



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

## Senators Fuschillo, Johnson and Zeldin Join WITH Lirr President in Announcing \$138 Million to Advance Lirr Second Track & New Republic Train Station

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. May 24, 2012

| ISSUE: **MTA (METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY)**



*Photo caption: Senator Fuschillo (second right) reviews plans for the LIRR's second track project near the site of the proposed Republic Train Station with LIRR President Helena Williams (center) and (l-r) Senator Lee Zeldin, Babylon Supervisor Rich Schaffer, United Transportation Union President Anthony Simon, Senator Owen Johnson, and Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone.*

New York State Senators Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick), Owen Johnson (R-Babylon), and Lee Zeldin (R-Shirley) today joined with Long Island Rail Road President Helena Williams and local labor leaders in announcing that work on the long-stalled LIRR second track project will begin this July. \$138 million in the MTA's 2010-14 Capital Program will enable the project to be accelerated and start more than two years ahead of schedule.

The four officials strongly advocated for the project's acceleration during the state budget negotiations because of its critical importance to Long Island. It will significantly improve service, create jobs, promote economic development, and is a vital component to several transit oriented development projects.

"The second track project brings tremendous benefits; jobs, economic development for Long Island, and improved service for LIRR riders. That's why we fought so hard to make sure work starts now, not in 2015. Accelerating this project will allow that to happen and ensure that a project which has long been a dream finally becomes a reality," said Senator Fuschillo, Chairman of the Senate's Transportation Committee.

"I am extremely pleased that the MTA / LIRR has acknowledged our insistence on accelerating the double track installation project on the Ronkonkoma line and that the legislature has approved amending the MTA five-year capital program to provide the funds for this critically important project. In addition to the second track being installed, the reestablishment of the Republic Train Station with a new Bus Transportation Hub, will be a great help to facilitate and expand business opportunities and employment along the Route 110 corridor," said Senator Johnson.

"Today's announcement of \$138 million in accelerated funding to build the second track project is a huge win for Long Islanders. The impact of this important return on our investment will boost our region's strength, and specifically our economy. This will create

jobs, improve our tax base, and make Long Island a better place to work and raise a family," said Senator Zeldin.

"The Double Track project will increase service reliability on one of the busiest corridors of the LIRR. It will also provide new opportunities for more express service to the city and additional intra Island commuting choices. We want to thank Gov. Cuomo and Senators Fuschillo, Johnson, and Zeldin for their leadership on the Double Track project and for fully funding the MTA's Capital Plan. They recognize that the LIRR is an economic engine for Long Island, getting residents to high skilled, high paying jobs. Double Track is a very important project both for the LIRR and for Long Island. It will provide real benefits for decades to come," said LIRR President Williams.

The new project timeline allows the MTA to begin the environmental assessment and start the design of the track and power systems, as well as the signal systems, this July. Design/build construction on the track, as well as installation of communications and signal elements, are scheduled to begin in 2013. The entire project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2018. Without the acceleration of this project within the MTA's 2010-14 Capital Program, work would not have started until at least 2015.

Additionally, the project will enable for the future rebuilding and reopening of the old Republic Train Station, a critical component of the Republic/Route 110 Corridor project. Senator Fuschillo has been working on the project with former Babylon Supervisor, and now Suffolk County Executive, Steve Bellone, current Babylon Supervisor Rich Schaffer, and Huntington Supervisor Frank Petrone.

"Accelerating the second rail project is a win for Long Island and will promote economic development in both Suffolk and Nassau Counties. The Connect LI Initiative, which was announced in 2011, is a regional transportation and development plan, focusing on

connecting existing and proposed developments by expanding mass transit service and providing the opportunity for a reverse commute. This announcement today serves as a major contributor to that initiative and will serve as the foundation for creating Bus Rapid Transit on the Route 110 corridor as well as the re-opening/redevelopment of the Republic Train Station. Long Island faces many transportation challenges however the acceleration of the second rail project will open up new opportunities for transportation as well as transit oriented development which is economically beneficial to the Long Island region," said County Executive Bellone.

"The second track project is tremendously important to Long Island's future, and I thank Senators Fuschillo, Johnson and Zeldin, as well as LIRR President Helena Williams for their hard work in making it a reality. The project is a critical component of two major initiatives in the Town of Babylon depend on the success of the project: Wyandanch Rising and the Route 110 Corridor project, and this announcement marks a great step forward for Babylon and Long Island as a whole," said Supervisor Schaffer.

"Accelerating construction of the second track will also help accelerate the development along the 110 corridor that our region's economy desperately needs, helping to grow our tax base, create jobs and provide work and lifestyle opportunities that will keep our young people from leaving the region. I commend Senators Fuschillo, Johnson and Zeldin, as well as the MTA and LIRR president Helena Williams for working out the details to speed the start of this project," said Supervisor Petrone.

The Main Line between Farmingdale and Ronkonkoma, which spans 17.9 miles, currently has 5.3 miles of double track, including at most stations. Under the project, a second track will be added to the remaining 12.6 miles of single, electrified track along the Main Line. Adding this new second track will greatly benefit commuters on the Ronkonkoma Branch by improving service reliability, increasing on-time performance, and enabling faster recovery

following service disruptions. The Ronkonkoma Branch is one of the LIRR's most crowded branches, with the highest number of customers per train on peak trains, reverse-peak trains, and weekends.

In addition to the jobs and economic activity generated by the project itself, the second track is also a critical component to other current and proposed transit oriented developments along the branch which would help promote additional economic development and activity. Along with the Republic/Route 110 Corridor project, the second track project is also critically important to other transit oriented developments such as Wyandanch Rising and the Ronkonkoma Hub.

Local labor leaders praised the project's acceleration.

"Long Island has not seen a major infrastructure investment in its transportation system in generations. We need to make this investment to prevent Long Island from becoming an economic backwater and allow the region to move forward, generate jobs, and attract new investment. Double track has strategic benefits for Long Island but the only way to receive them is to start work and get this project going," said Marc Herbst, Executive Director of the Long Island Contractors' Association.

"It is unfortunate that few people other than historians understand the enormous role the railroad has played in the economic development of Long Island. The construction trades appreciate what the second track will mean for the region because it goes far beyond the man hours the project will entail for the trades. The double track will allow Long Island to seize control of its own economic future and build its way out of a recession that shows no sign of relenting. We are ready, willing and able to get this job done," said William K. Duffy, President of International Union of Operating Engineers Local 138, 138A, 138B, & 138C.

Mark Epstein, Chairman of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council, said “The Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) views construction of a second track between Farmingdale and Ronkonkoma as a critical project for the Long Island economy. The second track will make travel more convenient, increase capacity significantly, and dramatically reduce the impact of train breakdowns and other incidents in this part of the Rail Road, as well as setting the stage for the reopening of the Republic Airport station and further enhancing economic development along the Route 110 corridor, Ronkonkoma and Wyandanch. This project is vital to users of the LIRR and is long overdue.”