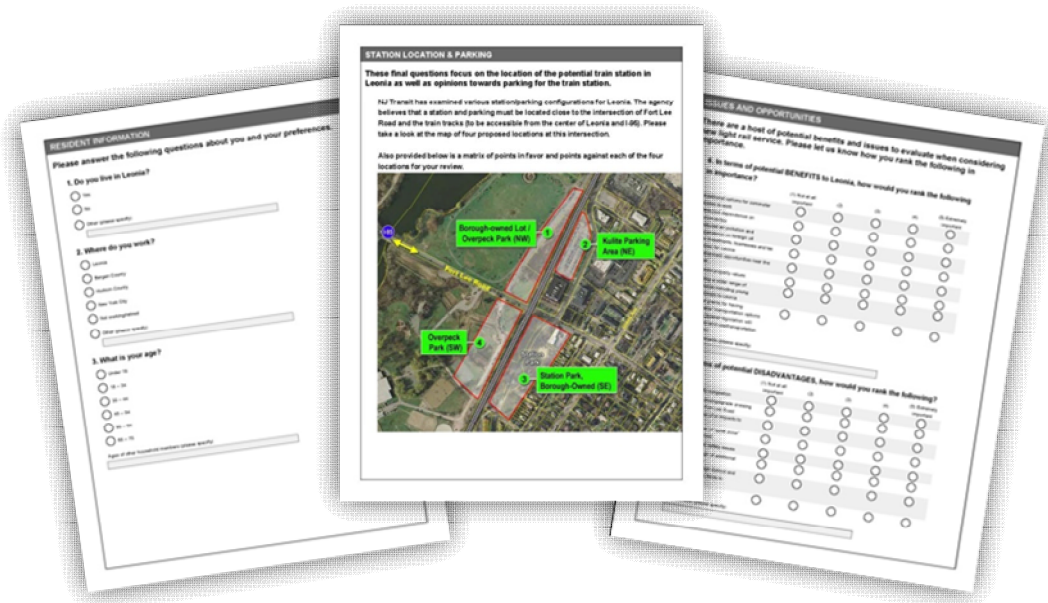


Transit Survey Results Analysis

Borough of Leonia, Bergen County, New Jersey



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OVERVIEW

This report presents a summary of the results and findings of the *Leonia Transit Survey*.

The Borough of Leonia conducted a Transit Survey as a way to collect and understand the opinions and preferences of Leonians towards the proposed NJ Transit “light rail” project, known as the Northern Branch line. The proposed NJ Transit plan for the Northern Branch line would restore passenger light rail service along an 11-mile-stretch of existing rail track between the Cresskill/Tenafly border and Hoboken, with connections to New York City by ferry and PATH service. While the existing track currently accommodates intermittent freight cars, passenger rail service has not run on the line for over 40 years.

Prior to issuing the survey, the Borough provided multiple opportunities for public input and dialogue, where residents could “weigh in” on various anticipated aspects of the proposed NJ Transit project. The proposed rail service has also been the subject of discussion of various other Planning efforts in the Borough, including most recently, the 2009 Master Plan Re-Examination Report and Economic Plan Element of the Master Plan. As was demonstrated during the public participation process for these efforts, as well as in other public forums, the subject of potential rail service in Leonia generates a robust response and produces a spirited dialogue among Leonia’s residents.

A survey was proposed as a way to try and generate wider input into the process. A survey is a convenient way for residents who are unable to attend public meetings to contribute to the discussion. It is also a way for to gather input from those who prefer to contribute in anonymity or with greater privacy than is afforded at a public meeting. The survey also provides a way to record resident preferences analytically, and in a consistent manner since every respondent answers the exact same questions. At the same time, by offering “comment” fields, respondents can provide candid responses in their own words.

The Survey asks questions to try and understand resident perspectives on transit issues other than a simple “yes” or “no.” The survey tries to understand how might residents use the rail? How would prefer to get to a station? How do they rank certain benefits and disadvantages in importance? What amenities would be important to seek from NJ Transit? And what are resident preferences for various station location and parking options? If in the end, NJ Transit moves the rail project forward, the Borough will be in a better position to negotiate with the Agency, having been armed with the information that is important to residents.

The survey questions were created and vetted through a collaborative effort between the Borough's hired Planning and Transportation Consultants (H2M Associates and Urbana Consulting) and the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Transportation. Upon finalization of the questions, the online version of survey ran for two and half months, between July 1, 2010 and October 15, 2010 at www.surveymonkey.com. The survey contained an introductory letter from the Mayor, a page of general information about the proposed rail service, and 13 questions. Paper copies of the survey were made available at Borough Hall and the Leonia Library.

