



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

State of New York

June 2, 2017

Hon. Kemp Hannon
NYS Senate, Capitol 420
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Elaine Phillips
NYS Senate, 848 LOB
Albany, NY 12247

Senator Hannon and Senator Phillips:

We have received your letter requesting additional funding for the Long Island Rail Road. While we appreciate your thoughts, frankly we are confused by the letter's contents. We have proposed the largest investment in the LIRR in more than 50 years and no one should be an obstacle to its progress.

We understand that you are seeking special benefits for small portions of your districts, but that should not stop progress for the more than 300,000 Long Islanders who rely on the LIRR every day. This is especially urgent during a time when Amtrak's infrastructure failures and subsequent repair work are adding hardship and delays for commuters.

Your letter suggests that the MTA Capital Plan should "consider" investing in signals and communications, rolling stock, stations, new parking facilities, lines structure and bridges, reconfiguring Jamaica Complex, storm resiliency, and power. That is odd because the MTA's Capital Plan already addresses the issues you raised and funds all of the improvements you have requested - and more - for the Long Island Rail Road.

The Capital Plan includes funding for Positive Train Control, new signals, new cars, new stations, new grade crossings, new parking facilities, line structure and bridge improvements, power enhancements and a significant number of resiliency projects born out of the lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy.

The LIRR Expansion Project itself makes many of the investments you seek:

- As part of the Capital Plan amendment, the LIRR Expansion Project will provide new utility infrastructure along the Main Line including a more resilient utility network in the LIRR right-of-way and at grade crossings. The project will increase capacity and eliminate all at-grade rail crossings in the 9.8 mile corridor, making the entire railroad safer and more efficient.

The agencies of the MTA

MTA New York City Transit
MTA Long Island Rail Road

MTA Metro-North Railroad
MTA Bridges and Tunnels

MTA Capital Construction
MTA Bus Company

- Because of the project corridor's critical, central position in the railroad, and its bottlenecked track capacity, incidents in the corridor affect not just commuters who get on a train in the corridor, but commuters throughout the entire system in Suffolk, Nassau, Queens and Brooklyn, as well as those who board at Penn Station at all times of the day including the PM rush.
- The project includes a new signal system governing all three tracks in the 9.8-mile project corridor. Additionally, in some areas, signals would be eliminated, reducing the chance of failure. Many of the delays that customers experience within the corridor are due to signal issues at the grade crossings. Eliminating the grade crossings would simplify the signal system and reduce potential causes of delay.
- Track and switch infrastructure is also being replaced, added or improved throughout the entire project corridor.
- The LIRR Expansion Project will include major improvements to rail stations in the 9.8 mile Project corridor. The enhanced stations will improve the customer experience with better pedestrian access and ADA accessibility including both under- and overpasses, new heated platforms with canopies and egress walkways, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) at each station to improve safety and security, improved lighting and passenger waiting areas with Wi-Fi and USB charging stations and new furnishings including shelters, benches and signage. One major improvement that will facilitate better service will be the lengthening of some station platforms, to allow passengers to disembark from 12-car trains without moving to the front of a train – an exercise that holds trains up at stations every day.
- The LIRR Expansion Project will also include the construction of six new parking garages and one new surface parking lot with a total capacity of over 3,600 spaces to address parking needs anticipated with expected growth in ridership.
- Seven substations will be replaced as part of the LIRR expansion project, including the New Hyde Park Substation, located at Third Avenue and South 9th Street; Merillon Avenue Substation, located at Atlantic Avenue and Hilton Avenue; Mineola Substation, located at the southwest corner of Main Street and Front Street; Carle Place Substation, located in the southeast quadrant of Meadowbrook State Parkway and the LIRR just north of Mallard Road; Westbury Substation, located southeast of Union Avenue and Sullivan Street north of the LIRR; New Cassel Substation, located at Broadway and Bond Street north of the LIRR; and Hicksville Substation, located on the south side of West Barclay Street near Marion Place and adjacent to the LIRR ROW.
- Elimination of grade crossings: The seven grade crossings between Floral Park and Hicksville represent the most congested segment of rail traffic within the LIRR network that still has street level grade crossings. Eliminating the grade crossings at Covert Avenue, South 12th Street, New Hyde Park Road, Main Street, Willis Avenue, School Street and Urban Avenue will have a significant positive impact on both train operations and street level traffic, noise and safety. Each plan was developed working hand-in-hand

with villages along the Main Line to meet community needs including traffic calming measures (such as dedicated turning lanes, elevated sidewalks, and improved signalization), pedestrian access (additional egress points, pedestrian plazas and pocket parks) and safety.

