

Long Island Rail Road Commuters Council

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COMMUTERS COUNCIL RELEASES 1997 LIRR REPORT CARD

The Long Island Rail Road Commuters Council today released the results of its 1997 Report Card, in which riders were asked to grade the LIRR on various aspects of service. This year, Council members personally collected over 2,000 report cards during the morning and evening rush hours in April and May.

Several continuing trends, both positive and negative, were noted. While the railroad's overall grade remained at C+, of the 45 subjects graded, improvements were noted in 15, while 7 declined.

Each year riders are asked what one aspect of the railroad they would most like to see improved. This year seating availability was their number one concern, while it was only third in importance last year. Equipment failures and ridership growth have affected this category. It is expected that the arriving diesel fleet and systemwide rescheduling in 1999 will alleviate some of the overcrowding.

On the positive side, continuing improving trends were noted in on-time performance (OTP) and cleanliness. The letter grade for OTP returned to B- from the low of C+ received last year, and cleanliness moved from C- to C. Improvement was also noted in on-board rest room cleanliness. These results correlated with Council members' observations in these areas and with the railroad's OTP postings, which reflect gradual improvement from the dismal lows caused by last year's winter storm. However, the railroad continues to lag behind better OTP in prior years. Innovations in car cleaning procedures and the recent "clean train campaign" are credited with improvements in cleanliness and riders' perceptions.

Commenting on the results, Council Chairman Larry Silverman stated, "It's nice for a change to be able to give credit where credit is due. The railroad's efforts in the cleanliness areas have been noted by our riders, as has the reversal of the downward trend in on-time performance. These trends must continue before our riders will be truly satisfied. We are all now aware of the important role that riders can play in keeping the trains clean. They should be given the credit as well."

Mr. Silverman continued, "However, riders' greatest concern is now the continued overcrowding caused by inadequate schedules and mechanical failures that result in

cancellations and short trains. Riders are still standing in hot, crowded trains. If the problem is not addressed, they will abandon mass transit and even perhaps Long Island."

On a related matter, Mr. Silverman stated, "It is essential that our elected leaders do whatever is necessary to secure the federal transportation funds to complete the tunnel to Grand Central Terminal. Reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) is now pending in Congress. The Long Island Rail Road must be able to serve the projected growth of ridership and to alleviate the capacity constraints of the tunnels to Penn Station that the project will address. It is truly essential to the economic well-being of Long Island in the next century."

Copies of the full report are available upon request.

The LIRRCC was created in 1981 by the New York State Legislature to represent the riders of the Long Island Rail Road. The ten volunteer members are commuters appointed by the Governor upon the recommendation of the Nassau and Suffolk County Executives.