March 2017 Passenger Ridership

- March ridership was -6.0% lower than last March, in raw numbers.
  - Ridership was -2.7% lower than last year when factoring out calendar differences, major weather incidents and special events (Adjusted Percent Change).
  - March weekday ridership averaged -5.0% lower than last year, -0.8% lower excluding the week of the March 14th snowstorm and the final week of the month that witnessed rain on 4 of 5 days.
  - Weekend ridership averaged -8.7% lower than last year. Weekends battled weather conditions, with weekend temperatures averaging -10 degrees colder than last March, with rain on 3 of 8 weekend days, contrasted with 1 of 8 days last year.

- Latest 12 months ridership collectively has totaled 266.7 million passenger trips, -2.8% lower than the 12 months prior to that.

- With spring beckoning and a long 31 day calendar, ridership levels during March are generally slightly above annual averages. During the past decade March ridership has averaged +1.6% higher than the average of the other 11 months of the year.

- Ridership trends among the region’s large transit systems continue to show commonality. Trends for the first 6 months of fiscal year 2017 (latest comparable period available) for all systems have moderated from fiscal year 2016 levels.
Bus Ridership

- March Bus ridership was -7.2% lower than last year, in raw numbers.
  - ~2.7% lower than last March when adjusted for distortions caused by calendar differences, major weather incidents and special events.
  - During FY17 NY Interstate Bus routes ridership is down -0.4%; North Jersey in-state travel -5.2%; South Jersey -8.5%.

Rail Ridership

- March Rail ridership -3.3% lower than last year, in raw numbers.
  - ~1.3% lower than last March when adjusted for distortions.
  - Overall Rail Monthly Pass levels unchanged from last March; NY Penn Passes up +0.3%; Newark Penn +1.8% higher; Hoboken up +0.3%.

Light Rail Ridership

- March Light Rail ridership -7.7% below last year.
  - HBLR (~ 6.6%)
  - Newark Light Rail (~ 9.6%)
  - River LINE (~ 9.8%)
  - Light Rail travel impacted by March 14th snowstorm and inclement weekend weather.
Weather

- Temperatures swung wildly during March, both above and below average. Instances of precipitation were above average for March; total rain and snowmelt equivalent quantity were +21% above normal. A late winter storm dropped 6.9 inches of snow on March 14th, and a subsequent cold spell kept the ground covered for another week.

- Significantly colder than last March. More instances of precipitation this year overall, with the weekend increase significant.
  - March saw 11 days with rain or snow; last year 8 days; past decade has averaged 9.3 March rain/snow days.
  - Temperatures dipped below freezing on 16 days this March, compared to only 6 days last March.
  - Major nor’easter winter storm on March 14th, with 6.9 inches of snow reported at Newark Airport; inland North Jersey readings were as high as 15.8 inches. A state of emergency was declared in New Jersey during the storm.

Calendar & Special Events

- Same number of weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays as last year. Good Friday and Easter occurred last year during March (this year the observances fall in April).

Economy

- Preliminary March employment data shows regional employment growth of +1.4%, somewhat below the fiscal year average of +1.7%
  - NY City +1.3%
  - New Jersey +1.1%
  - Philadelphia +3.2%
  - Region +1.4%

- Nationally, employment during March was +1.5% higher than last year.
Gasoline Prices

- March regional gasoline prices were +26% higher than last March. Year-over-year gas prices have risen during the past five months, following 28 consecutive months of price declines that had totaled -43%.

- New Jersey’s gasoline tax had increased November 1, 2016.

- Even with the hike in the NJ gas tax, inflation-adjusted March prices were still -35% lower than three years ago and -39% lower than four years ago.

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) on NJ Roads

- February (latest available data) New Jersey VMT as calculated by the USDOT Federal Highway Administration was +0.5% higher than one year earlier; February last year was a leap year with an additional weekday more than this year.

- NJ VMT during the 12 months ending in February was record-setting, the highest VMT ever in any 12 month period.

- During the past 12 months NJ VMT has been +1.1% higher than the 12 months before that.