

January 24, 2012

Floral Park and our sister hosting LIRR mainline communities between Queens Village and Hicksville have enjoyed relative calm since the MTA announced that its unwanted and unneeded LIRR Third Track Megaproject was finally being shelved. As a result, the Village of Floral Park and our neighboring communities have been able to focus on much more pressing and immediate local needs and issues. We were confident, however, that the MTA's leadership had abandoned their threat to our peaceful and quiet enjoyment of our communities. We believed that the MTA leadership would let a sleeping dog lie, and that memories of it bringing its own attack dogs into our communities were fast becoming a fading memory. Like a recurring nightmare, however, the MTA keeps pulling us back into the Third Track controversy just when we thought we could leave it behind us.

The MTA's new chairman, Joseph Lhota, on the very same day he was confirmed by the New York State Senate, said he supports the LIRR Third Track Megaproject! MTA Chairman Lhota said that "We need to get duplication, and in some cases the triplification of tracks so that when something happens we'll be able to zip around it and not slow everything down" according to *Newsday*. Lhota's "triplification" remark was a specific reference "to the LIRR's controversial plan to add a third track to its Main Line between Hicksville and Floral Park." The MTA now estimates its ever more costly megaproject at \$1.5 billion and which *Newsday* notes "would require the LIRR to build on some private properties, remains stalled by financial and political roadblocks." [Newsday 1-10-12 "New MTA Chief Hails LIRR East Side Access Project"] Say it ain't so, Joe?

MTA Chairman Lhota, who grew up in Lindenhurst, should immediately apologize for his imprudent remarks which, if not retracted, will result in a very short honeymoon with his new constituents in our Main Line communities. Perhaps he has not yet spoken with LIRR President Helena Williams who would tell him that the LIRR Third Track Megaproject has been shelved. If MTA Chairman Lhota wants duplication or his sarcastic "triplification" remarks to be fighting words, then fight with him we shall and once again send his ever ballooning \$1.5 billion boondoggle back to its "end of the line" graveyard of bad ideas.

Floral Park has remained vigilant and the Mayor's Third Track Task Force continues to remain active in conjunction with the not for profit CARE organization (Citizens Against Rail Expansion). Now that the Third Track issue has again been raised, State Senator Kemp Hannon needs to immediately provide CARE with his long promised \$25,000 member grant. We now also have New York State Senator Jack Martins to protect our communities from the unwanted and unneeded Third Track Megaproject. As Mayor of Mineola, Jack Martins worked very closely and actively with Floral Park to protect our communities from the MTA's insatiable appetite for taxpayers' money and the threat to use eminent domain to fulfill its desires.

Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano also needs to fulfill his promise to appoint a community leader from Floral Park or another mainline community who opposes the LIRR Third Track Megaproject to the MTA Board of Directors. MTA Chairman Lhota must remember that 'we the people' are his boss and not the other way around!

MTA Chairman Lhota should reassess his idea of reviving the LIRR Third Track Megaproject, an abandoned plan which has already been declared "dead on arrival" by all but him. Instead of trying to spend more billions of dollars from taxpayers' pockets on the LIRR Third Track fiasco, he should focus his attention on fixing the crumbling stations in the Mainline communities, and provide us with a real timetable to eliminate on-grade crossings. The MTA leader can tell us his plans on reinstating trains and customer service workers his predecessors have cut from the Mainline communities. The MTA Chairman needs to fix what is broken and leave what isn't alone. Floral Park already has not THREE, but FOUR tracks in the heart of our community and does not need or want any "fifthlification" from MTA Chairman Lhota, whose last name should now stand for Leaving Hosting Opposition to Tracks Alone!