

## Reducing train deaths means restricting access

Whether by accident or suicide, New Jersey is experiencing an uptick in the number of people killed by trains.

There were 16 people killed by trains in New Jersey in 2007, according to Federal Railroad Administration data. Last year there were 25 people killed. This year, through August, there were 22 deaths, according to the FRA. But there have been several train fatalities in the state since then, including three children killed in two separate incidents in North Jersey 24 hours apart last month.

Last week, while a new committee formed to look at ways to prevent train deaths in New Jersey was meeting for the first time, a Brooklyn, N.Y., woman threw herself in front of an Amtrak Acela train at a station in Hamilton, Mercer County. The express train was traveling at more than 110 mph. Her death was gruesome.

While it is nearly impossible to prevent those determined to kill themselves from jumping off train station platforms onto tracks, there is plenty that can be done to prevent many accidental deaths and even some of the suicides involving trains.

Generally, railroad tracks have to be made less accessible, particularly to children, and

police need to do more to keep people off of train tracks.

The newly assembled New Jersey Safety at Railroad Crossings Leadership Oversight Committee is looking at ways to do just that. The committee, which includes representatives of the Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Highway Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, state Department of Education, State Police and other agencies, was given a 60-day window by state Transportation Commissioner James Simpson to come up with recommendations for things that can be done to reduce the number of train fatalities in the Garden State.

We applaud Simpson for demanding a quick turnaround on recommendations.

But the real testament to how much officials and train operators care about reducing deaths isn't what they say and write in committee meetings. It's what they're willing to spend to put up additional

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fences, warning signs and walking paths to either allow trains and pedestrians to safely share bridges or give pedestrians other routes, and how much they're willing to allocate for additional police patrols around tracks.

Those who live in urban areas know especially well that train tracks are often the easiest way to walk from one place to another without having to cross busy roads that are more dangerous.

If we aren't going to invest what it takes to provide safe walking routes and do more to make tracks off limits, then there will continue to be tragic deaths.

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