

Presentation of  
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Mayor, Incorporated Village of New Hyde Park

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I appear today on behalf of the residents, business owners and daily visitors to the Incorporated Village of New Hyde Park.

The purpose of SEQRA is to assure that social, economic and environmental factors are considered before reaching a decision on proposed actions that may impact the environment. This requires that agencies must assess the environmental significance of all actions they have discretion to approve, fund or directly undertake.

In order for the SEQRA process to function properly, full cooperation is required amongst the project sponsor, lead agency, involved agencies and interested agencies. Crucial to this process is transparency and meaningful public participation. Respectfully, in this situation, it appears to be lacking on both counts.

The project is titled “Long Island Railroad Expansion Project”, focusing on the construction and installation of a third track. However, the draft scoping document is devoid of any mention, depiction and discussion of the third track location or placement. Such information is crucial in order for the public to sufficiently review and comment on the potential environmental impacts (cumulative or otherwise). A mere blue line on a Google Map would have at least provided the affected home owners some view on what may come to be if this project proceeds forward. But left as presented in this scoping document, the public is left guessing and speculating about the main components and/or goals of the project.

Meaningful public participation can only be accomplished if and when a more detailed scoping document is prepared and disseminated describing the project in its entirety. Such a

document must include project specifics as it relates to the construction and installation of the third track and an analysis of the cumulative environmental impacts of same.

An opportunity for meaningful public participation is further curtailed by the fact that the Draft Scoping Document establishes that the Scoping period and the public's opportunity to submit a comment will close on June 13, 2016. Given the nature of this project, a five week period for review, analysis and comment is insufficient. A project of this size and magnitude cannot be streamlined or simplified.

Full transparency and a desire on the part of the MTA LIRR to fully engage the public in the SEQRA process (as mandated by statute) is suspect when the project sponsor and lead agency are one in the same.

New Hyde Park is bisected by the main line of the Long Island Rail Road and has three (3) at-grade crossings. Traffic flow, development and the overall functionality of the community have been greatly affected by this fact, not to mention the compromise to safety that is created with all at-grade crossings. While the Village recognizes the potential benefits and significance of a project which includes the elimination of these grade crossings, it is extremely cautious about the overall cumulative impacts to our community resulting from such an undertaking and questions whether the benefits, if any, will outweigh such impacts.

New Hyde Park is a special village. The residents of the Village strive to preserve and promote a quality of life which focuses upon safety, security, fine homes, manicured lawns, uncluttered roads, culture, recreation, education and a sense of community. Any project proposed for New Hyde Park must also protect and promote that quality of life.

New Hyde Park is also special as a business community. The business owners and professionals in the Village are committed to complementing the residential community in promoting the Village as a wonderful place to live, or visit or in which to work.

It is urged that the environmental review of the proposed Expansion Project take into consideration and share in, at every phase and in every category of review, the promotion of the dearly-held values of the New Hyde Park community.

The Village of New Hyde Park will submit full written comments to the MTA LIRR concerning the scoping of the proposed project. However, at this time, I offer the following for your consideration:

1. Freight cargo. There currently exists a certain level of freight traffic on the LIRR line through New Hyde Park. A careful analysis of the current level of railroad freight traffic through the Village should be made and an evaluation of the potential for a future increase in rail freight traffic should be performed. Although the potential for increased freight traffic is dismissed in the Draft Scoping Document, an evident by-product of the project advancement is the potential for increased freight travel in the future. Also, the rail freight traffic dismissal is also contrary to studies by the NYSDOT to build Intermodal Facilities in Wyandanch and Pilgrim State. The impacts must be identified and carefully considered.

2. Takings. In order for the Village to appropriately examine the potential economic impact of the project, it is imperative that the Village has the opportunity to receive and evaluate a takings or condemnation map relative to what is planned. While the Draft Scoping Document states that the project will remain within the existing LIRR

right-of-way and that the number of acquisitions will be limited to commercial properties, this is questionable because the document fails to provide the particularities as to third track placement.

3. Cumulative impacts. In order for the SEQRA process to be effective and compliant with the spirit and intent of the statute, it is imperative that the project be evaluated with respect to its potential impacts upon New Hyde Park with respect to land use, the character of the community and noise. These impacts must be evaluated at the local level, neighborhood by neighborhood, block by block. A broad-stroke analysis will not suffice.

It is truly a failure of government or the agency that represent these governments when a process that claims to be so open and transparent to the public can be so manipulate and distorted that its citizens are left wondering what impacts these projects will really have to their property, their homes, and their lives.

Thank you.