

Supervisor Romaine Calls for LIRR Electrification of North Shore and South Shore Branches

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Farmingville, NY - Today, Supervisor Ed Romaine (at podium) held a press conference at the Long Island Railroad station in Patchogue to announce his call for New York State and the Metropolitan Transit Authority to extend electrification on the Montauk Branch from Babylon through the Patchogue, Bellport and Mastic-Shirley stations and the Port Jefferson Branch from Huntington to Port Jefferson Station. The Supervisor is asking that a portion of the \$5.5 to \$8 billion in the New York State budget for infrastructure improvements be earmarked to complete the projects which would vastly improve LIRR service, provide a much needed boost to the local economy and benefit the environment as well.

The Supervisor received across the board support from State, County and local elected officials who joined him at the press conference. Pictured left to right are Greater Patchogue Chamber of Commerce Executive Director David Kennedy, Patchogue Village Mayor Paul Pontieri, Bellport Village Deputy Mayor Leslie O'Connor, Councilman Dan Panico, State Senator Tom Croci, Councilman Neil Foley, Suffolk County Legislator Rob Calarco, Assemblyman Dean Murray, Councilwoman Valerie M. Cartright and Councilwoman Connie Kepert,

Supervisor Romaine said, "Thousands of Brookhaven residents use the LIRR to commute to work every day, and thousands more ride the train for other reasons. Electrification would provide faster, more efficient service and attract people to live in the communities with close access to the railroad. The economic upside would be felt throughout the town as more people choose to live here, and our young people decide to stay because of the improved LIRR service and easier access in and out of New York City."

The Supervisor will introduce a sense resolution at the February 26 Town Board Meeting in support of electrification of the Montauk Branch from Babylon to Mastic-Shirley, the Port Jefferson Branch from Huntington to Port Jefferson Station and the Main Line from Ronkonkoma to Riverhead. Unanimous support of the Town Board is expected.

The Supervisor also received support from Stony Brook University President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., MD. "As the largest single-site employer on Long Island with a significant population of students, faculty and staff who utilize the LIRR to travel from all points leading to and from the Stony Brook campus, this initiative would make a significant difference toward enhancing their commute. So, on behalf of Stony Brook University, I applaud Supervisor Romaine for calling upon the Long Island Rail Road to extend electrification through these key stations" commented Dr.

Stanley, who was unable to attend the press conference.

"I support Supervisor Romaine's call to electrify the Montauk line," said New York State Senator Croci (R-Sayville). "Demand will continue to grow as our population increases. Even with the development of the Ronkonkoma Hub, commuters will still need to use more than the Main Line. Given the reality that electrification will take at least a decade or more, it makes sense to start the process now so that the capacity will be there to meet the demand. Quieter, cleaner electrical train service would be a boon to the communities of Great River, Oakdale, Sayville, Patchogue, and Shirley-Mastic. In addition, any effort that helps get cars off the road and minimizes traffic congestion needs to be pursued."

New York State Assemblyman Murray said, "At a time when we are trying to encourage more ridership and greater use of mass transit, electrifying the Montauk line only makes sense. It will make things much easier for those commuters who live along the south shore and will also help with the ongoing parking and traffic issues in and around the Ronkonkoma station."

Suffolk County Legislator Calarco said, "In the last few years Patchogue has undergone a significant renaissance. The line is not only used by commuters going to points west, but for visitors coming here to dine, shop and attend cultural events in our revitalized downtown. The Patchogue station is also the southern terminus of County Executive Steve Bellone's Bus Rapid Transit initiative, so it makes perfect sense to modernize this heavily used rail line. I wholly support the efforts to electrify this line if it means getting more cars off the road and more people quickly and safely into our downtowns."

Councilman Foley said, "Many South Shore commuters make the daily round trip to and from Ronkonkoma for a faster ride into the city. Driving back and forth, five days a week is inconvenient, creates more traffic and increases our carbon footprint. Electrification is better for the environment and would bring a vast improvement to LIRR service. It would also make our communities more attractive to live in, which would be great for the local economy. I support Supervisor Romaine's action and will work with him to help see this to fruition."

Councilman Panico said, "A serious study of this proposal should be conducted to determine the feasibility of electrifying these railway lines. From an efficiency and environmental standpoint, electrification makes very clear sense. Other municipalities, both near and abroad, are examining and have implemented far more efficient means of rail transportation - our region should be moving in that same direction."

Councilwoman Kepert said, "I join with my colleagues on the Town Board to urge the LIRR to electrify the Montauk Line to bring enhanced, convenient train service to areas of Brookhaven that are currently under served. Electrification of the Montauk line would be great news both to those who use the railroad as a means of transportation, as well as, to those who travel on our often congested roadways."

Councilwoman Valerie M. Cartright said, "I strongly urge the Long Island Railroad to electrify the Port Jefferson Branch, a major line connecting Port Jefferson Station and Stony Brook. Commuter service will be greatly improved and a cleaner form of energy will be used with electric trains. Port Jefferson Station is the center of the recently completed Commercial Hub Study and the future location of the implementation of the community's vision."

Mayor Pontieri said, "I commend Supervisor Romaine for taking the lead on what could have great economic impact on Patchogue Village. We've added over 600 residential units over the past 10 years and many of our new residents are commuters. Electrification would benefit all of our commuting residents and attract more to live in the village. Our station was at one time the busiest in eastern Suffolk but ridership has sharply dropped with people going to Ronkonkoma. Electrification will change that, but we have more than enough parking at the station to handle the increased capacity."

Village of Bellport Mayor Raymond Fell said, "Electrifying the LIRR line from Patchogue to Montauk will provide a much safer environment for pedestrian and vehicular traffic. It will also greatly improve noise and air pollution for the thousands of riders that use the railroad each day and for the residents that live in the vicinity of the rail line."

Village of Port Jefferson Mayor Margot Garant said, "Electrifying the Port Jefferson line will help revitalize all the important urban centers along the line, improve and provide a critical service for the residents of Long Island who

commute to work and support tourism by hooking up major transportation lines such as the Bridgeport/Port Jefferson Ferry. It's the single most important infrastructure project the State could make to benefit all of Long Island."

David Kennedy, Executive Director of the Greater Patchogue Chamber of Commerce said, "My thoughts always have been that adding a second electric line to the LIRR Main/Ronkonkoma line should be secondary to electrifying the north and south shore lines. Anyone who visits Ronkonkoma station knows what a parking nightmare that can be. While the Ronkonkoma Hub development is a wonderful initiative, we know that is most likely years in the making. In the meantime, we have many north and south shore rail stations, like Patchogue, that are underutilized and can help spread the commuter traffic around. This certainly would be more feasible if north and south shore Brookhaven station travel times were reduced by electrification. Our continued development as a great place to attract young professionals from leaving Long Island would be vastly enhanced with electrified lines to Patchogue and beyond"

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