



SECTION D  
HERALDNEWS

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# Working



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## Get to work by 9? That's late



**5:09 A.M.:** Valencia boards NJ Transit bus 161 at a Rt. 46 East bus stop in Elmwood Park, five minutes from his Fair Lawn home, a thermos of coffee in hand. He needs to make it to Manhattan by 6 a.m. for work as a window-washer.



**5:26 A.M.:** The bus nearly fills up at it makes about a dozen stops on its route to Manhattan. Valencia stays awake, but most of his fellow passengers nap. He sleeps on the trip home, he says, usually at about 1 p.m.

### Alarm clocks ring earlier for many commuters

By JEAN STEVENS  
Herald News

Whether by train, bus or boat, more and more Passaic and Bergen county residents have been trekking earlier than ever into New York City to get to work.

Passenger numbers and demand have increased within the past year between 5 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. within the state public transportation system, judging from passenger surveys, fare box receipts and load factors, which calculates how full the trains or buses are, said Joe Dee, a spokesman for NJ Transit. NJ Transit does not have system-wide rider figures of this timeframe yet, however.

The earlier commute seems most popular with construction and building workers, as well as financial district employees, who need or prefer to arrive in New York by 7 a.m. to begin working, said Dan Stessel, a spokesman for NJ Transit.

Anytime later and the journey becomes more crowded and slow. Between 6:15 a.m. and 10 a.m., about 62,000 bus passengers ride into the city each day through the Lincoln Tunnel, according to the Port Authority.

An additional 43,000 passengers come through to New York's Penn Station between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. on NJ Transit's rail system, Stessel said.

NY Waterway began offering service at 5:45 a.m. on one ferry from New Jersey to the Wall Street area, 15 minutes earlier than its previous start time.

Enough passengers on the ferry from Belford, near Sandy Hook, to Pier 11 in Manhattan requested the change so they could arrive to work earlier, spokesman Pat Smith said.

NJ Transit plans to add more express trains and increase earlier bus routes within the next few years, Stessel said. In July, the Port Authority authorized up

to \$2 billion toward the creation of a second rail tunnel, the Trans-Hudson Express, from New Jersey to midtown Manhattan to accommodate an estimated 86,000 passengers (compared to today's 41,000) by 2015.

Overall, commuter numbers remain highest during the "peak of the peak" period between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., Stessel said. High gas prices and ugly driving conditions have most likely caused the early growth.

About 61,000 workers from Bergen County and 8,400 from Passaic commuted into Manhattan in 2000, according to the U.S. Census.

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**5:43 A.M.:** He arrives at the Port Authority and begins his walk uptown through Times Square.

### One man's pre-dawn routine

Under a moonlit sky, Rudy Valencia makes his morning commute.

Valencia, 38, takes the 4:55 a.m. express bus each weekday to Manhattan to get to his window-washing job at Collins Building Services, Inc. The buses that come by his Fairlawn home don't leave until about 6 a.m., he said. That's too late.

So Valencia drives five minutes from home to an Elmwood Park bus stop on Rt. 46, picking up his mother at her home along the way. He parks in an open lot across the street, and they take the NJ Transit bus 161 from Paterson together. She works at Lincoln Center on a custodial crew.

Valencia began working as a window-washer 19 years ago, one year after moving from Colombia to New York City. Five years later, he moved to New Jersey and continued to commute into the city every morning.

Sometimes his journey continues to Brooklyn, if he's assigned to a job there, or even to Connecticut. In that case, he drives from home.

But the commute's worth it to him. He prefers working alone, up on the scaffold.

"There's no one bossing you around up there," Valencia said.

— Jean Stevens



**5:46 A.M.:** He calls his supervisor and confirms today's assignment. He'll be washing inside, at 745 Seventh Ave., at 49th Street, the Lehman Brothers financial firm headquarters. He walks several blocks to get there and disappears inside, beginning another work day.

#### IF YOU DRIVE ...

■ To figure out how much money you spend each year for your commute ...

[www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/transportation/commutingcosts.pl](http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/transportation/commutingcosts.pl)

■ To figure out how many miles your car burns per gallon ...

[www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/findacar.htm](http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/findacar.htm)

■ To get up-to-the-minute, personalized traffic reports for your route ...

[www.state.nj.us/transportation/commuter/trafficinfo/](http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/commuter/trafficinfo/)

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