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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SJ Connects Launches New Shuttle Routes Across South Jersey Regional Mobility Initiative Expands Access to Jobs, Education, Healthcare, and Transit Connections

Hammonton, NJ - This morning, South Jersey leaders, healthcare representatives, higher education partners, business organizations, and community stakeholders gathered to officially announce the launch of SJ Connects, as a new regional shuttle service initiative designed to expand mobility and improve access to essential destinations throughout South Jersey.

The announcement was made during a press event hosted by the South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA) and the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey (CCSNJ), highlighting their collaborative effort aimed at strengthening workforce connectivity, supporting economic development, and addressing longstanding transportation gaps across the region.

Speakers included Assembly Majority Leader Louis D. Greenwald (D-6); State Senator Michael Testa; CCSNJ President & CEO, Christina M. Renna; SJTA Executive Director, Stephen F. Dougherty; President of Salem Community College Dr. Michael R. Gorman; and Senior Vice President of External Affairs and Chief Philanthropy Officer for Inspira Health and Chair, CCSNJ Board of Directors, Robin A. Walton.

Beginning service today, SJ Connects will introduce new shuttle routes operating throughout Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem counties. The service will provide residents with connections to employment centers, educational institutions, healthcare campuses, retail destinations, government services, and NJ TRANSIT hubs throughout the region, all at no cost to riders during the pilot program.

“For too many South Jersey families, transportation challenges limit access to opportunity,” said Governor Mikie Sherrill. “SJ Connects is an important step toward changing that reality by creating stronger connections between communities and the jobs, schools, healthcare providers, and services that help residents succeed. This free service reflects our administration’s commitment to ensuring South Jersey continues to receive the investment and attention it deserves.”

“For South Jersey, projects like SJ Connects play an important role in ensuring access to opportunity is not determined by geography alone,” said NJDOT Commissioner Priya Jain. “This initiative strengthens the connection between communities and essential services across the region, particularly in areas that have historically faced transportation challenges. It represents a systematic approach to improving mobility in a way that supports residents, strengthens workforce participation, and reinforces the broader economic vitality of the region.”

“Communities across South Jersey have long been left behind when it comes to reliable public transit,” said Majority Leader Louis D. Greenwald. “That lack of access affects people’s everyday lives and constrains our region’s economic potential. We’ve built a strong Eds and Meds corridor in South Jersey, anchored by hospitals, innovation centers, and higher education institutions, but those opportunities only matter if people can actually reach them. Today marks an important step forward for South

Jersey and a recognition that our communities deserve the same level of investment and connectivity as the rest of the state.”

“Vineland is the heart of Cumberland County, and for too long our residents have faced real barriers getting to jobs, healthcare, and opportunity without reliable transportation options. SJ Connects changes that,” said State Senator Michael Testa. “Four of the six routes originating right here in Vineland is not a coincidence - it’s a recognition of where the need is greatest and where the workforce is ready to go. This is the kind of practical, community-driven investment South Jersey deserves, and I’m proud to support it.”

Backed by a NJ TRANSIT \$5 million regional investment, the initiative includes a fleet of all-new ADA-compliant 20-passenger shuttle buses while also funding infrastructure improvements and driver salaries over the next 18 to 24 months.

“NJ TRANSIT’s \$5 million commitment to the SJ Connects project shows our continued vision to strengthening mobility and expanding transportation access throughout South Jersey,” said Kris Kolluri, President & Chief Executive Officer of NJ TRANSIT and Executive Director of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. “Initiatives like SJ Connects help extend the reach of the broader transit network for residents across the region. We are proud to support a partnership that enhances regional connectivity and helps better integrate communities into New Jersey’s overall transportation system.”

Over the last year, SJTA, CCSNJ, healthcare organizations, transportation agencies, educational institutions, and community partners worked to identify underserved areas and develop routes designed to provide the greatest regional impact.

“SJ Connects represents a major operational investment in regional mobility throughout South Jersey,” said Stephen F. Dougherty, Executive Director of the South Jersey Transportation Authority. “From professional drivers and brand-new vehicles to route planning, safety protocols, and day-to-day service reliability, our team has worked diligently to build a system residents can depend on. We’re proud of everyone involved in helping deliver this service and committed to providing safe, reliable, and accessible transportation connections throughout the region.”

"A chamber's job is to remove barriers to economic growth and in South Jersey, lack of access to reliable transportation has been one of the biggest ones," said Christina M. Renna, President & CEO of the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey. "SJ Connects puts free, dependable transit on corridors where our employers are hiring and our workforce is trying to show up. That's not just a social service, that's an economic investment, and it's one that's going to pay dividends for this region for years to come."

Healthcare leaders also emphasized the importance of dependable mobility for both patients and employees.

“Transportation access is closely tied to healthcare access,” said Robin Walton, Chair of the CCSNJ Board of Directors and Senior Vice President of External Affairs and Chief Philanthropy Officer for Inspira Health. “Programs like SJ Connects can help reduce barriers for patients seeking care while also supporting the thousands of healthcare employees who rely on dependable transportation to get to work each day.”

Educational institutions also praised the initiative's focus on strengthening South Jersey's "Eds and Meds" corridor and improving access to campuses and workforce training opportunities.

"Our motto at Salem Community College is *You Can Get There from Here*," said Salem Community College President Dr. Michael R. Gorman. "Thanks to SJ Connects, students can get to the college from our constituent communities. SCC students prefer in-person learning experiences. With the transportation barrier addressed through SJ Connects, they will be getting to campus. This is not simply a bus route, it is a pathway to career and personal success."

While the pilot program operates, partners will collect ridership data, evaluate service needs, and continue exploring long-term opportunities to expand the regional mobility service throughout South Jersey.

Officials noted that the success of the program will depend heavily on public awareness and community utilization, with outreach efforts planned through employers, community organizations, social media, and regional stakeholder partnerships.

Additional route information, schedules, and service details are available at www.SJTA.com, or by calling 856-227-7571.