- Noise attenuation: The third track project incorporates the addition of sound attenuation walls for residential properties that share a property line with the LIRR along the Main Line as well as vibration controls such as resilient fasteners, rail pads and concrete ties. The elimination of grade crossings – and the noisy train horns and gate bells that they require – will also significantly reduce noise in local communities. The addition of these measures would significantly reduce noise and vibration levels in virtually all locations as compared to existing conditions for those who reside or do business in such close proximity to the railroad.

But, beyond the Expansion Project, the Capital Plan makes even more:

The Main Line Double Track Project:

- Currently underway, this project from Farmingdale to Ronkonkoma will improve service and reliability in Suffolk County by adding a second track to the LIRR's Ronkonkoma Branch. This project will increase capacity, improve operational performance, and allow frequent off-peak service in both directions for intra-Island commuting. The project will include a new signal system and all signal equipment will be upgraded. Completion is scheduled for the second half of 2018.

New Rolling Stock (more than 360 new cars):

- The two most recent MTA Capital Plans include \$705 million to purchase 202 new M-9 cars to replace and expand the current fleet of older cars, plus \$707 million for 160 new M-9A cars for future service.

Reconfiguring Jamaica Complex:

- The ongoing Jamaica Capacity Improvements Project, which is funded through the MTA Capital Program at \$301.7 million plus an additional \$72.5 million in the recent Capital Program amendment, represents the infrastructure investments to address the operational requirements associated with train service to Manhattan, while also operating dedicated Jamaica to Brooklyn service, as well as diesel fleet operations between Long Island City Yard and Long Island. The Project will streamline the Jamaica track layout at the complex while upgrading and modernizing the switch and signal system, (including installation of higher-speed switches). Jamaica Station is a critical hub and main LIRR transfer location, and the current constraints in track and station capacity limit the number of trains that the station can handle during peak periods. This project will improve interlocking configurations and modernize the complex, enabling trains to enter and leave the station more quickly. The work includes the removal and installation of new switches, realignment of track, reconfiguration of the Johnson Avenue Train Yard, construction of a freight train bypass track and modification to the existing signal system, and the construction of a new platform specifically dedicated to scoot service between Jamaica and Atlantic Terminal, Brooklyn, as an integral part of the initiative.

The Enhanced Station Initiative:

- The recent MTA Capital Program amendment adds \$125 million to the \$25 million already in the program for the Enhanced Station Initiative, for a total of 17 station overhauls, plus \$20 million for a new stop on the Ronkonkoma Branch at the center of Long Island's innovation corridor at Brookhaven National Laboratory. The state budget also includes \$20 million to develop a direct LIRR connection to MacArthur Airport. These improvements will optimize system connectivity and enhance the overall passenger experience.

Moynihan Train Hall at the New Penn-Farley Complex:

- The FY 2018 State Budget also commits \$700 million to advance Governor Cuomo's sweeping plans to transform the historic James A. Farley Post Office into a world-class transportation hub. The Moynihan Train Hall will have more space than Grand Central's main concourse, housing both Amtrak and LIRR ticketing and waiting areas, along with state-of-the-art security features and a modern, digital passenger experience. The train hall will also feature 112,000 square feet of retail space and over 500,000 square feet of office space and connect to the new MTA LIRR Concourse joining Penn Station to Moynihan Train Hall. The Budget makes a multi-year commitment totaling \$700 million to support this development.

Penn Station Enhancement Initiative:

- The new Penn Station-33rd Street Corridor project helps to reimagine and redesign Penn Station to significantly improve the customer flow throughout the LIRR concourse. The 33rd Street Corridor inside Penn station, which is among the station's busiest sections connecting 7th and 8th Avenues, will be widened and ceiling height will be increased. Other improvements will include upgraded lighting and wayfinding, and digital information screens to provide a modernized environment.

Hicksville Station Rehabilitation:

- As part of the Hicksville Station and North Track Siding Improvements Project, station improvements at Hicksville Station (a major transit hub) are currently underway and supported in the MTA Capital Program. The Project is a \$121 million modernization of the aging station, and the preparation of an adjacent site where the railroad will build a new connection to an existing siding west of the station. The upgrades to the 55 year old station include Wi-Fi and USB charging stations throughout the station; an enhanced interior waiting room; new platforms with glass-enclosed, heated waiting rooms; improved lighting; a translucent canopy roof; improved stairways, escalators, plaza elevators, a video security system, audio and digital communications systems and better signage. The station work is expected to be completed by the spring of 2018.

