

# **THE LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD REPORT CARD**

## **2003**

Results of the Annual, Independent Rider Survey  
Conducted by the Long Island Rail Road  
Commuter's Council

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1987, the Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council (LIRRCC)<sup>1</sup> has undertaken an annual survey of Long Island Rail Road riders to rate Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) train service and station conditions, and gauge rider perceptions, opinions and concerns about specific topics. The result is a riders' "report card" on LIRR performance and feedback on railroad accomplishments, issues of concern and suggestions for improvement.

This year, 1278 riders from the eleven branches of the LIRR participated. More men (55%) are represented than women (45%). Almost two thirds of the riders are between the ages of 30-49 (63%). Seventeen percent are between the ages of 50-59 and 14 percent are between the ages of 20-29. The sample of riders this year is slightly older than the sample of riders in 2002.<sup>2</sup>

Surveys were conducted by LIRRCC members on-board peak-period, peak-direction trains between July 7, and August 8, 2003.<sup>3</sup> The sample represents roughly one percent of the total fall 2002 LIRR ridership. To ensure that the sample size for each branch is proportional to the overall LIRR ridership, branch responses were weighted in the analysis of the systemwide results.

As was done in previous years, survey respondents were asked to provide basic demographic information; grade the railroad on 48 performance indicators<sup>4</sup> on a scale from "A" to "F" relating to train and station conditions, service, schedules and personnel; and to rank five service improvements in order of importance. Riders were asked to identify aspects of the railroad they like the best, the least and would most like to see improved. The report card survey included four special topic questions about whether riders would be interested in using peak hour shuttle bus services to LIRR stations.

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<sup>1</sup> The New York State Legislature created the Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council (LIRRCC) in 1981 to represent the interests of MTA Long Island Rail Road riders. The Governor appoints the 12 volunteer members upon the recommendation of the County Executives of Nassau and Suffolk and the Borough Presidents of Brooklyn and Queens. The Council is an affiliate of the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC). For more information about us, visit our website: [www.pcac.org](http://www.pcac.org).

<sup>2</sup> In 2002, 57 percent of the rider sample were between 30-49, 22 percent were between 20-29 and 17 percent were between 50-59. These numbers differ slightly from what was reported in the 2002 Report.

<sup>3</sup> 95 surveys were conducted in early September.

<sup>4</sup> In 2002, home station maintenance was not evaluated, resulting in 47 indicators.

## SYSTEMWIDE RESULTS 2003

Long Island Rail Road riders feel that the LIRR has declined since last year. One key factor, which is likely to have influenced riders' dissatisfaction in 2003, is the MTA's fare increase. Many riders may have expected an increase in service along with the higher ticket prices and evaluated LIRR service and conditions more critically as a result.

This year, riders assigned good grades (B- and B) to a quarter of the 48 performance indicators compared to a third in 2002. The majority of the grades continue to reflect average levels of satisfaction (C and C+). For overall service, riders assigned the same grade (C+) as last year, but the numerical score declined significantly by 7 percent.

Riders' perception tends to be negative despite the Rail Road's past year of record on-time performance. Riders who think service has gotten better (33%) decreased by 12 percent over 2002, while those who think service has gotten worse (21%) increased by 11 percent. Those who think no change has occurred (46%) increased by 1 percent over last year.

In 2003, actual scores rose significantly in 9 categories and declined significantly in 13 categories. These results strongly contrast with last year's scores, where scores rose significantly in 27 categories and declined in three. Grades improved in only two categories in 2003 and declined in ten categories. In 2002, grades improved in 15 categories and declined in only one category.

The three highest numerical scores (grade B) in the 2003 survey were given to morning and evening train crews and security at Penn Station. While the numerical scores for morning and evening train crews remain the highest scores this year and continue the trend of placing one of the two indicators in the top position since 1994<sup>5</sup>, the scores are not as high as last year. These findings represent a small decrease in rider satisfaction with morning and evening train crews. The decrease in rider satisfaction with morning train crews, however, is statistically significant.

This year, riders feel security at Penn Station has improved and have placed it, as they did in 2001, in the third highest scoring category. Morning train on-time performance slipped out of the top three highest scoring categories in 2003.

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<sup>5</sup> With the exception of the 2000 Report Card.

Riders were the most dissatisfied with restroom and waiting area cleanliness. Riders gave the lowest mark to the Flatbush Avenue Terminal restroom (D+), which represents a significant decline (-17%) over 2002. Riders considered the Flatbush Avenue Terminal restroom to have worsened-- from third place in 2002 to first place in 2003. On-board restroom conditions moved to second place in 2003 from first place in 2002.

Riders were also very dissatisfied with the cleanliness of the Flatbush Avenue Terminal waiting area. The 2003 numerical score represents a significant decline from 2002 (-21%). The numerical score is also the lowest the category has received over the past four years.

### **Systemwide Improvement<sup>6</sup>**

The following performance indicators showed statistically significant improvement in 2003:

- **Seating Availability.** While the overall grades for morning and evening seating availability did not change from last year (B-and C, respectively), there was a significant change in numerical score (+8% for morning and +2% for evening). This positive trend likely reflects the LIRR's new M7 trains which have added to the number of trains in revenue service this year.
- **Security.** In 2003, riders feel more secure on-board trains (B-, up 2%); in Penn (B-, up 4%), Jamaica (C+, up 4%), Flatbush Avenue Terminal (C+, up 7%) in their home stations (C+, up 5%), and in station parking lots (C, up 8%). While the only grade change is the Flatbush Avenue Terminal (up from a C in 2002), the 2002-03 percent change in numerical scores for all these indicators is significant. Riders' improved sense of security is likely due to a more visible police presence at stations as well as a reduction in rider anxiety since the events of September 11.
- **Home Station Ticket Selling Hours.** Home station ticket selling hours improved from a C last year to a C+ (+8%) in 2003. While the hours of station ticket offices have not increased since 2002, riders are likely reacting to greater numbers of station ticket vending machines (TVMs) and feeling more comfortable using them.

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<sup>6</sup> Only changes determined through the statistical analysis described in footnote 3 are reported as better. Grade changes, which are determined not statistically significant, are not discussed because there is no valid way to prove that these grade changes did not occur solely by chance.



## Systemwide Decline<sup>7</sup>

The following performance indicators showed statistically significant decline in 2003:

- **Evening On-Time Performance.** Despite the Rail Road's best on-time performance record this year, riders gave evening on-time performance a lower grade (C+) than in 2002 (B-). The 2003 grade represents a significant 12 percent drop in numerical score over last year.
- **Announcements.** Announcements on-board trains and at Penn Station also declined significantly. In 2003, riders gave a C+ to both morning and evening on-board announcements. This represents a drop in grade for morning on-board announcements over 2002 (B-). Riders' numerical scores for announcements on-board morning trains dropped by 5 percent and by 8 percent for evening trains. While riders gave the same grades in 2003 as last year for morning and evening announcements at Penn Station (B-), the numerical scores declined significantly (down 6% for both).
- **Cleanliness.** Riders feel that cleanliness has declined significantly this year on-board trains (C, down 8%), in the Jamaica Station waiting area (C, down 6%), and in the Flatbush Avenue Terminal waiting area (C-, down 21%) and restroom (D+, down 17%). Grades dropped this year for cleanliness on-board trains from a C+ in 2002 and in the Flatbush Avenue Terminal waiting area and restroom from a C and C- in 2002, respectively. Lower levels of cleanliness at Jamaica Station and at the Flatbush Avenue Terminal may be due to the ongoing construction.
- **Management Performance.** Management performance also declined in 2003, likely due to riders' dissatisfaction with higher ticket prices. Riders' grade for management performance dropped to a C in 2003 from a C+ in 2002. The numerical score dropped significantly by 22 percent.
- **Escalator Reliability.** Riders feel less confident about escalator reliability this year (C) compared to last year (C+). This represents a significant 14 percent drop in numerical score.

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<sup>7</sup> Only changes determined through the statistical analysis described in footnote 3 are reported as worse. Grade changes which are determined not statistically significant are not discussed because there is no valid way to prove that these grade changes did not occur solely by chance.

## BRANCH RESULTS 2003

This year's results for the question regarding perception of change on the LIRR show a mix of trends when analyzed by branch. On seven of the eleven branches, a higher percentage of riders feel that no change in service is occurring.

The most notable change this year occurred on the Port Jefferson branch, where the percentage of riders who feel service has stayed the same increased by 21 percent over last year. In 2002, Port Jefferson branch riders felt the most satisfied of all the branches- 75 percent of the riders felt service was improving.

Riders are most satisfied this year on the Oyster Bay, Hempstead, and West Hempstead branches, with a higher percentage of riders feeling that service is getting better. Riders on the Ronkonkoma branch were the most dissatisfied in 2003, with a higher percentage of riders stating that service is getting worse. The percentage of satisfied Ronkonkoma riders declined by 30 percent between 2002 and 2003.

**Overall Service.** In 2003, riders assigned their highest grades (B-) for overall service to three branches: Port Washington, Long Beach and Far Rockaway. The 2003 grades on the Port Washington, Long Beach and Far Rockaway branches remained the same as in 2002.

In 2002, riders assigned the Babylon Branch one of the highest grades for overall service. In 2003, the Babylon branch grade slipped to a C+, down from the B- it received last year. The branch numerical score declined by seven percent this year and represents a statistically significant decline.

In 2003, riders assigned their lowest grade (C-) for overall service to the Ronkonkoma branch. This decline in grade (from a C in 2002) and numerical score (-16%) is statistically significant. Overall service satisfaction on the Montauk branch increased this year to a C+ (up from a C in 2002), but with no significant increase in score. All other branches received a C+, the same grade as in 2002.

**On-Time Performance.** Morning and evening on-time performance show mixed results by branch this year. In 2003, morning on-time performance grades held steady in the B range on seven branches, declined on three (Long Beach, Port Jefferson and Ronkonkoma) and rose on one (Montauk). Riders assigned the lowest morning on-time performance grade to the Ronkonkoma branch (C+). Montauk was the only branch to improve in grade to a B this year from a B- in 2002.

Evening on-time performance grades did not fair as well: grades declined on seven branches, held steady on four and rose on one. Riders felt that evening on-time performance declined on the Babylon (C+), Oyster Bay (C+), Port Jefferson (C+) and Ronkonkoma (C) branches. The only grade increase this year occurred on the West Hempstead branch (B-) up from a C+ in 2002.

Riders gave their highest grades (B+) for morning on-time performance to the Port Washington branch. Lowest grades (C+) went to evening on-time performance on the Ronkonkoma branch.

**Seating Availability.** Riders gave morning seat availability improved marks on six branches this year, which is a positive indication of the Rail Road's efforts to improve seat availability along with the introduction of the new M7 cars. Riders assigned above average scores (in the B range) on all branches except on the Ronkonkoma branch (C+). While Ronkonkoma riders were the least pleased with morning seat availability, they saw improvement over 2002 (C). Riders on the Montauk branch were the most pleased with morning seat availability (B+).

Evening seat availability was less favorable among individual branches, although riders felt conditions improved on four branches – West Hempstead, Far Rockaway, Long Beach and Ronkonkoma. West Hempstead riders were the most positive (B-). Ronkonkoma riders were the least satisfied (C-).

**Train Crews.** Train crews, once again, received good marks from riders on all branches. This year, train crews received particularly high marks (B+) from riders in the morning on the Far Rockaway, Long Beach, Oyster Bay and Port Washington branches. High marks in the evening were given to train crews on the Long Beach (A+), Far Rockaway (B+) and Oyster Bay (B+) branches. Train crew grades most notably declined in 2003 on the West Hempstead branch in the morning to a B (from a B+ in 2002) and in the evening to a B- (from B+ in 2002).

**Announcements.** Riders assigned the highest grades to Penn Station announcements and the lowest grades to announcements at their home stations. Grades for Penn Station were B and B- across the branches, with one exception: Ronkonkoma riders felt evening announcements at Penn Station were lower (C+). Grades for home station announcements were C+, C and C- across the branches.

On-board announcements received above average marks (in the B range) from riders on five branches in the morning and three in the

evening. Riders on the West Hempstead branch gave the highest grade of all the branches to morning on-board announcements (B). Riders on the Far Rockaway, Long Beach and Port Washington branches assigned a B- to both morning and evening on-board announcements. Riders gave the lowest grades (C) to morning and evening announcements on the Ronkonkoma branch.

**On-Board Cleanliness.** Riders saw a decline in on-board cleanliness on six branches and an improvement on two branches. Riders gave the highest grades to train cleanliness on the Oyster Bay (B), Montauk (B-) and West Hempstead (B-) branches. Riders assigned the lowest grades to train cleanliness on the Ronkonkoma (D), Far Rockaway (D+) and Huntington (D+) branches.

**Restrooms and Wait Areas.** Riders identified on-board restrooms as a problem on all but two branches – Montauk and West Hempstead. Riders on nine of the branches assigned a range of below average grades (D, D+ and C-) to on-board restrooms. On-board restrooms on the Montauk and West Hempstead branches received average grades of C, which represent improvements over grades last year of C- and D, respectively.

Restrooms at Jamaica Station and Flatbush Avenue Terminal also received poor grades from riders. Riders on six branches assigned below average grades (D+ and C-) to Jamaica Station restrooms. Riders on nine branches gave grades of D, D+ and C- to Flatbush Avenue Terminal restrooms.

Riders across the branches gave above average grades to the wait area at Penn Station: Babylon, Port Jefferson and Ronkonkoma riders, in particular, assigned higher grades than in 2002. The wait areas at Jamaica Station and Flatbush Avenue Terminal generally received lower grades from riders.

