

Gov help sought for project

Business groups: End dispute over LIRR Third Track

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Long Island business leaders are urging Gov. Kathy Hochul and other top state elected officials to help break the impasse between the Long Island Rail Road and the Village of Garden City over the Third Track project that could cause the \$2.6 billion effort to be late and over budget.

In a letter sent Monday, the business leaders asked Democrats Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie to “step in and implore” the village to issue the necessary permits for the railroad to move ahead with a bridge re-



Garden City sued over poles at the Merillon Avenue station.

HOWARD SCHNAPP

placement project that is critical to the Third Track’s progress.

The authors also encouraged the politicians to “examine legislative avenues to move this project forward.” That could include changing state law so that the LIRR would not need the village permits to move ahead with the bridge work.

“We find it obstructionist that the Village of Garden City is impeding the ability of the State of New York and its agency, the MTA, to fulfill their responsibilities under state law to construct a project or any other project which has been approved by the State,” said the letter, authored by the heads of the Long Island Association, the Long Island Builders Institute, the Association for a Better Long Island, and the Long Island Contractors’ Association.

The groups, which collectively represent thousands of Long Island businesses, have said the project would boost the economies of Nassau and Suffolk by creating jobs and improving connectivity onto, off and within the Island.

Hochul spokesperson Hazel Crampton-Hays called the project “critical” and said the governor “will ensure local leaders and stakeholders continue to be engaged throughout

the process.”

Mike Murphy, a spokesperson for Stewart-Cousins, said her office would review the letter. “We understand the importance of improved infrastructure and its relationship to economic development and helping all of Long Island,” Murphy said.

Heastie’s office did not respond to a request for comment.

Village officials have not responded to repeated requests for comment about the issue.

Formally known as the LIRR Expansion, the project seeks to construct a 10-mile third track between Floral Park and Hicksville — all on LIRR property. Earlier this year, the village unsuccessfully sued the LIRR over the location of several utility poles near the Merillon Avenue station.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority — the LIRR’s parent organization — has said the village, as retaliation for losing the suit, has withheld permits needed for the re-

placement of the Denton Avenue rail bridge.

In a letter sent to the court in August, an MTA attorney said that if the permits were not issued by the end of that month, the project “will not be able to meet its contractually mandated completion date of December 2022.”

A delay of the project could impact other major LIRR infrastructure efforts, officials have said. Nevertheless, MTA acting chairman and Chief Executive Officer Janno Lieber, as recently as Wednesday, said the Third Track project remained on time and on budget, and suggested the transit agency, too, was looking for a way to move ahead without the permits.

“We are going to work our tails off to make sure that, no matter what, we figure out a new way, if necessary, to circumvent the dramas that have been created by this small clique of folks in Garden City,” Lieber said.

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