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## **Out of an Abundance of Caution for the Health, Safety and Welfare of Monmouth County Families—Especially the Children—Reject JCP&L’s Power Line Project**

*Remarks by Rep. Chris Smith  
at NJ Transit Board of Directors  
October 13, 2016*

Thank you for the opportunity to address the NJ Transit Board of Directors this morning.

Let me begin by expressing my heartfelt concern for all of the victims of the Hoboken tragedy—passengers and NJ Transit personnel—and allow me to convey my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Fabiola Bittar de Kroon.

I’m here today to respectfully ask that the Board reject use of NJ Transit’s right of way along the proposed 10 mile portion of the North Jersey Coast Line—from Red Bank to Matawan-Aberdeen Stations—for JCP&L’s Monmouth Reliability Project.

As you know, an amazing group of Monmouth County citizens called RAGE, led by Rachael Kanapka, have highlighted numerous potentially adverse safety, health and economic consequences for families—especially young children—living in close proximity to the giant monopoles and wires.

NJ Transit prides itself on not only providing an essential public service but on being a good neighbor as well.

Installation of the 130’-210’ monopoles and wires is likely to be nocturnal—all but guaranteeing little or no rest for months, even years for homeowners.

If NJ Transit accepts JCP&L’s proposal, home values will decline significantly causing serious economic hardship for communities that are still reeling from Superstorm Sandy. Anyone who desires

to sell or must sell due to a myriad of factors including change of job or retirement may not only suffer a steep loss but may have difficulty even finding a buyer.

Testimony at a 2012 congressional hearing—*The Impact of Overhead High Voltage Transmission Lines on Eligibility for FHA Insured Mortgage Programs*—found that in Chino Hills California, property values plummeted overnight by 17% or more when a project nearly identical to JCP&L's became a reality.

Not only did homeowners suffer economic loss, but FHA can use “unsafe distance from any power line or tower” in its criteria on whether or not to provide FHA insurance. I've been in the backyards of homeowners adjacent to the rail line—they will only be yards away from the monopoles.

Chino Hills had a happy outcome. Eventually, the California Public Utilities Commission reversed the decision and voted to place portions of the lines in Chino Hills underground.

Most importantly—and out of an abundance of caution—I ask you to reject the JCP&L project because of potential health hazards to children due to daily exposure to low frequency magnetic fields.

Some may argue that there is little or no adverse health link to exposure and may produce select studies that suggest that.

But there is statistically relevant evidence including studies that suggests otherwise.

A New York Times article in July 2014 said that cancer caused by an extremely low frequency magnet field was an “uncomfortable possibility” and noted that an “epidemiological study comparing children in Denver who died of cancer from 1950 to 1973 with a control group of other children found that those who lived near electrical distribution lines were twice as likely to develop the disease as those who did not. A subsequent study, by scientists who sought to eliminate what was seen as flaws in the first study, had nearly identical conclusions.”

In 2002, the World Health organization (WHO) concluded that low frequency magnetic fields were “possibly carcinogenic”.

In 2007, WHO reiterated that the evidence of cancer risk from low frequency magnetic fields “is sufficiently strong enough” to cause a concern.

A massive French study that included all 2,779 cases of childhood acute leukemia in France over 2002-2007 and 30,000 contemporaneous population controls concluded that there were increased odds for childhood acute leukemia occurrence living within 50 meters of high voltage power lines.

Over my 36 years as a member of congress, I've been the prime author of several major Public Laws including research and services for persons with autism, assisting veterans with the Persian Gulf mystery illness, and a major amendment to help atomic veterans and their surviving widows and children.

Other bills I've written are currently pending on Lyme disease and neglected tropical diseases. In the 1980s I cosponsored an Agent Orange amendment—it failed although today Agent Orange exposure is recognized a basis for disease and veteran's service connected disability.

Each of those legislative initiatives had or has one thing in common—overcoming a culture of denial of the science.

Out of an abundance of caution and concern for the families—especially children—who may be adversely affected by JCP&L's proposal, I ask that you turn it down.