



Long Island Regional Economic Development Council

For Immediate Release: Thursday, February 25, 2016

Contact: Jonah Bruno | Jonah.Bruno@esd.ny.gov | (212) 803-3740
ESD Press Office | PressOffice@esd.ny.gov | (800) 260-7313

Long Island Regional Economic Development Council Announces Support For Governor Cuomo's Proposed Long Island Rail Road Expansion

LIREDC votes unanimously to endorse 9.8-mile third track between Floral Park and Hicksville

The Long Island Regional Economic Development Council (LIREDC) today announced that at its first meeting of 2016, it voted unanimously to support Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's proposal to expand Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) capacity between Floral Park and Hicksville, by adding a third track for reverse commuters and intra-island travelers. The governor announced the proposal at a January event in Nassau County

"This project will accomplish two goals which are essential to Long Island's future: it will reduce automobile congestion on our roads, while also making it easier for people to commute to their jobs," said Stuart Rabinowitz, President of Hofstra University and Co-Chair of the LIREDC. "The governor's proposed LIRR expansion will create a viable alternative to car travel, for people who work on Long Island and reverse commute to work."

"For Long Island to remain competitive, in the 21st Century economy, we need a modern transportation infrastructure that reduces congestion on our roads and improves LIRR service," said Kevin Law, President of the Long Island Association and Co-Chair of the LIREDC. "Governor Cuomo's proposal fills all those needs, while also providing key protections for property owners who will be affected by the new track."

Currently, the LIRR is limited by track capacity. At peak times, the LIRR is forced to run trains in one direction between Floral Park and Hicksville, making it impossible for reverse commuters and intra-island travelers. In essence, millions of people are limited by a system of transportation designed and virtually unchanged from 50 years ago.

In order to modernize the system, improve commutes for millions of customers, and reduce congestion on Long Island's roads, the Governor has proposed a renewed effort to expand the LIRR's capacity between Floral Park and Hicksville. The project will allow the LIRR to increase service, reduce congestion and train delays caused whenever there is an incident along this busy stretch of tracks and will enable the LIRR to run "reverse-peak" trains to allow people to take the LIRR to jobs on Long Island during traditional business hours. By allowing the LIRR to increase service between Floral Park and Hicksville, it will provide a more attractive alternative to driving and thereby reduce

traffic on Long Island's major east-west highways, like the L.I.E., Northern State and Southern State, and more trains will make it easier for Long Islanders to reach LaGuardia and Kennedy airports by train.

Unlike previous plans, this new effort dramatically minimizes the impact on communities along the right of way. The Governor's proposal reduces the previous length of the corridor from 11.5 miles to today's proposal of 9.8 miles. Even more importantly, the Governor's proposal would confine virtually all construction activity within the existing right of way. The number of property acquisitions required would be reduced from approximately 200 in prior proposals to just 50 in the Governor's proposal. Of those acquisitions, only 20 would involve residences, and the average resident acquisition would be five feet wide.

Property Owner Protections

The Governor's proposal contains an innovative landowner protection program. Residential land owners would be offered the choice of compensation for the strip of land – on average five feet wide – that the LIRR needs to acquire, or the option of a full buyout. For commercial landowners they would be offered compensation, plus assistance, if needed, from Empire State Development to remain in their community.

Environmental Reviews

Across the whole corridor, the LIRR will conduct environmental reviews including studies to analyze noise mitigation strategies and new rail technology.

Grade Crossing Safety Reviews

Additionally, the LIRR will conduct a comprehensive safety analysis to address and ensure all aspects of safety at the seven remaining street crossings.

Robust Community Engagement

Finally, the LIRR is launching an extensive community engagement program to ensure local input is heard and addressed. This will include direct outreach to property owners adjacent to the tracks and broad outreach across all affected communities – elected officials, community organizations and advocacy groups. Meetings will be organized in all communities along the corridor to provide information and to solicit input. LIRR will also launch a new website to provide a venue for residents to provide feedback directly to the project team and to receive continuously updated information about the project.

Rider Benefits

Two out of every five LIRR riders use the main line between Floral Park and Hicksville. It is the route used by the busy Ronkonkoma and Port Jefferson Branches. Some Montauk Branch trains use the corridor as well, and all Oyster Bay Branch trains use it for a portion of their trips. With just two tracks, this busy corridor becomes congested during rush hour. In the event that a train becomes disabled, the LIRR has very few options to route trains around a disabled train, and the result can be cascading delays rippling across the line and impacting thousands of people.

The LIRR Expansion project will also complement the East Side Access megaproject, which is doubling the LIRR's capacity into Manhattan by building a new terminal underneath Grand Central Terminal.

About the Regional Economic Development Councils

The Regional Economic Development Council initiative is a key component of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's transformative approach to State investment and economic development. In 2011, Governor Cuomo established 10 Regional Councils to develop long-term strategic plans for economic growth for their regions. The Councils are public-private partnerships made up of local experts and stakeholders from business, academia, local government, and non-governmental organizations. The Regional Councils have redefined the way New York invests in jobs and economic growth by putting in place a community-based, bottom up approach and establishing a competitive process for State resources. After five rounds of the REDC process, nearly \$4 billion has been awarded to more than 4,100 job creation and community development projects consistent with each region's strategic plans, supporting the creation or retention of approximately 200,000 jobs.

###