



December 1, 2010

Mr. Satish Sood, Deputy Commissioner of Planning  
Nassau County Planning Department  
100 County Seat Drive  
Mineola, NY 11501

Re: **Nassau County Draft Master Plan**

Dear Mr. Sood:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Nassau County Draft Master Plan and participate in the public hearing on November 18, 2010.

The LIRR supports the Master Plan process and recognizes that transportation is a critical component of the County's future prosperity. In reviewing the draft I have noted both inaccurate statements and shortcomings regarding the benefit of LIRR service to Nassau County today and the anticipated benefits to be gained from the opening of LIRR service to Grand Central Terminal in 2016. I have attached specific comments and information that will clarify various elements of the Draft plan for your information and use in finalizing the plan. Key points are also summarized below.

- The LIRR is an essential component of the region's transportation infrastructure and a gateway to the economic growth of the region. The LIRR carries over 80 million annual customers and provides 735 daily trains.
- The LIRR provides a link to high skilled, high paying jobs in Manhattan for thousands of daily commuters. It also links LIRR customers to schools, sporting events, concerts, beaches, Broadway shows, JFK Airport (via AirTrain) and the multitude of other attractions around the New York metropolitan region. The LIRR also provides intra-island service to many employment centers in Nassau County. In fact, customers traveling east during the AM Peak to reach jobs in Nassau County has increased 21% over the past decade.
- The importance of the East Side Access project cannot be emphasized enough. This \$6.3 billion dollar project is the Railroad's first major expansion project in over 100 years. It will provide improved service and regional access by providing a one seat ride to Manhattan's East Side. It will save commuters 40 minutes each day in commuting time, enhance economic development and regional competitiveness, and will support housing values on Long Island. In addition, it will further stimulate TOD growth in the vicinity of LIRR stations and, as a result, increase regional public transportation usage.

- The Draft Plan should recognize that through the MTA's Capital Program, a number of recent investments in the Railroad's infrastructure have brought improved service and added convenience to the Railroad's customers (e.g., new state-of-the-art M-7 electric cars, transformation of Jamaica Station into a first-class transportation facility allowing fast, easy connections between LIRR trains, AirTrain JFK, and NYC Transit subway and bus service; and other station rehabilitation projects, including Hempstead, Long Beach and Seaford).
- Going forward, additional capital investment is planned to expand system capacity. This will allow the Railroad to fully realize the benefits provided by the East Side Access project and further transform the LIRR into a modern day Railroad. This will require the support of the County, elected officials, local and regional agencies and other key stakeholders throughout the region.

We hope that the key points identified above as well as our comments, corrections, and clarifications provided in the attached document will be accurately incorporated into a revised Draft Plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elisa Picca". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Elisa" and the last name "Picca" clearly distinguishable.

Elisa C. Picca  
Chief Planning Officer

## LIRR Comments on the Draft 2010 Nassau County Master Plan

### Chapter 2 – The Economy

- **Inaccurate Statement** - "...by the fourth quarter of 2008, the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) reported 52,000 fewer trips to New York;" (p. 9)

LIRR Comment:

*Between 2007-2008, annual ridership increased 1.5% from 86.1 million customers to 87.4 million. In 2008, the number of average weekday customers was 302,600, a slight increase from the previous year.*

- Page 52 - Table 2-17 - Goal: Create 54,000 (75%) new growth sector jobs in downtowns and targeted redevelopment areas.

LIRR comment:

- *LIRR supports the Plan's policy to encourage new economic development and growth within existing downtowns and targeted areas with transportation access.*

### Chapter 3 – Land Use

- Page 32 - the Plan refers to the "HUB" and, in some cases, the "Hub."

LIRR comment:

- *The area should be referred to as the "Hub" (since it is not an acronym).*
- Page 33 - the boundaries of the Hub are not well defined. The Plan says approximately 10 square miles (chapter 3, page 33) versus approximately 11 square miles (chapter 4, page 33).

LIRR comment:

- *The aerial map showing the Nassau Hub (Figures 3-4 and 3-5) should be revised to clearly show the boundaries.*
- *Are these boundaries consistent with the graphics and discussion of the Hub in Chapter 4?*
- *This section should also reference the discussion of the Hub in Chapter 4, page 32.*

- Page 33 – paragraph beginning “The Hub is not readily accessible to transit...”

LIRR comment:

- *The statement that LIRR does not provide “convenient, centralized access” to the Hub should be revised to say:*

*“The Hub is not directly served by these stations, yet connecting bus service is provided between the Hub and many LIRR stations, including Mineola, Hempstead and Westbury.”*

#### Corrections

- Page 21 - Figure 3-4 should read “3-5.” In addition, the remaining figures in the chapter should be renumbered accordingly.
- Page 22 – The letter “X” should be replaced with the number of downtowns.

