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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

Transit-Oriented Development Plan Aims to Boost Downtown Harrison

MTA Board Considering Agreement With Developer to Expand Parking and Build Apartments and Shops at Harrison Metro-North Station

The Board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is considering an agreement to create the first Metro-North-initiated transit-oriented development in its system. The project, undertaken with AvalonBay Communities, Inc., would result in the construction of 143 apartments, 27,000 square feet of retail space and two pedestrian plazas at the Metro-North Railroad station in downtown Harrison, N.Y., and would increase commuter parking by at least 218 spaces.

The development would take place on a 3.28-acre site on the south side of the station along Halstead Avenue. The site now has four parking lots that are too small to meet current commuter demand and are in need of rehabilitation.

Under the proposed site plan drawn up by the developer, the parking lots would be replaced by a series of pedestrian-oriented, four-story buildings lined with retail stores on the ground floor and apartments on the upper floors.

A mixed-use building at the eastern end of the site would create a vibrant streetscape with space for small shops, restaurants, and community oriented facilities at street level. Its interior and upper stories would provide 569 parking spaces, of which at least 475 would be reserved for commuters, an 85% increase over the 257 Metro-North-owned commuter parking spaces that exist today.

Another 184 parking spaces for residents and retail customers would be located in the basement and rear first floor of the mixed retail/residential buildings on the western end of the site. The existing parking spaces owned by the Town/Village of Harrison on the north side of the station would be preserved.

Under the agreement being considered for approval on Wednesday, the MTA would offer to sell the property to AvalonBay in exchange for an expanded parking facility that would be built at AvalonBay's expense.

"We are delighted to be proceeding with what promises to be a transformative project for Metro-North commuters and for the Town and Village of Harrison," said Metro-North Railroad President Joseph Giulietti. "Commuters will have an easier time finding parking and downtown Harrison will be enlivened with stores and a 24-hour community of residents. We hope this type of suburban transit-oriented development becomes a model for communities throughout the MTA region."

"I'm very excited about the changes proposed for Harrison's Downtown Business District and am eager to work with MTA and AvalonBay on a shared vision that will support the different needs of our community," said Harrison Supervisor/Mayor Ron Belmont. "These improvements will undoubtedly help merchants and property owners strengthen Harrison's business climate while providing a variety of retail options for our residents. I look forward to seeing Harrison become an even better place to live, work and visit."

"AvalonBay is pleased to be a partner in this exciting development opportunity," said Grant Jaber, Sr., Development Director for AvalonBay Communities, Inc. "This project is a terrific example of a successful public/private partnership. AvalonBay looks forward to working with the Town of Harrison and MTA to create this unique mixed-use, transit-oriented community. Avalon Harrison will certainly be a showcase community in our national portfolio."

The agreement being considered by the MTA Board is a Joint Development Agreement (JDA), which would enable the MTA, the Town and Village of Harrison, and the developer to enter into negotiations for a Land Disposition Agreement detailing the terms and conditions by which the MTA would convey its land to the developer. The MTA Board's Finance Committee today approved entering into the JDA. The full MTA Board is slated to vote on it on Wednesday.

Before construction could begin, plans would go through a public review process as specified by the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), the Town and Village of Harrison's land use review process, and rezoning proceedings. Avalon Bay was selected as developer through an open and competitive request for proposals process that began in July 2011.

Harrison is located 45 minutes from Grand Central Terminal on the New Haven Line. It is served by approximately 100 trains a day in the current weekday timetable.