

**Comments from the Western Garden City Property Owners Association, Garden City, New York
In response to the MTA/LIRR Expansion Project DEIS**

The Western Garden City Property Owners Association's (WPOA) north border lies adjacent to the Long Island Rail Road property; therefore, it is imperative that we express our concerns and comment on issues presented in the Draft Environmental Assessment Statement (DEIS).

Concern: Contaminants

The Western Section of Garden City has experienced challenges from declared Superfund site remediation north of the railroad tracks. The Village has been monitoring this situation for years, including an extensive effort to aerate the Garden City water supply.

Additionally, in the DEIS for the Long Island Rail Road Expansion Project, ten "B" category sites were found in our area, seven in the immediate vicinity of our residents who border the tracks. It should be further noted that prior to 1980, the LIRR sprayed Agent Orange as a defoliant in this area.

There are 14 houses adjacent to the tracks on Greenridge Avenue, the northern most street in the Western Section of Garden City. An analysis by a current resident shows that from 1982 to 2006, seven Greenridge Avenue residents in their 40s and 60s died from cancer. One 49-year-old current resident is battling cancer; another was diagnosed with melanoma last year at age 37, and another is a cancer survivor.

The above facts cause great concern to members of the WPOA, since there is reasonable potential for these residents to have been impacted by the presence of contaminated materials. This is a very serious health concern and should be vetted completely by the EPA, State of New York, Nassau County and Garden City Village leaders. Below we quote in part from the DEIS:

"Soil, soil gas and groundwater beneath a site can become contaminated as a result of past or present uses within the Study Area or on nearby properties. Portions of the Study Area are and/or were used historically for railroad operations and other industrial activities. Common contaminants found in the subsurface at railroad properties include creosote, petroleum products, solvents, volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds, heavy metals, polychlorinated byphenols (PCBs), pesticides, and herbicides.

"Based on the methodology described in the following section, 153 Category B sites were identified within the Study Area. As further discussed below, a Category B site is defined as sites that had some reasonable potential to have been impacted by the presence of contaminated materials and thus additional analysis is prudent..."

Request: For these reasons, the WPOA believes all the noted sites deserve full analysis prior to any construction because of the immediate health and safety dangers to our residents. The risk of any further undertaking of railroad expansion should not proceed until these issues are examined thoroughly by an independent, separately funded environmental expert. Data should be fully disclosed as to the findings of contaminants along the expansion project stretch adjacent to and through the Village of Garden City. Included in the analysis should be the soil in right-of-ways on both sides of the tracks, the tracks wooden ties, the backyards of all residents adjacent to the tracks, water testing along tracks and in all homes along tracks, and air testing along railroad and in communities adjacent to railroad.

The health and welfare of our residents is paramount, and we believe the shortcuts taken in this "rush to construction" have only exposed our residents and properties to contaminants and health issues. Through an expedited bidding process, the LIRR awarded the \$6.95 million contract to a joint venture by Gannett

Fleming, headquartered in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and AECOM, headquartered in Los Angeles—both environmental firms located out of state and not invested in the lives of Garden City residents.

It is also imperative then, that if contaminants are identified, a detailed plan for immediate strict remediation be presented to Village officials and Western Garden City residents before any work proceeds.

In addition, the MTA/LIRR must also acknowledge that any increase in freight brings with it a heightened risk of spills and accidents with exposure to dangerous chemicals and pollutants. Is there an evacuation plan? What is the procedure for our neighbors adjoining the track to follow in the event of a hazardous condition?

Concern: Sound/Attenuation Walls

Since the MTA will be expanding the third track over its right-of-way and leaving no buffer between the railroad tracks and the private properties adjacent to it, it is imperative that home and business owners be properly safeguarded during and after any such expansion. In addition, along the stretch of railroad that goes through Garden City, several unique properties exist, namely, the Tanners Pond Road Environmental Center (Bird Sanctuary) and the Garden City High School and fields, which are adjacent to the tracks and need to be safeguarded.

Request: The sound attenuation walls must be offered to all areas adjacent to the railroad property from New Hyde Park Road to Garden City High School. The height of those walls is to be determined in consultation with those parties living and working in those areas. Additionally, the WPOA requests that none of these walls or their foundations should impinge on residents' properties.

Concern: Potential cracks in foundations due to construction or new expanded track usage

Request: While it is the contractors' acknowledged responsibility to reach out to homeowners to do the inspections pre-construction, homeowners must receive written agreement that any damaging situation resulting from pre-construction or the use of the new tracks will be rectified by the Railroad at the Railroad's expense.

