

The Long Island
ADVANCE

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Winters Bros. rail project is 'on track'



Winters Brothers is in the discussion and planning phases of its project that will ultimately move waste by rail.

FILE PHOTO

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With several groups discussing a waste solution for Long Island, considering the anticipated closure of the Brookhaven Town Landfill in 2024, companies like Winters Brothers are looking at moving waste by rail.

Winters Brothers is currently in the discussion and planning phases of its project, according to Will Flower, the company's general manager.

"We are talking to pretty much everybody who will listen," Flower said, including community groups, regulators from both the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as well as the federal Surface Transportation Board, the Town of Brookhaven, and environmental groups. "We want to make sure that we don't miss anybody."

Flower said the company has had recent conversations with politicians from all levels of government, too.

"We are kind of an open book. We understand this business," Flower said, adding that Winters Brothers operates eight transfer stations on Long Island. "We operate those every single day in compliance with regulations. We believe that the more open you are about the projects, the better off these are."

In speaking with community groups, like the Long Island Progressive Coalition, Flower said that two topics within this discussion are brought up: the proposal for an ash monofill as well as the connectivity between townships on Long Island. In describing the latter, Flower pointed to the presence of solid-waste management plans for townships as well as states.

"They talk about the need to do recycling. They talk about the need for disposal. They talk about the need for longterm disposal," he said. "What is truly missing is the connectors. [For example], how does Oyster Bay fit in with Brookhaven? How do they all blend together?"

What is also worth noting is that Gershow Recycling Corporation in Medford and two other companies have been at least discussing moving waste by rail. For Winters Brothers, they have been working alongside the Town of Brookhaven to petition the federal STB regarding potential land-use issues.

"Let's create a forum to ensure that land-use issues are addressed. We thought the way to do that is to have the STB host that discussion," Flower said. "It will take some time. Permitting is a long process, especially on Long Island."

All in all, Flower expressed that the rail project is on track and that their plot is an ideal location for the use.

"We think that this infrastructure is not short-term in nature," Flower said. "We think that this is a real solution that will serve Long Island for the next 50 years."

Flower pointed out that there is a big cost associated with big transitions, especially along the lines of altering how the majority of Long Island's garbage is handled, considering the anticipated closure of the Brookhaven Town Landfill.

"When you take out a chunk of infrastructure and you have to replace it, usually costs go up," Flower said. "It is both exciting to be part of coming up with a solution and challenging because it is so expensive, and it is a place that a lot of people want to have input into. Some locations are going to be more challenged than others. Our objective is just to focus on making sure society's waste has a place to go to."