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July 15, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

The Preservation League of New York State respectfully asks that you use your authority as Governor to delay Empire State Development Corporation's planned approval of the Penn Station area project, currently scheduled for July 21.

The plan raises numerous, serious questions about its viability that have not been addressed, including how it will be financed, and what will happen if, especially given the weak demand for office space in a pandemic and post-pandemic world, the expected revenue does not materialize. Even if all those questions could be answered, the plan would still represent a colossal waste of resources, energy, irreplaceable architecture, and building materials.

The Empire State Development Corporation's proposed Pennsylvania Station Civic and Land Use Project (the "Penn Area Plan") represents an unfortunate return to the Urban Renewal mindset of the mid-20th century, which promised that large-scale demolition would somehow lead to more viable and vibrant cities. Cities throughout the state and nation bear witness to the devastation caused by speculative demolition without a feasible rebuilding plan. Thousands of irreplaceable historic resources – of which the original Penn Station is an iconic example – were lost and wastefully discarded. **Governor Hochul, we urge you to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past by halting this ill-conceived plan.**

The current Penn Station is, without doubt, in need of improvement, and the League has no objection to upgrades that will improve the station's functionality and aesthetics. What we strongly oppose is the plan to demolish multiple blocks of historic buildings in the vicinity of the station in the hope that private redevelopment will raise revenue for station improvements. We also oppose the opaque and top-down planning approach, which has utterly lacked the transparency and respect for local land-use procedures we thought the current administration championed.

All told, over 40 historic buildings and structures stand to be lost while displacing thousands of residents and businesses. The immediate impact on the people who live and work in this neighborhood would be devastating. **The needless demolition is an environmental catastrophe.** The negative environmental impact related to the embodied carbon that is wasted when buildings are demolished and put in a landfill, combined with the carbon output of major new construction projects, is in direct opposition to New York State's proclaimed climate action goals. It is for these reasons that the Preservation League included the Penn Neighborhood on our current Seven to Save list of endangered historic places – underscoring the magnitude of the threat this community faces given the proposed Penn Area Plan.

Penn Station needs to be improved, but the current Penn Area Plan is not the answer. The people of New York deserve better. Along with our New York City-based colleagues at the New York Landmarks Conservancy and the grassroots activists of the Empire Station Coalition, the League strongly urges Governor Hochul to put a stop to Empire State Development's planned approval on July 21.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jay DiLorenzo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

Jay DiLorenzo
President, Preservation League of NYS