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Public Statement
Third Track Scoping Hearing
Hicksville, NY
May 25, 2016

The Long Island Regional Planning Council, a bi-County organization, comprised of elected officials, business executives and other Long Island stakeholders, serves as the Region's Chief Planner and a leading advocate for major issues affecting the Island's economic, social and environmental well-being.

The Long Island Rail Road's Third Track Project, designated by the Council, as its first Project of Regional Significance back in 2008, is absolutely one of those critical projects. The transformative billion dollar plus Third Track Project will provide much needed expansion in rail line capacity on a system that was originally constructed over 170 years ago when the population of Long Island was about the present population of the Village of Hempstead, a fraction of the almost 3 Million people of today! This expansion will not only have the net beneficial effect of reducing traffic and its associated air pollution on the east-west highway arteries but will also permit reverse commuting during peak hours, something that is virtually impossible under present ridership levels and existing rail configuration. The ability to reverse commute will enable persons living in the City to work on the Island thus growing our workforce and the Island's economy. It will also enable intra-Island transit commuting for the Island's workers. Importantly, the additional constructed capacity will allow the multi-billion dollar East Side Access Project to realize its full transportation and economic development potential as well as present Long Island communities with the expanded opportunity to develop mixed use projects proximate to rail stations, thereby adding much needed downtown housing for our millennials and empty nesters.

The Council recognizes that a project of this size and scope will undoubtedly impact surrounding areas during construction, but the benefits provided by the project including elimination of dangerous grade crossings and much needed system expansion warrant the unavoidable short-term disruption to local communities.

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LI 2035, the Planning Council's 25-Year Sustainability Plan, identifies the two greatest impediments to the Island's long-term viability as an unsustainable tax burden on Long Islanders and a lack of diversity in our housing stock. Construction of this critical project will enable us to address these vital issues. Failure to do so will be at Long Island's peril.

It is for the above stated reasons that the Long Island Regional Planning Council strongly supports the construction of the Long Island Rail Road's Third Track Project and encourages the MTA and the LIRR to work collaboratively with the affected communities toward a smooth and timely construction of the project. Thank you.

John D. Cameron, Jr.
Chairman
Long Island Regional Planning Council