The survey was advertised through numerous outlets to ensure a large and varied pool of responses. The survey was advertised at public forums, at Mayor and Council meetings, on community email list serves, through the public schools, and various other avenues.

In all, there were 566 responses to the survey, including 476 online submissions and 90 paper surveys. Respondents were allowed to skip questions if they desired, although more than 90% of respondents, on average, answered each question. Most questions provided an opportunity for respondents to enter their own "comments" into a text box.

The survey results were first analyzed for instances of duplication or cases where multiple responses ("stuffing the ballot") could come from the same respondent. The conclusion was that this was not a problem. Where there were instances of responses coming from the same computer (duplicate IP addresses); however, in these instances, answers to questions differed in content, or different names and addresses were provided.

The average survey respondent...

- lives in Leonia
- works in NYC
- is 55 – 64 Years Old
- would use Light Rail for Personal or Recreational trips to go to NYC
- prefers to get to the station by walking
- believes reducing air pollution, dependency on foreign oil, and dependency on automobiles are extremely important benefits of Light Rail
- believes the potential traffic congestion is the greatest disadvantage of light rail
- believes the pedestrian overpass between LHS and Overpeck Park is the most critical amenity for NJ Transit to provide
- prefers the station to be at the Borough-owned Overpeck Park North lot
- believes a parking garage, rather than a surface lot, is essential to reduce impacts of a large parking facility

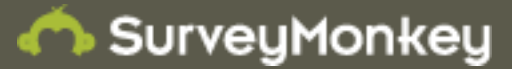
1-PAGE SUMMARY

- (1) Approximately 91% of survey respondents live in Leonia.
- (2) More respondents indicated they work in NYC (32%) than anywhere else, including Bergen County (18%), Leonia (15%), Hudson County (6%), are retired (15%) or other location.
- (3) The largest age cohort to respond was 55-64 year olds (29%).
- (4) Most respondents indicated they would use the light rail for personal or recreational trips (either to NYC, 57% or the Hudson River Waterfront, 40%) or as a travel option for visitors (46%). Those indicating they would use the rail for commuting purposes included 38.4% of respondents. Those who would rarely use the light rail service (21.5%) outnumbered those who indicated they would not ever use the rail service (12.2%).
- (5) If using the Light Rail, most respondents (67%) would prefer to get to the station by walking. Nearly half (44%) would prefer to drive and park, while more than a third (36%) would prefer to get dropped off. Bicycling to the station is an option preferred by 20% of respondents, while 24% would like to be able to take a bus or jitney service.
- (6) Of the potential benefits of having a light rail option, respondents ranked environmental and commuter convenience benefits most highly. Reducing air pollution and dependence on foreign oil, reducing dependence on automobiles, and having additional options for commuters were ranked as “extremely important” by 50.8%, 50.5% and 47.6% of respondents, respectively. More than a third of respondents ranked economic benefits such as new investments, businesses and tax ratables for Leonia (35.7%) and increased property values (35.2%) as “extremely important.”
- (7) Of the potential disadvantages of having a light rail option, traffic concerns rank most highly. The increase in traffic congestion and delays at grade crossings along Fort Lee Road were ranked as “extremely important” by 54% and 45% of respondents, respectively. Similarly, the potential loss of parkland is seen as an extremely important disadvantage for 43% of respondents.
- (8) The most important concessions or amenities for Leonia to negotiate with NJ Transit are those ranked “extremely important” by the most respondents. These include a pedestrian overpass between Leonia High School and Overpeck Park (48%) and achieving “quiet-zone” status (44%), as well as providing certain features at the station such as trash and recycling receptacles (45%), pedestrian lighting (44%), bike racks (35%), and street trees and landscaping (35%).
- (9) More respondents prefer that the station be located within the Borough-owned Overpeck Park north lot (40.2%), as compared to Borough-owned Station Park (28%), County-owned Overpeck Park South (22%) or the Kulite property (9.5%).
- (10) Nearly half of respondents (47%) indicated that a parking garage, rather than an open lot, would be essential to minimize the physical footprint and aesthetic and visual impacts of the proposed 550-space parking facility.
- (11) More than half of respondents believe that it is “extremely important” to design the station and parking area to minimize physical impact to the area and ensure the parking facility is within walking distance of the station and bus stops (56.5%). Providing Leonia residents the opportunity to have reserved parking permits at the station was ranked as extremely important to 43% of respondents.