**Management Performance.** Riders were less pleased with management performance this year. Riders on four branches felt management performance was below average (C-) and three branches felt performance was adequate (C). Ronkonkoma branch riders were the least pleased (D+), while Far Rockaway branch riders were the most satisfied (B). Lower grades for this performance indicator may be linked to rider dissatisfaction with the May 2003 fare increase.

**Security.** Riders on the Montauk branch saw a slight improvement in security at home stations (C) and parking lots (C) this year over last year (D+ for both indicators). Far Rockaway, Ronkonkoma and West

Hempstead riders felt parking security was below average (C-). Hempstead and Long Beach riders felt Flatbush Avenue Terminal security declined to C and C-, respectively, compared to a B- in 2003.

**Home Station Access.** Home station building and ticket selling hours received average grades from riders. Home station building hours received low grades from riders on the Oyster Bay (D+) and Montauk (D+) branches and average grades on the Babylon (C), Far Rockaway (C), Port Jefferson (C) and West Hempstead (C) branches. Grades for ticket selling hours were lowest, although slightly improved over 2002, on the Montauk (C-) and West Hempstead (C-) branches, followed by the Far Rockaway (C) and Oyster Bay (C) branches. Riders on the Port Washington branch felt ticket selling hours improved this year (B-), up from a C in 2002.

Riders gave the highest grades to home station maintenance, not evaluated in 2002, on the Port Washington (B), Hempstead (B-), Long Beach (B-) and Huntington (B-) branches. Montauk branch riders assigned the lowest grade (C-).

**Train Service.** Train service is an issue for riders on certain branches. Riders gave the highest grades for morning peak hour service on the Far Rockaway (B), Long Beach (B) and Port Washington branches (B). Riders assigned an average grade (C) to evening peak hour service on the Oyster Bay and Ronkonkoma branches.

Riders rated midday service on the Long Beach branch the highest (B) and midday service on the Oyster Bay, Ronkonkoma and West Hempstead branches the lowest (C-).

Riders were satisfied with the weekend service on the Long Beach and Port Washington branches (B-), but felt weekend service on the Oyster Bay and West Hempstead branches was below average (C-). Riders were also dissatisfied with late night service on the Oyster Bay (D+) and West Hempstead (D+) branches.

## **DESIRED IMPROVEMENTS**

Systemwide, riders assigned the most important priority to both better on-time performance and more frequent peak and off-peak service among

a list of five service improvements.<sup>8</sup> Better on-time performance received a slightly higher percentage (42%) than more frequent peak and off-peak service (37%). This year's top priorities represent a combination of the priorities identified by riders in 2001 and 2002.

Consistent with 2001 and 2002, riders in 2003 identified the need for more available seats as the second most important priority. Better air conditioning was the third most important priority. No priority was designated for fourth place since two improvements were chosen for first place this year. Home station security remained the lowest priority for two years in a row.

Branch service improvement priority lists were in keeping with the systemwide results. 2003 riders on seven branches listed more frequent peak and off-peak service as a top priority, compared to eight in 2002. Riders also listed better on-time performance as a top priority on five branches --Babylon, Long Beach, Huntington, Port Washington and Ronkonkoma -- compared to three branches last year.

This year, two branches -- Long Beach and Port Washington --selected two improvements for top priority. Long Beach riders listed better on-time performance and more frequent peak and off-peak service as number one priorities. Port Washington riders felt that better on-time performance and more available seats are number one priorities.

Systemwide, riders' written comments also identified increased frequency of peak and off-peak service (19%) as the most wanted aspect of service to be improved, followed by cleanliness (11%) on-board trains, in station waiting areas and restrooms. On-time performance (10%) was the third most wanted improvement. Seating availability was sixth in the list of most wanted improvements, despite riders' assigning it a second priority service improvement.

By branch, riders identified other most wanted improvements, such as new trains (Babylon, Long Beach and Ronkonkoma branches), a one-seat ride to Penn Station (Hempstead, Oyster Bay and West Hempstead branches), seating availability (Montauk and Port Washington branches) and better announcements (Port Jefferson branch).

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<sup>8</sup> Riders were asked to determine priorities among a list of five service improvements: better on-time performance, more available seats, better air conditioning, more frequent peak and off-peak service and home station security.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: PEAK HOUR SHUTTLE BUS SERVICES**

In 2003, riders were asked a series of questions about their likely use of shuttle bus services to railroad stations during peak travel times. Despite the benefits of shuttle bus services for reducing parking demand at railroad stations, almost two thirds (63%) of the riders surveyed systemwide said they were not at all likely to use a shuttle bus service. Almost a quarter (24%) of the riders indicated that they would be likely or very likely to use a shuttle bus and another 14 percent said they don't know.

Riders' interest by branch in using morning or evening peak hour shuttle bus services mirrors the results systemwide: about two thirds of riders say they are not at all likely to use a shuttle bus and a quarter are likely or very likely. Riders on the Babylon (28%), Far Rockaway (26%) and Long Beach (26%) branches indicated a higher likelihood of using a shuttle bus to the rail station. The Far Rockaway branch also had the highest percentage of riders (23%) who are unsure if they would use a shuttle bus service. Riders on the Oyster Bay branch (79%), Hempstead (76%), Port Jefferson (74%) and West Hempstead (70%) branches had the lowest interest.

Systemwide, many riders indicated they were not likely to use shuttle bus services because shuttle buses lack flexibility (43%). Riders were also concerned about not being able to get home if they took a return train prior to or after the peak period (36%). Length of travel on a shuttle bus (26%) and inconvenient bus stops, not close to home (21%), were also of concern. Bus service cost and negative associations were of lesser concern.

By branch, riders' top reason for not wanting to use a shuttle bus service was the same as systemwide: lack of flexibility. Riders on seven branches felt they would be stuck at the station if they decided to return home before or after the peak period. Riders on four branches – West Hempstead, Hempstead, Long Beach and Far Rockaway - were concerned about the length of travel time to the station.

The last question asked riders what would encourage them to use a shuttle bus service to the railroad. Systemwide, riders stated in almost half of their written responses that nothing would get them to take a shuttle bus service (48%).

Riders interested in taking a shuttle bus feel that cost is a factor (17%), with just over a third stating that the service would need to be free. This finding shows that cost is important among riders interested in using a shuttle bus

service, but is not a primary concern among riders who are not interested in using the service. Other riders suggested a discount on the monthly LIRR ticket for taking the shuttle bus. Other factors which contribute to riders interest in using a shuttle bus is the convenience of the stop location (13%), service frequency (8%), and coordination with train arrival and departure times (5%).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The results of the 2003 Report Card survey clearly show that riders feel conditions have declined since last year on the Long Island Rail Road. One key factor, which is likely to have influenced riders' dissatisfaction in 2003, is the MTA's fare increase. Many riders may have expected service improvements to accompany higher ticket prices and evaluated LIRR service and conditions more critically as a result.

On a positive note, LIRR riders saw improvements this year in seating availability, security and home station ticket selling hours. Riders' higher marks for morning and evening seating availability clearly recognize the initial benefits of the Rail Road's new M7 fleet. Riders' assessment is likely to continue to improve as the full order of 678 M7 cars is phased in over the next four years.

In 2003, riders gave higher marks for security systemwide: on-board trains, in Penn Station, at Jamaica Station, Flatbush Avenue Terminal, at home stations and in parking lots. Security at Penn Station was given the third highest grade this year. This is a noted improvement over 2002, when riders' felt more insecure, particularly on-board trains, at Jamaica Station and at home stations.

Riders also noted improvement in home station ticket selling hours. This is likely due to riders' growing ease in using the ticket vending machines (TVMs). The Rail Road's introduction of the new TVMs over the past two years has been a benefit for riders.

In 2003, LIRR riders gave significantly lower marks in several areas: evening on-time performance; morning train crews; announcements on-board and at Penn Station; cleanliness on board, in the waiting areas at Jamaica Station and Flatbush Avenue Terminal and in the restroom at Flatbush Avenue; management performance; and escalator reliability. While riders' lower marks for these fundamental services may reflect higher expectations for service provision associated with paying more, they also demonstrate service concerns.



Evening on-time performance and morning train crews are issues for riders. Since the last report card, LIRR's overall (twenty-four hour, seven days a week) on-time performance for most months has been between 93 and 95 percent. Riders clearly feel that evening on-time performance has slipped both in grade and in numerical significance. Satisfaction with morning train crews is a slightly less important issue for riders, with a significant decline in numerical score, but not in grade.

Announcements on-board trains and at Penn Station are also of particular concern to riders in 2003. Riders want to be well informed about the nature and status of service delays. Riders want reassurance from front line personnel that the Rail Road is aware of and actively working to solve the problem at hand.

As was noted in the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee's (PCAC) November 2003 report, **Best Foot Forward: Training Front Line Personnel to Provide Quality Customer Service**, LIRR ticket clerks, station agents and conductors often lack up-to-the-minute train service information due to inadequate and aging telecommunication technology. Rail Road personnel can also get caught up in solving a particular problem and forget to provide updates to front line personnel or customers.

Cleanliness on-board trains and in station waiting areas and restrooms continues to be an issue this year. Rider dissatisfaction with cleanliness of the Flatbush Avenue restroom increased from the third lowest in 2002 to the worst scoring category in 2003. While on-board cleanliness improved insignificantly over last year, the cleanliness of the Flatbush Avenue waiting area moved significantly into third worst place. Cleanliness must remain a priority for the LIRR in the waiting room and restrooms during construction at Jamaica Station and the Flatbush Avenue Terminal.

Escalator reliability emerged as a concern to riders in 2003. Finally, riders gave a significantly lower mark for LIRR management performance. The rating on this indicator is likely connected to the higher ticket prices.

Systemwide, riders' written comments conveyed dissatisfaction with frequency of service, on-time performance and seat availability. Other riders were dissatisfied with and wanted to see improvements to train and station cleanliness, better seating and more comfortable temperatures. Another group of riders were dissatisfied with the new ticket prices and wanted to see more new trains and improvements at Penn Station.

Riders' dissatisfaction with service frequency and their desire to have more frequent peak and off-peak service continues to be an issue this year as it has been in the past. In 2003, riders indicated their preference for more frequent service to be a top ranked priority for service improvement on seven of the eleven branches. More frequent service was number one in the list of most wanted improvements requested by riders systemwide. Riders on the Port Jefferson and Huntington branches are particularly vocal on this issue.

In a number of instances, the LIRR cannot improve service frequency without major capital improvements. The LIRR depends on local communities for approval of these projects, and riders represent only a small fraction of the residents. LIRR riders make up a small constituency of these local communities. Riders need to be more proactive in advocating for local community support for LIRR service improvement projects, such as the Port Jefferson Branch Yard.

This is a continuing problem. In the LIRRCC's 2002 Report Card survey, riders identified the need to improve LIRR communication sixth in the list of most wanted systemwide improvements. Riders also gave the Rail Road a C for communication to riders about capital project planning and a C+ for service improvement plans. Riders feel the Rail Road needs to strengthen its communication to riders about these issues.

While the majority of LIRR riders are not in favor of the expansion of shuttle bus services at this time, the LIRR should reevaluate the potential for these services in the future as station parking demand increases.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations address key issues raised by riders in the LIRRCC's 2003 Report Card survey: announcements and customer information, evening on-time performance, cleanliness, and customer communication and frequency of service. The following are based upon the findings of the 2003 Report Card survey as well as recent PCAC report recommendations.<sup>9</sup>

- **Prioritize Agency Improvements in Communication Technology for the Provision of Train Service Information to Front Line Personnel.** The Rail Road should place a priority on upgrading its information technology, such as computer on-line capabilities, branch line radio reception and

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<sup>9</sup> Refer to PCAC reports: **Best Foot Forward: Training Front Line Personnel to Provide Quality Customer Service** (November 2003).

public address systems, for front line personnel in stations, on-board trains, in central transportation operations and telephone information agents. The LIRR should also develop a schedule for systemwide implementation.

- **Provide All Front Line Personnel with Text Messaging Pagers to Ensure Communication Systems Back-up.** The LIRR should install text messaging pagers in all station ticket offices to ensure back up communication options during an emergency. Text messaging pagers should also be provided to conductors and other personnel as deemed necessary for this purpose.
- **Create Special Communication “Go Teams” to Facilitate Communication to Customers in Emergencies.** Develop special teams of personnel -- Go Teams -- whose principal focus in an emergency is communicating with the public and informing them of available options. A similar recommendation was made recently to NJ TRANSIT after experiencing a train derailment.
- **Require More Frequent On-Board and Station Announcements.** The LIRR should require conductors, ticket sellers and station agents to make more frequent and informed announcements to riders about the status of regular service and service delays, current conditions and alternate travel options, if necessary. Providing this type of information reassures riders that the Rail Road is focused on the problem at hand, provides riders the ability to make more informed choices and improves customer relations.
- **Review Ways to Improve Evening On-Time Performance.** While the Rail Road has set on-time performance records this year, evening on-time performance remains a concern of riders.
- **Review Cleanliness Schedules to Determine Ways to Improve Maintenance Levels.** The LIRR should review current processes and schedules for cleaning on-board, train restrooms, and station wait areas and restrooms.
- **Create a More Proactive Educational Campaign to Inform Riders About and Elicit Support for LIRR Plans to Improve the Frequency of Service.** The LIRR should develop new outlets to educate riders about its current capital plans to improve the frequency of service. The agency should also actively promote ways riders can advocate and support LIRR efforts on the local, state and federal levels.

# METHODOLOGY

## Survey Sample

Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council members collected a total of 1278 report card surveys distributed onboard peak-period, peak-direction LIRR trains between July 7, and August 8, 2002.<sup>10</sup> The survey period was conducted later than usual this year to allow riders time to adjust to the fare increase that went into effect May 2003. It is important to note that negative feelings about the higher fares may have influenced riders' overall opinions about railroad service.

