

Floral Park-Bellerose UFSD
Proposed LIRR MTA Third Track Project
May 24, 2016

Good morning. My name is James Opiekun and I proudly serve as the Superintendent of Schools for the Floral Park-Bellerose Union Free School District. I am here on behalf of the Floral Park-Bellerose Board of Education, the 1600 PreK-6 students and 300 employees who are part of the Floral Park Bellerose School community.

Our community pays close attention to local civic matters, particularly those involving the education of our children and we are deeply concerned regarding the immediate and long term impact of the proposed addition of a Third Track by the LIRR MTA.

Although this concern stems from many issues we are most disappointed that our school community has not been included in the planning or specifics of the proposed LIRR MTA Third Track Project. So far, in all of the public documents furnished and all the discussion that has taken place the fact that two elementary schools will be directly impacted is not mentioned once.

It has become increasingly evident that those specifics do not include consideration or sensitivity for the negative environmental, educational and infrastructure impacts on the fragile and complicated nature of providing a safe and secure setting for our elementary school community.

It appears that the simple task of arriving to and leaving from school will be a logistical nightmare as traffic is rerouted for an undetermined length of time. We currently use one set of busses to service three elementary schools in our district. Timing is essential as these busses are sequenced to go drop off at one school and then circle back to pick up students at the next. Even a five minute backup becomes an incremental delay at each school. The budget impact to change this would approach \$2 million dollars to service our students with additional busses and drivers.

How are we to accommodate the inevitable traffic delays caused by the crossings projects?

Noise, vibration and distraction during construction will be real challenges that will affect our students and staff.

How are we to continue to conduct an effective educational program when construction will be taking place literally on our back step?

Air quality is a health issue. Dust and debris will be constantly airborne. It has already been established that the soil around the tracks contains toxins such as mercury and arsenic.

What will be done to remediate, monitor and proactively account for the health and safety of our students and staff?

Location of staging areas during construction will have an immediate effect on parking for staff and residents around our John Lewis Childs School and exacerbate the already delicate balance in that area. Our John Lewis Childs School has depended on the shared use of the Creedmoor Spur for both parking and play area for decades.

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What will happen to this area during construction and after?

Going forward the increase in rail traffic, whether it be passenger or freight, raises the specter of more potential for mishap and more unsolved problems.

What plans are in place to assess and analyze the effect on our two elementary schools directly impacted by the increased amount of train activity?

And throughout the entire unveiling of this project there has been a consistent inability to answer the simplest of questions-

What will it ultimately look like?

Where will it go?

When and how long will it take?

To be clear our concerns are real. We take seriously the educational stewardship entrusted to us and are understandably perplexed that such a cavalier approach has been taken about the effects on our schools. Please understand we are not against progress. We are however not in favor of progress any cost. Especially at the cost of the wellbeing of our students.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our concerns.