Statement by Mary Harkins Conway
Inc. Village of Floral Park
At Long Island Rail Road Scoping Hearing
May 24, 2016

My name is Mary Harkins Conway. I am a member of the Floral Park Village's Third Track Force and belong to the Town-Village Aircraft Safety & Noise Abatement Committee. I have been a resident of Floral Park since my family moved to the village in 1968. When I was getting married and was thinking of having a family, I convinced my husband that Floral Park would be a great place to live. When I told my co-workers from White Plains that I was buying a house in Floral Park, they asked me about the size of the property. When I told them 40x100, they laughed and told me that no one lives on property lots as small as 40x100, outside of the city. I told them that yes people do and in fact most people in Floral Park live in homes on lots of 40x100 and we like it that way. We can walk or ride our bicycles to the stores, restaurants, the library, churches, the schools and the recreation center and pool. We can see what our kids are up to and what the children of our friends and neighbors are up to, roaming the tree and flower named streets of Floral Park. There is a strong sense of community in our village, which is due in part to our size and our close proximity to one another.

I am concerned that the construction of a third track will result in an increase in freight coming through our village by rail car. The scoping document at page 5 states that currently three round trip trains travel through our village on the main line each day. The scoping document goes on to say that since the NY&A Railway operations are not currently **capacity constrained,** the 3rd track would not increase freight traffic along the Main Line. First, I'm not reassured when the word current is used, particularly when talking about a permanent project. Second, I find it very hard to believe that with or without the 3rd track, it is anticipated that rail freight on Long Island would not increase significantly, as it states in the one paragraph about freight in the scoping document. How do you reconcile that statement with the expansion of the Brookhaven Rail Terminal, a multi modal freight rail facility in Yaphank, which is on the Main Line? The Brookhaven Rail Terminal's own website talks of Long Island being one of the largest consumer markets with 2.8 million people and predicts that as Long Island's population is expected to increase to 3.3 million people by 2035, the growth of inbound freight to the island is projected to increase to 98 million tons per year through 2030. The Brookhaven Rail Terminal touts itself as playing a vital role in connecting Long Island businesses and communities to the national rail freight network. At a hearing in February 2015, when the Port Authority was discussing a range of options for getting freight across or under New York Harbor, Judy White, a spokesperson for Brookhaven Rail Terminal said the Port Authority should increase capacity across the water in the short term and then dig a tunnel. She went on to say that based on Brookhaven Rail Terminal's business development efforts, we observe an immediate demand for rail freight service. As of recently, a number of businesses have established buildings to handle the freight shipped out to the Brookhaven Rail Terminal including Home Depot, and Ultra Green a biodiesel company. In fact, Gov. Cuomo was present at the opening of the Ultra Green facility. So then how do we believe that an increase in rail freight is not expected in view of the recent expansion and the fact that the State of New York gave a 2.5 million grant for track expansion at the Brookhaven Rail Terminal in 2013 and in 2015, 3.6 million was given to a company to build an automated food warehouse. In view of the foregoing, it is very hard to believe that the construction of a third track on the Main Line would not result in a significant increase in rail freight through the Village of Floral Park.

The last line of the one paragraph on freight contained within the scoping document states that should a change in market conditions occur, service would be during the off peak periods similar to current operations. While that would be acceptable for a LIRR commuter, it is of no comfort to the residents of Floral Park, particularly the children, Think about it, off peak is most of the day, when our children are in school or trying to get their 8-10 hours of prescribed sleep per night. These freight trains are normally heavier and longer. The freight trains on the Main Line will be passing within a few feet of Floral Park Bellerose School and John Lewis School and blocks from Our Lady of Victory School. As our children work diligently to master the Common Core curriculum, they will be barraged with the cumulative effect of the noise of the freight trains, the planes flying to Runway 22 at JFK airport and to LaGuardia Airport, as well as the helicopters, which fly a few hundred feet over the Main Line track route out to eastern Long Island, due to the fact that the planes fly lower on their approach to the local airports.

In addition to the two grammar schools, a number of Floral Park homes border the Main line tracks, as does our Recreation Center including fields that are used for baseball, softball, football, soccer and lacrosse. The roller hockey rink on which our Screaming Eagles roller hockey league operates is a hockey puck throw from the Main Line tracks. The Floral Park Pool also borders the Main Line tracks. At the Recreation center there is a building for community organizations to meet such as our seniors. From the "Rec" Center you can walk past the shops on Tulip Avenue and to the Floral Park Public Library, where old and young and everyone in between can go to look for a book, attend a program or sit and read in a comfort. The library was an oasis for many Floral Park residents when we were without power for almost two weeks following Super Storm Sandy. However, our library is located directly across the street from the Main Line tracks.

In view of the foregoing, I would say that the cry from the residents of the Village of Floral Park is not NIMBY, not in my back yard, but rather TOO much in our backyards, the yards on our 40 by 100 lots. I urge Governor Cuomo and the MTA/LIRR to let the beautiful and much loved Village of Floral Park alone. Just let us be.