

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a summary of the process used to date to encourage public and agency participation during the early phases of the LIRR Expansion Project, and planned measures to encourage continued involvement throughout future project phases.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has directed MTA, LIRR, and NYSDOT to engage in an unprecedented level of public outreach for the Proposed Project. To this end and to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive public involvement effort, the project team has developed and implemented a robust Public Involvement Plan consisting of numerous actions that have been collectively unseen in local public projects, such as:

- Door to door outreach to project neighbors
- Close consultation with elected officials and community representatives to help formulate proposed project elements
- Close coordination with state and local government agencies potentially affected by the Proposed Project
- A staffed Project Information Center to answer questions and provide information
- More public “scoping” meetings than much larger projects, such as the replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge, to allow the public to help shape the Proposed Project’s environmental study
- Localized information sessions to explain the contents of the DEIS and answer questions from local communities about the Proposed Project

The Public Involvement Plan was formulated to engage stakeholders—including a broad range of individuals and organizations, such as community groups, elected and appointed officials, and business and commercial entities—located within or having interests within the Project Corridor. The public outreach effort is informing stakeholders about the Proposed Project, soliciting their feedback, and communicating the potential benefits of and impacts from the Proposed Project.

## **B. INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

### **PROJECT WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

To effectively engage stakeholders, various communication tools are being employed, including the use of a website ([www.AModernLI.com](http://www.AModernLI.com)). The website was launched in May 2016. It is regularly updated to notify viewers of available documents, responses to frequently asked questions, upcoming meetings, helpful graphics, press releases and other project information. Through the website, interested parties can sign up for the electronic mailing list and receive regular project updates and meeting notices (via email). As of the date of this DEIS, more than 1,000 individuals have registered for this electronic mailing list. The website also provides an option for viewers to

submit comments or request information. Additionally, the project team provides information to interested parties through Twitter (<https://twitter.com/amodernli>) and a dedicated YouTube channel located at (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsEhPBVfaf8ZRDY6x6L6Lsg>).

### **PROJECT BROCHURES AND PRESS RELEASES**

The project team has distributed seat drop pamphlets on passenger train seats, hung informational posters at train stations, and handed out project brochures throughout the Project Corridor. The project brochures have been made available at public meetings and are continually stocked at the Project Information Center. The project team has also issued general media press releases to reach a wider range of individual residents, employers, and employees living and/or working within the vicinity of the Project Corridor, in addition to commuters and other interested parties.

### **C. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

In addition to the large public meetings held during the scoping period, the project team has met with many stakeholders individually and in groups to focus on specific issues and understand localized concerns. Such meetings have included property owners' associations, individual homeowners, school districts, emergency services, civic organizations, business owners, and local elected officials. As of the date of this report, hundreds of these stakeholder engagement meetings have occurred. Meetings with elected officials will continue to take place throughout the environmental review process (including pre- and post-release of the Draft and Final Scoping Documents and the DEIS and Final EIS).

A concerted effort was made to meet with homeowners and other residents directly affected by the Proposed Project. The project team's goal was to reach out to each homeowner who lives adjacent to the LIRR right-of-way along the Project Corridor. In May 2016, the project's outreach team embarked upon a door-to-door outreach campaign to explain the project and its potential impacts, listen to homeowners' concerns and questions, and—when invited—walked the property with the homeowner. When the homeowner was present, the project representative provided a copy of the project brochure and a handout with the dates of the public scoping meetings. When the homeowner was not present, these materials were left at the doorstep. The project team has responded to all homeowner inquiries by phone, email, or through in-person meetings at the homeowners' convenience (with a choice of mornings, evenings, weekdays, and weekends). The project officials have committed to continuing robust homeowner coordination throughout the environmental assessment process, the procurement process, and during the construction period.

### **PROJECT OFFICE**

Since May 2016, the project team has been maintaining a Project Information Center, in the Mineola Station adjacent to the south platform waiting room. The current Project Information Center schedule is available on the Proposed Project website ([www.AModernLI.com](http://www.AModernLI.com)). The Project Information Center has displays, exhibits, and interactive elements. Comment forms are available, along with a trained staff representative to answer inquiries and provide general project information.

## **D. AGENCY COORDINATION**

LIRR and NYSDOT have been coordinating with multiple State and local agencies throughout the development of the project, including but not limited to:

- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, & Historic Preservation (OPRHP)
- Nassau County Department of Office of Emergency Management
- Nassau County Department of Planning
- Nassau County Department of Public Works
- Town of North Hempstead
- Town of Hempstead
- Town of Oyster Bay
- Village of Floral Park
- Village of New Hyde Park
- Village of Garden City
- Village of Mineola
- Village of Westbury
- Hamlet of Garden City Park
- Hamlet of Carle Place
- Hamlet of New Cassel
- Hamlet of Hicksville
- Local fire departments and police departments regarding emergency services
- Local water and sewer districts
- Long Island Power Authority/ Public Service Enterprise Group-Long Island (LIPA/PSEG-LI)

Additionally, the project team reviewed various databases maintained by natural resources agencies—including the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)—to confirm the presence or absence of wetlands and federally and state-listed species. In addition to these public government entities, the project team is coordinating closely with various utility companies to confirm the presence or absence of utilities and any potential relocation work.

