
II. Lyndon LaRouche on Manhattan

Lyndon LaRouche Calls for Committee On Manhattan Infrastructure

by Diane W. Sare

May 29—Last week, in response to a report from Manhattan Project organizers, Lyndon LaRouche proposed that a committee be created to do something about the alarming collapse of the Manhattan area transportation grid, and to “kick whoever needs it, to get it done.”

As anyone who has attempted to travel into or through New York City will tell you, the roads in some areas, especially on toll plazas at the bridges, look like they were hit by a carpet bombing campaign. One couple returning from Staten Island to New Jersey destroyed three tires in one large pothole! And this, where each driver pays \$15 just to cross the Hudson River! Driving is a high anxiety activity, which has become like an obstacle course in a war zone.

Then there's the subway. Aside from the fact that both the East River and Hudson River tunnels were built 107 years ago, in 1910, they were also damaged by Superstorm Sandy in 2013, which flooded them with salt water, which is corrosive, but also leaves a nasty, rock-hard residue around cables and wires, making “minor” repairs impossible. Some of the tunnels have been repaired, but the Canarsie Tunnel, built in 1924, which connects Manhattan to Brooklyn for 225,000 commuters each day, will have to be shut down for 15 months, beginning in 2019. The two tunnels crossing to New Jersey need to be replaced, and there is no other tunnel

to absorb the traffic while new tunnels are being built.

Pennsylvania (“Penn”) Station in Manhattan is already serving an average of 650,000 commuters per day, well over double the number of passengers for which it was built. Because it is so overloaded, and there are now so many delays—due to ancient switches and storm damage, among other problems—no one knows which track a train will be pulling into, until just a few minutes before it arrives. As a result, there is a mad swarm of rushing New Yorkers suddenly all trying to move to the same location at the same time. In early April, when a train derailed due to old tracks, 8 of the 21 tracks had to be shut down. The system is so run down, and so overloaded, that not only is there no redundancy, but any accident is likely to have a chain-reaction, multiplier effect.



Disruptions during repairs to LIRR and NJ Transit systems' aging track and infrastructure promise, in the words of Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a "Summer of Hell."



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New York City is the center of the United States, the financial center, economic center, political center. A breakdown of transportation in the New York metropolitan area would be devastating for the nation. Here, Manhattan seen from the Port of Elizabeth, New Jersey.

A National Catastrophe

Repairs on Penn Station can no longer safely be delayed, so that, although there does not seem to be any comprehensive plan yet in place, as of July 7, 2017, up to 20% of the Long Island Railroad trains will no longer be going to Long Island, and there will be similar reductions in New Jersey Transit trains. This is being called, by New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo and others, the beginning of the “Summer of Hell.” Supposedly the repairs are going to take “only” two months, but no one knows for sure. Moreover, although the partial shutdown begins on July 7, no plan has been announced to address the plight of commuters who need to get in and out of Manhattan each day. There are vague promises of ferries and buses, and proposals that some people should just start their work day at 4:00 am—but nothing concrete at all.

One of the tasks of LaRouche’s proposed committee, should be to indicate the potential consequences of doing nothing about this nightmare, which clearly could implode into a catastrophe, including with great loss of life. When asked this question, rail transport corridor expert Hal Cooper said,

New York City is the center of the United States. It’s the financial center; it’s the economic center; it’s the social center; it’s the political center. If we don’t repair the infrastructure, the ability of the people who work in New York—and I understand that’s something like 1.8 million people who work in New York City [1.6 million commute into Manhattan each day to work, bringing the daytime population of Manhattan to over 3 million—ed.], and a large portion of them come from outside, either Westchester County or Rockland County, or from New Jersey or Long Island,—many of them wouldn’t be able to get to work. An economic breakdown and collapse is going to happen, because so much of what is important in this country centers in New York City. And that is *absolutely essential*, and we will see a great breakdown if something is not done to correct the problem soon.

Integrate Manhattan into Belt & Road

In other words, the consequences of a breakdown of transportation in the New York metropolitan area would not only be catastrophic for the people in New

York, but would be devastating for the nation as a whole. This implosion must be prevented, but to do so requires urgent action, and even with urgent action, we will be unable to prevent certain damage from occurring.

A comprehensive plan to integrate Manhattan into China's Belt and Road Initiative is needed. That President Trump sent a high-level delegation to the Beijing conference in May, and has himself established a personal relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping, is a promising beginning. Schiller Institute President Helga Zepp-LaRouche, who spoke on a think-tank panel at that Beijing conference, expressed the potential represented by Trump's commitment to spend \$1 trillion on infrastructure, and to return to the American System of economics. She pointed out that Chinese estimates are that the United States needs something closer to \$8 trillion in infrastructure investment, and the American Society of Civil Engineers has called for about \$4.5 trillion—so Trump's proposal would definitely be a step in the right direction.

But there are obstacles to implementing the urgently needed projects. First, the U.S. Congress is stalling on reinstating the FDR-era Glass-Steagall Act, for which bills have been introduced in both the House and Senate, and for which the President has stated his support. But no one has thus far been willing to force it through. And second, the small-mindedness of the American people themselves who, after sixteen years of Bush and Obama, on top of the post-JFK rock-drug-sex counterculture—which is now *the* culture—barely consider the future at all, except as something they would like to avoid. Many of them are just drugging themselves into oblivion, when they should be grabbing their pitchforks and chasing down their Representatives with appropriate urgent demands.

There is also another important factor delaying such action, and that is the political witch-hunt against President Trump, directed from London. The hysteria being spouted in the U.S. news media about President Trump and his administration's relationship with anyone from Russia, and former President Barack Obama's and Hillary Clinton's campaigns to harass and scandalize the new administration, are highly destructive, not so much of Trump personally, who has demonstrated a fortunate willingness to fight, but of the opportunity that now greets the American people in the wake of the Beijing Belt and Road Forum.

Questions for the Committee

The committee that Mr. LaRouche has called for, will have to step back and look at Manhattan as if from outer space. With the impending doom of local breakdown, it can be challenging to consider where the United States and the world will be even 50 years from now, much less 100 or 1,000 years from now, but this is the kind of thinking that is required.

One factor, hopefully in the not-so-distant future, is the development of thermonuclear fusion power, which China is pursuing aggressively. With cheap, abundant, clean energy, what kind of transportation, manufacturing, water-management, and even food production becomes possible?

The Belt and Road is all about connectivity. Now that the Bayonne Bridge is going to be elevated, large freight container vessels will be able to get into the New Jersey ports of Elizabeth and Newark. What are the implications for trade? Not much if our rail system is in a shambles.

Should we have a rail transportation grid that connects our ports to our major cities? What about rail from Newark to China and Russia across the Bering Strait? What role would Detroit play in this? Could New York City become a manufacturing center again? How will we connect the Port of Elizabeth to the high-tech areas of Connecticut and Long Island? What about building the storm surge barrier that should have been erected before Sandy? Shouldn't those industries in Long Island, New Jersey, and Connecticut that contributed so much to the Apollo Project, be revived, to become part of NASA's collaboration with China on a mission to Mars, and in establishing an industrial base on the Moon?

New York City and the contiguous areas have a high density of capable people and also of potentially capable people, if there were a crash program to train them. These are the questions that the people of the United States need to urgently consider, not whether Jared Kushner had a meeting with the Russian Ambassador (which would probably have been a good idea).

LaRouche's Four Laws provide the parameters for the needed crash program. Now we must assemble a committee of experts who can fill in the details, and by so doing, transform the way that New Yorkers think about the current catastrophe. Remember, in Chinese, the character for crisis is also the character for opportunity.