The number of surveys completed by riders of each branch as a percentage of the total fall 2002 LIRR Branch ridership is shown in Table 1. The sample represents roughly one percent of the total fall 2002 LIRR ridership. The method used to ensure that the sample size for each branch is proportional to the overall LIRR system ridership is discussed under data analysis and shown in Table 2.

**Table 1. LIRR Fall 2002 Ridership, 2003 Sample Sizes and Percentages**

<b>BRANCH</b>	<b>FALL 2002 RIDERSHIP</b>	<b>2003 REPORT CARD SURVEY SAMPLE</b>	<b>SAMPLE SIZE AS % OF BRANCH RIDERSHIP</b>
Babylon	26,270	285	1.04%
Far Rockaway	4,440	49	1.14%
Hempstead	4,880	50	1.01%
Long Beach	9,190	84	.91%
Montauk	3,200	67	2.11%
Oyster Bay	2,160	59	2.65%
Port Jefferson	4,870	90	1.84%
Huntington/ Hicksville	14,520	221	1.49%
Port Washington	15,650	161	0.95%
Ronkonkoma	17,600	161	1.00%
West Hempstead	1,520	51	3.29%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>104,300</b>	<b>1,278</b>	<b>1.20%</b>

## Survey Content

As was done in previous years, the survey asked respondents to provide basic demographic information (home station, gender, age, and number of years riding the LIRR); grade the railroad on 48 performance indicators relating to train and station conditions, service, schedules, and personnel; and to rank five service improvements in order of importance.

<sup>10</sup> 95 surveys were conducted in early September.

Categories of performance indicators included: on-time performance, train crews, management, escalator reliability, on-board climate control, public announcements on trains and at stations, train and station cleanliness, personal security, home station conditions, and overall and specific time period train service. Riders graded the railroad using the following scale: A = Excellent; B = Good; C = Average; D = Below Average; F = Failing; and dk= Don't Know.

Riders were asked to rank five service improvements by priority from most important to least important. The five service improvements were as follows: better on-time performance, more available seats, better air conditioning, more frequent service and home station security. This year, the question was formatted somewhat differently to make it easier for riders to complete. Rider responses to this reformatted question, however, indicated lack of some clarity about the need to assign only one priority number per improvement.

Riders were also asked to identify what they like best and least about the LIRR as well as what aspect of the railroad they would most like to see improved. This set of questions was modified from previous years when riders were asked to identify one thing they would like to see improved and for additional comments or suggestions. The questions were revised this year to facilitate the analysis of rider comments.

As it does every year, the 2003 report card survey included questions designed to solicit input on current issues facing the railroad and its riders. This year, respondents were asked four questions to assess their interest in using a peak hour shuttle bus service to LIRR stations, if the service was offered. The first question asked riders how likely they would be to use a shuttle bus service to the station. The second question asked riders who indicated they were likely to use a shuttle bus to identify a specific station where they would like to see this service offered. The third question asked riders who indicated they were not likely to use a shuttle bus about their reasons. The fourth question asked riders about what would encourage them to use a shuttle bus. A copy of the 2003 Report Card survey is provided in Appendix A.

## **Data Analysis**

Data for all but the four written response questions were analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Written responses were analyzed using qualitative methods, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access software. Percentages were rounded up or down to the nearest percentage point.

To ensure that the effective sample size for each branch is proportional to its contribution to the overall LIRR system ridership, branch responses were weighted in the analysis of the systemwide results. Branch weights used to adjust the survey sample to similar proportions to the overall system branch ridership are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. LIRR Branch Ridership Percentages, Pre-Weighted Branch Sample Percentages and Branch Weights.**

LIRR BRANCH	BRANCH RIDERSHIP AS % OF SYSTEMWIDE RIDERSHIP	PRE-WEIGHT SURVEY SAMPLE AS % OF SYSTEMWIDE SAMPLE	WEIGHT BY BRANCH
Babylon	25%	22%	1.18
Far Rockaway	4%	4%	1.07
Hempstead	5%	4%	1.22
Long Beach	9%	7%	1.35
Montauk	3%	5%	0.58
Oyster Bay	2%	5%	0.46
Port Jefferson	5%	7%	0.66
Huntington/ Hicksville	14%	17%	.82
Port Washington	15%	13%	1.23
Ronkonkoma	17%	13%	1.36
West Hempstead	1%	4%	.37
TOTALS	100%	100%	N/A

With a few exceptions, data entered into SPSS were assigned numerical values. The grades circled by respondents were assigned the following values: A=12, B=9, C=6, D=3, F=0 and D/K = missing. Descriptive statistics, frequencies and cross tabulations were run for systemwide and branch data.<sup>11</sup> Results were averaged for each performance indicator. The average values (or means) were then assigned to a letter grade according to the numerical ranges listed in Table 3.

<sup>11</sup> Systemwide data was weighted and branch data was not.

**Table 3. Letter Grades with Assigned Mean Value Ranges**

<b>LETTER GRADE</b>	<b>ASSIGNED MEAN (AVERAGE) VALUE RANGE</b>
A	11.50 to 12.00
A-	10.50 to 11.49
B+	9.50 to 10.49
B	8.50 to 9.49
B-	7.50 to 8.49
C+	6.50 to 7.49
C	5.50 to 6.49
C-	4.50 to 5.49
D+	3.50 to 4.49
D	2.50 to 3.49
D-	1.50 to 2.49
F	0.00 to 1.49

A statistical independent groups t- test between means was performed to compare performance indicator results between 2002 and 2003 and to determine significant changes in mean values. A confidence level of 95 percent was selected and statistical significance was determined if the variation between the means was 0.05 or less.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The two-tailed probability score was used as the measure of the variation between the means. If the two-tailed probability score was less than or equal to 0.05, it was determined that the change in scores between 2002 and 2003 was statistically significant.

## SYSTEMWIDE RESULTS

### Rider Sample Characteristics

The sample of 1278 riders who participated in the survey come from the eleven branches of the LIRR and are split between men (55%) and women (45%). Those surveyed represent a wide range of ages. Almost two thirds are between the ages of 30–49 (63%) and 17 percent are older-- between the ages of 50 – 59. Another 14 percent of the riders are between 20-29. Only five percent are between 60-69. The sample of riders this year is slightly older compared to the sample of riders in 2002.<sup>13</sup>

As was the case in 2002, many riders are relatively new to the railroad, using the LIRR only within the past 5 years (33%), or 6 and 10 years (24%). Another group of commuters are longer term, indicating that they have been using the railroad between 11 and 15 years (18%) or twenty or more years (15%). A smaller percentage of riders have been traveling on the LIRR for 16 to 20 years (10%).

### Perception of Change in LIRR Service

Rider perceptions of change in the provision of LIRR service have declined in 2003 compared with 2002 (See Table 4). Riders who think LIRR service has gotten better (33%) decreased by 12 percent from 2002 and riders who think service has gotten worse (21%) increased by 11 percent. Percentages stayed roughly the same for those who think service has not changed, increasing by one percent (46%). Riders' opinions about service are closer to those of 2001. The 2003 findings may reflect riders' dissatisfaction with the May 2003 fare increase because on-time performance since last year's Report Card survey is the best on record.

**Table 4. Perception of Change, Systemwide**

YEAR	THE LIRR IS GETTING BETTER	THE LIRR IS GETTING WORSE	NO CHANGE IS OCCURRING
2003	33%	21%	46%
2002	45%	10%	45%
2001	35%	20%	44%

<sup>13</sup> In 2002, 57 percent of the rider sample were between 30-49, 22 percent were between 20-29 and 17 percent were between 50-59. These numbers differ slightly from what was reported in the 2002 report.



## Performance Indicators

While the railroad's grade for overall service remains unchanged from 2002 (C+), the actual numerical score represents a *statistically significant* decrease.<sup>14</sup> The decreased score shows some customer dissatisfaction with LIRR service since last year. The grade results for the systemwide performance indicators are presented in Table 5 (for numerical scores and percentage changes between 2002 and 2003, see Appendix B, Table 21.)

Statistically significant increases and decreases in 2003 are summarized in the boxes below.

### PERFORMANCE INDICATORS WITH SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN 2003:

- **Seating**
  - Availability (morning and evening)
- **Security**
  - On-board trains
  - At Penn Station
  - At Jamaica Station
  - At Flatbush Avenue Station
  - At home stations
  - At parking lots
- **Home Station Ticket Selling Hours**

### PERFORMANCE INDICATORS WITH SIGNIFICANT DECLINES IN 2003:

- **Overall Service**
- **On-Time Performance** (evening)
- **Train Crews** (morning)
- **Announcements**
  - On-board trains (morning and evening)
  - At Penn Station (morning and evening)
- **Cleanliness**
  - On-board trains
  - In the Jamaica Station waiting area
  - In the Flatbush Avenue Station waiting area and restroom
- **Management Performance**
- **Escalator Reliability**

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<sup>14</sup> As noted in the methodology section, statistical significance refers to significant changes in performance indicator mean values between 2002 and 2003. A confidence level of 95 percent was selected and statistical significance was determined if the variation between the means was 0.05 or less.

In 2003, actual scores rose significantly in 9 categories and declined significantly in 13 categories. These results strongly contrast with last year's scores, where scores rose significantly in 27 categories and declined in three. Grades improved in only two categories due to rising scores in 2003 and declined in ten categories. In 2002, grades improved in 15 categories and declined in only one category.

Similar to last year, riders considered the majority (90%) of the performance indicator categories to be between average and good. Riders assigned grades of C and C+ to 65 percent of the 48 categories<sup>15</sup> and grades of B- and B to 25 percent. Only 4 percent of the categories received grades of C- and 4 percent received a D+.

Key areas of systemwide improvement in 2003 are in seating availability, security and home station ticket selling hours. While the overall grades for morning and evening seating availability did not change from last year (B- and C, respectively), there was a significant change in numerical score (+8% for morning and +2% for evening). This positive trend likely reflects the LIRR's new M7 trains which have added to the number of trains in revenue service this year.

In 2003, riders also feel more secure than in 2002 on-board trains (B-, up 2%); in Penn (B-, up 4%), Jamaica (C+, up 4%), Flatbush Avenue (C+, up 7%) in their home stations (C+, up 5%), and in station parking lots (C, up 8%). While the only grade change is the Flatbush Avenue Terminal (up from a C in 2002), the 2002-03 percent change in numerical scores for all these indicators is significant. Riders' improved sense of security is likely due to a more visible police presence at stations as well as a reduction in rider anxiety since the events of September 11.

Home station ticket selling hours also improved in 2003, from a C last year to a C+ (+8%). While the hours of station ticket offices have not increased since 2002, riders are likely reacting to greater numbers of station ticket vending machines (TVMs) and feeling more comfortable using them.

Key areas of systemwide decline in 2003 are: evening on-time performance, morning train crews, morning and evening announcements on-board trains and at Penn Station. Other significant declines are cleanliness on-board trains, in the Jamaica Station waiting area, and in the Flatbush Avenue Terminal waiting area and restroom. Riders also gave lower marks for management performance and escalator reliability.

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<sup>15</sup> In 2002, 47 indicators were evaluated.

Despite the Rail Road's best on-time performance record this year, riders gave evening on-time performance a lower grade (C+) than in 2002 (B-). The 2003 grade represents a significant 12 percent drop in numerical score over last year.

Announcements on-board trains and at Penn Station also declined significantly. In 2003, riders gave a C+ to both morning and evening on-board announcements. This represents a drop in grade for morning on-board announcements over 2002 (B-). Riders' numerical scores for announcements on-board morning trains dropped by 5 percent and by 8 percent for evening trains. While riders gave the same grades in 2003 as last year for morning and evening announcements at Penn Station (B-), the numerical scores declined significantly (down 6% for both).

Riders feel that cleanliness has declined significantly this year on-board trains (C, down 8%), in the Jamaica Station waiting area (C, down 6%), and in the Flatbush Avenue Terminal waiting area (C-, down 21%) and restroom (D+, down 17%). Grades dropped this year for cleanliness on-board trains from a C+ in 2002 and in the Flatbush Avenue Terminal waiting area and restroom from a C and C- in 2002, respectively. Lower levels of cleanliness at Jamaica Station and at the Flatbush Avenue Terminal may be due to ongoing construction.

Management performance also saw a decline in 2003, likely due to riders' dissatisfaction with higher ticket prices. Riders' grade for management performance dropped to a C in 2003 from a C+ in 2002. The numerical score dropped significantly by 22 percent.

Finally, riders feel less confident about escalator reliability this year (C) compared to last year (C+). This represents a significant 14 percent drop in numerical score.

