



Mark Epstein – *Chair*
Larry Rubinstein – *Vice Chair*

William Henderson -- *Executive Director*
Ellyn Shannon – *Associate Director*
Angela Bellisio – *Transportation Planner*
Bradley Brashears – *Transportation Planner*
Karyl Berger -- *Research Associate*
Deborah Morrison - *Administrative Assistant*

Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council

2 Broadway, New York, NY 10004 • 212/878-7087 • Fax 212/878-7461 www.pcac.org

Nassau County: Owen Costello • Michael Godino • Raymond Pagano • Bryan Peranzo • Larry Rubinstein
Suffolk County: Gerard P. Bringmann • Sheila Carpenter • Mark J. Epstein • Maureen Michaels
Queens County: Ira Greenberg
Kings County: Matthew Kessler

December 1, 2014

Mr. Patrick Nowakowski, President
MTA Long Island Rail Road
Jamaica Station
Jamaica, NY 11435

Via Email

Dear Mr. Nowakowski:

I am writing to you to express my council's extreme disappointment in the LIRR's handling of the invalid monthly MetroCards that were mailed out through Rail Road's Mail & Ride program. We believe that the remedies that you have developed for the inability of Mail & Ride monthly ticket/MetroCard purchasers to use the MetroCard portion of their tickets shift the burden of resolving this issue mainly onto the rider, and we find this to be unacceptable. We understand that technical problems can happen, but this situation was not handled appropriately. For example, bus operators and subway station booth personnel have been instructed to honor monthly tickets for passage this afternoon, but it is unclear to us why this policy was not instituted as soon as the technical issue was discovered. We also believe that the Rail Road must improve its communication to riders through means other than alerts, as not all riders subscribe to this service.

Further, for some riders, the hardship of resolving this issue will be particularly great. Riders have paid, or have had paid on their behalf, a substantial sum for an unlimited MetroCard for the month of December. Now the LIRR is effectively telling these riders that they will have to pay an additional \$112 in NYC Transit fares for December and that these additional charges will be made up to the rider at a later date. Many riders, including those from households with multiple monthly ticket purchasers, simply do not have the extra funds necessary to pay for additional monthly MetroCards.

We are also concerned about the potential impact of this policy upon those who receive their monthly tickets through a pre-tax transit benefit program and would like the LIRR to address this situation. Other riders may be willing to authorize a regular charge to a credit card or bank account but are wary of using a debit or credit card in a MetroCard vending machine. We recommend making it possible for riders to purchase monthly

MetroCards through major stations' ticket windows, where there is at least a human presence. In addition, some riders may face changes in circumstances so that they will no longer be using the Mail & Ride program in 2015, and they will face an additional wait for a refund of the value of this credit to their account.

We believe that, as this malfunction was in no way the fault of the riders, the remedy provided should exert the lowest possible burden on LIRR riders. One possibility that occurs to us is to provide for NYC Transit to honor monthly LIRR tickets on buses and subways for a period that is sufficient to mail to all affected riders a MetroCard or set of MetroCards to allow them to ride buses and subways through the end of December. This practice might require additional effort on the part of the Mail & Ride program, but it is better that the LIRR and MTA fulfill their responsibility to provide the fare cards that the Mail & Ride program promised rather than to inconvenience the rider who only wants what he or she has already paid for.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark J. Epstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Mark Epstein
Chair

c: Thomas Prendergast