



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) ▼

Press Release

January 24, 2011

LIRR

IMMEDIATE

MTA LIRR Begins Environmental Review For Proposed Colonial Road Improvement Project

Extension of Existing Pocket Track Will Bring Immediate Benefits to Port Washington Branch Customers As Well As Safer, Modern Bridge

MTA Long Island Rail Road is conducting 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:

It will extend an existing pocket track enabling the LIRR to turn trains faster and immediately provide better rush hour service and seat availability from Great Neck and stations west of Great Neck.

It will set the stage for even more service enhancements when the \$7.3 billion East Side Access Project brings the LIRR to Grand Central Terminal for the first time in 2016, significantly improving commuting time for tens of thousands of customers along the entire branch

It will allow for better service for special events at Mets-Willets Point..

It will include the much-needed replacement of the 100-year old Colonial Road Bridge, which has carried vehicular and pedestrian traffic over the LIRR right of way since the days of horse drawn carriages.

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

It will 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 100 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."

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.

Public participation will be an integral element of the LIRR's environmental review, which gets underway this month in compliance with the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. The LIRR plans to begin holding public information meetings in February, reaching out directly to invite the local residents as well as Port Washington Branch customers to attend as soon as locations, dates and times have been finalized.

The LIRR will follow the environmental process, which includes listening to public comments, analyzing alternatives for the bridge and turning track and preparing a draft environmental report later this year. Another public meeting to review the findings of that report will follow.

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 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 barrier between our tracks and the local neighborhood.

LIRR has already held preliminary informational meetings with local elected officials and Thomaston residents. The Railroad will be meeting with the Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration, and NYS DOT to review the project and the required environmental review process.