

# Nassau Hub Transit Initiative

Nassau County Department of Public Works – Planning Division



## Meeting Minutes

<b>DATE</b>	18 January 2023
<b>TIME</b>	7:00 PM – 8:00 PM
<b>VENUE</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>MEETING TITLE</b>	Nassau Hub Transit Initiative – Public Meeting

### ITEM

#### 1.0 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- David Viana (Nassau County Department of Public Works – Planning Division), the Project Manager for the Nassau Hub Transit Initiative, welcomed about 50 participants to the public meeting. He then introduced the Project Team:
  - o Daniel Baer (WSP USA) – Program Manager
  - o Alexandra Derian (WSP USA) – Deputy Program Manger
  - o Oliver Ernhofer (WSP USA) – Project Manager for AA Update
  - o Rachel Van Metre (WSP USA) – AA Update Team
  - o Molly Hollister (WSP USA) – Communications & Public Involvement
  - o Rebecca Fleischer (WSP USA) – Communications & Public Involvement
  - o Anna Sampson (WSP USA) – Communications & Public Involvement
- Next, the elected and appointed officials on the call were acknowledged:
  - o Hon. Jeffery Daniels – Deputy Mayor, Village of Hempstead
  - o Hon. Mary Carter Flanagan – Trustee, Village of Garden City
  - o Danielle Oglesby – Commissioner, Village of Hempstead
- The purpose of the public meeting was then presented, and participants were encouraged to submit comments via the chat function and to send an email to [info@nassauhubtransit.com](mailto:info@nassauhubtransit.com).

#### 2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE NASSAU HUB TRANSIT INITIATIVE

- David Viana began by discussing the strategic role of the Nassau Hub area by providing local context and identifying the defining characteristics of the Study Area and related challenges, such as automobile dependent development patterns, traffic congestion, and lack of transit choices.
- The preliminary goals and objectives of the Nassau Hub Transit Initiative were then outlined, including identifying realistic and practical travel options, enhancing mobility and supporting transit equity, supporting sustainable and transit friendly land use patterns and economic development, increasing quality of life while minimizing adverse environmental impacts, and supporting sustainable parking strategies.
- The previous outcome of the 2014 Alternatives Analysis (2014 AA) was then reviewed, followed by a discussion on the 2014 Initial Operating Segment (IOS) Phase 1 and Phase 2 roll out.

#### 3.0 NEW AND EVOLVING TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE NASSAU HUB AREA

- David Viana discussed new opportunities in the Nassau Hub area:
  - o Significant financial investment by the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) will enhance LIRR Main Line service – this includes investment in better service, additional parking, and transit-oriented development.
  - o The Village of Mineola is the location of a vibrant downtown which is complemented by new multi-family housing.
  - o The Village of Westbury is implementing their Downtown Revitalization Initiative which will be complemented by new multi-family housing and other transit-oriented development.
  - o The Village of Hempstead’s intermodal center is served by a significant number of NICE Bus routes and is adjacent to the LIRR Hempstead Branch’s terminus.
  - o Additional investment by private and public entities are supporting the expansion of educational, medical, and entertainment uses within the Hub area.

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## 4.0 CONNECTING THE INITIAL OPERATING SEGMENT (IOS) TO THE LIRR MAIN LINE.

