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**Statement by Ellyn Shannon, PCAC Associate Director
Metro-North Should Take Over Suffern Station
At the Joint LIRR/MNR Committee Meeting
MTA Headquarters, 2 Broadway, New York, NY 10004
September 23, 2019**

Good Morning, I am Ellyn Shannon, Associate Director of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, speaking on behalf of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council.

As advisors to the MTA on behalf of its riders, we commend Metro-North President Cathy Rinaldi and her team for the tireless effort they have put into creating the next Metro-North Railroad capital program. We applaud the \$4.7 billion investment – with it, we are finally in the ballpark of a right sized capital plan.

Unfortunately, we are also left scratching our heads that the Metro-North hiring freeze continues. Having talented, skilled staff burn both ends of their candles is a losing strategy. It is time for Headquarters and the Governor to lift the hiring freeze so that this vital capital program can be properly managed.

An important item missing from the program is the purchase of the Suffern station from NJ Transit. The time has beyond come, as Rockland County Executive Ed Day clearly stated in a recent letter to Metro North. Suffern is an historic and exciting New York village West of the Hudson, Yet! Its train station is owned by the State of New Jersey. This is an appalling situation made worse by the lack of attention NJ Transit has given the station. It is run down and, worse yet, the station is not accessible. A law prevents accessible vans from dropping passengers at the nearest accessible station,,, which for Suffern is in New Jersey. The result is that these passengers are driven 28 minutes north to Harriman for their *southbound* Metro-North destination.

The state of New York via the MTA must rectify this situation and reclaim the station. Work out an agreement with NJ Transit regarding fare income, but purchase the station and upgrade it to Metro-North standards, including making it ADA accessible. This is critical to a successful West of Hudson plan. The Village of Suffern is seeing a revitalization and its Metro-North station should be a place of pride, not the current embarrassment that it is today.