Concern: Increased truck traffic on New Hyde Park Road through Garden City.

New Hyde Park Road is a through truck route, and many vehicles, from 18-wheelers to tour buses to fuel and utility repair trucks to local deliveries, pass down this street every day, from early morning to evening rush hour. New Hyde Park Road is a narrow road, with 2 lanes each way. We have several dangerous intersections: (a) New Hyde Park Road and Stewart Avenue, and (b) New Hyde Park Road at Chester Avenue/Fairmount Boulevard. New Hyde Park Road also crosses over the railroad tracks at the Stewart Manor station. Going south of the intersection at New Hyde Park Road at Chester Avenue, through a business district and by an elementary school, the road becomes increasingly dangerous because it narrows to one lane each way and goes into a blind curve.

Request: The WPOA requests that the MTA/LIRR conduct a "crash" or accident incident report for the two dangerous intersections to determine, with the Village and the Western Garden City community, if some action can be taken to mitigate the expected increase in the traffic volume and the size of the vehicles.

Concern: Clinch Avenue is a major thoroughfare for residents who live on the northern border of the Western Section, called The Haven. There are only two additional streets that bring community members out to the larger community – Fenimore and Greenridge avenues.

Request: On behalf of our residents living in The Haven, the WPOA requests that Clinch Avenue at New Hyde Park Road remain open for resident vehicle passage.

Concern: The placement of the proposed Kiss-and-Ride

The DEIS proposes two scenarios for the placement of the parking area:

- (A) on the north side of the New Hyde Park RR Station (where the self-storage building is now)
- (B) on the south side (in Garden City).

If the MTA takes by eminent domain the greenspace on the west side of New Hyde Park Road for the Kiss-and-Ride, the entrance and egress to the lot are designed to be on New Hyde Park Road.

Request: The WPOA requests that the MTA place the Kiss-and-Ride lot on the north side of the tracks, because of the dangerous situation that will be created if the lot is placed on the south side (Garden City). In the south side scenario, there is a traffic signal at the entrance to Clinch, which will allow cars to cross New Hyde Park Road to enter the lot. This scenario poses a distracting and dangerous situation for drivers. If the lot is located on the north side, vehicles can enter and egress from the lot via Plaza and Second avenues.

In addition, the WPOA demands that New Hyde Park Road maintain two lanes going south, due to the expected heavy flow of traffic through this all-too-frequently congested area.

Concern: ADA compliance

Request: The MTA must make every effort to make the New Hyde Park Road station fully handicapped-accessible, in both the eastbound and westbound directions, in the easiest way possible for residents and travelers with handicapping conditions.

Concern: Tanners Pond Road underpass

Request: The WPOA requests that the height and width of the vehicle opening at the Tanners Pond Road underpass remain a one-lane passage, and in the same slanted configuration. This configuration serves the community as a traffic-calmer and also inhibits trucks from entering the Village from Jericho Turnpike and Denton Road.

Concern: Unsightly construction vehicles and equipment left for long periods of time on Garden City sites and streets.

Request: At no time will such vehicles and equipment block Garden City streets. Village officials and WPOA representatives must be given contact information for MTA/LIRR staff that will be responsible for the removal of such vehicles, if they are preventing emergency vehicles from their routes, causing traffic congestion or other nuisances.

Concern: Freight

Freight is expected to increase each year because of population demands. The New York and Atlantic Railway will add cars to existing runs up to a certain point, and then they will begin to start up new runs. The MTA/LIRR points out that by federal law, the railroad must provide track availability.

Request: Western Garden City residents are already subjected to freight train passage, and the railroad cars are frequently a severe eyesore. We demand that the MTA/LIRR put restrictions on freight carriers that will eliminate idle standing or storage of open cars and mandate that graffiti-filled cars be cleaned of graffiti.

Concern: If the improvements to the New Hyde Park Road station and the other 2 Village of New Hyde Park crossings cause residents to look for alternate service, many commuters will use the Stewart Manor station.

Request: While we understand that the Stewart Manor station is currently undergoing improvements, it would behoove the MTA/LIRR to support the Village of Garden City by providing repaving of the large parking lot to the north of the station and planting of tall shrubbery encircling the lot to add a buffer for the nearby homeowners' property lines and the adjacent roadways.

Submitted by the Western Garden City Property Owners Association, Maureen Traxler Dellacona, President