



\$17 Million for Bus Accident

Baker v. New Jersey Transit:

A woman permanently injured when she was run over by a bus was awarded over \$17 million by a jury in her Essex County suit on February 21, 2014.

In January 2011, Angelique Baker had exited an NJ Transit bus in East Orange when the driver, Jean Valme, closed the door on a drawstring bag she was carrying. The bus dragged Baker several feet as it departed the stop, and its right rear wheel ran over her, say her lawyers, **William Greenberg** and **Lawrence Minasian** of **Greenberg Minasian** in West Orange.

She sustained a crushed pelvis, numerous other fractures and a closed-head injury. During one of her 12 surgeries, Baker stopped breathing, which exacerbated the brain injury and led to a cognitive deficit. Now 42, she can walk short distances but is largely wheelchair-



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LARRY MINASIAN AND WILLIAM GREENBERG

bound, her lawyers say.

NJ Transit contended that Valme's duty ended once Baker reached the sidewalk. The agency also argued that Baker's health problems, AIDS and past heroin use, could have contributed to her fall and shortened her life expectancy.

In a six-week trial before Superior Court Judge **W. Hunt Dumont** that was interrupted by holidays and weather delays, the eight-member jury reached a verdict after an hour and 10 minutes. The panel unani-

mously found NJ Transit liable, assigned it 100 percent fault and awarded \$1.4 million for past medical expenses, \$3.6 million for future medical expenses, and \$12 million for pain and suffering.

NJ Transit's counsel, **Thomas Hart** of **Ruprecht Hart Weeks & Ricciardulli** in Westfield, didn't return a call.

— **By David Gialanella**

