

## TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Testimony of Veronica Vanterpool  
Tri-State Transportation Campaign  
Hearings on Third Track/Right Track LIRR project  
The Inn at New Hyde Park  
May 24, 2016

Good morning. My name is Veronica Vanterpool and I am the executive director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a nonprofit advocacy organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation network in NY, NJ and Connecticut.

TSTC has supported a third track on the Main Line since 2004, when we convened the Third Track Coalition including 14 labor, environmental, business and civic organizations on Long Island. For the past 12 years, despite strong support for the project, we have seen funds dwindle from the MTA's Capital Programs and progress stalled. We applaud Governor Cuomo for reviving this much needed project and calling attention to its value for Long Island and the metro economy.

A few points:

- According to TSTC's March 2016 Laggy analysis, the Port Jefferson branch was #1 in Rider Delay with over 26 hours lost each year by riders on this branch. The Ronkonkoma branch topped our list in 3 categories:
  - Lost economic activity on this branch = \$19 M in economic loss
  - Lost time due to cancelled, late or delayed trains = 345,000 hours in 1 year
  - Riders lost nearly 23 hours a year riding this branch

A third track would reduce the cancelled, late or delayed trains that contribute to this loss.

- A third track along MetroNorth's Harlem Line in Westchester County significantly improved service. Frequency of northbound trains increased from one every 90 minutes to one every 30 minutes. Ridership increased over 30%. White Plains is one of the system's busiest stations for Westchester and NYC residents who have found the system's frequency a key factor in a desirable reverse commute. Property values adjacent to the tracks continue to soar; proximity to the railroad is a desired amenity for homeowners in the area.
- This project must strictly adhere to a set timeline and budget. Soaring costs and delayed project schedules have beset MTA capital projects and eroded the public's confidence in project delivery. The agency must learn from the mistakes of East Side Access, Second Avenue Subway and the #7 extension and ensure the Third Track is not another example of delay and inflated budgets.
- One way to keep project costs down is to shift the focus away from eliminating grade crossings. Governor Cuomo has suggested tunneling under or over the tracks to reduce fatalities at these junctures. These are impractical costs for limited transportation dollars—especially for this project which is not yet funded. Keep the problem in focus—while there were 84 total deaths at railroad

crossings in all of NY in a 15 year period (2011-2014), there were 88 pedestrians killed in Nassau County in a 3 year period. Spend hundreds of millions of dollars to improve signage at crossings and build pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure and safer roadways overall.

- Lastly, we encourage AECOM and Gannett Fleming to conduct a meaningful public outreach process that incorporates community feedback and ideas. The process should be modeled after the Tappan Zee Bridge outreach process which to-date includes over 700 meetings with more than the usual suspects and should include--residents, community groups, schools, business associations, elected officials and other stakeholders. Much like the TZB, competitive grants should be made available to community partners advancing the goals of the project and building public support.