

**Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen
New Jersey Transit
General Committee of Adjustment**



JULY 19, 2017 — The following is a statement from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) in response to allegations by NJ Transit that is locomotive engineers are to blame for manpower shortages.

“New Jersey Transit management has portrayed its locomotive engineers in a negative light by blaming them for recent manpower shortages at the commuter railroad, implying that engineers simply do not want to come to work. In fact, the opposite is true. Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen are highly trained professionals who take their commitment to safety and to the traveling public very seriously. Since track work began at New York’s Penn Station, many engineers have worked on their scheduled days off and have come to work early and stayed late in order to do their part during the unprecedented summer construction schedule.

“In public statements, NJ Transit has made an issue out of engineers exercising their contractual right to take up to 48 hours to choose a work assignment after they have been displaced from their current assignment. However, this is not the root cause of the current manpower shortage. Even during normal traffic periods the railroad does not have enough locomotive engineers to cover all work assignments.

“The BLET warned NJ Transit management over two years ago that current locomotive engineer staffing levels were inadequate. The Penn Station track work added 8-10 new work assignments and the current staff of locomotive engineers are simply spread too thin to keep up with the added work. Also, it should be noted that NJ Transit management did not consult with the BLET in any way to develop an improved engineer-scheduling plan prior to the start of Penn Station track work.

“The BLET recommends that NJ Transit hire up to 30 additional locomotive engineers to cover all work assignments, but that is a long term solution given that it takes up to two years for a locomotive engineer to become fully trained and federally certified at NJ Transit. In the short term, the BLET suggests that NJ Transit combine some of its eight hour work assignments into 10 or 11 hour assignments, allowing the railroad to run more trains with its current workforce of engineers. The BLET stands ready to work with NJ Transit management to solve its manpower issues to better serve the traveling public.”

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