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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

### LIRR Opens Info Center at Great Neck Station for Proposed Colonial Road Improvement Project

#### ***Port Washington Branch customers invited to visit LIRR's Info Center to learn how Proposed Project will improve Port Washington LIRR Service***

MTA Long Island Rail Road is opening a special Information Center at Great Neck Station for LIRR Port Washington Branch customers to learn about the proposed Colonial Road Improvement Project and how it will improve service for the entire Port Washington Branch. The Info Center – which will be open Tuesday, March 29 through Sunday April 3 – will have LIRR personnel on hand to discuss the details of the LIRR's proposed project to replace the 114-year-old Colonial Road Bridge, address track drainage problems and extend an existing pocket track east of Great Neck Station as part of the effort to bring LIRR service to Grand Central Terminal.

LIRR's Project Information Center at the Great Neck Station is located at Middle Neck Road and Station Plaza at Great Neck Road, 1/4 mile north of Route 25A.

#### **Information Center hours:**

Preview Monday, March 28: 4 PM - 8 PM  
 Tuesday, March 29: 6:30 AM - 10:30 AM; and 4 PM - 8 PM  
 Wednesday, March 30: Noon - 8 PM  
 Thursday, March 31: 6:30 AM - 10:30 AM; and 4 PM - 8 PM  
 Friday, April 1: 6:30 AM - 10:30 AM; and 4 PM - 8 PM  
 Saturday, April 2: 12 PM - 4 PM  
 Sunday, April 3: 12 PM - 4 PM

The LIRR is seeking comments from the public – customers and residents – as it conducts an environmental review of its proposed replacement of the Colonial Road Bridge in Great Neck and extension of an existing pocket or turning track crucial to improving service on the Port Washington Branch.

The \$36 million Colonial Road Improvement Project will provide the following benefits:

- Extend an existing Great Neck pocket track approximately 1,200 feet enabling the LIRR to turn trains faster and provide better rush hour service and seat availability from Great Neck and stations west of Great Neck.

- Set the stage to add as many as 10 trains to the East Side of Manhattan during the AM when the \$7.3 billion East Side Access Project brings the LIRR to Grand Central Terminal for the first time in 2016, cutting as much as 40 minutes off commuting time for tens of thousands of customers along the entire branch

- Allow for better service for special events at Mets-Willets Point.

- Include the much-needed replacement of the 114-year old Colonial Road Bridge, which has been flagged by DOT and has carried vehicular and pedestrian traffic over the LIRR right of way since the days of horse drawn carriages.

- Allow for the installation of a new drainage system at track level that will eliminate a flooding problem that often hampers train service.

- Provide construction jobs crucial to the continued recovery of the Long Island economy.

- Some 43,000 people travel daily on the Port Washington Branch with approximately two-thirds using Great Neck Station and stations west of Great Neck.

LIRR President Helena Williams said: "This \$36 million project will create construction jobs while replacing a 114 year old bridge and extending an existing railroad siding near Great Neck that will improve service for 43,000 customers who use the LIRR's Port Washington branch each day. This project is critical as the LIRR prepares for the biggest expansion of service in 100 years - providing direct service to Grand Central Terminal. I encourage customers to stop by our project info center and let us know what you think."

As part of its environmental review, the LIRR is launching a comprehensive study of all materials that could best mitigate any possible increase in noise for residents of the Village of Thomaston. A small number of backyards run alongside the proposed extension of the LIRR's pocket track, just east of the Great Neck station. The Railroad will examine all possibilities, and determine which materials might be the best sound absorbing buffer between the new extended track and the community. These include everything from the density and height of foliage, the composition and height of a retaining wall, and a combination of both. At no time will the pocket track be used for overnight train storage. Electric trains normally used on the Port Washington line are much quieter than diesel trains used on some other LIRR branches.

Congressman Gary Ackerman said: "The residents of Thomaston who would be affected by the extension of the Great Neck pocket track deserve to be heard. I thank Helena Williams for giving me the opportunity to express their concerns, and for understanding the unease of homeowners who would be impacted by this project. I look forward to the LIRR quickly completing its study so that the best course of action can be determined."