SURVEY RESULTS ANALYSIS

The following pages provide a detailed analysis of the responses for each question of the survey. The analysis is based on all of the surveys received, inclusive of both online and paper survey submissions.






Leonia Borough Northern Branch Light Rail Survey










1. Do you live in Leonia?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		91.3%	505
No		7.8%	43
Other (please specify)		0.9%	5
answered question			553
skipped question			13

2. Where do you work?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Leonia		15.0%	83
Bergen County		18.1%	100
Hudson County		6.2%	34
New York City		32.1%	177
Not working/retired		15.0%	83
Other (please specify)		13.6%	75
answered question			552
skipped question			14


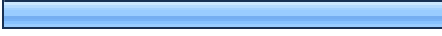


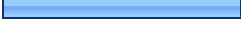
3. What is your age?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Under 18		0.9%	5
18 – 34		9.5%	52
35 – 44		18.9%	103
45 – 54		25.1%	137
55 – 64		29.1%	159
65 – 75		16.5%	90
Ages of other household members (please specify)			239
answered question			546
skipped question			20

4. Would you or any family members consider using the Leonia light rail station ? (Check all that apply.)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Commuting most days		24.5%	134
Commuting 1-2 days per week		13.9%	76
Personal or recreational trips to the Hudson River Waterfront		40.7%	223
Personal or recreational trips to New York City		56.8%	311
As a travel option for visitors (friends, relatives, etc.) to get to Leonia		46.2%	253
I would rarely use the rail service		21.5%	118
I would not ever use the rail service		12.2%	67
		Other (please specify)	31
		answered question	548
		skipped question	18

5. If using light rail, how would you prefer to get there? (Check all that apply.)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Drive and park there		43.9%	224
Walk to the station		66.7%	340
Bike to the station		20.4%	104
Take a bus/jitney to the station		24.1%	123
Get dropped off		35.7%	182
		Other (please specify)	27
		answered question	510
		skipped question	56

6. In terms of potential BENEFITS to Leonia, how would you rank the following in importance?

	(1) Not at all important	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) Extremely important	Rating Average	Response Count
Additional options for commuter access to work	11.3% (59)	6.7% (35)	13.2% (69)	21.2% (111)	47.6% (249)	3.87	523
Reduced dependence on automobiles	8.6% (45)	7.4% (39)	14.1% (74)	19.4% (102)	50.5% (265)	3.96	525
Reduced air pollution and dependence on foreign oil	8.3% (43)	8.7% (45)	14.6% (76)	17.7% (92)	50.8% (264)	3.94	520
New investments, businesses and tax ratables for Leonia	10.2% (53)	9.6% (50)	21.3% (111)	23.2% (121)	35.7% (186)	3.65	521
Development opportunities near the station	22.8% (119)	11.7% (61)	21.7% (113)	20.5% (107)	23.2% (121)	3.10	521
Increased property values	9.4% (49)	9.8% (51)	20.6% (107)	25.0% (130)	35.2% (183)	3.67	520
Attracting a wider range of households including young professionals to Leonia	11.3% (59)	11.5% (60)	20.8% (108)	27.9% (145)	28.5% (148)	3.51	520
Potential grants for having "sustainable" transportation options (pending federal legislation will emphasize land use/transportation connection)	9.4% (47)	10.4% (52)	25.5% (128)	24.7% (124)	30.1% (151)	3.56	502
Other/Comments (please specify)							63
answered question							528
skipped question							38

7. In terms of potential DISADVANTAGES, how would you rank the following?

	(1) Not at all important	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) Extremely important	Rating Average	Response Count
Increased traffic congestion	6.0% (32)	10.5% (56)	16.5% (88)	13.0% (69)	53.9% (287)	3.98	532
Delays at gate closings/grade crossing on traffic along Fort Lee Road	9.9% (52)	10.7% (56)	19.3% (101)	14.9% (78)	45.2% (237)	3.75	524
The potential loss of or impacts to parkland	12.1% (64)	13.3% (70)	16.3% (86)	15.2% (80)	43.1% (227)	3.64	527
Train whistle noise (if “quiet zone” status is not obtained)	16.6% (88)	15.3% (81)	18.0% (95)	14.7% (78)	35.3% (187)	3.37	529
Potential pedestrian safety issues	14.0% (73)	18.4% (96)	21.0% (110)	14.9% (78)	31.7% (166)	3.32	523
Costs to the Borough of additional emergency services	10.2% (54)	12.9% (68)	20.8% (110)	20.1% (106)	36.0% (190)	3.59	528
Effects on Leonia High School and access to the athletic fields in Overpeck Park	13.3% (70)	12.9% (68)	18.6% (98)	19.1% (101)	36.2% (191)	3.52	528
Light pollution	19.4% (100)	20.0% (103)	22.7% (117)	14.1% (73)	23.8% (123)	3.03	516
Other/Comments (please specify)							73
answered question							532
skipped question							34