- Oliver Ernhofer presented a set of alternatives for the LIRR Main Line Connection to the IOS in Westbury and Mineola.
  - There are a number of major activity centers within the Study Area; seven essential attractors and generators are crucial to be served and three key attractors and generators should be served when possible.
  - The purpose of a connection from the IOS to the LIRR Main Line is to complement the IOS's service and maximize the benefits of a new transit system by providing a direct connection between major activity centers.
  - Maps of the Mineola and Westbury alternatives were displayed to review the Long List of Alternatives for the Main Line Connection. Five alternatives were developed for the Mineola Main Line Connection and eight alternatives were developed for the Westbury Main Line Connection.
  - The Preliminary Long-List Evaluation for the five Mineola alternatives was presented. Alternatives 1 and 4 were not recommended to advance due to roadway congestion and roadway size restrictions.
  - The Preliminary Long-List Evaluation for the eight Westbury Alternatives was presented. Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 were not recommended to advance because they would not improve travel time and/or be constrained by roadway width and slow travel speeds.
  - The current Alternatives Analysis process for making recommendations for alternatives was reviewed. The identification of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) will be determined after outreach to the public and stakeholders is completed in January 2023.
  - While an LIRR Main Line connection in Mineola does have viable alternatives, there are drawbacks including congestion issues, heavy traffic, and operation through heavily residential neighborhoods. Alternatives for the LIRR Main Line Connection in Westbury will advance at this time, and the Mineola alternatives will be preserved for future analysis.
- Rachel Van Metre presented the remaining Recommended Long List Alternatives for both Mineola and Westbury.
  - Routing of Mineola Alternatives 2, 3, and 5 were reviewed.
  - Routing of Westbury Alternatives 5, 6, 7, and 8 were reviewed.

## 5.0 QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Following the review of the alternatives for the Main Line Connection in Westbury and Mineola, David Viana began the question-and-answer session for the presentation. Questions and comments were submitted via the chat function in Microsoft Teams and by email to [info@nassauhubtransit.com](mailto:info@nassauhubtransit.com). The following are the questions and comments received during the public meeting. Questions and comments received have been grouped together by topic, and responses, which were shared at the public meeting, have been documented.

### Economic Development

#### 1. *Will the county go forward with development of the Nassau Hub plan even if the casino is not built?*

The Project Team is anticipating that redevelopment of the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum Site (Coliseum Site) will occur in the near future. However, the Nassau Hub Transit Initiative (the Project) has independent utility beyond providing a connection to the Coliseum Site. The transit service proposed by the Project will better connect medical, educational, residential, and other essential uses in the surrounding area, while also providing these uses with faster access to a Long Island Rail Road Main Line station.

#### 2. *How much more ridership is the proposed casino projected to bring in?*

The casino proposal is in its initial stages, and specifics regarding both residential and/or employment numbers resulting from the development are unknown at this time. Once further information is available about development at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum Site (Coliseum Site), the Project Team will be able to fully analyze ridership for the proposed bus rapid transit alternatives. The Project Team will also conduct analysis of the impact the casino would have on our proposed service, as the need arises.

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## Travel Options and Congestion Mitigation

- 3. I work at RXR Plaza, directly across Hempstead Turnpike from the Coliseum property. Right now, it is difficult and time-consuming to get onto any main roads, either Hempstead Turnpike via Glenn Curtiss Blvd., or to Merrick Ave., also via Glenn Curtiss. The traffic from 5-5:30 pm is bumper-to-bumper. I am concerned that should the Nassau Hub project be approved, the traffic impact will make getting into and out of RXR Plaza next to impossible. I understand you have developed a mass transit plan, but the truth is that Long Island has a car culture. People who own cars (most LI residents do) will prefer to drive regardless of the transit options available. What are the plans to mitigate the traffic impact and how long will those plans take to come to fruition? Thank you.*

As part of the environmental review work that will occur after the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Main Line Connection, the project will undergo a traffic study to understand potential impacts of extending the Initial Operating Segment to the Long Island Rail Road Main Line. The County plans to begin this environmental review work later this year.

- 4. Our roadways are currently congested and along with that comes environmental pollution. Will these buses be electric to help mitigate the environmental impact on our communities?*

In March 2022, the Nassau County Legislature announced that battery electric buses (BEBs) will serve the Initial Operating Segment identified in the 2014 Alternatives Analysis Report (see the County Legislature press release here: <https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=9968>). It is anticipated that the Locally Preferred Alternative connecting to the Long Island Rail Road Main Line would also use BEBs.

