STATEMENT BY WILLIAM J. CORBETT
AT LONG ISLAND RAILROAD SCOPING HEARING
REGARDING THE THIRD TRACK
NEW HYDE PARK INN, MAY 24, 2016

My name is William J. Corbett and I have an office at 113 South Tyson Avenue, Floral Park, NY 11001. I have had two businesses facing the tracks on South Tyson Ave. for the past 30 years and have been a Floral Park resident for over 70 years. I have raised a family here and have been active in many local organizations. We employ 6 full time and 4 part time staff member – a small business.

INADEQUATE NOTICE
First, let me say that there has not been adequate time to present comments on the scoping document since it has only been available for two weeks and it is woefully short of the details that are essential to a careful analysis.

Asking us to provide comments on this proposal which is so lacking in details is like the Governor asking us to take a mail order bride without ever having met her or even seen her photo. He is asking us to accept a "Pig in a Polk."

PRESENT AND PAST OPPOSITION
I understand that we are limited in the time we can present testimony so if I am cut short I have prepared a written document to submit to become part of the record. The written version of my testimony will have appended a list of over 100 local organizations and political leaders who are opposed to this unnecessary and costly project and the list continues to grow. The list was compiled by CARE- Citizens Against Rail Expansion. The last time this came up we had a similar group in opposition and over 10,000 local citizens signed a petition in opposition.

This time the Governor received several thousand postcards and letters from local citizens who are opposed to the Third Track.

LIRR IS A BAD NEIGHBOR
Let me start by saying that the Long Island Railroad has not been a good neighbor. For years I have been compiling that a dangerous condition exists on South Tyson Avenue in Floral Park in which rocks and metal pieces of equipment fly down from the elevated tracks. the LIRR has refused to provide screening to stop these objects from flying down into the street which have the possibility of killing or injuring members of the public. As part of your study please, consider the question of placing screening along the tracks along South Tyson Avenue so pedestrians will not be injured.

LOCAL IMPACT
Our building is located about 200 feet from where we believe that construction will begin. The oldest commercial building in Floral Park is located just across the street from where we think construction of a Third Track will begin. We would like to know what measures will be taken to make sure that the vibration from your use of pile drivers and other equipment will not damage these structures, loosen electrical and gas connections and vibration that could cause plumbing leaks? What measurers are you going to take to insure that the underground water and sewer system is not disrupted and that pipes are not broken by the vibration of the construction equipment?

In reviewing these comments you should understand that South Tyson Ave. starts at Jericho Turnpike and runs south to the railroad and makes a 90-degree turn west up to Tulip Avenue.

PARKING AND TRAFFIC FLOW

Parking is now very scarce with the 32 spots under the tracks from Tulip Ave. to the South Tyson underpass. These spots will be lost during the construction phase of the work. What arrangements will you be making to provide parking for these commuters and for the workers who now park under the trestle and on South Tyson Avenue – a total of at least 50 spots. Where will you provide parking for these people? As it is now, some of my employees have to already park several blocks away across Plainfield Avenue.

I practice Elder Law and with the anticipated closing of South Tyson Ave. how will my elderly clients be able to park and come to my office? Will you be providing me with office space at another location for the duration of the construction?

What is your claimed right of way on South Tyson Avenue? Is it just where the structure now lies or does it extend into the middle of South Tyson that runs parallel to the railroad?

There are six other businesses on South Tyson Avenue between Tulip Ave. and the area of construction. What arrangements will you be making for these people to park when South Tyson is either closed or restricted? Will South Tyson be closed and if so, how will fire and rescue apparatus have access to the four buildings on this street, including an apartment house with many tenants?

CONTAMINATED SOIL

Over the years there have been reports of Cancer Clusters along the railroad. There have been reports that the LIRR has used many dangerous and hazardous chemicals to keep down vegetation growth and try to control the rat population along the tracks. In the Floral Park area I know you took away tons of contaminated soil from your electric substation that is located between the tracks.

What tests will you do to determine the extent of the soil that is hazardous? Will you do tests every 20 feet along the 9.8 miles you plan to work? How will you determine the level of contaminants? How will you remove these contaminants to insure that the poisons do not become airborne and become a hazard to human life? Will you be wetting everything down to keep the contaminants from getting into the air? How do you plan to transport the contaminated soil and gravel? What is the destination of this hazardous material?