Rehabilitating and Replacing railroad bridges:

- In an effort to improve the integrity of these structures, the Capital Program supports replacement of certain deteriorated bridges, including the Ellison Avenue Bridge (recently completed) and the Post Avenue Bridge in Westbury (currently underway), which is also included in the Capital Program. The Post Avenue Bridge is a century old, offers limited clearance, and is subjected to frequent truck strikes. The replacement bridge will improve safety and provide the bridge width necessary so as not to preclude a third track along the Main Line. Other bridge projects include rehabilitation at Wreck Lead, Buckram Road, Accabonac, Flushing Main Street, Springfield Blvd., Union

Turnpike, and Webster Ave. Seven Bridges are also being modified as part of the LIRR Expansion Project including the South Tyson Bridge and the Plainfield Avenue Bridge in Floral Park, the Denton Avenue Bridge and the Nassau Boulevard Bridge in Garden City, and the Glen Cove Bridge, Meadowbrook State Parkway Bridge, and Cherry Lane Bridge in Carle Place.

Storm Resiliency:

- To minimize the risks of coastal flooding, storm surges and other climate-related problems, the MTA has undertaken more than 40 climate related efforts since Superstorm Sandy, each supported by the MTA Capital Program. More than \$500 million is allocated to LIRR Sandy restoration and resiliency work.
- The Long Beach Substation Replacement is a \$53.1 million project that includes the replacement of three substations (Oceanside, Oil City, and Long Beach) on the Long Beach Branch. The new Oceanside substation went into service in 2015, while the Oil City substation is under construction. The preliminary design for the Long Beach substation has been completed. Because the Long Beach Branch is flood prone, the LIRR is incorporating resiliency into the new substations by rebuilding them at a higher elevation. This will better protect the substation equipment against future extreme weather events. This standard will be used in other flood-prone areas of the system.
- The \$65.3 million Long Beach Branch Systems Restoration project will replace switches, signals, communications and third rail equipment along the Long Beach Branch. Early construction work by both third party and LIRR construction teams is underway. The next major upcoming project milestone is the award of a Design/Build contract for the signal system. Critical components like signal and communication huts are being rebuilt on elevated platforms to make them more resilient against future flooding.
- The Wreck Lead (Reynold Channel) Bridge Systems restoration project is a \$12.6 million replacement project for the bridge's underwater cable, bridge electrical system, and emergency generator. A contract was awarded for a new emergency generator, concrete foundation and platform. The bridge's new emergency generator is in service and built on an elevated platform to provide resiliency against future flooding / storm surge events. Preliminary design for the replacement of the damaged bridge electrical systems has been completed, with the award of a third party construction contract to undertake the replacement work being the next major project milestone.
- The \$31.3 million Long Island City Restoration/resiliency project will replace the power, signal, and communications systems for tracks 9 through 12 in the yard and tracks 7 & 8 will be electrified. Construction work for tracks 7 and 8 is currently underway. Design of perimeter flood walls is progressing and under review to provide resiliency against future flooding.
- The \$1.4 million Long Island City Yard Substation Restoration project replaced damaged components and has been in full operation since the first quarter of 2015.

- The \$43.3 million West Side Yard Restoration project is replacing signals, power and other assets in the yard. This work is being coordinated with the West Side Yard Overbuild and Amtrak Gateway projects. LIRR construction crews have been assigned to the project since early 2014.
- East River Tunnel Restoration will be coordinated with Amtrak and includes the replacement of signal, communication, track, power and drainage systems in the East River Tunnel Lines One and Two.
- The \$9.7 million infrastructure system upgrade across the LIRR network includes station, signal and power infrastructure component repair and restoration. Work is being performed by third party and LIRR construction teams, with various elements nearing completion.
- The \$8.4 million First Avenue Substation replaces AC switchgear and associated equipment which that was damaged by saltwater intrusion. The design was completed in June 2015, which will allow the construction to progress.

As you can see, the MTA's investment program already clearly addresses the requested upgrades, which is why we continue to be baffled by the assertions in your letter.

We are facing a crisis for commuters and we must address it together. The largely short-term concerns expressed by some segments of your villages and towns are important, but LIRR improvements should not be held ransom when these improvements will benefit not only a majority of your districts but also all of Long Island.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fernando Ferrer', written in a cursive style.

Fernando Ferrer
MTA Acting Chairman

cc: Veronique Hakim, Interim Executive Director