**Table 5. 2003 Results for Performance Indicators, Systemwide<sup>16</sup>**

INDICATOR	2000	2001	2002	2003
Overall Service	C+ ↑	C+	C+ ↑	<b>C+ ↓</b>
On-Time Performance AM	B- ↑	B-	B ↑	B
On-Time Performance PM	C+ ↑	C+ ↓	B- ↑	<b>C+ ↓</b>
Seating Availability AM	B- ↑	C+ ↓	B- ↑	<b>B- ↑</b>
Seating Availability PM	C+ ↑	C-	C ↑	<b>C ↑</b>
Schedule Adequacy AM	B- ↑	C+ ↓	B- ↑	B-
Schedule Adequacy PM	C+ ↑	C+ ↓	C+ ↑	C+
Train Crews AM	B ↑	B ↓	B ↑	<b>B ↓</b>
Train Crews PM	B ↑	B- ↓	B ↑	B
Announcements:				
On-Board AM	C+ ↑	C+	B-	<b>C+ ↓</b>
On-Board PM	C+ ↑	C+	C+ ↑	<b>C+ ↓</b>
Penn Sta. AM	NA	B-	B-	<b>B- ↓</b>
Penn Sta. PM	B-	B-	B- ↑	<b>B- ↓</b>
Jamaica Sta. AM	B- ↑	C+	C+	C+
Jamaica Sta. PM	C+ ↑	C+	C+	C+
Flatbush Av. AM	NA	C+	C+	C+
Flatbush Av. PM	B-	C+	C+	C
Home Sta. AM	C+ ↑	C ↓	C ↑	C
Home Sta. PM	C+ ↑	C ↓	C	C
Cleanliness:				
On-Board	C+ ↑	C+	C+ ↑	<b>C ↓</b>
On-Board Restroom	C ↑	D+	D+	D+
Home Sta. Wait Area	B- ↑	B-	B- ↑	B-
Home Sta. Restroom	C+ ↑	C+	C+ ↑	C+
Penn Sta. Wait Area	B-	B- ↓	B-	B-
Penn Sta. Restroom	C+	C	C	C
Jamaica Sta. Wait Area	C+ ↑	C	C	<b>C ↓</b>
Jamaica Sta. Restroom	C ↑	C- ↓	C-	C-
Flatbush Av. Wait Area	C	C- ↓	C ↑	<b>C- ↓</b>
Flatbush Av. Restroom	C- ↑	D+ ↓	C- ↑	<b>D+ ↓</b>
Management Performance	C+ ↑	C ↓	C+ ↑	<b>C ↓</b>
Escalator Reliability	C+ ↑	C+	C+ ↑	<b>C ↓</b>
Winter Heating	C+ ↑	C+	B- ↑	C+
Summer A/C	C ↑	C	C+ ↑	C+
Seat Condition	C+ ↑	C	C+ ↑	C
Security:				
On-Board	B-	B- ↓	B- ↓	<b>B- ↑</b>
Penn Sta.	B-	B- ↑	B-	<b>B- ↑</b>
Jamaica Sta.	C+	C+ ↑	C+ ↓	<b>C+ ↑</b>
Flatbush Av.	C+	C+	C	<b>C+ ↑</b>
Home Sta.	B-	C+ ↓	C+ ↓	<b>C+ ↑</b>
Parking	C+ ↑	C ↓	C	<b>C ↑</b>
Home Sta. Hours	C+ ↑	C-	C	C
Home Sta. Ticket-Selling Hours	C+ ↑	C ↓	C	<b>C+ ↑</b>
Home Sta. Maintenance	C+ ↑	C+ ↓	N/A <sup>17</sup>	B-
Peak-Hour Service AM	C+ ↑	B- ↑	B- ↑	B-
Peak-Hour Service PM	C ↑	C+ ↑	C+ ↑	C+
Midday Service	C+ ↑	C+	C+ ↑	C+
Late-Night Service	C ↑	C	C ↑	C
Weekend Service	C+ ↑	C	C+ ↑	C+

<sup>16</sup> The arrow symbol indicates that a statistically significant change has occurred since the previous year and denotes the direction of the change. Grades with numerical scores that represent statistically significant changes in 2003 are indicated in bold.

<sup>17</sup> Home station maintenance was not evaluated in 2002.

The three highest numerical scores (grade B) in the 2003 survey were given to morning and evening train crews and security at Penn Station (see Table 6). These findings represent a decrease in rider satisfaction with morning and evening train crews since last year and continue the trend of placing one of the two indicators in the top position since 1994.<sup>18</sup> While the decrease in rider satisfaction with morning (-2%) and evening (-1%) train crews is small, the decrease is statistically significant for morning train crews.

This year, riders feel security at Penn Station has improved and have placed it, as they did in 2001, in the third highest scoring category. Morning train on-time performance slipped out of the top three highest scoring categories in 2003.

**Table 6. Three Highest-Scoring Categories, Systemwide**

YEAR	HIGHEST-SCORING CATEGORY	GRADE / % CHANGE 2002-03	SECOND HIGHEST SCORING CATEGORY	GRADE/ % CHANGE 2002-03	THIRD HIGHEST SCORING CATEGORY	GRADE/ % CHANGE 2002-03
2003	Morning Train Crews	B ↓ (-2%)	Evening Train Crews	B (-1%)	Perceived Security at Penn Station	B-↑ (+4%)
2002	Morning Train Crews	B ↑	Evening Train Crews	B ↑	Morning On-Time Performance	B ↑
2001	Morning Train Crews	B ↓	Evening Train Crews	B- ↓	Perceived Security at Penn Station	B- ↓

Riders were the most dissatisfied with restroom and waiting area cleanliness. Riders gave the lowest mark to the Flatbush Avenue restroom (D+), which represents a significant decline (-17%) over 2002. Riders considered the Flatbush Avenue restroom to have worsened from third place in 2002 to first place in 2003. On-board restroom conditions moved to second place in 2003 from first place in 2002. The numerical score for on-board restroom conditions (D+) increased slightly (+1%) over last year, but not significantly.

Riders were also very dissatisfied with the cleanliness of the Flatbush Avenue waiting area (C-). The 2003 numerical score represents a significant decline from 2002 (-21%). The numerical score is also the lowest the category has received over the past four years. The results indicate that in 2003, as in 2002, restroom cleanliness continues to be an area of needed improvement (see Table 7).

<sup>18</sup> With the exception of the 2000 Report Card.

**Table 7. Three Lowest-Scoring Categories, Systemwide**

YEAR	LOWEST-SCORING CATEGORY	GRADE / % CHANGE 2002-03	SECOND LOWEST SCORING CATEGORY	GRADE/ % CHANGE 2002-03	THIRD LOWEST SCORING CATEGORY	GRADE/ % CHANGE 2002-03
2003	Flatbush Avenue Restroom Cleanliness	D+ ↓ (-17%)	On-Board Restroom Cleanliness	D+ (+1%)	Flatbush Avenue Waiting Area Cleanliness	C- ↓ (-21%)
2002	On-Board Restroom Cleanliness	D+	Jamaica Station Restroom Cleanliness	C-	Flatbush Avenue Restroom Cleanliness	C- ↑
2001	On-Board Restroom Cleanliness	D+	Flatbush Avenue Restroom Cleanliness	D+ ↓	Flatbush Avenue Waiting Area Cleanliness	C- ↓

## Desired Improvements

Desired improvements to LIRR service were elicited from riders in four questions in 2003, compared to three questions in previous years. Questions in 2003 were revised to obtain clearer and more defined issues from riders.

The first question, the same as in 2002, asked riders to rank a list of five service improvements from most to least important to determine priority. The second question asked riders to write in responses to the question “What do you like least about the LIRR?” The third question asked riders “What do you like best about the LIRR?” The fourth question, as in 2002, asked riders “What would you most like to see improved?” Space provided in previous years for general comments or suggestions was omitted in 2003.

Rider responses to what they liked least and best about the LIRR are discussed in the Customer Written Comments section of the report.

As in 2002, riders were first asked to determine priorities among a list of five service improvements. The list of improvements were: better on-time performance, more available seats, better air conditioning, more frequent peak and off-peak service and home station security. All of these improvements, except home station security, were identified by customers as desired service improvements in the Council's 2000 Report Card survey and were first included in a question on the 2001 survey. This year riders were asked to circle a priority number instead of writing it in the blank

provided.<sup>19</sup> Despite the expected clarity of the question, riders' responses indicated that they were not clear about the need to assign a different priority level to each improvement. Many riders assigned the same level of priority to several improvements. The 2003 findings, therefore, have more than one top priority.

In 2003 riders assigned the most important priority to both better on-time performance and more frequent peak and off-peak service (see Table 8). Better on-time performance received a slightly higher percentage (42%) than more frequent peak and off-peak service (37%). This year's top priorities represent a combination of the priorities identified in 2001 and 2002.

The combination of these top priorities in 2003 indicates that riders feel that the Rail Road should pay more attention to service. The focus on improved service may also reflect riders' view that if they are paying more they expect improved service. LIRR's overall monthly on-time performance<sup>20</sup> since the last report card survey (June 2002 to June 2003) has ranged between a high of 95 percent in April 2003 to a low of 84 percent in February 2003. On-time performance for most months has been between 93 and 95 percent.

Consistent with 2001 and 2002, riders in 2003 identified the need for more available seats as the second most important priority, indicating that riders have not yet felt the relief the new M7 fleet is expected to provide. Riders identified better air conditioning as the third most important priority for service improvements in 2003, compared with fourth place in 2002. This improvement reflects the high performance of LIRR's monthly climate control records since the last report card survey, which show a high of 99 percent in October and November 2002 and a low of 96 percent in February 2003. Climate control for most months has ranged between 97 and 98 percent.<sup>21</sup>

No priority was designated for fourth place since two improvements were chosen for first place this year. Home station security remained the lowest priority for two years in a row.

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<sup>19</sup> The rating system also shifted this year to 1 = most important and 5 = least important. In previous years, the rating system was defined as 5 = most important and 1 = least important.

<sup>20</sup> Overall performance covers twenty-four hours, seven days a week service. The June 2002-03 monthly on-time performance data was provided by LIRR.

<sup>21</sup> The June 2002-03 monthly climate control data was provided by LIRR.

**Table 8. Priority Ranking of Service Improvements<sup>22</sup>**

<b>SERVICE IMPROVEMENT</b>	<b>RANK<sup>23</sup></b> (1 is highest/ 5 is lowest)		
	2001	2002	<b>2003</b>
More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	4	1	<b>1</b>
More Available Seats	2	2	<b>2</b>
Better On-Time Performance	1	3	<b>1</b>
Better Air-Conditioning	3	4	<b>3</b>
Home Station Security	N/A	5	<b>5</b>
No More Short Trains	5	N/A	<b>N/A</b>

The second question asked riders to identify the aspects of service that they would most like the railroad to improve. A list of the 924 written responses was sorted and tabulated by theme. The top twenty most-wanted improvements identified by riders are summarized in Table 9.

Similar to last year more frequent peak and off-peak trains is the top issue this year, while cleanliness is the second most desired improvement replacing last years desire for more seat availability which moved down to the sixth place (see Table 10). This may be the result of new M7 cars that have added seats to the system, in conjunction with lower ridership levels, explained by the slowed economy.

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<sup>22</sup> Possible service improvements represent four of the most-desired service improvements identified in the Council's 2000 Report Card Survey Report.

<sup>23</sup> Priority numbers for 2001 and 2002 have been adjusted to reflect the same ranking scale as 2003.



**Table 9. Top 20 Most-Wanted Improvements, Systemwide**

<b>Most Wanted Improvement</b>	<b># Of Responses</b>	<b>Percent of Total Responses</b>
More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	177	19%
Improve Cleanliness	100	11%
Improve On-Time Performance	88	10%
Provide New Trains	77	8%
Lower the Fare	72	8%
More Seat Availability	61	7%
Improve Communication	55	6%
More Express Trains	42	5%
Improve Temperature Control	34	4%
Provide Direct Service to Penn Station (No Change at Jamaica)	30	3%
Improve Seating Comfort	29	3%
Improve Train Scheduling	27	3%
Increase Security	20	2%
Improve Penn Station	20	2%
Faster Train Speed	19	2%
Better Customer Service	17	2%
Remove No Refund For Forgotten Monthly Ticket Policy	15	2%
Create Quiet Cars With No Cell Phones	9	1%
Increase Parking	9	1%
Improve Flatbush Avenue Terminal	5	1%

**Table 10. Comparison of Top Three Most Wanted Improvements, Systemwide**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>FIRST MOST-WANTED IMPROVEMENT (%)</b>	<b>SECOND MOST-WANTED IMPROVEMENT (%)</b>	<b>THIRD MOST-WANTED IMPROVEMENT (%)</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Trains (19%)</b>	<b>Improve Cleanliness (11%)</b>	<b>Improve On-Time Performance (9%)</b>
2002	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Trains (22%)	More Seat Availability (12%)	Improve On-Board Cleanliness (8%)
2001	More Seat Availability (13%)	Improve On-Time Performance (10%)	Increase Parking (9%)

## Special Topic: Peak Hour Shuttle Bus Services

Each year, riders are asked a set of questions to determine their views on topical issues. In 2002, riders were asked about the performance of the LIRR's communication to customers on specific issues and the preferred means of communication by which they would like to hear about these issues. In 2003, riders were asked four questions about their likely use of shuttle bus services to railroad stations during peak travel times.

The choice of this year's topic follows the PCAC's December 2002 report: ***You've Got Connections! Increasing Shuttle Bus Services to the MTA Railroads***, which recommended the use of shuttle bus services as a strategy for reducing station parking demand. The Council wanted a better understanding of what might encourage or discourage LIRR riders to use such services.

The first question asked riders about their likely use of a morning or evening peak hour shuttle bus service to and from the train platform that is timed to the train schedule. Riders were asked to select among the following choices: very likely, likely, not at all likely or don't know.

Almost two thirds (63%) of the riders surveyed said they were not at all likely to use a shuttle bus service. Almost a quarter (24%) of the riders indicated that they would be likely or very likely to use a shuttle bus and another 14 percent said they don't know. Results are shown in Table 11.

**Table 11. Likelihood of Riders to Use a Peak Hour Shuttle Bus Service**

LIKELIHOOD TO USE SERVICE	PERCENT OF TOTAL RESPONSES
Not at all Likely	63%
Don't Know	14%
Likely	14%
Very Likely	10%

The following question asked riders who were likely to use a shuttle bus service about where they would like to see the service offered. Riders were asked to identify a specific station. The top three stations listed were: Ronkonkoma (25 responses), Port Washington (20 responses), and Baldwin (19 responses). Other preferred stations with more than ten responses included Massapequa, Long Beach, Rockville Centre and Huntington. A complete list of preferred stations or routes is included in Appendix C.

