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## **WINTER CRISIS: COMMUTER SUMMIT**

### **CT RAIL COMMUTER COUNCIL CONVENES MEETING TO INVESTIGATE METRO-NORTH WINTER SERVICE CRISIS**

#### **Commuters, Railroad, Kawasaki, Lawmakers Invited**

( Stamford CT - February 5, 2011 ): With Metro-North's New Haven line service nearing a "meltdown", The CT Rail Commuter Council is convening a special meeting of all stakeholders to discuss the crisis on **Wednesday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at 7 pm in Stamford Government Center.**

"We are inviting commuters, Metro-North, the CDOT, elected officials and Kawasaki to join us," says Jim Cameron of Darien, Chairman of the legislature-appointed watchdog group.

"We especially want commuters who have suffered through recent weeks of delays, cancellations and unheated cars to attend, share their experiences and get their questions answered," added Council Vice Chair Terri Cronin from Norwalk. "The folks from Metro-North need to hear from their customers. But commuters also need to hear Metro-North explain their challenges in running a first class railroad with third-world equipment."

Because the real solution to this crisis is the introduction of the new M8 railcars, now months behind schedule, the Council is also inviting manufacturer Kawasaki and consulting firm LTK to join the meeting to explain the continuing delays in the M8 testing. And elected officials are invited to attend to listen to their constituents and hear from the railroad what they need to fix the system.

A combination of poorly designed, now-obsolete equipment, horrendous weather and continuing delays in the M8 testing has shattered Metro-North's operations in Connecticut this winter. Half of the 300+ fleet of cars is out of service. Inadequate shop facilities make it impossible to repair those cars, forcing Metro-

North to cut schedules and run trains with fewer cars, leading to standing-room-only conditions.

The state's \$866 million investment in new M8 railcars has brought no help to this crisis as promises that the cars would be in service in late 2009 were broken by production problems. Delivery of the first car in December 2009 then led to new in-service targets of "late 2010". But by December 2010, testing identified new problems. Neither Metro-North nor CDOT is offering any estimate of when the M8s will complete necessary testing and be ready to run.

"The Commuter Council has been following the M8 car program for six years," said Cameron. "We have asked for detailed information about the testing and the delays but have been given few answers. Commuters and taxpayers deserve a full explanation about these delays."

Even when the first test cars in the M8 order enter service, it will be at least three years before the full 300 car order is delivered and on the tracks. That means future winters will leave the railroad vulnerable to breakdowns similar to this year if weather conditions are as bad.

"Our M2 cars are 35 years into their 25 year life-expectancy," says John Hartwell, a member of the Council from Westport. "Metro-North deserves a lot of credit for their efforts to keep these cars running, especially in blizzards and ice storms so bad that Amtrak shut down."

Created by the Connecticut legislature, the CT Rail Commuter Council's members are Metro-North or Shore Line East commuters who serve, without compensation, as advocates of their fellow riders' interests. The CT Rail Commuter Council meets monthly with Metro-North and Connecticut Dept of Transportation and testifies before state and regional boards and commissions in favor of affordable, reliable rail service in the state. The CT Rail Commuter Council is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of service to commuters.

More information is available at the Council's website: [www.trainweb.org/ct](http://www.trainweb.org/ct)

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