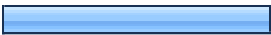

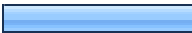

8. When seeking concessions or amenities from NJ Transit in the project design, how important are the following?

	(1) Not at all important	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) Extremely important	Rating Average	Response Count
A pedestrian overpass from Leonia High School to Overpeck Park sports facilities	7.1% (37)	6.5% (34)	16.3% (85)	22.0% (115)	48.2% (252)	3.98	523
Capital funding to help achieve “quiet zone” status (trolley-type bells rather than train whistles announcing train crossings)	8.7% (45)	8.1% (42)	17.7% (92)	21.4% (111)	44.1% (229)	3.84	519
Parking garage instead of open lot	22.3% (114)	12.9% (66)	22.3% (114)	19.1% (98)	23.4% (120)	3.09	512
Station-oriented retail shops at or around the station	26.1% (135)	15.5% (80)	29.8% (154)	16.2% (84)	12.4% (64)	2.73	517
Raised/textured crosswalks and wide sidewalks	11.8% (60)	13.7% (70)	29.8% (152)	25.7% (131)	19.0% (97)	3.26	510
Street trees and Landscaping	8.3% (43)	8.3% (43)	21.1% (110)	27.1% (141)	35.3% (184)	3.73	521
Benches and seating	8.4% (44)	6.5% (34)	24.6% (128)	32.8% (171)	27.6% (144)	3.65	521
Trash & recycling receptacles	3.4% (18)	5.9% (31)	16.1% (84)	29.7% (155)	44.8% (234)	4.07	522
Bike racks	6.4% (33)	8.5% (44)	22.2% (115)	28.2% (146)	34.7% (180)	3.76	518
Public Art	28.4% (145)	16.4% (84)	26.4% (135)	15.7% (80)	13.1% (67)	2.69	511
Pedestrian lighting	4.3% (22)	3.3% (17)	18.6% (96)	29.8% (154)	44.0% (227)	4.06	516
Solar array on top of a parking structure	18.8% (93)	12.1% (60)	26.8% (133)	23.0% (114)	19.4% (96)	3.12	496
Other (please specify)							75
answered question							525





skipped question

41

9. My preference among these proposed locations is for:

		Response Percent	Response Count
1-NW: Overpeck Park North (Borough-owned)		40.2%	187
2-NE: Kulite (Privately owned)		9.5%	44
3-SE: Station Park (Borough-owned)		28.4%	132
4-SW: Overpeck Park South (County-owned)		21.9%	102
Other/Comments? (please specify)			115
		answered question	465
		skipped question	101




10. Most transit riders using Leonia station are likely arrive from I-95 and this highway exit makes it an attractive place for NJ Transit to establish a commuter parking facility. NJ Transit envisions a 550-space parking facility. Which of the following statements comes closest to your views?

		Response Percent	Response Count
A 550-space parking facility is too big.		18.3%	86
A 550-space parking facility is too small; NJ Transit predicts 3,000 round-trip riders at the proposed Leonia station, with most arriving from I-95.		12.6%	59
Regardless of the number of parking spaces, a parking garage, rather than an open lot is essential to minimize the physical footprint and aesthetic and visual impacts of the project.		47.1%	221
Even if Leonia has been advised that projected ridership and NJ Transit project planning will not allow for a drop off (no parking) station design, Leonia should fight for this approach even at the risk of ending up with a NJ Transit design that is less favorable than could otherwise have been obtained through cooperation and compromise.		22.0%	103
	Other/Comments? (please specify)		104
answered question			469
skipped question			97