The third question asked riders with no interest in using a shuttle bus service, why they were not interested. The question provided the following range of reasons to choose from: stops not close to home, cost, long travel time, lack of flexibility, stuck if return after/before peak, negative association or other. The choice of other provided a space to write in a specific response. The list of reasons was drawn from the findings of the PCAC's 2002 report on shuttle bus services. Respondents could circle more than one reason.

Many riders indicated that they felt that a peak period shuttle bus service lacked flexibility (43%). Riders were also concerned about not being able to get home if they took a return train prior to or after the peak period (36%). Length of travel on a shuttle bus (26%) and inconvenient bus stops, not close to home (21%) were also of concern. Other reasons written in by riders included their preference to walk, nothing or close to the station.<sup>24</sup> Bus service cost and negative associations were of lesser concern. Results are shown in Table 12.

**Table 12. Reasons for Not Using a Peak Hour Shuttle Bus Service**

REASON FOR NOT USING SERVICE	PERCENT OF TOTAL RESPONSES
Lack of Flexibility	43%
Stuck if Return After/ Before Peak	36%
Long Travel Time	26%
Stops Not Close to Home	21%
Other	19%
Cost	11%
Negative Association	9%

The last question asked riders what would encourage them to use a shuttle bus to the railroad. Of the 1278 surveys returned by riders, 383 (30%) riders responded. Riders stated in almost half of their written responses that nothing would get them to take a shuttle bus service (48%), including comments from people that prefer to walk, live close to the station, or would prefer to drive.

The largest response from those interested in taking a shuttle bus indicates that cost is a factor (17%), with just over a third stating that the service would need to be free. Other riders suggest a discount on the monthly LIRR ticket would be an incentive to take the shuttle bus. The convenience of the stop location (13%) is another factor which contributes to riders' interest in taking the shuttle, as did shuttle frequency

<sup>24</sup> It is not clear whether riders close to the station prefer to walk, to drive or just feel the service is unnecessary.

(8%) and coordinating the shuttle schedule with train arrival and departure times (5%). Riders' inability to find parking and higher monthly parking costs relative to the shuttle (3%) are additional factors that would encourage riders to take the shuttle.

Other issues identified by riders include overall convenience, weather and service reliability. Results are shown in Table 13.

**Table 13. Rider Incentives to Use Shuttle Bus Services**

<b>RIDER INCENTIVE TO USE SERVICE</b>	<b>PERCENT OF TOTAL RESPONSES</b>
Nothing	48%
Free Shuttle/ Discounted Shuttle/Train Ticket	17%
Convenient Stop Locations	13%
Frequency of Service	8%
Schedule Timed to Trains	5%
Lack of Parking	3%

## **BRANCH RESULTS**

Results were analyzed by branch to determine trends and changes. Rider demographics were not analyzed by branch since riders who participated in the survey encompass a small, non-representative segment of branch ridership.

### **Perception of Change in LIRR Service**

This year's results for the question regarding perception of change on the LIRR show a mix of trends when analyzed by branch (See Table 14). On seven of the eleven branches, a higher percentage of riders feel that no change in service is occurring. On three branches, a higher percentage of riders feel that service is getting better. Riders on one branch feel the service is getting worse.

The 2003 results show an overall decline in customer satisfaction when compared to 2002. Riders who feel that service is getting worse increased on ten of the eleven branches in 2003.

Higher percentages of riders on the Port Washington, Long Beach, Port Jefferson, Huntington and Babylon branches feel that no change in service is taking place. The most notable change this year occurred on the Port Jefferson branch, where the percentage of riders who feel service has stayed the same increased by 21 percent over last year. In 2002, Port Jefferson branch riders felt the most satisfied of all the branches- 75 percent of the riders felt service was improving. Comments received from Port Jefferson riders this year focus on the need for more frequent service, direct service to Penn Station and more public address and supported service announcements. A rider from Northport station said:

More evening trains (are needed) on the Port Jefferson branch, currently, (there is) only the 6:27, 7:22 and 8:42 pm and those trains are crowded. Why can't the 6:56 and 7:54 pm to Huntington continue to Port Jefferson? Why do we need to transfer at Huntington if we have new dual mode trains?

Riders on the Oyster Bay, Hempstead, and West Hempstead branches are the most satisfied with service. The most notable change this year occurred on the West Hempstead branch, where the percentage of riders who feel service has improved increased by 15 percent over 2002. Comments received from West Hempstead riders indicate a high level of satisfaction with service reliability and convenience. A rider from West Hempstead said: "Beats driving, (the) new trains are very nice."

Riders on the Ronkonkoma line were the most dissatisfied in 2003, with a higher percentage of riders feeling that service is getting worse. The percentage of satisfied Ronkonkoma riders declined by 30 percent between 2002 and 2003. Comments focused on their dissatisfaction with on-time performance and the increased fare. A comment from a rider regarding what they liked least about the Rail Road said: "(A) (t)wenty-five percent increase – but a decrease in good service."

**Table 14. Perception of Change, by Branch**

BRANCH	THE LIRR IS GETTING BETTER		THE LIRR IS GETTING WORSE		NO CHANGE IS OCCURRING	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
Babylon	47%	29%	10%	21%	44%	45%
Far Rockaway	39%	36%	11%	20%	50%	44%
Hempstead	43%	51%	14%	13%	43%	36%
Long Beach	54%	43%	5%	9%	41%	48%
Montauk	52%	43%	2%	13%	46%	44%
Oyster Bay	54%	60%	8%	14%	39%	27%
Port Jefferson	75%	34%	1%	22%	24%	45%
Huntington	45%	34%	10%	21%	45%	45%
Port Washington	45%	38%	7%	10%	48%	52%
Ronkonkoma	32%	16%	18%	48%	50%	36%
West Hempstead	29%	44%	29%	23%	43%	33%

## Performance Indicators

**Overall Service.** In 2003, riders assigned their highest grades (B-) for overall service to three branches: Port Washington, Long Beach and Far Rockaway. In 2002 riders also included the Babylon Branch among the highest grades.

The 2003 grades on the Port Washington, Long Beach and Far Rockaway branches remained the same as in 2002. The highest numerical score went to the Port Washington branch (7.97), followed by Long Beach (7.71) and Far Rockaway (7.60). The numerical branch scores show an insignificant decline from 2002: Port Washington (-5%), Long Beach (-5%) and Far Rockaway (-.4%).

In 2003, the Babylon branch grade for overall service slipped to a C+, down from the B- it received in 2002. The branch numerical score declined by seven percent and represents a statistically significant decline.

In 2003, riders assigned their lowest grade (C-) for overall service to the Ronkonkoma branch. This decline in grade (from a C in 2002) and numerical score (-1.6%) is statistically significant. Overall service satisfaction on the Montauk branch increased this year to a C+ (up from a C in 2002), but with no significant increase in score. All other branches received a C+, the same grade as in 2002. Results for the branch performance indicators are presented in Table 14.

**On-Time Performance.** Morning and evening on-time performance show mixed results by branch this year. In 2003, morning on-time performance grades held steady (in the B range) on seven branches, declined on three (Long Beach, Port Jefferson and Ronkonkoma) and rose on one (Montauk). Riders assigned the lowest morning on-time performance grade to the Ronkonkoma branch (C+). Montauk was the only branch to improve in grade to a B this year from a B- in 2002.

Evening on-time performance grades did not fair as well this year: grades held steady (in the B range) on four branches, declined on seven and rose on one. Riders felt that evening on-time performance declined on the Babylon (C+), Oyster Bay (C+), Port Jefferson (C+) and Ronkonkoma (C) branches. The only grade increase this year occurred on the West Hempstead branch (B-) from a C+ in 2002.

Riders gave their highest grades (B+) for morning on-time performance to the Port Washington branch. Lowest grades (C+) went to evening on-time performance on the Ronkonkoma branch.

**Seating Availability.** Riders gave morning seat availability improved marks on six branches this year, which is a positive indication of the Rail Road's efforts to improve seat availability along with the introduction of the new M7 cars. Their approval among the branches are more mixed, however, than the results systemwide. Riders assigned above average scores (in the B range) on all branches except on the Ronkonkoma branch (C+). While Ronkonkoma riders were the least pleased with morning seat availability, they saw improvement over 2002 (C). Riders on the Montauk branch were the most pleased with morning seat availability (B+).

Evening seat availability was less favorable for the individual branches, although riders felt conditions improved on four branches – West Hempstead, Far Rockaway, Long Beach and Ronkonkoma. West Hempstead riders were the most positive (B-). Ronkonkoma riders were the least satisfied (C-).

**Train Crews.** Train crews, once again, received good marks from riders on all branches. This year, train crews received particularly high marks (B+) from riders in the morning on the Far Rockaway, Long Beach, Oyster Bay and Port Washington branches. High marks in the evening were given to train crews on the Long Beach (A+), Far Rockaway (B+) and Oyster Bay (B+) branches. Train crew grades most notably declined in 2003 on the West Hempstead branch in the morning B (from B+ in 2002) and in the evening to a B- (from B+ in 2002).

**Announcements.** Riders assigned the highest grades to Penn Station announcements and the lowest grades to announcements at their home station. Grades for Penn Station were B and B- across the branches, with one exception: Ronkonkoma riders felt evening announcements at Penn Station were lower (C+). Grades for home station announcements were C+, C and C- across the branches.

On-board announcements received above average marks (in the B range) from riders on five branches in the morning and three in the evening. Riders on the West Hempstead branch gave the highest grade of all the branches to morning on-board announcements (B). Riders on the Far Rockaway, Long Beach and Port Washington branches assigned a B- to both morning and evening on-board announcements. Riders gave the lowest grades (C) to morning and evening announcements on the Ronkonkoma branch.

**On-Board Cleanliness.** Riders saw a decline in on-board cleanliness on six branches and an improvement on two branches. Riders gave the highest grades to train cleanliness on the Oyster Bay (B), Montauk (B-) and West Hempstead (B-) branches. Riders assigned the lowest grades to train cleanliness on the Ronkonkoma (D), Far Rockaway (D+) and Huntington (D+) branches.

**Restrooms and Wait Areas.** Riders identified on-board restrooms as a problem on all but two branches – Montauk and West Hempstead. Riders on nine of the branches assigned a range of below average grades (D, D+ and C-) to on-board restrooms. On-board restrooms on the Montauk and West Hempstead branches received average grades of C, which represent improvements over grades last year of C- and D, respectively.

Restrooms at Jamaica Station and Flatbush Avenue Terminal also received poor grades from riders. Riders on six branches assigned below average grades (D+ and C-) to Jamaica Station restrooms. Riders on nine branches gave grades of D, D+ and C- to Flatbush Avenue Terminal restrooms.



Riders across the branches gave above average grades to the wait area at Penn Station: Babylon, Port Jefferson and Ronkonkoma riders, in particular, assigned higher grades than in 2002. The wait areas at Jamaica Station and Flatbush Avenue Terminal generally received lower grades from riders.

**Table 15. 2003 Results for Performance Indicators, by Branch**

INDICATOR		BAB.	FAR ROCK.	HEMP.	LONG BEACH	MONTAUK	OYSTER BAY	PORT. JEFF.	HUNT/ HICKS.	PORT. WASH.	RONK.	WEST. HEMP.
Overall Service		C+	B-	C+	B-	C+	C+	C+	C+	B-	C-	C+
On-Time Performance	am pm	B C+	B B-	B- B-	B B-	B B-	B- C+	B C+	B- C+	B+ B-	C+ C	B B-
Seating Availability	am pm	B C+	B C+	B C	B C+	B+ C+	B- C+	B C+	B C	B C+	C+ C-	B B-
Schedule Adequacy	am pm	B B-	C+ C+	B- B	B- B-	C+ C	D+ D	B- C+	B- C+	B B	C+ C	C- C-
Train Crews	am pm	B B	B+ B+	B B-	B+ A-	B B	B+ B+	B- B	B- B-	B+ B	B- B-	B B-
Announcements: On-Board	am pm	C+ C+	B- B-	C+ C+	B- B-	C+ C+	B- C+	C+ C+	C+ C+	B- B-	C C	B C+
Penn Sta.	am pm	B- B-	B B	B- B-	B B-	B- B-	B- B-	B- B-	B- B-	B- B-	B- C+	B- B-
Jamaica Sta.	am pm	B- C+	B- B-	C C	B- B-	B B-	C+ C+	C+ C+	C+ C+	B- B-	C+ C+	C+ C
Flatbush Av.	am pm	C+ C+	C+ C+	C+ C	B- B-	B- C+	C- C-	C+ C	C C+	B B-	C+ C-	C+ C+
Home Sta.	am pm	C+ C	C C	C- C	C+ C+	C- C-	C+ C	C C	C C	C+ C+	C- C-	C- C-
Cleanliness: On-Board		C+	C	C	C	B-	B	C+	C	C	C-	B-
On-Board Restroom		C-	D+	C-	C-	C	C+	C-	D+	C-	D	C
Home Sta. Wait Area		B-	B-	B-	B	C	B-	B-	B-	B	B-	B
Home Sta. Restroom		B-	C	C+	C+	C-	C	C+	C+	B-	C+	C+
Penn Sta. Wait Area		B-	B	B-	B	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-
Penn Sta. Restroom		C	C+	C	C	C+	C	C	C	C	C	C
Jamaica Sta. Wait Area		C	C+	C-	C	C	C	C	C-	C+	C-	C+
Jamaica Sta. Restroom		C-	C	D+	C	C	C-	C-	C-	B	D+	C
Flatbush Av. Wait Area		C-	C	D+	C-	D+	C-	C-	D+	C+	D+	D+
Flatbush Av. Restroom		C-	C-	D+	C-	C	D+	D+	D	B	D+	C-
Management Perf.		C	B-	C+	C+	C-	C-	C	C-	C+	D+	C
Escalator Reliability		C	C+	C	C+	C-	C-	C	C	C+	C-	C
Winter Heating		C+	B-	B-	B-	B-	B	B-	C+	B	C	B-
Summer A/C		C+	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	C+	C+	B-	C	B
Seat Condition		C	C+	C+	C+	B-	B	C	C	C+	C-	B-
Security: On-Board		B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	B	B-	B-	B-	C+	B-
Penn Sta.		B	B	B	B	B	B-	B	B-	B	B-	B
Jamaica Sta.		C+	C+	C	C+	C+	C+	C+	C	B-	C+	B-
Flatbush Av.		C+	C+	C	C-	B-	B-	C+	C+	B	C+	B-
Home Sta.		C+	C	C+	C+	C	C+	C+	C+	B	C	C+
Parking		C+	C-	C+	C+	C	C+	C	C	C+	C-	C-
Home Sta. Hours		C	C	C+	C+	D+	D+	C	C+	B-	C+	C
Ticket-Selling Hrs.		C	C	C+	C+	C-	C	C+	C+	B-	C+	C-
Home Sta. Maint.		C+	C+	B-	B-	C-	C+	C+	B-	B	C+	C+
Peak-Hour Service	am pm	B- C+	B B-	B- C+	B B-	B- C+	C+ C	B- C+	B- C+	B B-	C+ C	B- B-
Midday Service		C+	C+	C	B	C	C-	C+	C+	B-	C-	C-
Late-Night Service		C+	C	C-	C+	C-	D+	C	C-	C+	C-	D+
Weekend Service		C+	C+	C	B-	C	C-	C+	C	B-	C	C-

**Management Performance.** Riders were less pleased with management performance this year. Riders on four branches felt management performance was below average (C-) and three branches felt performance was adequate (C). Ronkonkoma branch riders were the least pleased (D+), while Far Rockaway branch riders were the most satisfied (B). Lower grades for this performance indicator can likely be linked to rider dissatisfaction with the May 2003 fare increase.

