

NJ Transit to make stop at Cape May County Airport

TRENTON — Assemblyman Erik Simonsen announced NJ Transit officials have agreed to add a bus stop near the Cape May County Airport on Hornet Road. NJ Transit set a tentative date of June 2020 for the commencement of this bus service.

"We are excited to announce this important step in providing safe and af-

fordable transportation to the Cape May County Airport, Lower Township Police Department and Municipal Court and the growing number of new businesses in the airport complex," said Simonsen, (R-Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic.).

Simonsen and Lower Township Councilman Tom Conrad met with NJ

Transit to discuss the need for a bus stop. With the increase in traffic caused by recent development and the promise of greater expansion on the horizon, NJ Transit agreed that there is a clear and present need for bus service to the airport complex. Preliminary plans call for an extension of the 313 and 315 bus routes to include

a new stop near the Cape May Brewery location.

"This important step by NJ Transit will improve access to services for our residents and make it easier for visitors to our area to explore all that the airport complex has to offer," Simonsen said.

The airport is home to the Lower Township Police Department and municipal

court, Naval Air Station Wildwood Aviation Museum, Flight Deck Diner, the fast-growing Cape May Brewery, several other businesses and a county government services area.

Lower Township, Cape May County and the Delaware River and Bay Authority have worked together to create an opportunity zone at the airport

to incentivize and attract new businesses. New construction at the airport is underway to create a tech village to incubate small businesses and property at the airport is being marketed aggressively to attract new business development. The township also has tentative plans to build a regional aquatic center on the property.

Death row

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house and she gave him the gun."

People asked Hinton why he told the police about a gun of which they had no prior knowledge.

"All my life, my mother told me to always tell the truth," Hinton said. "I told the truth and it cost me 30 years."

Police seized an old revolver belonging to Hinton's mother, and state firearms examiners said it was the gun used in all three crimes. The prosecutor — who had a documented history of racial bias and said he could tell Hinton was guilty and "evil" solely from his appearance — told the court that the state's experts' asserted match between Mrs. Hinton's gun and the bullets from all three crimes was the only evidence linking Hinton to the Davidson and Vason murders.

He said he again asked the officers why he was being arrested.

"I said, 'You got the wrong person, I ain't done none of that,'" Hinton said. "And the officer said, 'I

don't care if you did or didn't, I'm going to make sure you're found guilty of it.'"

The officer told Hinton he would be convicted of five things.

"He said, 'First, you're black and a white man is going to say you shot him; whether or not you did, I don't care,'" Hinton said. "He said, 'There will be a white prosecutor, a white judge and a white jury, and you know what that spells.' The officer repeated the word 'conviction' five times."

Hinton gave his supervisor's phone number to the officer. Despite his alibi, the officer returned hours later to tell Hinton he would no longer be charged with first-degree murder, but two counts of capital murder.

"I'm trying my best to convince this detective I could never take a human being's life," Hinton said. "The officer said, 'Let me be honest with you, I truly believe you didn't commit these crimes but take this wrap for one of your homeboys who actually did the crime.'"

He said the officer contin-

ued, "All of y'all is always taking the wrap for one another."

"I said, 'Detective, there's not a homeboy in the world that I would take a wrap like this for,'" Hinton said.

Hinton, with no history of violent crime, steadfastly maintained his innocence. A polygraph test given by police exonerated him, but the judge (now-retired Circuit Judge James Garrett) refused to admit it at trial.

When Hinton went before the judge, he could not afford an attorney. The court appointed an attorney to his case.

"The first thing the attorney said was, 'I did not go to law school to do pro bono work,' and I said, 'Sir, would it make a difference to you if I told you I'm innocent?'" Hinton said.

Hinton's lawyer mistakenly thought he could not get enough money to hire a qualified firearms examiner. Instead, he retained a visually impaired civil engineer with no expertise in firearms identification who admitted he could not operate the machinery necessary to examine the evidence. With no credible expert to challenge the state's assertion of a match, Hinton was convicted by an all-white jury and sentenced to death.

"The judge stood up and said, 'Anthony Ray Hinton, you have been found guilty by a jury of your peers and I sentence you to death,'" Hinton said. "And that judge had the audacity to say, 'May God have mercy on your soul, we got the right nigger today.'"