11. How important are the following parking-related issues?							
	(1) Not at all important	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) Extremely important	Rating Average	Response Count
Leonia residents should have the opportunity to reserve a portion of the parking permits at the station area	7.6% (37)	5.5% (27)	19.7% (96)	24.4% (119)	42.8% (209)	3.89	488
The parking facility should be a parking garage (not a larger surface parking lot)	15.2% (73)	6.7% (32)	19.1% (92)	20.0% (96)	39.1% (188)	3.61	481
The parking facility should be within walking distance of the station and bus stops for transferring passengers	5.2% (25)	1.4% (7)	11.4% (55)	25.5% (123)	56.5% (273)	4.27	483
Any parking facility must be "right-sized" to accommodate NJ Transit's projected vehicle usage.	11.7% (56)	7.7% (37)	21.7% (104)	26.1% (125)	32.8% (157)	3.61	479
Any station/parking design should minimize physical impacts to the area and favor pedestrian and non-parking (bus transfers, drop-offs, cyclists) light rail users	5.3% (26)	6.1% (30)	13.9% (69)	16.8% (83)	58.0% (287)	4.16	495
Other/Comment? (please specify)							62
answered question							504
skipped question							62

12. Do you have any other comments concerning parking or any aspect of the proposed light rail project?	
	Response Count
	190
answered question	190
skipped question	376

13. Please provide your name and address (optional for those completing the electronic version).

		Response Percent	Response Count
Name (First, Last)		97.8%	314
Street Address		94.4%	303
City, State, Zip		97.8%	314
		answered question	321
		skipped question	245

Appendix: SUMMARY OF USER COMMENTS

From all of the written comments collected throughout the survey, it is clear that opinions on the topic of light rail vary widely. This section attempts to summarize the hundreds of written responses received throughout the survey into various common “themes.” The intent here is not to provide judgment as to the responses, but to provide Borough Officials with a general synopsis of the comments made by survey respondents.

In Favor of Train Service

Many respondents expressly stated that they were in support of train service in Leonia. Respondents stated that Leonia could benefit from the proposed project for a variety of reasons, including:

- Traffic and congestion in Leonia and the region is at a tipping point. The area is in critical need of transportation alternatives to the automobile.
- The train service would fill a much needed transit void in Bergen County, which currently has no active passenger rail service.
- The existing bus service into Manhattan is inadequate and additional alternatives are needed. Bus transportation is subject to traffic conditions, which is worsening throughout the region. Bus service is also unpredictable and unreliable.
- The project will offer Leonia residents easy, convenient access to important job markets.
- The project will attract businesses to the Borough and economic development opportunities.
- The project will attract younger residents to live in Leonia and others who are looking for a convenient commute to the lower Hudson County or New York City job market.
- The massive infrastructure investment will have long-term benefits for Leonia, future Borough residents, and the region as a whole. Effort should be spent on finding solutions to mitigate the anticipated problems, rather than opposing the project altogether.

Not in Favor of Train Service

Many respondents expressly stated that they were not in favor of train service in Leonia. These respondents provided various explanations for why train service is not needed or should not be implemented in Leonia, including:

- The existing bus service to New York City is an adequate mass transit option. Compared to bus travel, the train service would not be able to offer a “one seat” ride into the City and could not compete with the 25 minute ride from Leonia to midtown.
- The train service and parking would not necessarily benefit Leonia. The proposed commuter lot, in particular, would cater to out-of-towners and not Borough residents. Also, since Leonians commuting to Manhattan would likely continue taking the bus as a preferred option, the ridership from Leonia would be much lower than proposed NJ Transit estimates.
- The train service would exacerbate existing traffic problems, most specifically because of the gate closings at grade crossings and the traffic generated from commuter parkers. The concern for worsening traffic conditions was mentioned repeatedly for Fort Lee Road, Grand Street and Broad Street.
- The train service would change the small-town, residential character of Leonia. Respondents indicated that the train may bring undesirable commercial development or residents to the Borough.
- The train service would impact quality of life for residents living close to the train and people around the train. Residents who indicated they lived close to the train tracks wrote about fear of noise, vibration and general nuisance coming from a frequent train passing by their home. Others indicated fears of pedestrian safety, including children crossing between Leonia High School and Overpeck Park, as well as general fears of increases in crime.

Change the Location

Many respondents wrote that they did not necessarily oppose the project, but felt strongly that the *location* of the station and parking was the problem. For a variety of key reasons (traffic/congestion, noise, vibration, pollution, pedestrian safety and the loss of parkland), respondents opposed the location of the station and parking at the Fort Lee Road intersection. Respondents provided preferences for other locations, including:

- Locating the station and parking at the existing DPW site with access via Cedar Lane in Englewood and extending the service road from I-95, as well as providing access from Route 4 and from Ray Avenue.
- Locating the station and parking within undeveloped land under or close to I-95.
- Locating the station and parking at another location at the northern end of town.

