a million people. It is also New York City's least dense and most automobile dependent borough by far. Part of this stems from geographic isolation, but also because the Island was not developed until after passenger automobiles became the norm in transportation. Indeed, it's major railway branch on the North Shore of Staten Island died long before the Verrazano Bridge was completed which brought a flood of development to the island.

However, the over-reliance on the automobile has created a traffic and transportation nightmare for Staten Islanders, who have [one of the longest average commutes in the country - 44 minutes](#). So what's being done to address Staten Island's transit pain?



*Staten Island's Current Rail Line (SIRT)*

The Mayor created a [Staten Island transportation task force](#) to examine problems and recommend solutions (short & long term). While most of these recommendations involve improving traffic flow at particularly high traffic intersections there are a few that could be important to increasing mass transit usage and linking Staten Island up to the regional rail network ([June Update Presentation](#)):

Recommendation #11: Restoring the North Shore Freight Rail Service

Recommendation #12: Better Bus Service around the South Shore

Recommendation #13: Improved Bus Service to Brooklyn starting Sept 3rd.

Recommendation #14: Bus Link over the Bayonne Bridge to the Hudson, Bergen Light Rail System.

Recommendation #15: Express Service on Staten Island Rapid Transit (decreases trip time by 8-9%).

Recommendation #16: Park & Ride at Great Kills

The bus route across the Bayonne Bridge to the Hudson Bergen Light rail would increase access to the North East corridor, provide a new route to Manhattan and further increase utilization of the new light rail connection to Bayonne, thus improving it's financial health and long term growth prospects.

The other more long term project which is receiving broad political support is the restoration of the [North Shore Railroad connection between the Staten Island Ferry and Arlington](#):

Plans for new light rail line on the North Shore of Staten Island have received strong support from Borough President James Molinaro and various members of New York's congressional delegation, as well as the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce and the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation. The proposed five mile route, which would connect Arlington and the St. George Ferry Terminal, would cost \$360 million, with funding coming from federal, state and local agencies. In order to move forward, the project will require a \$4 million allocation from congress for a feasibility study which is currently awaiting approval from the House Transportation Committee.

The proposed route would run along an old rail line and could potentially cut commute times between Arlington and St. George by half to less than fifteen minutes, according to a preliminary study released by the Borough President's office. The study also estimated that the light rail would serve between 10-15,000 people and reduce the number of cars on the road by up to 7,500. Construction could be completed within eight to ten years depending on when funds are approved.

The Borough President's office conducted a poll of workers who drive to Bayonne by car if they would use the rail connection and [85% said they would](#)

Eventually, this rail service could also take advantage of Staten Island's restored freight rail network and reach out to the Northeast Corridor line as well, strengthening Staten Island's connection to the regional rail network. This would also help Staten Island refocus it's development along this rail corridor and break it's dependence on the personal automobile.

Again, this shows how regional rail networks can expand and build off one another. Without the success of the Hudson Bergen Light Rail, it's doubtful much of this would be considered for Staten Island. Now, Staten Island can link up to that line and further support it by building up connections to its own new lines.



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