- 5. How much increased use of the Nassau Hub and Coliseum is the planning team factoring for with their plan?*

The Project Team is anticipating that some redevelopment of the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum Site (Coliseum Site) will occur in the near future. However, the exact scale of the development remains uncertain as of January 2023. Regardless of the development that occurs, the Project to implement bus rapid transit along the Initial Operating Segment with a connection to the Long Island Rail Road Main Line, has independent utility beyond providing a connection to the Coliseum Site. The transit service proposed by the Project will better connect medical, educational, residential, and other essential uses in the surrounding area, while also providing these uses with faster access to a Long Island Rail Road Main Line station. Once further information is available about development at the Coliseum Site, the Project Team will fully analyze ridership for the proposed bus rapid transit alternatives and adjust any plans as needed.

- 6. How will it connect to the UBS Arena?*

The Project is not proposing a direct connection to the UBS Arena in Elmont (western Nassau County). Existing connections to the UBS Arena will remain as is. This includes connections via the Long Island Rail Road Main Line at the Elmont and Belmont Park stations, and NICE Bus routes n6 and n6X.

- 7. Does the County propose lifting the bus ban on Stewart Ave?*

Nassau County would need to revisit the bus restrictions currently in place on Stewart Avenue if a proposed alternative using a portion of Stewart Avenue within the Village of Garden City is carried forward as a preferred alternative to connect to the Mineola Long Island Rail Road station. Such actions would need to be done in coordination with the Village of Garden City. It is important to note that none of the Westbury Alternatives contemplate using the section of Stewart Avenue in the Village of Garden City that restricts buses.

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**8. *You mentioned a shift in public attitude toward mass transit. Hasn't LIRR ridership been sharply down and slow to recover since the pandemic?***

The statement regarding a “shift in public attitude” is related to the general desire by younger generations to prioritize public transportation access when considering where they live, work, and socialize, which was identified by various studies prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Ridership on the Long Island Rail Road and other public transportation systems have continued to recover since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and these systems will continue to play a critically important role in the NY metropolitan region.

**9. *Because a lot of the streets you mention are in Uniondale, will Uniondale get special buses?***

Based on the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) bus rapid transit (BRT) guidelines, any bus used for the BRT service would be specifically branded for this Project. Specific branding has not yet been developed but will be consistent throughout the entire BRT system. Additionally, it is anticipated that the BRT service would use battery electric buses (BEBs) as announced by the Nassau County Legislature in 2022.

**10. *I vote for Mineola Alt 2!***

Noted – thank you.

## Enhanced Mobility, Quality of Life, Sustainability

**11. *Can one of the stops be the African American Museum of Nassau County in the Village of Hempstead being that you plan on including Museum Row?***

The Joysetta & Julius Pearse African American Museum of Nassau County would be served by the stop at the Rosa Parks Hempstead Transit Center, which is located approximately two blocks away. The Hempstead Transit Center will be served via the Initial Operating Segment which will tie into the Long Island Rail Road Main Line connection.

**12. *There is a stigma around busses in Nassau county. Is light rail, that was mentioned in previous iterations, off the table? Is using any of the Hempstead line RoW from Mineola or Hempstead secondary now off the table?***

Light rail/modern streetcar was analyzed as part of the 2014 Alternatives Analysis, which sought to connect the Village of Hempstead, the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum Site (Coliseum Site), and the Village of Mineola. While the Locally Preferred Alternative identified in the 2014 Alternatives Analysis report was proposed as a modern streetcar, the Initial Operating Segment was designed as a bus rapid transit (BRT) system to allow for construction and implementation to be faster and less expensive. Given the significant capital cost related to constructing a light rail/modern streetcar system and the potential environmental impacts that light rail/modern streetcar construction may have on the surrounding community, the County is not moving forward with the technology at this time and will instead be focusing on bus rapid transit.