Traffic and Parking

By far, the most reiterated reason for opposition to, or concern regarding, the light rail project was the anticipated impact of additional traffic and congestion on roads that already experience severe traffic conditions. Similarly, respondents expressed concerns about the impact of the proposed commuter parking facility for a variety of reasons. Respondents stated:

- The traffic along Fort Lee Road is currently a serious problem as it is a major route to and from the George Washington Bridge, and traffic often backs up between the I-95 exit and the bridge. The problem would be exacerbated by the additional commuter traffic coming from I-95 to the station and the delays caused by gate closings at Fort Lee Road.
- The additional traffic impact along Fort Lee Road would also exacerbate the existing poor traffic conditions that occur during rush hour periods on both Grand Avenue and Broad Avenue.
- The proposed commuter parking lot would add many out-of-town drivers to Leonia's limited street network and cause additional traffic, but would not benefit Leonia residents. (Alternatively, other respondents indicated that realistically, Leonians would in all likelihood utilize the parking area as the distance from most residences to the station is prohibitively far to walk, and not all residents will be able to get dropped off.)
- The proposed commuter parking lot should be drastically reduced in size, or should be a kiss n' ride facility, only. (Alternatively, other respondents indicated that this scenario still does not mitigate traffic, as drivers that queue-up for a drop-off area may only generate more traffic problems. Similarly, it is not realistic to assume all transit users will have access to a means of drop-off.)
- The proposed commuter parking facility will result in the loss of valuable parkland that is critical open space and recreation space for the Borough.

- The proposed commuter parking facility will alter the appearance of the entrance to the Borough, particularly if a structured parking facility is built.

Other Issues of Concern

Both respondents in favor of the train station, as well as those against it, voiced concern over a number of issues that could arise from the project. Respondents stated:

- Security at the station and parking area and safety of transit users, particularly in the evening hours, is an issue of concern.
- The additional cost to taxpayers, including providing police and emergency services to the station, is an issue of concern.
- The anticipated sound of loud whistles and the general noise and vibration caused by the train is an issue for residents in close proximity to the tracks. Other respondents worried that an approved “Quiet zone” status may make crossings more dangerous for pedestrians and students in the area.
- The small-town character of the town that makes it so appealing should not change because of a light rail.
- Leonians should receive priority parking or reduced parking fares.
- If an adequate parking facility is not provided, commuter parking on local streets is a concern. This problem already exists for bus commuters.
- Conditions for pedestrian and bicyclists would need to be improved for these modes of transportation to the station to be viable alternatives to driving.

Suggestions for Mitigating Traffic Issues

Respondents provided numerous recommendations and ideas that they felt could reduce negative impacts if the proposed station and parking area were to be developed at the Fort Lee Road intersection. Suggestions included:

- Construct a vehicle overpass over Fort Lee Road, or otherwise a tunnel under Fort Lee Road to avoid further traffic disruption by gate closings.

- Provide an elevated track and station for the train at Fort Lee Road. Include the parking garage as part of the construction of the elevated train station.
- Have stations and parking areas on both sides of the train tracks (i.e., at Station Park and the southwest quadrant of Overpeck Park.) Ensure that commuters are able to enter and exit the parking facility from Fort Lee Road without having to cross over the tracks.
- Locate the station and parking within the “new” Overpeck Park area west of the river. Construct a new road between this area, I-95 and the train station to avoid additional traffic on Fort Lee Road.
- Extend Christie Heights Street to Grand Avenue to disperse volume on Fort Lee Road.
- Restrict making a left turns in and out of the parking facility. Construct a roundabout, instead.

Other Considerations and Recommendations

Respondents suggested other considerations that should be explored as part of the project. Respondents stated:

- A Transit Village project designation and obtaining related sources of grant funding should be explored. (Some respondents suggested a transit village for the DPW site.)
- A rail project may have the opportunity to create economic development opportunities and an enhanced retail presence at Leonia’s primary gateway.
- A shuttle-, trolley-, or bus-to- rail service should be explored to reduce the amount of traffic generated by Leonia residents accessing the parking area.
- NJ Transit should consider extending the hours of service until midnight so that people may consider using the line to access nighttime entertainment such as evening ball games, Broadway, etc.
- NJ Transit and the Borough should look at the successes of other light rail systems in the United States and throughout Europe to find models of good design that mitigates negative community impact.
- NJ Transit and the Borough must ensure that the design of the station and parking area fit within the context of a small community.