NOISE AND VIBRATION

On South Tyson Avenue there is an apartment house about 200 feet from where we anticipate construction will begin. How will you protect the tenants in this structure from noise that will prevent them from sleeping and will you restrict construction to daylight hours? If not, then how will you muffle the noise to make it livable?

Right now there are approximately 400-plus trains a day that pass by my office. When trains go by my employees have to stop their telephone conversations until the train has passed. What do you intend to do to keep the noise from getting worse and causing further interruption to local businesses? Will you be proving funding for those businesses facing the tracks to install insulated windows to help cut down on the increased noise of both train operations and construction?

TRAFFIC
We have not seen any plans with details of what is to happen in the Tyson Avenue Area. Do you anticipate closing the underpass at the Tyson Ave. Extension during construction or permanently? If permanently, have you conducted studies and will you perform studies to see the impact of the increased traffic on other nearby underpasses?

Closing the SouthTyson underpass will cause an unacceptable and unmanageable traffic load on the Tulip Avenue crossing and long delays at the light at Tulip Ave., and South Tyson Avenue can be expected. How does this fit into your plans?

STAGING AREA
Where will you be staging equipment and materials for the work to be done from Floral Park to New Hyde Park? Will you be storing any flammable liquids and what have you done in your plans to protect homeowners and business owners in the vicinity and alert the local fire department of potential hazards?

CONSTRUCTION EASEMENTS
We have been told that you will not be taking any private property. From the Floral Park train station to New Hyde Park it is anticipated that you will have to construct retaining walls to keep the tracks secure. Please advise us on how you intend to do this without acquiring private land? Please advise us how you plan to go on private property during the construction phase of this project and which properties do you intend to go on and when and for how long?

IMPACT ON FLORAL PARK POOL AND RECREATION CENTER
Before the Floral Park Mayor and Village Board decided to spend millions of dollars constructing a new pool complex, they inquired of the MTA and were told that there were no plans to do any work in that area where the pool abuts the railroad and that there was nothing in their five-year and 20-year capital construction plan. Exactly what impact will the construction of the Third Track have on the Floral Park Pool Complex? What work will you be doing? What time of the year will you be doing it, hopefully during the winter when the pool is not open?

What plans do you have to construct barriers so people using the pool do not have to see trains just a few feet from the water slide?

SCHEDULE CHANGES
We have been told that trains on the Third Track will not stop at any of the stops from Bellerose to Mineola so there will be no additional service to commuters in these areas as a result of the Third Track. Please confirm that this is true or false.

We understand that when the East Side Access is completed that some trains that go to Penn Station will instead be diverted to the new East Side Station. We understand that the slots that would then open up at Penn Station would be used for additional Metro North trains. Is this true and how does it fit into your construction plans?

SWITCHING ALTERNATIVES
Have you considered that for much less cost and much less disruption of commuters and business along the Main Line that additional switching on the two existing tracks between Floral Park and Hicksville would be a more effective way to go?

INCREASED FREIGHT
Please examine the impact that a Third Track will have on having additional freight trains running through these suburban neighborhoods as far as noise, vibration and air pollution from the dirty diesel trains will have on the people in the area.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON SUFFOLK COUNTY
While it is doubtful that the Third Track will cause businesses to open in western Suffolk County, since this area has the highest taxes and utility rates, plus traffic congestion, in the country are you going to do any studies as to the negative impact on Suffolk County as far as overtaxing the available water supply from the aquifer and the possible increased demand on the sewer and septic systems in the area?

Recent press reports state that nitrogen from cesspools and septic systems are making existing lakes in Suffolk County unusable for people and animals with small animals being poisoned from the water and the growth of certain plants in the water.

SUBURBAN WAY OF LIFE
Many people move to Nassau County from Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx to have a suburban way of life with pleasant, quiet surroundings. Have you done any research as to the impact on the average person and what they think about this Third Track rather than just listening to wealthy big business executives who belong to the LIA Club and may have a vested interest and profit motive for supporting this project?

Many people who have moved to Suffolk County do so to enjoy a semi-rural community. Have you taken surveys to see what the average person in Suffolk County feels about bringing additional people and factories into their neighborhoods?

CHANGING WORK CONDITIONS
In determining the needs of commuters, have you studied the growing trend among office workers to work from home most of the time which totally negates the need for additional railway capacity?

