



## Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement Belmont Park Redevelopment Project

January 8, 2018

Reinvent Albany advocates for transparent and accountable New York government. We are a leading voice for sensible and transparent economic development subsidies and for more accountable public authorities, including Empire State Development (ESD).

In our March 22, 2018 comments<sup>1</sup> on the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement we noted that the EIS process is an artificially limited way to answer basic questions about the cost/benefit of this project to the Belmont community, Long Island as a region, and to New York State taxpayers more broadly. Despite the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), it remains clear as mud how much state taxpayers will have to pay in various forms of subsidies for this project.

When will ESD clearly and definitively say what this project will cost the public and who exactly will pay for what? For example, the cost of the transportation components of the project are completely murky and do not clearly assign costs to the developer or the MTA.

When and how would a plan be committed to? The MTA is listed as an agency “*required to implement the Proposed Project*” on page S-10 of the DEIS.<sup>2</sup> Yet there is no public plan for increased MTA service; the MTA has not publicly released any details about the cost of this expanded service. We are still unable to find any record of a vote by the governing board of directors of the MTA that says the MTA will support the project or has budgeted for an expansion of service to Belmont.

The December DEIS notes two areas where MTA service is “*anticipated*” to be expanded as a result of the project (emphasis added):

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<sup>1</sup><https://reinventalbany.org/2018/03/full-cost-to-taxpayers-and-mta-lirr-of-belmont-park-queens-redevelopment-projects-needs-to-be-disclosed/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/Belmont-NoC-Public-Notice.pdf>

## LIRR SERVICE

*On days with scheduled events at the proposed arena, it is anticipated that the LIRR would provide two round trip trains between Jamaica Station and Belmont Park Station, with eastbound trains arriving at Belmont Park prior to the start of the event and westbound trains departing from Belmont Park following the conclusion of the event, which could accommodate the projected number of passengers that would use the LIRR, which would be expected to be used by up to 2,280 and 1,330 arena patrons arriving for weekday and Saturday events, respectively. It is unlikely that the Proposed Action would result in any impacts to platforms, stairways, or ramps at Belmont Park Station.*

## BUS SERVICE

It is likely that the Proposed Project would result in a *significant adverse impact* to NICE and MTA bus routes during time periods before and after arena events, *requiring some increases in bus service to accommodate bus rider trips made by arena patrons.* Bus operators normally adjust their service based on ridership and market demand and it is anticipated that such increases in service would be coordinated with NYAP as part of the transportation management plan for the arena.

The General Project Plan released on December 6, 2018<sup>3</sup>, notes it is “*expected*” that New York Belmont Development Partners (BDP) “*will contribute to LIRR and MTA funding for the automation of switches and operation of the train service.*” This expectation is not a firm commitment. The service increases themselves are also “*anticipated*”.

Will this “*expected*” contribution encompass the full cost to the MTA? The DEIS notes that the most significant adverse impact will be to bus service, yet the the General Project Plan does not specifically state that BDP will contribute to the cost of bus service. Exactly how much is cost to the MTA - which faces severe funding constraints and has adopted service cuts in other areas for its FY 2019 budget - given that it may have to bear the brunt of expanded bus service and could still be responsible for a portion of the bill for expanded LIRR service?

Long Island Rail Road is already facing reductions in service and staffing as a result of budget cuts approved by the MTA Board in December.<sup>4</sup> These include:

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<sup>3</sup> <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/news-articles/12618-ESD-BM-posting.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://web.mta.info/mta/news/books/docs/special-finance-committee/LIRR-BRPs.pdf>

- Reduced administrative positions across the company. Positions reduced through attrition.
- Reduced scope and extended timeline of the Enterprise Asset Management program.
- Reduced fleet maintenance - stretching out maintenance schedule and elimination of management positions
- Reduced ticket sale/special event staff

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Should you have any questions, please contact Rachael Fauss, Senior Research Analyst, at [rachael@reinventalbany.org](mailto:rachael@reinventalbany.org).