

Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council
Chair's Report
May 8, 2014

To say that things have changed since our last meeting would be an understatement. Last Wednesday's decision to replace Helena Williams as President of the LIRR took nearly everyone by surprise. Ms. Williams served longer than any LIRR President since the State assumed ownership of the system in 1966, which provided stability to the leadership of the Rail Road and gave this Council an opportunity to build a relationship with top LIRR management.

The announcement that Ms. Williams was leaving the LIRR was followed quickly by an announcement of the appointment of Patrick Nowakowski as LIRR President, effective next Monday, May 12. Mr. Nowakowski is an engineer by training, with four decades of experience in rail transportation. Most recently he served as Executive Director of the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project, which is nearing completion and will connect the Washington DC Metro system to Dulles Airport. Prior to his work in Washington, Mr. Nowakowski spent 27 years with the Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) in the Philadelphia area, completing his career there as Assistant General Manager of Operations.

We issued a statement thanking Helena Williams for her long and distinguished service and expressing our appreciation for her work with the Council and respect for its mission. Our statement also congratulated Mr. Nowakowski on his appointment as the LIRR's next President.

Mr. Nowakowski has noted that he intends to spend a lot of time learning about local needs and issues and meeting with stakeholders. I believe that we should help him as much as possible to learn about the riders' issues and have been active over the past week in trying to arrange for a meeting with Mr. Nowakowski. This is a critical period for the LIRR and its riders, with a new MTA Capital Program in preparation, questions about East Side Access remaining unanswered, and most immediately, the threat of a strike on the Rail Road as early as July 19.

The collective bargaining process between the LIRR and its represented employees entered its final phase as the LIRR and MTA and the coalition of unions negotiating with the LIRR met in the presence of mediators from April 21 to 23. The two sides met without mediators on April 24, but no settlement was reached.

As if there isn't enough change in the air, Governor Cuomo yesterday released a letter to MTA Chairman Tom Prendergast calling for the establishment of an MTA Transportation Reinvention Commission to examine the MTA system and make recommendations for its future in a report to be submitted before MTA Board

consideration of the next Capital Program in September. Details are scarce, but the process is to include public hearings and we will provide more information as we have it.

The LIRR will be selling and accepting tickets through mobile phones using an application developed by the mobile payments firm Masabi. Masabi is the same company that will be providing mobile ticketing for the Nassau County (NICE) bus system. The mobile ticketing pilots that were used at several golf events served by the LIRR were operated by a competing firm, CooCoo.

On April 24, along with Ira Greenberg and Matt Kessler, I attended a ceremony in Mineola marking the 180th Anniversary of the Long Island Rail Road, which is the nation's oldest railroad still operating under its original name and of course the nation's top railroad in terms of passengers.

At a meeting on April 25, Amtrak CEO Joseph Boardman announced that one of Amtrak's Hudson River tunnels will have to be shut down within the next twenty years. This would not have a direct impact on LIRR operations, but could impact riders through changes in NJ Transit operation that would almost certainly become necessary if tunnel capacity were sharply curtailed. Amtrak's Gateway Program, which is not funded, has plans for two additional Hudson River tunnels.

Tomorrow, I will be meeting with State Senator Jack Martins to discuss the needs of LIRR riders and priorities for the Rail Road. As you know, many of Long Island's State Legislators who have been active in transportation have recently left office or will not be seeking reelection. We look forward to continuing to work with Senator Martins to keep the needs of our commuters in the view of our State government. We will continue to work with our Long Island elected officials to ensure that LIRR commuters get the service that they deserve.