**Security.** Riders on the Montauk branch saw a slight improvement in security at home stations (C) and parking lots (C) this year over last year (D+ for both indicators). Far Rockaway, Ronkonkoma and West Hempstead riders felt parking security was below average (C-). Hempstead and Long Beach riders felt Flatbush Avenue Terminal security declined to C and C-, respectively, compared to a B- in 2003.

**Home Station Access.** Home station building and ticket selling hours received average grades from riders. Home station building hours received low grades from riders on the Oyster Bay (D+), Montauk (D+) branches and just average grades on the Babylon (C), Far Rockaway (C), Port Jefferson (C) and West Hempstead (C) branches. Grades for ticket selling hours were lowest, although slightly improved over 2002, on the Montauk (C-) and West Hempstead (C-) branches, followed by Far Rockaway (C) and Oyster Bay (C) branches. Riders on the Port Washington branch felt ticket selling hours improved this year (B-), up from a C in 2002.

Riders gave the highest grades to home station maintenance, not evaluated in 2002, on the Port Washington (B), Hempstead (B-), Long Beach (B-) and Huntington (B-) branches. Montauk branch riders assigned the lowest grade (C-).

**Train Service.** Train service is an issue for riders on certain branches. Riders gave the highest grades for morning peak hour service on the Far Rockaway (B), Long Beach (B) and Port Washington branches (B). Riders assigned an average grade (C) to evening peak hour service on the Oyster Bay and Ronkonkoma branches.

Riders rated midday service on the Long Beach branch the highest (B) and midday service on the Oyster Bay, Ronkonkoma and West Hempstead branches the lowest (C-).

Riders were satisfied with the weekend service on the Long Beach and Port Washington branches (B-), but felt weekend service on the Oyster Bay and West Hempstead branches was below average (C-). Riders were

also dissatisfied with late night service on the Oyster Bay (D+) and West Hempstead (D+) branches.

## Desired Improvements

Branch service improvement priority lists of the five specified service improvements were in keeping with the systemwide results. 2003 riders on seven branches listed more frequent peak and off-peak service as a top priority, compared to eight in 2002. Riders also listed better on-time performance as a top priority on five branches --Babylon, Long Beach, Huntington, Port Washington and Ronkonkoma -- compared to three branches last year.

This year, two branches -- Long Beach and Port Washington --selected two improvements for top priority. Long Beach riders listed better on-time performance and more frequent peak and off-peak service as number one priorities. Port Washington riders feel that better on-time performance and more available seats are number one priorities.

Port Washington riders changed their top priority this year from more frequent peak and off-peak service in 2002. West Hempstead riders changed their top priority to more frequent peak and off-peak service this year from their 2002 top choice of better on-time performance (see Table 16).

**Table 16. Top-Priority Service Improvements, by Branch**

<b>BRANCH</b>	<b>TOP RANKED SERVICE IMPROVEMENT</b>
<b>Babylon</b>	Better On-Time Performance
<b>Far Rockaway</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service
<b>Hempstead</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service
<b>Long Beach</b>	Better On Time Performance/ More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service
<b>Montauk</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service
<b>Oyster Bay</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service
<b>Port Jefferson</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service
<b>Huntington</b>	Better On Time Performance
<b>Port Washington</b>	Better On Time Performance/ More Available Seats
<b>Ronkonkoma</b>	Better On-Time Performance
<b>West Hempstead</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service

In response to the question about aspects of service that they would most like to improve, riders on six branches requested more frequent service,

while Long Beach and Port Washington riders wanted more cleanliness on-board, train restrooms, and station waiting areas and restrooms. Babylon riders requested newer trains and Ronkonkoma riders wanted better on-time performance as their most wanted improvements. Other improvement requests submitted by riders included a one-seat ride (direct service) to Penn Station (Hempstead, Oyster Bay and West Hempstead branches), seating availability (Montauk and Port Washington branches) and better announcements (Port Jefferson branch). The top three most wanted improvements are summarized by branch in Table 17.

**Table 17. Top Three Most-Wanted Improvements, by Branch**

<b>BRANCH</b>	<b>MOST-WANTED IMPROVEMENT</b>	<b># OF RESPONSES</b>	<b>% OF TOTAL RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTION</b>
<b>Babylon</b>	Provide Newer Trains	48	23%
	Improve Cleanliness	46	22%
	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	22	11%
<b>Far Rockaway</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	7	21%
	Improve Cleanliness	5	15%
<b>Hempstead</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	9	33%
	Provide Direct Service to Penn Station	5	13%
	Improve On-Time Performance	4	11%
<b>Long Beach</b>	Improve Cleanliness	11	19%
	Provide New Trains	6	10%
	Increase Parking	4	7%
<b>Montauk</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	17	29%
	More Seat Availability	5	
	Improve On-Time Performance	4	
<b>Oyster Bay</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	17	31%
	Provide Direct Service to Penn Station	9	17%
	Improve Scheduling	4	7%
<b>Port Jefferson</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	20	24%
	Provide Direct Service to Penn Station	10	12%
	Improve Announcements	9	11%
<b>Huntington</b>	Lower the Fare	25	14%
	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	24	
	Improve Cleanliness	19	
<b>Port Washington</b>	Improve Cleanliness	24	18%
	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	21	16%
	More Seat Availability	12	9%
<b>Ronkonkoma</b>	Improve On-Time Performance	19	13%
	Provide New Trains	16	11%
	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	14	10%
<b>West Hempstead</b>	More Frequent Peak and Off-Peak Service	16	46%
	Improve On-Time Performance	4	11%
	Provide Direct Service to Penn Station	3	9%

## Special Topic: Peak Hour Shuttle Bus Services

Riders' interest by branch in using morning or evening peak hour shuttle bus services mirrors the results systemwide: about two thirds of riders say they are not at all likely to use a shuttle bus and a quarter are likely or very likely. Riders on the Babylon (28%), Far Rockaway (26%) and Long Beach (26%) branches indicated a higher likelihood of using a shuttle bus to the rail station. The Far Rockaway branch also had the highest percentage of riders (23%) who are unsure if they would use a shuttle bus service. Riders on the Oyster Bay branch (79%), Hempstead (76%), Port Jefferson (74%) and West Hempstead (70%) branches had the lowest interest. Results are detailed in Table 18.

**Table 18. Likelihood of Using a Peak Hour Shuttle Bus Service to/from the Train Station, by Branch**

BRANCH	LIKELIHOOD OF USING A PEAK HOUR SHUTTLE BUS			
	VERY LIKELY	LIKELY	NOT AT ALL LIKELY	DON'T KNOW
<b>Babylon</b>	12%	16%	59%	13%
<b>Far Rockaway</b>	19%	6%	51%	23%
<b>Hempstead</b>	2%	7%	76%	15%
<b>Long Beach</b>	12%	14%	62%	12%
<b>Montauk</b>	6%	11%	68%	15%
<b>Oyster Bay</b>	0%	8%	79%	12%
<b>Port Jefferson</b>	3%	11%	74%	11%
<b>Huntington</b>	7%	15%	62%	16%
<b>Port Washington</b>	10%	14%	60%	17%
<b>Ronkonkoma</b>	11%	14%	65%	10%
<b>West Hempstead</b>	8%	12%	70%	12%

Across the branches, riders' top reason for not wanting to use a shuttle bus service to the train station was a lack of flexibility. This finding supports the systemwide finding. Riders on seven branches felt they would be stuck at the station if they decided to return home before or after the peak period. Riders on the other four branches – West Hempstead, Hempstead, Long Beach and Far Rockaway - were concerned about the length of travel time to the station. Shuttle bus service cost and a negative association with the use of shuttle bus services were lesser concerns. Results are detailed below in Table 19.

**Table 19. Reasons For Not Wanting to Use a Shuttle Bus Service to/from the Train Station, by Branch**

BRANCH	REASONS FOR NOT WANTING TO USE A SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE <sup>25</sup>					
	STOPS NOT CLOSE TO HOME	COST	LONG TRAVEL TIME	LACK OF FLEXIBILITY	STUCK IF RETURN AFTER/BEFORE PEAK	NEGATIVE ASSOCIATION
Babylon	23%	11%	20%	44%	39%	5%
Far Rockaway	12%	8%	23%	27%	19%	15%
Hempstead	23%	10%	29%	36%	23%	7%
Long Beach	11%	0%	27%	43%	24%	8%
Montauk	16%	7%	24%	40%	36%	11%
Oyster Bay	14%	12%	19%	28%	37%	5%
Port Jefferson	19%	12%	34%	45%	49%	9%
Huntington	26%	10%	33%	52%	36%	9%
Port Washington	15%	9%	25%	41%	36%	11%
Ronkonkoma	24%	19%	28%	46%	41%	12%
West Hempstead	12%	0%	33%	42%	30%	9%

Riders' top incentive for encouraging their use of a shuttle bus service to the train station was cost, convenient stop locations, frequency of service, timing the schedule to the trains, and lack of parking. Table 20 shows the incentives preferred by branch.

**Table 20. Incentives to Encourage Riders to Use a Shuttle Bus Service to/from the Train Station, by Branch**

BRANCH	INCENTIVES TO USE A SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE						
	TOTAL RESPONSES	NOTHING (NO INTEREST)	CONVENIENT STOP LOCATIONS	FREE SHUTTLE/DISCOUNTED SHUTTLE/TRAIN TICKET	FREQUENCY OF SERVICE	SCHEDULE TIMED TO TRAINS	LACK OF PARKING
Babylon	76	37	10	11	6	7	1
Far Rockaway	13	5	1	2	1	1	0
Hempstead	8	7	0	0	1	0	0
Long Beach	10	5	2	1	0	2	0
Montauk	22	10	2	5	1	1	1
Oyster Bay	13	5	2	3	1	0	0
Port Jefferson	28	12	6	7	1	0	1
Huntington	74	35	7	10	8	5	2
Port Washington	49	20	6	5	6	1	3
Ronkonkoma	72	22	8	17	4	0	0
West Hempstead	13	9	2	1	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>

<sup>25</sup> Percentages do not add up to a hundred percent because riders could choose more than one reason.

Table 21 highlights those branches with higher rider interest in shuttle bus use given the right incentives. The Oyster Bay, Port Jefferson, and Ronkonkoma branches had more riders indicating interest in shuttle bus use than not.

**Table 21. Riders Interest In Using A Shuttle Bus Service To and From the Train Station**

BRANCH		RIDERS NOT LIKELY TO USE A SHUTTLE SERVICE		RIDERS LIKELY TO USE A SHUTTLE SERVICE	
	TOTAL RESPONSES	NEGATIVE RESPONSES WITH NO INTEREST DESPITE INCENTIVES	% OF TOTAL	POSITIVE RESPONSES WITH INCENTIVES	% OF TOTAL
Babylon	76	37	49%	35	46%
Far Rockaway	13	5	38%	5	38%
Hempstead	8	7	88%	1	13%
Long Beach	10	5	50%	5	50%
Montauk	22	10	45%	10	45%
Oyster Bay*	13	5	38%	6	46%
Port Jefferson*	28	12	43%	15	54%
Huntington	74	35	47%	32	43%
Port Washington	49	20	41%	21	43%
Ronkonkoma*	72	22	31%	29	40%
West Hempstead	13	9	69%	4	31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>167</b>		<b>163</b>	



## CUSTOMER WRITTEN COMMENTS

Additional customer preferences and concerns are identified in three final survey questions that ask riders what they like least about LIRR, what they like most, and what they would like to see improved. Of the 1278 surveys returned by individuals, 812 commented on what they liked least, 881 commented on what they liked most and 517 commented on what they would most like to see improved. In 2002, 312 written comments were received.<sup>26</sup> Many of the comments received this year reflected the dismay with the fare increase. The nature of the comments are discussed thematically systemwide and by branch.

