

Republicans now onboard; LIRR third track to get OK

By: Joe Dowd July 11, 2017 0

State Senate Republicans won't block the Long Island Rail Road's proposed third track, clearing the last major hurdle to move the \$2 billion project forward.

Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan, R-East Northport, issued an emailed statement to media outlets early Tuesday evening, saying his final concerns regarding the third track have been answered and the project can proceed, pending a final approval of a revised plan by the MTA's board.

"All along, we have listened to our constituents and endeavored to do the right thing," Flanagan said. "On behalf of the Senate Majority, Sen. Marty Golden, our representative on the MTA's Capital Program Review Board and a staunch advocate for the needs of his own community, will vote to allow the proposed 'third track' project to move forward."

On June 30, the MTA scrapped its third track capital spending proposal just hours before it was to become reality. Senate Republicans had late objections to the \$2 billion project that would add a third track from Floral Park to Hicksville. The project would alleviate a bottleneck that has caused years of delays, inconvenience and danger along the LIRR's main line.

At the time, Flanagan, who controls the vote on the spending review panel, said he wanted a more "comprehensive solution to the ongoing crisis" involving the entire MTA system.

In his statement, Flanagan said he has had "direct and frank conversations" with Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the new MTA Chairman Joseph Lhota and "relayed to them what I believe is important."

Cuomo, who has long advocated for the massive construction project, did not immediately respond to the announcement.

OPINION: This is no time to block the third track

Kevin Law, President & CEO of the Long Island Association, which has strongly supported the project, commended Cuomo and Flanagan "for reaching an agreement to add a Third Track to the LIRR that was envisioned a half century ago and will now result in a \$2 billion investment to the region, economic growth and a better experience for commuters while addressing the legitimate concerns of surrounding communities."

In addition to the third set of tracks along the route From New Hyde Park to Hicksville, the MTA's initiative would also provide key safety features, new parking and stations, sound barriers and eliminate several at-grade crossings.