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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

LIRR to Make Structural Repairs to Lefferts Boulevard Overpass in Kew Gardens

Long Island Rail Road President Phil Eng today announced that the railroad intends to make nearly \$1 million in structural repairs to a pair of platforms above the LIRR tracks in Kew Gardens, Queens, that span either side of Lefferts Boulevard and provide a base for neighborhood retail buildings. The funds were secured by New York City Council Member Karen Koslowitz.

“We thank Council Member Karen Koslowitz, who identified funding for this project,” said LIRR President Phillip Eng. “We had initially asked for these funds so that we could conduct an engineering feasibility study. After many conversations with the community and elected officials convened by Borough President Katz, my team looked at this issue more carefully and we determined that the best use of the funds would be to directly repair the platforms. We look forward to continuing to work with the elected officials and local community to ensure this bridge’s future. The LIRR is an integral component of Queens and we understand the importance of these businesses to the character of Kew Gardens. So we wanted to re-evaluate all options.”

The LIRR plans to award a contract to make the repairs to a company specializing in heavy structural construction, with the expectation that all work would be completed by the end of next year. “We’re looking to expedite a procurement and have the interested parties bid both cost and schedule so we can evaluate the best value proposition,” Eng said. “The repairs we plan are significant, and will make the platforms safe for continued retail use.”

The structures in question are a pair of concrete and iron platforms below street level that were built in the 1920s. One platform, to the west of the roadway, supports the retail building at 81-12 Lefferts Boulevard. The other platform, to the east of the roadway, supports the retail building at 81-19 Lefferts Boulevard. Although owned by the LIRR, together the buildings house approximately a dozen local neighborhood businesses.

The bridge that carries the roadway itself – as opposed to the platforms on either side of it that support the retail buildings – is owned and maintained by the New York City Department of Transportation.

QUOTE SHEET:

Council Member Koslowitz said: “The demolition of the Lefferts Blvd. bridge would have had a devastating effect on the Kew Gardens community. Speaking for myself, my fellow public officials and the Kew Gardens residents, I commend President Phillip Eng for his willingness to reexamine the problem, bringing his professional abilities and background to the analysis, and concluding that the bridge does not have to be demolished.”

Queens Borough President Melinda Katz said: “The structural repairs to be made by the LIRR will provide much-needed peace of mind to the business owners on and around the Lefferts Boulevard Bridge. These businesses are vital to the Kew Gardens community and the new level of certainty on the bridge’s future is welcome news. Councilmember Karen Koslowitz deserves our great thanks for securing the funding that will make these repairs a reality.”

Senator Leroy Comrie said: “This action is the result of the persistent advocacy of the Kew Gardens community and the bridge merchants. I was proud to work with them, as well as my colleagues at the city and state levels, to push for preservation. I thank LIRR President Phil Eng and his team for listening to the concerns of the community and pledging to restore the bridge structure without disrupting the businesses. We will remain diligent as this process continues.”

Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal said: “I join the entire Kew Gardens community in celebrating this positive step forward. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the LIRR to ensure that this bridge continues to be a safe home to our small businesses for years to come. We are all thankful to President Eng and his team for coming to the table and actively responding to the needs of our community.”

Congresswoman Grace Meng said: “Our community owes Councilwoman Karen Koslowitz our thanks for making sure the Lefferts Boulevard Bridge in Kew Gardens will be preserved and protected. I was pleased to join Karen in advocating for the bridge’s preservation. President Phillip Eng of the Long Island Rail Road agreed that this was an important step for our community after careful study and consultation with the New York State Department of Transportation. I’d also like to thank all of my colleagues in local government for their strong advocacy to keep the bridge; Kew Gardens Civic Association and Community Board 9 brought tremendous energy and advocacy on this important issue. Keeping the bridge will help preserve the character of Kew Gardens and maintain the core of the business center within the community.”

State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. said: “I am pleased and grateful to hear that the Long Island Rail Road has decided to chart a course to save and repair the Kew Gardens Bridge, including the two platforms above the LIRR tracks. I believe investing in the current infrastructure is a rational approach that saves the bridge, along with its local businesses and jobs, while also easing the concerns of my constituents. I truly appreciate the time taken by Mr. Eng, to evaluate the matter and be considerate of our issues related to the bridge. I would also like to thank Councilwoman Koslowitz for helping to secure the funds for this project.”

Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi said: “Thank you to Councilwoman Koslowitz for providing the funding for the Lefferts Boulevard bridge. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues in government and our dedicated community advocates, business owners, and residents, to ensure the safety, stability, and integrity of this structure.”