The County Right of Way (ROW) is a former Long Island Rail Road rail alignment that parallels Franklin Avenue and is adjacent to Nassau County’s government offices in the Village of Garden City. This ROW is one option for a north-south connection to connect to the Mineola Long Island Rail Road Station for Mineola BRT alternatives.

The Garden City Secondary is the section of mostly disused track in the Village of Garden City that connects to Nassau Community College, and is currently owned by the Long Island Rail Road. Use of the Garden City Secondary as an option to create a dedicated east-west right of way connection for the BRT system is not being pursued at this time.

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**13. *Wouldn't activated the old LIRR track in the back of Nassau Community College be a better solution than overwhelming our communities with buses?***

The Garden City Secondary, the section of mostly disused track in the Village of Garden City that connects to Nassau Community College, is currently owned by the Long Island Rail Road. Use of the Garden City Secondary as an option to create a dedicated east-west right of way connection for the bus rapid transit system is not being pursued at this time.

**14. *Thank you for hosting this meeting! Do you have any statistics on the estimated daily ridership for the BRT system?***

A ridership estimate was completed for the 2014 Alternatives Analysis. This estimate of ridership on the Initial Operating Segment indicated that daily ridership could range from 3,100 to 5,200 passengers, depending on the development scenario at the Nassau Coliseum site. As part of the current project work being completed for the Long Island Rail Road Main Line Connection, a new ridership estimate will be generated to understand ridership potential.

**15. *Mineola connects the Oyster Bay line and the intermodal center in Mineola. It is also in zone 4 for LIRR vs zone 7 for Westbury making it less expensive and more attractive for use. Reposted: I commented before on zone 4 (mineola) vs zone 7 (westbury). Has the \$35 additional monthly cost for Zone 7 from Zone 1 LIRR ticket been factored in to the decision to start from Westbury vs Mineola?***

As part of the work being completed for the Long Island Rail Road Main Line Connection, a new ridership estimate will be generated to understand ridership potential. This estimate will account for the travel costs associated with the different Long Island Rail Road zones.

**16. *Hi there! I'm a student at Hofstra University and a frequent NICE rider. There is a high potential for public transit demand at Hofstra for access to essentials and attractions, with roughly half of all students living on-campus, many without cars. How much have you considered transit access for Hofstra students in designing the alternative lines, and does the committee believe there is future room for transit expansion at Hofstra?***

The Project Team agrees that providing access to higher education institutions, such as Hofstra University and Nassau Community College, is one of the big benefits of the Initial Operating Segment and connection to the Long Island Rail Road Main Line. Both Hofstra University and Nassau Community College were identified as essential ridership attractors/generators, which are crucial locations to be served by the proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) system.

**17. *Will nice bus be part of the BRT?***

The bus rapid transit (BRT) system would be folded into the larger NICE Bus system.

**18. *Have other surface modes such as light rail, or even elevated monorail been considered?***

Light rail/modern streetcar was analyzed as part of the 2014 Alternatives Analysis which sought to connect the Village of Hempstead, the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum Site (Coliseum Site), and the Village of Mineola. While the Locally Preferred Alternative identified in the 2014 Alternatives Analysis report was proposed as a modern streetcar, the Initial Operating Segment was designed as a bus rapid transit (BRT) system to allow for construction and implementation to be faster and less expensive. Given the significant capital cost related to constructing light rail/modern streetcar and the potential environmental impacts that light rail/modern streetcar construction may have on the surrounding community, the County is not moving forward with the technology at this time and will instead be focusing on bus rapid transit.

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**19. Thank you for this presentation. A few questions: Will the PDF for this be posted on the website? If this went ahead as a bus BRT, would NICE (Veolia) be operating this or would it be another vendor potentially? Has NICE been involved as part of this study overall?**

The [presentation in PDF format](#) was made available on the County's website along with links to provide comments about the presentation via email. The comment period was open from January 18<sup>th</sup> through February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. The bus rapid transit (BRT) system will be folded into the larger NICE Bus system and will be operated and maintained by NICE Bus's operator.

