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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

### MTA LIRR Announces Availability of the Environmental Assessment for the Colonial Road Improvement Project for Review by Community

***Assessment Evaluates Effects of Replacing Existing Colonial Bridge with New Bridge, Extending Pocket Track to Accommodate 12 Additional Cars and Track Drainage Improvements; Comment period extends through January 14, 2013***

The MTA Long Island Rail Road announced today that the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Colonial Road Improvement Project is now available for review by the community. The EA evaluates the potential economic, social, and environmental effects of replacing the existing Colonial Road Bridge with a new structure, extending the existing railroad pocket track along the Port Washington Branch at Colonial Road to accommodate one additional 12-car train, and drainage improvements at the track level. Additional railroad improvements associated with the project will also include utility relocations, additional switches for crossing between tracks, modifications to the signal system, and installation of retaining walls and new landscaping as mitigation efforts.

"We are very interested in getting feedback from the community on the Environmental Assessment as we continue to move this vital project forward," said LIRR President Helena Williams. "Comment from the public and elected officials has been very helpful in the early developmental stages of the project, and remains just as critical now."

The full Environmental Assessment can be accessed online at: <http://www.mta.info/lirr/News/ColonialRoad/>.

Hard copies of the EA are available for review at the Great Neck Public Library – Station Branch, 26 Great Neck Road, in Great Neck, and at the LIRR offices in Jamaica (144-41 94th Avenue, Jamaica, Queens).

The \$36 million Colonial Road Improvement Project will provide immediate benefits to Port Washington commuters and local residents, including:

- Provide better rush hour service by extending an existing Great Neck pocket track approximately 1,200 feet, enabling the LIRR to turn trains faster and provide more seats for rush hour commuters from Great Neck and stations west of Great Neck. At no time will the pocket track be used for overnight train storage. The new pocket track includes a retaining wall and abundant landscaping, which together will act to mitigate railroad noise between LIRR tracks and the local neighborhood.
- Includes the much-needed replacement of the 114-year old Colonial Road Bridge, which is beyond its useful life and is weight-restricted by New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT). The bridge has carried vehicular and pedestrian traffic over the LIRR right of way since the days of horse drawn carriages. It crosses over the LIRR tracks a half mile east of Great Neck Station in the Village of Thomaston. The new bridge will meet NYS DOT standards, which means wider travel lanes and improved pedestrian sidewalk.
- Colonial Road Bridge will be rebuilt in the current alignment. The community expressed a strong desire to maintain the bridge in its existing alignment and an engineering solution was found to accommodate public input. The new bridge will be a concrete arch structure which will further reduce noise impacts to residents near the bridge.
- Allow for the installation of a new drainage system at track level that will eliminate a flooding problem that often hampers train service.
- Allow for better service for special events at Mets-Willets Point.
- Provide construction jobs crucial to the continued recovery of the Long Island economy.
- In 2019, when the East Side Access project is completed, the LIRR will be able to add as many as 10 trains to Grand Central during the AM rush when the \$8.2 billion project connects the LIRR to the East Side of Manhattan, cutting as much as 40 minutes off commuting time for tens of thousands of customers along the entire branch.

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.

The Colonial Road Improvement Project Environmental Assessment is being undertaken in compliance with the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. Public participation continues to be an integral element of the LIRR's environmental assessment. Last year, as part of the process, the LIRR opened a special Information Center at Great Neck Station for approximately one week at the end of March for LIRR Port Washington Branch customers to learn about the proposed project. LIRR personnel were on hand to discuss the details of the project and how it would improve service for the entire Port Washington Branch, as well as listen to public comments.

#### Comment Period for Environmental Assessment

The LIRR is seeking comments from the public – customers and residents – on the Environmental Assessment. The deadline to submit comments is

January 14, 2013. Written comments may be submitted via post or e-mail to:

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