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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

MTA Board Approves Contract For Transformative LIRR Modernization

Historic Project Will Improve Railroad Infrastructure, Eliminate Seven Street-Level Railroad Crossings, Improve Railroad Bridges, Add Third Track to Busiest LIRR Corridor

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Board on Wednesday approved a design-build contract with 3rd Track Constructors (3TC), to complete the design and construction of the crucial Long Island Rail Road Expansion Project. Several expert firms have joined together to form 3TC, including Dragados USA, Inc., John P. Picone Inc., CCA Civil, Inc., and Halmar International LLC, with Stantec as the design professional, as well as Cameron Engineering, and Rubenstein Associates leading the community outreach team.

The approval of the 3TC contract marks another important milestone for the LIRR Expansion Project, a signature initiative of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's, and part of his comprehensive, interconnected plan to improve transit and transportation throughout the region.

This initiative, which blends capital expansion and state-of-good-repair work, will unlock the full potential of existing LIRR modernization initiatives including East Side Access, Double Track, Jamaica Capacity Improvement Project, and other major investments. This project will provide a state-of-the-art transportation system for Long Island and New York City residents, commuters, and business communities, while laying the foundation for a resurgence of the region's economic growth.

"Upon its completion, this modernization initiative will provide faster commuting with a more reliable network, and will allow us to keep the railroad in a state-of-good-repair," MTA Chairman Joseph J. Lhota said. "All too often, major delays on the LIRR are tied to incidents along this corridor. With this investment, Long Islanders and New York City residents alike will be able to avoid the crippling and cascading delays that affect the entire network. This project will transform not only Long Island, but the economy and accessibility of the entire region."

"These infrastructure improvements were identified as crucial and necessary many years ago, and I am pleased to see that they will soon become a reality," said LIRR President Pat Nowakowski. "The reliability of our system is the focal point for good service, and with this project, the LIRR will be able to deliver that better than ever for our customers who rely on the railroad for commuting to work and school, and other facets of daily life."

New Third Track Adds Capacity, Reduces Delays

The third track will be placed within the existing LIRR right-of-way, on a 9.8-mile segment of the Main Line between Floral Park and Hicksville that serves more than 250 trains on a typical weekday, and is used by 40% of LIRR customers. This heavily utilized, two-track segment is susceptible to congestion during peak periods. Without the third track, the threat of bottlenecks from emergency repairs, disabled trains and other disruptions linger, with the potential to inconvenience tens of thousands of riders during each event. Upon its completion, the LIRR Expansion Project will equate to faster commutes, fewer delays, enable true reverse commuting capabilities and reduce crowding.

New Third Track Will Allow For Reverse Commuting

With the addition of the third track, all-day, two-directional service on the Main Line will become a reality for the first time in modern LIRR history. Currently, during the morning and evening rush hours, only a limited number of trains are allowed to run in the opposite flow direction, making it difficult for those who may live in New York City or western Nassau County to access jobs on Long Island. Now, Brooklyn and Queens residents will be able to connect with opportunities in Nassau and Suffolk Counties the same way that Bronx residents currently travel to jobs via Metro-North, benefitting the entire metropolitan region's economy.

Safety, Infrastructure, Reliability, Quality-of-Life and Service Boosted

Risks to public safety currently exist at street-level grade crossings. Accidents and delays occur when motorists and pedestrians attempt to circumnavigate lowered gates while a train is entering the intersection. From 2013 to 2016, there were 127 such incidents on the Main Line, causing 4,354 late or canceled trains, and affecting millions of LIRR customers.

Seven grade crossings along this 9.8-mile corridor will be completely eliminated, which will dramatically improve safety for both LIRR customers and crew, as well as motorists. Traffic along these crossings will also see vast improvements, as crossing gates currently can close roadways for up to 30 minutes in a peak hour, contributing to significant congestion on local streets.

"These seven grade crossings create major safety, air pollution, traffic and noise problems," said MTA Chief Development Officer Janno Lieber. "It's time to get rid of them."

Street-level grade crossings to be eliminated include:

- Covert Avenue, New Hyde Park
- 12th Street, New Hyde Park
- New Hyde Park Road, New Hyde Park
- Main Street, Mineola
- Willis Avenue, Mineola
- School Street, Westbury
- Urban Avenue, Westbury

Rail infrastructure improvements throughout the corridor include:

- New signal equipment and switches.
- New power substations to bring power infrastructure to a state-of-good-repair while enhancing capacity to power three tracks simultaneously.
- With a second track on the Ronkonkoma Branch and a third track along this Main Line corridor, the LIRR will have more flexibility to perform scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, thereby reducing costs and limiting customer inconvenience.
- Station enhancements, including ADA accessibility improvements, along with longer platforms, which will eliminate the need to walk through train cars to exit, helping to avoid delays and safety issues.
- Seven rail bridges along the Main Line will be improved to accommodate a third track, and certain bridge clearances will be raised to reduce bridge strikes. Currently, when a truck hits a railroad bridge, the incident causes significant train delays and poses safety risks.