IMPACT ON VOLUNTEER FIRE FIGHTERS
Long Island is serviced almost exclusively by volunteer fire fighters and companies. Have you evaluated the additional fire equipment and personnel that might be needed should this supposed growth in industry occur in Suffolk and eastern Nassau County? We understand that fire companies are having increasing difficulty attracting volunteers. What do you propose to do to help this situation? Since the closure of underpasses during construction will prevent the movement of fire, rescue and medical emergency equipment, what studies have you done to take this negative situation into consideration?

INCREASED CRIME
In some areas transportation hubs have led to increased crime such as out at Huntington Station. What studies have you done or will you do to see what additional law enforcement assets need to be provided in areas where you are supposedly predicting great growth? What is the plan to provide more LIRR police at stations, which will have higher volume of traffic? How many more police will you be adding to the very sparse coverage that is now afforded by the LIRR? As it is now they are only called to the scene after there is an incident but are never around to be visible as a preventive measure. Are you looking into this need?

MORE COMPETITION FOR JOBS
There is unemployment on Long Island. Have you done any studies as to the impact on the job seekers about Long Island having more competition for the jobs from people who might commute out east from the five boroughs of New York City?

HIGH COST OF COMMUTING
Have you studied or analyzed the fact that low income workers cannot afford to reverse commute due to the high fares charged by the LIRR?

LACK OF INTRA ISLAND TRANSPORTATION
Have you studied or considered the problem that a reverse commuter would have disembarking at a station that has no north-south connecting public transportation? What are these workers to do other than to take an expensive taxi once they leave the train, wiping out any wage increase they might expect to enjoy?

INCREASED FREIGHT
Increased freight is a major concern for those living near the tracks. Right now the rumble, noise and vibration of freight trains can be heard and felt for blocks around. People in Floral Park who have moved here did so without any anticipation that the noise and vibration from the LIRR would be increased when they bought their homes. What will you do to study the noise and vibration from additional freight on the nearby communities, especially with the construction of freight yards in Suffolk County? There is talk of taking trucks off the roads, thus reducing air pollution and use of gas and diesel fuel, however, have you evaluated the amount of dirty diesel fuel the diesel locomotives use or will be using with the anticipated increased freight? With the elimination of at grade crossings, longer freight trains will be possible with an increase of vibration, noise and air pollution. Have you considered this in your studies?

RADIOACTIVE AND DANGEROUS WASTE
A few years ago the LIRR was planning to remove radioactive waste from Suffolk to points west using the main line tracks. The Queens Boro President learned of this and sounded an alarm forcing the cancellation of these shipments. The contaminated soil and materials was taken off Long Island by barge. What plans do you have to make sure that if radioactive materials or any other hazardous freight is scheduled to move along the Main Line track to alert local police and fire departments of this possible threat should there be a derailment or accident?

What requirements will you have that all such shipments be covered to make sure these substances do not get into the air to harm our residents? Many shipment and freight cars remain uncovered today. Will they be required to wet them down so they will not become airborne? Where will you dispose of these shipments?

TRANSPORT OF GARBAGE
With incinerators closing in Suffolk County and landfills being filled we have heard that more and more garbage and trash will come along the Mail Line to be transported off Long Island. Have you taken this into consideration in assessing the environmental impact of such shipments on the local communities? Our residents have observed shipments of garbage going through Floral Park with uncovered loads.

UNREALISTIC TIME SCHEDULE

We ask that you realistically review the projected time. The MTA LIRR anticipated that this work can be completed in 3 to 4 years. In Floral Park, it has taken over a year to just replace a stairway. We know that other grade crossing eliminations have taken up to 8 years for example Roslyn Road in Mineola. The East Side Access has taken decades more than planned. Are you talking into consideration the fact that these projects usually take at least twice as long as anticipated and usually at twice the cost or more? Considering that as each at grade crossing is eliminated, it will require diversion of traffic and a slowing of commuter trains. Have you studied the feasibility of eliminating the at grade crossing projects one at a time rather than trying to do seven at once?

SUMMARY

As a small business owner and community leader, I can tell you that the Third Track will be a disaster during the construction phase and thereafter and will probably put me out of businesses and damage other small business on my block. We don't believe the Governor is aware of the adverse impact this will have on property values, small business and the eight suburban communities affected. He is being misled by his staff and we hope the Environmental Impact Study will point out these problems and hopefully propose some meaningful and thoughtful solutions. We look forward to reading your next report. Thank you.

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