**20. It is expected that trip frequency and timing will be coordinated with LIRR schedules at the selected stations?**

During the peak hours, the bus rapid transit (BRT) system could run every 10 minutes; during the off-peak hours, the BRT system could run every 20 minutes. Alternatively, the BRT system could run every 15 minutes during all hours of operation. It is anticipated that the BRT schedule would be timed with the Long Island Rail Road schedule.

**21. How often would the buses run?**

During the peak hours, the bus rapid transit (BRT) system could run every 10 minutes; during the off-peak hours, the BRT system could run every 20 minutes. Alternatively, the BRT system could run every 15 minutes during all hours of operation.

**22. Are these the same routes that the charter buses will be using?**

Potential privately-run charter bus routes to the Coliseum site have not yet been identified.

**23. Will the buses include bike racks? Is additional bicycle parking planned at major points?**

In 2021, NICE Bus announced its Bike & Ride program which installed bike racks on some of its buses, including the n6Xpress, and the n88. NICE continues to evaluate opportunities to expand this program across more of its fleet.

Nassau County is also undertaking the Shared Mobility Management Plan ([www.nassaumobility.com](http://www.nassaumobility.com)) to identify opportunities for introducing new and enhanced mobility services to complement and extend the reach of existing transit. These mobility services would improve transportation options for residents, workers, students, and visitors, and populations that are underserved. Shared mobility options can include both bike share and scooter share. The Nassau Hub Transit Initiative Alternatives Analysis Update has incorporated shared mobility options into the analysis of the alternatives.

## Other topics

**24. Will it be union or non-union drivers driving for the brt?**

Thank you for your comment, the Project Team cannot comment on NICE Bus's labor practices because it is out of scope of the project.

**25. Will this project utilize any state or federal funding, or only county funds? Also, can you specify the cost of the project?**

It is anticipated that the Long Island Rail Road Main Line Connection will use a combination of federal, state, and local funding to design and construct the Locally Preferred Alternative.

**26. How much would this BRT service cost passengers to ride?**

The expected fare for the proposed service is still to be determined. The Project Team recommends that the fare should be an integrated fare, that allows for seamless transfers to other NICE Bus existing services.

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**27. *Labor will it be union or non-union drivers***

Thank you for your comment, the Project Team cannot comment on NICE Bus's labor practices because it is out of scope of the project.

**28. *What is the timing on Phase II design and implementation?***

The Initial Operating Segment Phase II work will begin once funding has been identified.

**29. *Can we have another one of these meetings using zoom, this app has proven difficult for some. I am receiving many texts about the difficulties some residents are having using Microsoft teams.***

Thank you for your feedback. We will take this into consideration for future meetings. For additional information or comments about the project, please email the Project Team at [info@nassauhubtransit.com](mailto:info@nassauhubtransit.com).

**30. *I would like to suggest that your next virtual meeting be more heavily promoted as I just found out about this meeting by accident. Perhaps Newsday could put it on their cover page a week in advance?***

The public meeting was advertised in the local outlet of Patch.com on December 22, 2022, the local outlet of MSN.com on December 22, 2022, LongIsland.com on December 23, 2022, on Nassau County's website and Facebook page, on the Nassau Hub Transit Initiative website, and on NICE Bus's website and Facebook page and Twitter account.

**31. *Thank you for holding this presentation.***

Noted – thank you.

**32. *Thank you for the presentation!***

Noted – thank you.

**33. *Thank you***

Noted – thank you.

## 6.0 NEXT STEPS

- David Viana reviewed the project's next steps and noted that additional comments can be shared with the Project Team via email.
- Next steps for the Project Team will include analyzing the remaining alternatives to determine a Locally Preferred Alternative for the Main Line Connection in the coming months.