The systemwide responses were grouped according to the following broad categories and themes:

### SERVICE DELIVERY

- **Service Requirements** (frequency of service, type of service - such as express service or a direct one-seat ride to Penn Station, short car trains and general comments about how the railroad is doing overall)
- **Scheduling of Trains** (specific changes in train timetables and references to the punctuality of train service - on-time performance)
- **Communication** (on-board and station announcements, leafleting and other ways the LIRR communicates with customers)

### CUSTOMER COMFORT AND SAFETY

- **Air-Conditioning, Heating and Ventilation** (temperature and air flow on-board trains)
- **More Comfortable Seating** (condition and comfort of seating on trains)
- **Cleanliness** (cleanliness of station, train car interiors and restrooms)
- **Cell Phones** (customer behavior related to cell phone use)
- **Safety/ Security** (safety and security at home stations and on-board trains)
- **Employee Conduct** (train conductors and other LIRR staff)

### MANAGEMENT

- **Train Equipment** (the condition and use of the cars and other train equipment)
- **Fares** (railroad fares and pricing)

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<sup>26</sup> There were two questions in 2002: What one thing would you most like to see improved? and additional comments or suggestions?

- **Miscellaneous** (responses that did not fit into any of the above categories)

## **SYSTEMWIDE**

Of the 2,489 comments received 1375 were dissatisfied and wanted to see improvements in service delivery, with the top three issues being frequency (292), on-time performance (280) and more seats (61). 727 were dissatisfied and wanted to see improvements in customer comfort, with the top three issues being cleanliness (185), better seating (58) and more comfortable temperatures (55). 627 were dissatisfied and wanted to see improvements in the management of the LIRR, with the top three issues being high fares (319), wanting new trains (204) and improvements at Penn Station (36).

772 comments expressed what the riders liked most about the Rail Road, with the top three issues being convenience (219), found it better than driving (130), and appreciated the on-time performance (90). Riders also liked the new trains (70), and felt the reliability was good (61).

Of the 312 comments received from riders last year, concerns focused on service requirements (77), scheduling of trains (46), train equipment (30), heating, ventilation and air conditioning (21), on-board cleanliness (20), communications to customers (19), home station and parking lot security (17) and LIRR employee conduct (17). Numbers of riders' comments by category and type are presented in Table 22.

**Table 22. The Top Categories of Systemwide Responses to Questions**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>LIKE LEAST # OF RESPONSES</b>	<b>LIKE MOST # OF RESPONSES</b>	<b>SEE IMPROVED # OF RESPONSES</b>	<b>TOTAL COMMENTS</b>
High Fares	247	0	72	319
Frequency	101	14	177	292
On-Time Performance	102	90	88	280
Convenience	0	219	0	219
New Trains	39	70	95	204
Cleanliness	76	9	100	185
Better Than Driving	0	130	0	130
Crew/ Customer Service	18	56	17	91
Express	21	19	42	82
Schedules	33	13	27	73
Reliability	0	61	0	61
More Seats	0	0	61	61
Better Seating	29	0	29	58
Temperature	21	0	34	55
Communication	0	0	55	55
Comfort	0	54	0	54
Speed	13	21	19	53
Direct	21	0	30	51
Safety / Security	11	16	20	47
Penn Station	16	0	20	36
Forgotten Ticket Policy	13	0	15	28
Cell Phone Courtesy	17	0	9	26
Parking	8	0	9	17
Other Stations	12	0	0	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>772</b>	<b>919</b>	<b>2489</b>

## BY BRANCH

Table 23 indicates branch comments by category. Following is a brief discussion focusing on riders' most prominent concerns by branch.

**Table 23. Top Branch Comments by Category \***

	BAB.	FAR ROCK.	HEMP.	LONG BEACH	MONTAUK	OYSTER BAY	PORT. JEFF	HUNT/ HICKS.	PORT. WASH.	RONK.	WEST. HEMP.
<b>SAMPLE</b>											
Total Survey Sample	285	49	50	84	67	59	90	221	161	161	51
Total Comment Respondents	209	34	38	58	60	55	84	184	133	143	35
Percentage of Respondents	73%	69%	76%	69%	89%	93%	93%	83%	83%	88%	69%
<b>LIKED LEAST</b>											
High Fare	25	18	24	29	12	18	16		18	34	28
Frequency		15	11		27	24	13				16
Cleanliness									17		
On-Time Performance	12									14	
Management							11				
More Seats	11		13						19		12
Direct						12					
Schedule											16
<b>LIKES MOST</b>											
Convenience	26	40	18	35		21	16		30	27	20
Better Than Driving	14		15		11	12	14			25	16
Reliable	12		15						13		12
On-Time Performance	12				14				12		12
Crew						12					12
Speed		11									
Comfortable				13	20		14				
New Trains				11	18	35	25				20
Nothing										13	
<b>SEE IMPROVED</b>											
New Trains	15									11	
Cleanliness	11	15		19					18		
Frequency	11	20	33		29	31	24		16		16
Communication							11				
More Seats											12
Direct			13			16	12				
On-Time Performance			11							13	
High Fares											28
Scheduling											16

\* The chart represents categories that exceeded 10 responses or more.

## Babylon Branch

Of the 243 total responses received from Babylon commuters, many were concerned with the high fares (56), wanting new trains (48) and station, restroom and car cleanliness (46). Some riders complimented the Rail Road, finding the Rail Road convenient and a better alternative to driving. Babylon Riders would most like to see new trains (31), and improved cleanliness (24). In 2002, Babylon branch riders were concerned with more frequent train service and more available seating during peak hours.

**Table 24. Top Babylon Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
High Fare	56	0	0	56
Old Trains	17	0	31	48
Cleanliness	22	0	24	46
On-Time Performance	27	0	0	27
Frequency	22	0	0	22
Communication	0	0	17	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	5	15	19	216

## Far Rockaway Branch

Of the 39 total responses received from Far Rockaway commuters, the two primary concerns are train frequency (12) and station, restroom and car cleanliness (8). Riders were also vocal regarding their dislike of the fare increase (6). Riders liked the convenience of the service. In 2002, Far Rockaway commuters two primary concerns were frequency, more available seating and on-board cleanliness.

**Table 25. Top Far Rockaway Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
Frequency	5	0	7	12
Convenience	0	11	0	11
Cleanliness	3	0	5	8
High Fare	6	0	0	6
Cell Phones	3	0	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	17	11	12	40

## Hempstead Branch

Hempstead branch riders focused on more frequent service (13), high fares (9) and on-time performance (7). Last year, riders expressed the need for more frequent peak and off peak service – particularly between 5:13 and 5:38 pm from Penn, additional express service and more available seating in the morning.

This year, other issues included the desire for more express service, more seats, direct service to Penn Station and new trains for the branch.

Some riders liked the convenience (6) of the Rail Road and found it a better option than driving to the city (5) and a reliable means of transportation (5).

**Table 26. Top Hempstead Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
Frequency	4	0	9	13
High Fare	9	0	0	9
On-Time Performance	3	0	4	7
Convenience	0	6	0	6
Express	3	0	3	6
Better Than Driving	0	5	0	5
Reliability	0	5	0	5
More Seats	5	0	0	5
Direct Service	0	0	5	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	24	16	24	64

## Long Beach Branch

The response received from riders on the Long Beach branch was much higher this year (83) compared to last year (1). Long Beach riders were dismayed with the high fares (18) and cleanliness (16), but are pleased with the convenience of the railroad (16). Comments related to cleanliness most often mentioned dirty trains as the primary problem. Riders also mentioned a need for more off-peak frequency.

**Table 27. Top Long Beach Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
High Fare	18	0	0	18
Cleanliness	5	0	11	16
Convenience	0	16	0	16
Frequency	6	0	5	11
New Trains	0	0	6	6
Comfortable	0	6	0	6
New Trains	0	5	0	5
Better Than Driving	0	5	0	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	29	32	22	83

## Montauk Branch

Montauk branch riders are concerned with the frequency of peak and off-peak service (33). Riders also expressed dissatisfaction with the fare increase (11), and would like to see better on-time performance (10), although other riders also expressed satisfaction with the on-time performance (6). Some riders were pleased with the comfort of the ride (6) and others liked the new trains (8). Last year riders also expressed concern about the frequency of peak and off-peak service (3), and riders identified problems with moderating the air-conditioning on the bi-level cars (3), and home station and parking lot security (3).

**Table 28. Top Montauk Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
Frequency	16	0	17	33
High Fare	7	0	4	11
On-Time Performance	0	6	4	10
Comfortable	0	9	0	9
New Trains	0	8	0	8
Communication	4	0	4	8
More Seats	3	0	5	8
Temperature	3	0	4	7
Express	5	0	0	5
Better Than Driving	0	5	0	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	38	28	38	104

## Oyster Bay Branch

Oyster Bay branch riders' concerns focus on frequency (29), direct service to Penn Station (15), high fares (9) and policy changes (9), particularly the new ticket policy stating no reimbursement for forgotten monthly tickets.

Last year, customer comments had a higher number of temperature related concerns, with riders stating that on-board temperatures were too cold (7). This year only two riders stated that the temperature was too cold.

Customers were most happy with the new trains (15), which may have contributed to the appreciation of the convenience (9) the train service offers, and recognition that it is a better alternative to driving (5). Responses also reflected an increase in the customer service /crew category (5).

**Table 29. Top Oyster Bay Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
Frequency	12	0	17	29
Direct Service	6	0	9	15
New Trains	0	15	0	15
High Fare	9	0	0	9
Policy Changes	9	0	0	9
Convenience	0	9	0	9
Crew/ Customer Service	0	5	0	5
Better Than Driving	0	5	0	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	36	34	26	96

## Port Jefferson Branch

Commuters on the Port Jefferson branch are most concerned with train frequency (31) the high fares (19) and direct service to Penn Station (18). Last year, scheduling of trains (14) and more frequent service (9) were the top concerns.

Comments related to frequency stated that there were not enough trains during the am and pm peak hours. Many riders also commented on wanting direct service to Penn Station, better communication to riders particularly during delays and an appreciation of the new trains.



**Table 30. Top Port Jefferson Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
Frequency	11	0	20	31
High Fare	13	0	6	19
Direct Service to Penn	8	0	10	18
Communication	8	0	9	17
New Trains	0	16	0	16
Convenience	0	10	0	10
Better Than Driving	0	9	0	9
Comfortable	0	9	0	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>28</b>

## Huntington/Hicksville Branch

Huntington/Hicksville branch riders were the most upset about the fare increase (72) of any of the branches. On-time performance (45), ranked second in issues of concern, while riders also wrote in to express that the service is better than driving to work (41) and convenient (37). Last year, comments were concerned with more frequent peak and off-peak service (7), communication with riders (3), and parking and station improvements (3). Riders this year again expressed the need for increased peak hour and late night frequency (36), while also wanting cleanliness of the trains to be a higher priority for the Rail Road (27) and fewer short trains during peak hours (24).

**Table 31. Top Huntington/Hicksville Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
High Fare	47	0	25	72
On-Time Performance	26	0	19	45
Better Than Driving	0	41	0	41
Convenience	0	37	0	37
Frequency	12	0	24	36
Cleanliness	8	0	19	27
More Seats	15	0	9	24
Communication	13	0	9	22
Need New Trains	0	0	16	16
Comfortable Seats	6	0	7	13
Crew	0	11	0	11
Schedule	5	0	5	10
Comfort	0	8	0	8
New Trains	0	6	0	6
Nothing	0	6	0	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>374</b>

## Port Washington Branch

Top issues for riders on the Port Washington branch include cleanliness (47), the convenience of the service (39) and the lack of seating (36). Last year top issues for riders included scheduling of trains (3), train equipment (3) and communications (3).

Riders were most dismayed with the lack of on-board cleanliness, including the train bathrooms. Many comments relating to the lack of available seating pertained to trains being short cars during the morning peak hour.

**Table 32. Top Port Washington Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
Cleanliness	23	0	24	47
Convenience	0	39	0	39
More Seats	24	0	12	36
Frequency	8	0	21	29
On-Time Performance	11	16	11	38
High Fare	24	0	0	24
Reliable	0	17	0	17
New Trains	0	0	11	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	90	72	79	241

## Ronkonkoma Branch

Ronkonkoma riders expressed concern this year about the high fare (58), and on-time performance (39), while acknowledging the convenience of the LIRR (31). Last year concerns included the need for new trains (22), train schedules (21) and service requirements (14) including the need for more express trains on weekends, more frequent peak and off-peak service and more available seats.

**Table 33. Top Ronkonkoma Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
High Fare	48	0	10	58
On-Time Performance	20	0	19	39
Convenience	0	31	0	31
Better Than Driving	0	29	0	29
Frequency	10	0	14	24
Cleanliness	10	0	10	20
New Trains	0	0	16	16
Nothing	0	15	0	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	88	75	69	232

## West Hempstead Branch

West Hempstead riders submitted more comments than last year expressing concerns related to train frequency (21), high fares (9) and train schedules (5). Last year scheduling of train concerns (2) focused on overcrowding on the 5:33 pm train from Penn Station to West Hempstead and the need for additional service on the weekends.

**Table 34. Top West Hempstead Branch Comments by Category and Type**

CATEGORY	LIKE LEAST	LIKE MOST	WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED	TOTAL # OF TOP BRANCH COMMENTS BY ISSUE
Frequency	5	0	16	21
High Fare	9	0	0	9
Schedule	5	0	0	5
New Trains	0	5	0	5
Convenience	0	5	0	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	19	10	16	45

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the 2003 Report Card survey clearly indicate that riders feel conditions have declined since last year on the Long Island Rail Road. This year, riders assigned good grades (B- and B) to a quarter of the performance indicators compared to a third in 2002. The majority of the grades continue to reflect average levels of satisfaction (C and C+).

