

Belmont Park Redevelopment Project – DEIS Public Hearing
1/8/19

Speaker: Dr. Lynn Pombonyo, Trustee

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Thank you, and good evening. I am speaking to you as a resident and Trustee of the Village of Floral Park. In my role as Trustee, I am also proud to be the Commissioner of the Floral Park Fire Department.

Tonight, I wish to address two areas of major concern in the Belmont Park Redevelopment Civic and Land Use Improvement Project DEIS: Chapters 11 and 17: Transportation and Mitigation.

In Chapter 11, on page 72, only two paragraphs are devoted to “Effect On Emergency Vehicle Response Times.” The DEIS states, “The Proposed Project would result in increased traffic volumes and delays at intersection movements in the local street network during the peak hours analyzed and could potentially slow down emergency vehicle response times...Furthermore, emergency vehicles such as police cars, fire trucks, and ambulances can maneuver around and through congested areas when responding to emergencies because they are not bound by standard traffic controls.” The DEIS conclusion, “no significant effect on emergency vehicle response times.” This conclusion is erroneous, and based on serious misconceptions. Our Village and other surrounding communities’ fire and rescue trucks absolutely cannot “maneuver around and through” busy intersections connecting two-lane thoroughfares, with one lane of traffic in each direction, alongside necessary curbside parallel parking. There simply is no room. And Floral Park’s Fire Department of well over 100 volunteer firefighters cannot “maneuver around and through” or ignore standard traffic controls as they must first drive their own cars to the firehouses and then begin all over again, driving and riding in the fire vehicles through that very same “increased traffic volume and delays” to get to the scene. These emergency response times will increase in cases of mutual aid fires. We all know that seconds count. How many have times have our highly skilled and heroic first responders successfully rescued the public from burning and smoky buildings, administered life saving measures, and minimized property damage because their response was immediate, and their firefighting procedures and medical treatment were flawless?

To another point, the DEIS, Chapter 17 presents proposed mitigation measures for Transportation impacts which do not address Emergency Vehicle Response Times. For example, the limitations of the Cross Island Parkway (CIP) and their impact on Emergency Vehicle Response Times. First, the increased numbers of trucks for deliveries and buses, which are being planned to transport Belmont patrons to and from other communities and LIRR stations in different areas, are not permitted on the CIP, and would be forced to travel on the smaller, secondary roads surrounding Belmont, adding to congestion and gridlock on Plainfield, Tulip and Carnation Avenues in Floral Park and numerous others in the surrounding communities. Secondly, to mitigate what is called “background traffic” on the CIP (in other words, traffic heading to destinations other than Belmont or the traffic that we see now, which is heavy at best and at a standstill, at worst), the DEIS, p. 17/14 proposes “diversionary signage” on the CIP advising motorists to “Plan Alternate Routes.” Those alternate routes would undoubtedly take motorists through Floral Park and the other surrounding communities as navigation apps like Waze direct them to the shortest routes. The resulting impact, increased Emergency Vehicle Response Times.

We urge Empire State Development to work closely with our local fire, emergency and police agencies, scale down the magnitude of this project, and ensure that seconds will count in the final EIS. Thank you.