



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Senator Andrew Lanza Calls Into Question The Procurement Process And Community Outreach Policies Of The MTA

ANDREW J. LANZA June 16, 2022



Throughout this month, each of Staten Island's three Community Boards are hosting the MTA for a presentation that the MTA initially pitched as a "project to upgrade the Staten Island Railway (SIR) radio system." While the topic itself is commendable, it immediately became clear that hiding behind the rather innocuous presentation title, the MTA is attempting to install 7 unsightly 150 foot monopoles in communities along the SIR. At 150 feet each, these monopoles would immediately become the tallest structures in their vicinity, towering high above everything surrounding them.

During the June meeting of Community Board 3's Traffic and Transportation Committee, Senator Lanza repeatedly called upon the MTA to conduct a proper request for proposals (RFP) where the best and the brightest can propose state of the art communications systems for SIR and its riders.

Senator Andrew Lanza said, "Instead of seeking out the best technology of today, the bureaucrats at MTA came up with a singular solution that fails to take into account the realities on the ground. It is as if the MTA didn't even consider the local homeowners who will now have these 150 foot monstrosities outside their homes."

During the public comment period, a concerned citizen asked if this proposal is a fait accompli. The MTA indicated that it had already received bids for this project and the MTA plans to award the contract in a matter of weeks. Furthermore, the MTA, when directly asked why it did not issue an RFP – which could have brought forward unique inventive ideas, was unable to offer any explanation.

Senator Lanza joined with many concerned citizens in asking the MTA why public outreach on a project of such magnitude was starting so late into the planning and construction of this project. Once again, the MTA was unable to articulate any acceptable reasons for its delayed public outreach efforts, which only began this month.

Senator Lanza continued, "The MTA knows that Staten Island is its cash cow. It has no qualms about coming hat in hand to ask the people of this community to fork over more money each time the MTA needs to fill a shortfall elsewhere in its system. It is shameful that the MTA would present this hideous project and expect Staten Islanders to simply welcome it with open arms. The MTA needs to go back to the drawing board so that it can deliver the state of the art communications system that our rail line needs and deserves. The proposal as it stands now is an insult to the people of Staten Island."

Today, Senator Lanza is requesting all information that the MTA has with regard to this project, referenced by the MTA as project S80501R. He also is requesting that the New York State Comptroller thoroughly review any proposed contract as well as MTA communications with any bidders for this contract. Furthermore, Senator Lanza is calling upon the MTA to answer the many open questions surrounding this proposal, including the location and size of any currently underserved communications locations along SIR as well as how its communications systems function in other boroughs and throughout the rest of the MTA system.

Senator Lanza continued, "Staten Islanders universally oppose this. There are other viable options to do this project in a way that will not negatively affect the character of our community, and accordingly the MTA must abandon its plan to proceed as they have described. If the MTA does not withdraw, I will call for the resignation of the MTA Chairman and MTA Board Members, given that to proceed against the interests of Staten Islanders would represent intentional disregard of the people's best interest, together with a violation of the MTA's fiduciary responsibility to our residents. Furthermore, I am introducing legislation which would prohibit the MTA from embarking upon any capital project or agreeing to do so before there is an opportunity for the public to be heard. Furthermore, I am requesting that the MTA provide any and all text messages, e-mails, and other communications which they have had with any vendor, prospective manufacturer, or contractor concerning this job."

Senator Lanza continued, "As an attorney and accountant, I can say without hesitation that this project epitomizes the urgent need to fully and independently audit the MTA. This agency has lost its way in understanding that it works for the people. The MTA's dismal public outreach effort with this project indicates its hope that people simply are not paying attention as it advances half-baked ideas."

The MTA must restore trust in our community by bringing this project back to the drawing board and returning with a truly state of the art communications system.