One key factor, which is likely to have influenced riders' dissatisfaction in 2003, is the MTA's fare increase. Many riders may have expected an increase in service to go along with the higher ticket prices and evaluated LIRR service and conditions more critically as a result.

Systemwide, LIRR riders who think service has gotten better decreased by 12 percent over 2002, while those who think service has gotten worse increased by 11 percent. For overall service, riders assigned the same grade (C+) as last year, but the numerical score declined significantly by 7 percent. Riders' perception tends to be negative despite the Rail Road's past year of record on-time performance.

On a positive note, LIRR riders saw improvements this year in seating availability, security and home station ticket selling hours. Riders' higher marks for morning and evening seating availability clearly recognize the initial benefits of the Rail Road's new M7 fleet. Riders' assessment is likely to continue to improve as the full order of 678 M7 cars is phased in over the next five years to replace the M1 fleet.

In 2003, riders gave higher marks for security systemwide: on-board trains, in Penn Station, at Jamaica Station, Flatbush Avenue Terminal, at home stations and in parking lots. Security at Penn Station was given the third highest grade this year. This is a noted improvement over 2002, when riders' felt more insecure, particularly on-board trains, at Jamaica Station and at home stations.

Riders also noted improvement in home station ticket selling hours-- an area of concern in 2002. This is likely due to riders' growing ease in using the ticket vending machines (TVMs) at their home stations. The Rail Road's introduction of the new TVMs over the past two years has been a benefit for riders.

In 2003, LIRR riders gave significantly lower marks in several areas: evening on-time performance; morning train crews; announcements on-board and at Penn Station; cleanliness on board, in the waiting areas at

Jamaica Station and Flatbush Avenue Terminal and in the restroom at Flatbush Avenue; management performance; and escalator reliability. While riders' lower marks for these fundamental services may reflect higher expectations for service provision associated with paying more, they also identify service concerns.

Evening on-time performance and morning train crews are issues for riders. Since the last report card, LIRR's overall (twenty-four hour, seven days a week) on-time performance for most months has been between 93 and 95 percent. Riders clearly feel that evening on-time performance has slipped both in grade and in numerical significance. Satisfaction with morning train crews is a slightly lesser issue for riders, seeing a significant decline in numerical score, but not in grade.

Announcements on-board trains and at Penn Station are also of particular concern to riders in 2003. Riders want to be well informed about the nature and status of service delays. Riders want reassurance from front line personnel that the Rail Road is aware of and actively working to solve the problem at hand.

As was noted in the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee's (PCAC) November 2003 report, **Best Foot Forward: Training Front Line Personnel to Provide Quality Customer Service**, LIRR ticket clerks, station agents and conductors often lack up-to-the-minute train service information due to inadequate and aging telecommunication technology. Rail Road personnel can also get caught up in solving a particular problem and forget to provide updates to front line personnel or customers.

Cleanliness on-board trains and in station waiting areas and restrooms continues to be an issue this year. Rider dissatisfaction with cleanliness of the Flatbush Avenue restroom increased from the third lowest in 2002 to the worst scoring category in 2003. While on-board cleanliness improved insignificantly over last year, the cleanliness of the Flatbush Avenue waiting area moved significantly into third worst place.

Cleanliness plays an important role in promoting a railroad's positive image. Attention or lack of attention to cleanliness can convey a railroad's level of respect for its customers. Similarly, the level of cleanliness has an impact on riders' travel experience. While it is likely that riders' perception of on-board cleanliness will improve as more new M7 trains come into revenue service over the next five years, it has to be improved in the short term. This was noted in the 2002 Report Card report. Similarly, cleanliness must remain a priority for the LIRR in the waiting room

and restrooms during construction at Jamaica Station and the Flatbush Avenue Terminal.

Escalator reliability emerged as a concern to riders in 2003. Previous problems with reverse direction escalators at a few Penn Station tracks have not been fully resolved in the evening rush.

Finally, riders gave a significantly lower mark for LIRR management performance. The rating on this indicator is likely connected to the higher ticket prices.

Systemwide, riders' written comments conveyed dissatisfaction with frequency of service, on-time performance and seat availability. Other riders were dissatisfied with and wanted to see improvements to train and station cleanliness, better seating and more comfortable temperatures. Another group of riders were dissatisfied with the new ticket prices and wanted to see more new trains and improvements at Penn Station.

Riders' dissatisfaction with service frequency and their desire to have more frequent peak and off-peak service continues to be an issue this year as it has been in the past. In 2003, riders indicated their preference for more frequent service to be a top ranked priority for service improvement on seven of the eleven branches. More frequent service was number one in the list of most wanted improvements requested by riders systemwide. Riders on the Port Jefferson and Huntington branches are particularly vocal on this issue.

In a number of instances, the LIRR cannot improve service frequency without major capital improvements. The LIRR depends on local communities for approval of these projects, and riders represent only a small fraction of the residents. Riders need to be more proactive in advocating for local community support for LIRR service improvement projects, such as the Port Jefferson Branch Yard.

This is a continuing problem. In the LIRRCC's 2002 Report Card survey, riders identified the need to improve LIRR communication sixth in the list of most wanted systemwide improvements. Riders also gave the Rail Road a C for communication to riders about capital project planning and a C+ for service improvement plans. Riders feel the Rail Road needs to strengthen its communication to riders about these issues.

While the majority of LIRR riders are not in favor of the expansion of shuttle bus services at this time, the LIRR should reevaluate the potential for these services in the future as station parking demand increases.

## Recommendations

Recommendations address key issues raised by riders in the LIRRCC's 2003 Report Card survey: announcements and customer information, evening on-time performance, cleanliness, and customer communication and frequency of service. The following improvements are a combination of new and recent PCAC report recommendations.<sup>27</sup>

- **Prioritize Agency Improvements in Communication Technology for the Provision of Train Service Information to Front Line Personnel.** The Rail Road should place a priority on upgrading its information technology, such as computer on-line capabilities, branch line radio reception and public address systems, for front line personnel in stations, on-board trains, in central transportation operations and telephone information agents. The LIRR should also develop a schedule for systemwide implementation.
- **Provide All Station Based Personnel with Text Messaging Pagers to Ensure Communication Systems Back-up.** The LIRR should install text messaging pagers in all station ticket offices to ensure back up communication options during an emergency. Text messaging pagers should also be provided to conductors and other personnel as deemed necessary for this purpose.
- **Create Special Communication “Go Teams” to Facilitate Communication to Customers in Emergencies.** Develop special teams of personnel -- Go Teams -- whose principal focus in an emergency is communicating with the public and providing available options to customers. A similar recommendation was made recently to NJ TRANSIT after experiencing a train derailment.
- **Require More Frequent On-Board and Station Announcements.** The LIRR should require conductors, ticket sellers and station agents to make more frequent and informed announcements to riders about the status of regular service and service delays, current conditions and alternate travel options, if necessary. Providing this type of information reassures riders that the Rail Road is focused on the problem at hand, provides riders the ability to make more informed choices and improves customer relations.

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<sup>27</sup> Refer to PCAC reports: **Best Foot Forward: Training Front Line Personnel to Provide Quality Customer Service** (November 2003).

- **Review Ways to Improve Evening On-Time Performance.** While the Rail Road has set on-time performance records this year, evening on-time performance remains a concern of riders.
- **Review Cleanliness Schedules to Determine Ways to Improve Maintenance Levels.** The LIRR should review current processes and schedules for cleaning on-board trains, train restrooms, and station wait areas and restrooms.
- **Create a More Proactive Educational Campaign to Inform Riders About and Elicit Support for LIRR Plans to Improve the Frequency of Service.** The LIRR should develop new outlets to educate riders about its current capital plans to improve the frequency of service. The agency should also actively promote ways riders can advocate and support LIRR efforts on the local, state and federal levels.



## **APPENDIX A**

LIRR 2003 Report Card Survey Form



## **APPENDIX B**

Numerical Scores for  
Performance Indicators, Systemwide

**Table 35. 2003 Numerical Scores for Performance Indicators, Systemwide<sup>28</sup>**

INDICATOR	2000	2001	2002	2003	% CHANGE (2002-03)
Overall Service	6.65 ↑	6.58	7.37 ↑	<b>6.87</b> ↓	<b>-7%</b>
On-Time Performance AM	8.18 ↑	8.10	8.81 ↑	8.56	-3%
On-Time Performance PM	7.02 ↑	6.76 ↓	8.05 ↑	<b>7.08</b> ↓	<b>-12%</b>
Seating Availability AM	7.76 ↑	7.46 ↓	7.77 ↑	<b>8.43</b> ↑	<b>+8%</b>
Seating Availability PM	6.28 ↑	5.33	6.30 ↑	<b>6.45</b> ↑	<b>+2%</b>
Schedule Adequacy AM	7.71 ↑	7.39 ↓	7.77 ↑	7.89	+2%
Schedule Adequacy PM	7.22 ↑	6.77 ↓	7.28 ↑	7.17	-2%
Train Crews AM	9.04 ↑	8.75 ↓	9.25 ↑	<b>9.04</b> ↓	<b>-2%</b>
Train Crews PM	8.62 ↑	8.41 ↓	8.84 ↑	8.76	-1%
Announcements:					
On-Board AM	7.47 ↑	7.42	7.65	<b>7.27</b> ↓	<b>-5%</b>
On-Board PM	7.14 ↑	7.02	7.41 ↑	<b>6.81</b> ↓	<b>-8%</b>
Penn Sta. AM	NA	8.11	8.48	<b>8.01</b> ↓	<b>-6%</b>
Penn Sta. PM	7.86	7.80	8.36 ↑	<b>7.83</b> ↓	<b>-6%</b>
Jamaica Sta. AM	7.59 ↑	7.33	7.37	7.30	-1%
Jamaica Sta. PM	7.39 ↑	7.23	7.41	7.11	-4%
Flatbush Av. AM	NA	6.74	6.92	6.68	-3%
Flatbush Av. PM	7.33	6.53	6.85	6.42	-6%
Home Sta. AM	6.85 ↑	5.81 ↓	6.13 ↑	6.02	-2%
Home Sta. PM	6.99 ↑	5.98 ↓	6.26	6.06	-3%
Cleanliness:					
On-Board	6.71 ↑	6.52	6.86 ↑	<b>6.29</b> ↓	<b>-8%</b>
On-Board Restroom	5.57 ↑	4.06	4.38	4.44	+1%
Home Sta. Wait Area	8.16 ↑	7.79	8.08 ↑	8.24	+2%
Home Sta. Restroom	7.35 ↑	6.65	7.27 ↑	7.07	-3%
Penn Sta. Wait Area	7.78	7.69 ↓	7.84	7.91	+1%
Penn Sta. Restroom	6.74	6.38	6.34	6.15	-3%
Jamaica Sta. Wait Area	6.52 ↑	6.32	6.33	<b>5.93</b> ↓	<b>-6%</b>
Jamaica Sta. Restroom	5.89 ↑	4.73 ↓	5.18	5.02	-3%
Flatbush Av. Wait Area	6.03	5.30 ↓	6.07 ↑	<b>4.79</b> ↓	<b>-21%</b>
Flatbush Av. Restroom	5.45 ↑	4.13 ↓	5.29 ↑	<b>4.39</b> ↓	<b>-17%</b>
Management Performance	6.59 ↑	6.17 ↓	7.30 ↑	<b>5.66</b> ↓	<b>-22%</b>
Escalator Reliability	7.01 ↑	6.56	6.99 ↑	<b>6.01</b> ↓	<b>-14%</b>
Winter Heating	7.09 ↑	6.86	7.67 ↑	7.45	-3%
Summer A/C	6.05 ↑	5.64	6.85 ↑	6.95	+1%
Seat Condition	6.91 ↑	6.45	6.82 ↑	6.48	-5%
Security:					
On-Board	7.92	7.90 ↓	7.61 ↓	<b>7.79</b> ↑	<b>+2%</b>
Penn Sta.	8.09	8.15 ↑	8.30	<b>8.67</b> ↑	<b>+4%</b>
Jamaica Sta.	6.82	6.86 ↑	6.51 ↓	<b>6.78</b> ↑	<b>+4%</b>
Flatbush Av.	6.88	6.82	6.34	<b>6.78</b> ↑	<b>+7%</b>
Home Sta.	7.74	7.26 ↓	6.77 ↓	<b>7.14</b> ↑	<b>+5%</b>
Parking	6.91 ↑	5.91 ↓	5.82	<b>6.31</b> ↑	<b>+8%</b>
Home Sta. Hours	6.84 ↑	6.48	6.34	6.43	+1%
Home Sta. Ticket-Selling Hours	6.77 ↑	6.05 ↓	6.17	<b>6.64</b> ↑	<b>+8%</b>
Home Sta. Maintenance	7.49 ↑	7.00 ↓	N/A <sup>29</sup>	7.53	----
Peak-Hour Service AM	7.44 ↑	7.63 ↑	8.21 ↑	8.16	-6%
Peak-Hour Service PM	6.34 ↑	6.66 ↑	7.46 ↑	7.13	-4%
Midday Service	6.86 ↑	6.60	7.00 ↑	6.91	-1%
Late-Night Service	6.25 ↑	5.40	6.07 ↑	5.99	-1%
Weekend Service	6.67 ↑	6.12	6.66 ↑	6.72	+1%

<sup>28</sup> Numerical scores are the mean (average) values calculated for each indicator. The arrow symbol indicates that a statistically significant change has occurred since the previous year and denotes the direction of the change. Numerical scores that represent statistically significant changes in 2002 are further indicated in bold.

<sup>29</sup> Home station maintenance was not evaluated in 2002.

## **APPENDIX C**

Riders' Preferred Stations/ Routes For Shuttle Bus Services