Village of Great Neck Plaza Mayor Jean Celender said: "The service on the Port Washington Branch historically has been a major attraction for people living and working in Great Neck. Better and more frequent train service benefits the community, and that's the promise here. I urge residents of our community to take advantage of the LIRR's environmental review process to learn more about the proposal, weigh the pros and cons and express your concerns. Ultimately, we want the LIRR to do what is best for the entire Great Neck peninsula. This includes ensuring that any new construction plans minimize disruption to the community and mitigate negative impacts."

According to the 2010 LIRR Customer Service Satisfaction Survey, the improvement to LIRR service that is most valued by our customers is increased service frequency. In Great Neck, the extension of the existing turning track would provide the infrastructure to turn more trains during the busy AM and PM peak hours. The result will be better seat availability and increased frequency of service.

At no time will the pocket track be used for overnight train storage.

## Environmental Review

The LIRR will follow the federal NEPA environmental process. LIRR has held preliminary meetings with elected officials to inform them of the proposed project. LIRR also held an information meeting in November, 2010, for some Thomaston residents who live adjacent to the LIRR Right of Way.

Public participation will be an integral element of the LIRR's environmental review. The Great Neck Information Center represents an opportunity for the public to learn about the project and to provide input. There are many ways to comment on the project: LIRR employees will collect written comments on the project at the Information Center, people can email their comments through the MTA website, or residents can call the LIRR and provide comments. The LIRR will create a database of the contacts and comments that are received, and will include these materials in the environmental report. LIRR will use the contact information to update customers, residents and interested parties about the status and the progress of the project, as well as any updates to the website.

After the public comments are reviewed, work will advance on the environmental report. During the spring and summer, LIRR anticipates that the draft environmental report will be completed. In the fall, the public would have an additional opportunity to comment on the environmental report and any mitigation that may be associated with the project. The environmental process is expected to conclude in the first quarter of 2012.

## Colonial Road Bridge

The Colonial Road Bridge crosses over the LIRR tracks a half mile east of Great Neck Station in the Village of Thomaston. It is currently approved to carry vehicles weighing less than three tons, the state's minimum weight limit for vehicular traffic. Trucks exceeding that weight have been reported to use the bridge, a condition that prompted the LIRR to request additional traffic enforcement from the Nassau County Police Department.

Because of its age (114 years) and condition, the Colonial Road Bridge is costly to maintain and requires frequent inspections by the Railroad and the New York State Department of Transportation. Maintenance of the bridge is the sole responsibility of the LIRR, whose bridge engineering staff has determined the structure is at the end of its useful life.

The new bridge will meet New York State Department of Transportation standards, which means wider travel lanes and improved pedestrian sidewalk. The new drainage system includes a retaining wall and abundant landscaping, which together will act as a sound buffer between our tracks and the local neighborhood.

### Great Neck Station - Westbound AM Peak Period Train Schedule

Existing AM Peak Service (Departure Time)	Destination	Planned AM Peak ESA Service (Departure Time)	Destination
5:46	Penn Station	5:47	Penn Station
6:27	Penn Station	6:02	<i>Grand Central Terminal</i>
6:37	Penn Station	6:14	Penn Station
6:56	Penn Station	6:31	Penn Station
7:06	Penn Station	6:34	<i>Grand Central Terminal</i>
7:30	Penn Station	6:47	<i>Grand Central Terminal</i>
7:47	Penn Station	6:50	Penn Station
8:04	Penn Station	7:02	Penn Station
8:19	Penn Station	7:12	<i>Grand Central Terminal</i>
8:24	Penn Station	7:22	Penn Station
8:29	Penn Station	7:45	<i>Grand Central Terminal</i>
8:38	Penn Station	7:54	Penn Station
8:56	Penn Station	7:57	Penn Station
8:58	Penn Station	8:06	Penn Station
9:22	Penn Station	8:11	<i>Grand Central Terminal</i>
		8:21	<i>Grand Central Terminal</i>
		8:32	Penn Station
		8:37	<i>Grand Central Terminal</i>
		8:48	<i>Grand Central Terminal</i>
		8:51	Penn Station
		9:02	Penn Station
		9:07	<i>Grand Central Terminal</i>
		9:31	Penn Station