For the next three years while on death row, Hinton did not utter a word to another human being. One morning, Hinton woke up

to the sound of a grown man crying.

"I had never asked his name or where he was from, but my mother taught me no matter what someone does in life, they deserve compassion," Hinton said.

The man told Hinton he had just received word his mother had died.

"I told him how sorry I was to hear that and if I could do anything for him, to please let me know," Hinton said. "I sat on the bed and realized my mother was still alive and I was alive, and I had something to be thankful for."

Being imprisoned on death row left Hinton looking for ways to survive.

"I looked at my body and told my body in order to survive the hell I was in, I would have to escape mentally," Hinton said. "It was as if my body said, 'Do you promise to come back?' and the moment it gave me permission to leave, I left up here."

Hinton said he wanted to go see Queen Elizabeth.

"Don't you dare ask me why; I was 29 and I wanted to see the queen," Hinton said. "In my mind, I [went] to the palace and told the guard I was here to see the queen. She invited me in, I introduced myself."

While Hinton visited with the queen, he would discuss the royal family and the tragedy of Princess Diana. He realized he could go anywhere in his mind.

After an unsuccessful first appeal, Hinton wrote a letter to lawyer Bryan Stevenson to ask him to consider being his lawyer.

"The day he came, I remember shaking his hand and something came over me," Hinton said. "And I realized, God has sent me

his best lawyer."

When preparing for the new appeal, Hinton told Stevenson he needed to hire a qualified ballistics expert. Stevenson said he planned to, but Hinton said the expert needed to be a white man from the South.

"I have lived in the South all of my life and the South only recognizes one of their own," Hinton said. "You can go out and get the best white female in the country, but her word is no good on the stand in Alabama."

Hinton said the ballistics expert certainly could not be a person of color.

"Here I am, facing execution, and I got to worry about what race a person has to be to help me," Hinton said. "Even on death row, I have to choose what race."

When Stevenson took expert witness ballistic evidence to the attorney general in Birmingham, the attorney general said it would be a waste of taxpayer money and his time to re-examine the bullets.

"As far as he was concerned, he said the right man was on death row," Hinton said. "I sat on death row an extra 16 years because my life wasn't worth it."

As he continued to live on death row, Hinton received the worst news he said he could ever get: his mother had passed away.

"My biggest cheerleader was no longer here and I didn't give a damn about the case anymore as far as I was concerned," Hinton said. "[However], the next day, I told Mr. Stevenson to give Alabama all the hell you can give them. We fought for 16 long years."

In 2014, the Supreme Court unanimously over-

turned his conviction based on his attorney's deficient representation, and Jefferson County Circuit Court Judge Laura Petro ordered a new trial, in which he was exonerated. He finally left prison at 9:30 a.m. Friday, April 3, 2015.

"The Supreme Court did something it has never done before, all nine justices ruled in my favor," Hinton said.

The ruling resulted in Alabama dropping all charges against Hinton.

"I came here tonight to ask you a question," Hinton said. "Since the state of Alabama was going to execute me in the name of justice, I came here tonight to ask 'Where is my justice?'"

Hinton said 34 years later, no one from Alabama has ever apologized to him.

"I came home, I forgave [the police who] conspired because they had the power and means to put me on death row," Hinton said. "I didn't forgive them because they broke me, I forgave them so I could sleep good at night."

Hinton says he has no hard feelings toward law enforcement. He ended the event by retelling a story from his book. He said, "If you can be taught hate, you can be taught love."

"What would you do if they came for you? What would you do if you were charged for a crime you didn't commit? What if one day you were set free? Who would you be?"

Hinton said he struggles with these questions every day.

"Like everything, there is good and there is bad," he said. "We are dealing with mass incarceration and I believe you have to be very mindful who you vote for."

TIDES : Feb. 26-March 4, 2020

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
26	9:38	9:57	3:16	3:39
27	10:12	10:31	3:53	4:10
28	10:47	11:07	4:31	4:42
29	11:24	11:47	5:13	5:17
1		12:07	6:02	5:59
2	12:36	1:00	7:00	6:50
3	1:35	2:07	8:06	7:52
4	2:42	3:20	9:13	8:59

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