## **E. SCOPING PROCESS**

One of the first major steps in the public outreach process pertained to the public scoping period. In accordance with SEQRA, the scoping process entails a written document that outlines the topics and analyses of a project's potential environmental impacts that will be evaluated in the DEIS. Per SEQRA, the scoping process is intended in part to ensure public participation in the EIS development, allow for an open discussion of issues of public concern, and allow the lead agency and other involved agencies to reach agreement on relevant issues to minimize the inclusion of unnecessary issues. A Draft Scoping Document for the LIRR Expansion Project was released for public review on May 5, 2016. As explained below, a variety of comment methods were available to the public.

### **PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS**

Because of the length of the Project Corridor and the high level of interest in the Proposed Project, multiple scoping meetings were scheduled. While none of these meetings were required, all were held to fulfill the agencies' desire for unprecedented community outreach on this project. It is notable that this level of early outreach exceeded parallel efforts for other recent, large-scale state projects, including Tappan Zee Bridge, Second Avenue Subway and East Side Access. A total of six public meetings were held at four different locations to obtain input on the Draft Scoping Document for the LIRR Expansion Project:

- Tuesday, May 24, 2016:
  - 11 am to 2 pm at The Inn at New Hyde Park
  - 10 am to 2 pm at Hofstra University in the Town of Hempstead
  - 5 pm to 9 pm at The Inn at New Hyde Park
  - 6 pm to 9 pm at Hofstra University in the Town of Hempstead
- Wednesday, May 25, 2016:
  - 11 am to 2 pm at the Yes We Can Community Center in Westbury
  - 6 pm to 9 pm at Antun's by Minar in Hicksville

A total of approximately 1,200 individuals attended the meetings. At these meetings, the project team presented an overview of the Proposed Project and a series of visuals (including poster boards, maps, and renderings) were displayed. MTA, LIRR, NYSDOT, consultant team staff, and representatives from the Governor's Office were available to answer questions. Attendees were able to provide oral comments (either in a public or private forum) and written comments (through an on-line database or comment cards).

### **SCOPING COMMENTS**

The public comment period was open from May 5, 2016 through June 13, 2016. Notably, the 40-day comment period allotted for the LIRR Expansion Project was longer than for other comparable MTA projects' scoping comment periods. In addition to the comment options provided at the scoping meetings, members of the public could submit comments through the website, by regular mail, or at the Project Information Center. During the public comment period, more than 750 individuals or entities submitted comments or questions. LIRR provided responses to these comments and questions in the Final Scoping Document, and revised the document to reflect the input received. The important public input received during the scoping period helped to shape and refine the issues being studied in the EIS and increase the awareness of certain existing features and community resources. Additionally, scoping input led to design improvements for specific elements—such as parking facilities and sound barriers.

### **F. DEIS COMMENT PERIOD**

The formal comment period for this DEIS closes on January 31, 2017. This DEIS is being widely distributed to interested parties for review and comment. The DEIS has been posted on the project website.

Hard copies of the entire DEIS and its appendices have been made available for review at the Project Information Center at Mineola Station, as well as at libraries and other public locations in and near the project area.

In accordance with SEQRA and Eminent Domain Procedures Law, multiple public hearings have been scheduled throughout the Project Corridor. The meetings will be held during daytime and evening hours, to accommodate a variety of public preferences. All venues will be accessible to persons with disabilities. The public will have an opportunity to submit comments about the DEIS; those comments will be recorded and used to inform project officials as they work to finalize the environmental study and publish a Final EIS.

During the DEIS comment period, project officials will hold highly-localized information sessions to explain the conclusions of the DEIS, discuss how the project will affect specific communities and resources, and solicit comments. The project officials will be available to answer any questions the local communities may have about the Proposed Project.

Comments on the DEIS can be submitted at the Project Information Center, through the website ([www.AModernLI.com](http://www.AModernLI.com)), at the public hearings listed above, or by regular mail to:

Edward M. Dumas, Vice President—Market Development & Public Affairs  
Long Island Rail Road Expansion Project  
MTA Long Island Rail Road, MC 1131  
Jamaica Station Building  
Jamaica, NY 11435

All comments will be recorded and used by project officials to finalize the environmental study and publish a Final EIS. Comments are due by 5:00 PM January 31, 2017.

### **G. ONGOING OUTREACH**

MTA, LIRR, and NYSDOT have extensive experience designing and constructing large public infrastructure projects. It is essential to maintain a continuous dialogue and open lines of communication throughout the design and construction phases. As described throughout this DEIS, the project team will continue coordinating with the affected communities throughout future project phases. Notifications of street closures, advanced notice of anticipated work hours, rail service changes, and temporary changes to passenger rail station access are just a few examples of important information that will be clearly communicated. A complete list of outreach measures proposed to be conducted during construction is available in Chapter 13, “Construction.” The project team will continue its robust public outreach and agency coordination program to disseminate such information and provide ongoing opportunity for input throughout the course of the project. \*