These bridges will be replaced using the method successfully employed earlier this fall, when the LIRR replaced the Post Avenue Bridge in Westbury -- a span over the Main Line that had been struck by dozens of overheight trucks in recent years resulting in train delays. In anticipation for future expansion, the new bridge included space for a piece of third track to be laid. The project was completed on budget and ahead of schedule the weekend of October 21-22, 2017, with the new bridge's height clearance now allowing trucks up to 14 feet to safely pass underneath, thus improving LIRR system infrastructure and service reliability. The old bridge, which hovered over Post Avenue at 11 feet 10 inches, had been struck by trucks between five and nine times per year in each of the past six years. Train delays in both directions loomed as LIRR crews worked to determine its safety and structural stability before restoring train service. Using a design-build contract, the new bridge was constructed in a parking lot adjacent to the Westbury Station and hoisted into place after the old bridge was removed intact -- a swap that took one weekend to complete.

This successful Post Avenue Bridge replacement marked the first step of the LIRR's current plan to improve safety and service along the Main Line.

- For video of the Post Avenue Bridge construction project, click here: <https://youtu.be/gwHJXC58VKo>
- For photos showing the Post Avenue site before, during and after the construction, click here: <https://flic.kr/s/aHsm9P4mT7>

Community Outreach

Over the past two years, MTA and LIRR officials have met consistently and frequently with local elected officials, civic leaders, business owners and residents to discuss the project and elicit feedback. The results of these efforts have been incorporated into the project's scope and details in some of the following ways:

- The use of retaining walls will allow the third track to be placed in the existing LIRR right-of-way. This approach eliminated the need for residential property takings and other imposing community impacts.
- Sound attenuation walls will be erected throughout residential areas to reduce noise levels and protect quality of life standards.
- Environmental controls will be in place throughout the duration of construction to minimize dust, noise and other community disruptions.
- The MTA's and LIRR's ongoing commitment to robust community outreach, including consultation on design aspects, will ensure the public's voices are heard and considered throughout the project.

The Procurement Process, Award and Construction Schedule

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo first announced the project in January 2016, catalyzing an extensive environmental impact study and hundreds of meetings between LIRR officials and local communities. A two-step procurement process was approved by the MTA Board in November 2016, and four bidders were pre-qualified in January 2017. This was followed by a series of nine one-on-one meetings with the bidders. Three of the pre-qualified bidders submitted design-build proposals. The proposals were reviewed by technical committees, including staff from the LIRR, MTA and state Department of Transportation. The Final Selection Committee, comprised of railroad, transportation, and construction industry experts, reviewed the technical and price proposals during the summer months before meeting four times during the fall, when pricing negotiations began.

The months-long selection process concluded with the recommendation of 3TC's application, which an MTA analysis found offered the lowest price and best overall value. 3TC was found to have a strong understanding of the overall scope of the project, along with sensitivity to community impacts with a commitment to an innovative approach and to deliver a high-quality project.

The \$1.813 billion 3TC contract award comprises a base scope of \$1.457 billion for work during the current 2015-2019 Capital Plan Program, and a completion scope for an additional \$356 million to be funded through the 2020-2024 Capital Plan Program.

Separately, MTA Capital Construction on Wednesday awarded a competitive RFP contract to Arup – Jacobs Joint Venture for \$99.996 million for project management consulting services on the third track project. With the 3TC, and Arup – Jacobs Joint Venture contracts, as well as other owner costs, the total project cost is estimated at \$2.6 billion. The overall project is expected to be completed by late 2022.

Beginning in January 2018, the contractors will work to complete design, surveying, mobilization, utility relocations, and other early construction activities. Ongoing community outreach efforts will also be included in this phase, such as developing clear communications protocols, opening a public information office, continuing coordination with local elected officials, and soliciting input on the aesthetics of components such as stations and sound walls. Substantial construction is expected to begin in late 2018.

The project is using the “design-build” form of contracting, in which a single firm or consortium is responsible for both the design and construction of a project. This approach puts competitive pressure on bidders to harness innovative methods to complete the project faster, and lessen the impact of construction. The contract imposes financial penalties for failure to adhere to a strict project timetable. This approach incentivizes faster construction, places the risk for cost overruns on the Design-Builder, and rewards the Design-Builder for reducing impacts on local communities and commuters. Design-build has been used successfully in projects such as the new Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge, as well as the LIRR’s Ellison Avenue Bridge and Post Avenue Bridge replacements.

In addition to its commitments to the community regarding noise mitigations, 3TC has also promised job growth and contract opportunities for Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises, with participation goals at 15% for each category, and at 6% for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses.