

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
- Six Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Eminent Domain Procedure Law (EDPL) public hearings to allow the public to provide important feedback
- Localized information sessions with elected officials, civic organizations, and others 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). The website was launched in May 2016. It is regularly updated to notify viewers of available documents, responses to frequently asked

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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 [^] FEIS, approximately 1,[^] 500 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 [^] as well as informational fact sheets were made available at public [^] hearings 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 both the scoping period and DEIS comment 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. [^] Such meetings will continue to take place [^] beyond the environmental review process[^] .

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). This procedure continued throughout the DEIS comment period to maintain steady communication with homeowners, as well as inform them about the DEIS public hearing dates and locations. 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[^] at 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). 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. Spanish-language translation is available at the Project Information Center. LIRR intends to maintain the Project Information Center throughout the duration of the Proposed Project, and information regarding the location and hours of availability will be maintained on the project website.

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

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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 Subway₂ 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 scoping 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 scoping 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 [^] 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 PROCESS

In accordance with SEQRA, an EIS analyzes and evaluates the topics of a project's potential environmental impacts that have been recognized during the scoping process. Per SEQRA, the DEIS comment period^ 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. The DEIS ^ for the LIRR Expansion Project was released for public review ^ on ^ Monday, November 28, 2016. Hard copies of the entire DEIS and its appendices ^ were made available for review at the Project Information Center at Mineola Station, ^ at libraries, and at other public locations in and near the project area. An electronic copy of the DEIS and its appendices was posted online at www.AModernLI.com.

The 65-day comment period was initially scheduled to close on January 31, 2017. To accommodate requests by some communities and elected officials for a longer review period, Governor Cuomo extended the comment period until February 15, 2017. In all, the DEIS comment period lasted for 80 days, longer than the DEIS comment periods for other comparable projects. As explained below, a variety of comment methods were available to the public. More than 700 comments were received during the DEIS comment period.

DEIS PUBLIC HEARINGS

In accordance with SEQRA and the Eminent Domain Procedures Law^ (EDPL), public hearings ^ were held throughout the Project Corridor. The ^ hearings were scheduled during both daytime and evening hours^ to accommodate a variety of public preferences. ^ Hearings occurred in multiple communities along the Project Corridor and all venues ^ were accessible to persons with disabilities. Shuttle buses from the Hicksville Station and Mineola Station to the public hearings venues were provided. At these public hearings, the project team presented an overview of the Proposed Project and summarized the conclusions of the DEIS technical analyses. A series of visuals (including engineering alignments and renderings) were displayed. MTA, LIRR, NYSDOT, consultant team staff, and representatives from the Governor's Office were available to answer questions. A total of six public hearings were held at three different locations, as follows:

- Tuesday, January 17, 2017:
 - 11 am to 2 pm at the Yes We Can Community Center in the Village of Westbury
 - 6 pm to 9 pm at the Yes We Can Community Center in the Village of Westbury
- Wednesday, January 18, 2017:
 - 11 am to 2 pm at Hofstra University in the Town of Hempstead
 - 6 pm to 9 pm at Hofstra University in the Town of Hempstead
- Thursday, January 19, 2017:
 - 11 am to 2 pm at The ^ Inn at New Hyde Park in the Village of New Hyde Park
 - 6 pm to 9 pm at The Inn at New Hyde Park in the Village of New Hyde Park

In total, approximately 1,000 individuals attended the six DEIS public hearings. At each hearing, the public had an opportunity to submit formal comments about the DEIS^ . These comments ^ were incorporated into the public record and used to inform project officials ^ during preparation of the FEIS. Attendees were able to provide oral comments (either in a public or

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private forum) and written comments (through an on-line database or comment cards). The stenographers' transcripts from each hearing can be found in Appendix 22.

^ DEIS COMMENTS

In addition to the oral testimony and written comments provided at the DEIS hearings, members of the public could submit comments throughout the 80-day DEIS comment period. Comments could be submitted through the project website, e-mail, regular mail, or in-person at the Project Information Center. Information regarding comment submissions was advertised widely on the project website and listserv, at the Project Information Center, through various local newspaper advertisements, seat drop pamphlets, and posters hung at train stations. In total, more than 700 comments or questions were received during the DEIS comment period. All formal comments submitted during the DEIS comment period are included in Appendix 22. Chapter 22, "Response to Comments," provides a summary of the comments and questions submitted and the general topics and themes of the comments. The public input received during the DEIS comment period helped to shape and refine the Proposed Project in the FEIS—including identification of new project elements and selections of preferred grade crossing options.

FEIS COMMENTS

SEORA does not require a formal comment period on an FEIS. However, any comments can be submitted at the Project Information Center, through the website ^ (www.AModernLI.com), 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

^ 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 ^ FEIS, 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. *