#### Chapter 4 – Infrastructure

- Page 6 – Freight discussion

LIRR comment:

- *The County may want to update the Plan to note that construction of the Brookhaven Rail Terminal (not the LITRIM facility), a freight-rail facility for construction aggregates and building materials, is underway.*

- Page 8 – Long Island Rail Road

LIRR comment:

- *LIRR description should be more robust detailing the magnitude of service within Nassau County, regional connectivity of LIRR and MTA, and the historical importance of LIRR to Nassau County’s economic development. LIRR recommends the following language:*

*“Long Island Rail Road is an integral element of development and growth in Nassau County. LIRR celebrated its 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2009, a reminder of the railroad’s importance and sustained contributions to the County for nearly two centuries. LIRR carried 87.4 million customers in 2008; it operates 11 branches and 735 daily trains serving 124 stations, of which ten branches and 58 stations serve Nassau County. Major hub/transfer stations*

*include Mineola, Hicksville, Hempstead, Farmingdale, Great Neck, Valley Stream, and Lynbrook. LIRR not only provides access to jobs, it also provides convenient access to schools, universities (Adelphi and Hofstra), and cultural and sporting events across the region, such as Madison Square Garden, Citifield (Mets), USGA golf tournaments, and many other smaller venues. LIRR also provides regional transportation connections at Penn Station to New Jersey Transit and Amtrak, as well as AirTrain connection at Jamaica to JFK International Airport.*

- Page 8 – “The Long Island Rail Road is primarily oriented to provide service for Manhattan commuters; intra-island service is limited. Many commuters living on Long Island are unable to use the LIRR to reach jobs on Long Island.

LIRR comment:

- *This sentence should be followed by an explanation as to why that is the case. LIRR recommends:*

*“LIRR’s service delivery reflects the post-World War II pattern of development which has resulted in dispersed residential development and employment centers across Nassau County, access oriented to automobiles rather than public transportation, and the lack of new track infrastructure across Nassau County. Despite the lack of robust reverse peak service across Nassau County, customers traveling east during the AM Peak to reach jobs in Nassau County has increased 21% over the past decade. To facilitate and encourage additional economic development across Nassau, LIRR is exploring new service opportunities to expand commuters ability to use LIRR to reach jobs on LI.*

*LIRR is proposing a new scoot service between downtown Brooklyn and Jamaica. This new service would operate more frequently, providing customers with more service opportunities. In addition, the Main Line track capacity project between Floral Park and Hicksville, as well as the proposed double track project between Farmingdale and Ronkonkoma, are critical infrastructure projects that would unlock new service opportunities and create the capacity necessary to increase service and enable Long Islanders to use the LIRR to reach jobs on LI.*

- **Inaccurate Statement** – “Today, the stopping patterns that have been established to serve the heavy flows into Manhattan have many trains bypassing possible destination stations on Long Island.” (p. 8-9)
- **Inaccurate Statement** – It is not feasible for commuters to use the railroad to reach jobs in Mineola, Hicksville, Syosset, Farmingdale, Ronkonkoma or Brentwood, as trains heading east in the morning do not stop at these stations...” (p. 9)

LIRR comment:

- *Although current service patterns result in a 1.5 hour window along the Main Line where there is no opposing traffic as both tracks carry customers westbound to New York City destinations, LIRR offers hourly, or better, reverse AM Peak service along the Hempstead, Babylon, Port Washington, Far Rockaway, and Long Beach Branches. In addition, 6 eastbound trains stop at Mineola and Hicksville between 6-9 AM. Reverse peak ridership has increased 21% over the past decade from 7,570 customers in 2000 to 9,140 in 2009.*

*Construction of the third track would add much needed capacity along the Main Line. It would increase opportunities for employees to use eastbound LIRR trains to reach jobs in Nassau County. It also assists traditional westbound commuters by giving them more service opportunities to hub stations such as Mineola and Hicksville, as well as more express trains to shorten their commute. LIRR is also planning for improving service frequencies and reliability along the Main Line and Oyster Bay Branches by providing a new scoot train between Mineola and Oyster Bay.*

*Support of Nassau County and local elected officials is necessary to realize improved reverse commute and intra-island service opportunities.*

- Page 10 - Train Station Parking

LIRR comment:

- *Other ways to mitigate parking shortages include: strategically placing intermodal transit facilities throughout the County, promoting use of connecting transportation services and supporting local parking management plans (which ensure that*

