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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

Freight Agreement Addresses Community Concerns

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority today announced that the MTA Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and New York Atlantic Railway (NYAR) have agreed to a moratorium on the rail movement of municipal solid waste, including ash, and the use of the intermodal facility in Garden City until December 31, 1999. The agreement comes at the request of Governor George E. Pataki, who had expressed his concern to the MTA over issues raised by local officials.

"I commend all the parties involved in this agreement, because it demonstrates that public and private entities working in partnership with elected officials can be truly responsive to the concerns of our communities," Pataki said.

The agreement also calls for the establishment of a task force to study and address concerns that have been raised about the movement of municipal solid waste by rail and its impact on surrounding communities.

The agreement is a milestone in the effort to privatize the MTA LIRR's freight operation, which began in October 1996 when NYAR was awarded a contract to run the LIRR's freight operation. This followed an extensive study to determine how to improve rail service in the downstate New York area. The study concluded that a privatized rail operator had the best potential for lowering costs, providing better service, raising capital and achieving credibility in the marketplace.

The benefits of privatizing the MTA LIRR freight operation include: removing an estimated 715,000 trucks from congested roadways; improving air quality and reducing noise on secondary roads; lowering the cost of goods and services to the region and boosting the regional economy through job creation and retention. Currently, while forty percent of freight is moved by rail nationwide, in the New York metropolitan area only three percent of goods are moved by freight railroads.