

OPINION

Leroy Comrie must reset Penn plan: Common sense state senator should point the way

By Daily News Editorial Board

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Long ago, we knew Leroy Comrie was a standout when, as a councilman, [he was the rare one to decline](#) the Sanitation Department's effort to put his name on extra garbage cans in his Queens district, wisely telling us, "why would I want my name on a garbage can?"

It was also Councilman Comrie, as chair of the Land Use Committee, who shepherded through the [very worthy 2010 zoning change](#) for Vornado Realty Trust and its chairman Steve Roth to erect a skyscraper on the site of the Hotel Pennsylvania rivaling the height of the nearby Empire State Building, whose owner furiously objected. Billionaire Roth, a super smart guy (he got an 800 on his math SAT while at the then boys-only DeWitt Clinton High School), saw market conditions sour and canceled the tower. Roth is only in the process now of slowly demolishing the hotel.

Gov. Cuomo and then Gov. Hochul were banking on Roth to erect several towers, which would provide the money to fix Penn Station, but Roth is still super smart about markets and has shelved his plans, so poof goes Hochul's funding.

In separate op-ed articles, [Layla Law-Gisiko](#), the chair of the local Community Board, and [Tony Simone](#), the local assemblyman, offer sound solutions to the problem of fixing Penn with Roth's disappearance.

The subject is [on the agenda today](#) as now-state Sen. Comrie, overseeing the MTA, and the transportation panel chair, Tim Kennedy, examine the Penn situation.

Penn must and should be repaired, but it has to be done right, by lengthening all 21 existing tracks to hold 12-car trains, and dropping Amtrak's nightmare

of plowing under several Midtown blocks for a brand new, \$11 billion unneeded annex for NJTransit. Haven't we learned from the problems with East Side Access, that building new train stations in Midtown is hugely wasteful when the old stations can be shared?

On May 7, 2021, Comrie and Kennedy [heard Amtrak foolishly refuse the MTA's pleas](#) to repair-in-place the LIRR's East River tunnel. Today they should ask MTA Chair Janno Lieber about Amtrak's "cooperation" on East Side Access and bringing Metro-North into Penn.