*existing parking facilities are being used efficiently and effectively).*

- Page 10 – Mineola Intermodal Center (MIC)

LIRR comment – MIC discussion should be expanded as follows:

- *The MIC accommodates over 900 commuter parking spaces and was built with the capability to add additional parking levels. It serves as a bus facility for seven MTA LI Bus routes and a major transfer point between LIRR and MTA LI Bus. The planning and construction of the MIC was closely coordinated with the Village of Mineola. It is a major component of the Village’s overall efforts to revitalize the downtown area in that it improves and better coordinates public transportation services, improves vehicular/pedestrian circulation in the vicinity of the Mineola Train Station, and improves parking management. The MIC encourages public transit usage, future transit-oriented development and further secures the Village of Mineola as a vital regional transportation hub. New development opportunities, such as the proposed Windsor project and other smart growth initiatives, will result further support public transportation usage.*

- Page 10 – LIRR recommends inserting a description of Long Beach Bus service

LIRR comment:

- *Long Beach Bus*

*Long Beach Transit was formed in 1963 and has earned an excellent reputation for its good on-time record, safety for its passengers and the public, and cleanliness and reliability of the bus fleet, to the popularity of its bus operators. Long Beach Transit has continued its tradition of responsiveness to our riders and the community. It carries more than three times the number of riders than it did in 1963.*

*The Long Beach Bus Terminal, located at LIRR’s Long Beach Train Station, serves MTA Long Island Bus, City of Long Beach buses, and provides convenient connections to LIRR trains.*

- Page 35-36 – the paragraph beginning with “The Long Island Rail Road’s...”

LIRR comment:

- *Replace “main line” with “Main Line”*
- *“off-peak” should be replaced with “reverse peak”*

- *“Service on the Oyster Bay Branch is also constrained by Main Line capacity.”*
  - *Glen Cove Station is not located in the central business district – connecting bus service would be required to/from the station; Glen Cove does not contain major employers that attract large numbers of employees – the area contains mostly service oriented businesses. Perhaps when Glen Isle is complete, there would be greater demand for train service to Glen Cove.*
  - *Not all AM Peak Oyster Bay customers have to change trains in Jamaica. There is one dual mode train that provides direct service to Penn Station in the AM and PM peak. There is also one electric train in the AM Peak that begins in East Williston that provides direct service to Penn Station.*
- **Inaccurate Statement** – “The project will **divert** a number of trains from the East River Tunnels serving Penn Station via an unused level of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street tunnel.” (p. 36)

LIRR comment:

*“Rather than diverting trains, the project will enhance current service levels to Penn Station with additional frequent service to a new station beneath Grand Central Terminal, via an unused level of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street tunnel.”*

- LIRR suggests adding the following paragraph to the middle of page 36, regarding East Side Access:

*The East Side Access (ESA) project is the largest public transportation project under construction in the United States and represents a \$6.3 billion investment in support of the Long Island economy. It will connect the Long Island Rail Road’s electric service branches in Queens to a new LIRR terminal beneath Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan, offering a one-seat ride from LI to Manhattan’s East Side. The new connection is a transformative project for the LIRR, reducing congestion at Penn Station and providing more express trains and service opportunities for commuters. It will dramatically shorten travel time for Long Island and eastern Queens commuters traveling to the east side of Manhattan by 30-40 minutes. This equates to 20 vacation days per year. It will improve regional access with convenient connections to Metro-North and NYCT subways.*



*The reduced travel time, increased service opportunities to Manhattan, and improved transit connections will enhance economic development and regional competitiveness. ESA will also protect the Long Island housing market by providing convenient, direct service to high-skilled, high-paying jobs on the East Side of Manhattan.*

*Related to ESA, other expansions that are planned include completion of the Main Line double track between Farmingdale and Ronkonkoma. This vision was originally established with the electrification extension project of the 1980s and was unable to be fully accomplished due to limitations of capital funds. When adding the double track, the LIRR also contemplates reopening Republic Station along the Route 110 corridor, which is a major employment center for Long Islanders. The double track provides much needed capacity expansion to adequately serve this LI economic corridor as well as provide increased service to LI MacArthur Airport. Preliminary design funds for the double track project are included in the 2010-2014 Capital Program.*

## **ACTION PLAN MATRIX**

### **LIRR comment:**

- *The ability of LIRR to increase service to enhance the use of transit for intra-county travel, especially at future planned Transit Oriented Development locations, is dependent on whether several LIRR capacity expansion projects are able to move forward, including: Main Line Third Track, Main Line Double Track, and yard expansion projects. Support of Nassau County and other elected officials for these infrastructure improvements that unlock current capacity constraints must occur.*