

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD COMMUTER COUNCIL
MINUTES OF JANUARY 12, 2017

A meeting of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) was convened at 4:30 p.m. on January 12, 2017, in the LIRR Transportation Services Conference Room at 1 Penn Plaza, Penn Station, New York City.

The following members were present:

Sheila Carpenter	Mark Epstein
Owen Costello	Michael Godino
Ira Greenberg	

The following members participated in the meeting via Phone:

Gerard P. Bringmann	Larry Rubinstein
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The following members were absent:

Maureen Michaels	Raymond Pagano
Bryan Peranzo	

In addition, the following persons were present:

William Henderson	-PCAC Executive Director
Bradley Brashears	-Transportation Planner
Hector Garcia	-LIRR
Dave Kubicek	-LIRR
Chris Greif	-NYCTRC
Richard Schulman	-Concerned citizen

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Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The agenda for the January 12, 2017 meeting was approved. The minutes of the November 3, 2016 meeting were approved.

Chair's Report

There were no questions.

Owen Costello commented that trash has been an issue over and over. He wanted to know what President Nowakowski has done to follow up on the problem.

Communication Report

Larry Rubinstein stated that the night before he received little from the railroad.

Gerry Bringmann stated that he is disappointed that News 12 reached out to LIRR for comment, but they refused – Even if a miscommunication, should have gotten back to them.

Hector Garcia stated that News 12 spoke to an MTA spokesperson who responded to them and that the LIRR was not available at that time. That communication was not reported by News 12.

Mr. Rubinstein said News 12 is not all live, so this was repeated over and over.

Mr. Epstein said people who were watching News 12 saw this and that it is important the LIRR understands how it looked to the viewing audience.

Old Business

Dave Kubicek talked about the winter weather storm update. The LIRR is now cataloging who is responsible for what snow removal in an aerial photo to improve the clarity of responsibilities. The LIRR has cataloged its understanding of responsibilities which was based on a verbal understanding in the past. The LIRR is holding meetings with localities to confirm those understandings. This is a living document and updated as the local meetings occur.

Mr. Garcia stated that they have a snow escalation plan, where the LIRR goes up the line when plowing and shoveling is not complete.

Mr. Epstein asked what should people do if clearing has not happened.

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Mr. Kubicek commented that they have limited resources, but in a normal snow storm, they should clean. When snow levels are above expected, clearing snow is problem. The LIRR recently purchased a "side by side" that does the work of 20 people.

Mr. Epstein asked how customers can send the LIRR pictures of snow problem areas. Mr. Garcia suggested they send it to the web contacts on MTA.Info.

Mr. Epstein has asked the railroad several times to coordinate with localities on an agreement to not ticket out-of-area-commuters' cars during snow incidents.

Parking: Mr. Garcia said that they have asked localities to relax parking restrictions during severe weather, but they cannot force them. Mr. Kubicek said they can make this part of the outreach effort. He is pushing to reach out face to face with a plan about what we want.

Mr. Kubicek Discussion

Third Rail Scraper Shoes: The entire fleet will be equipped with third rail scraper shoes, where in the past only 10-20% of cars were equipped with them. Thus the LIRR had to make sure there was one scraper car for each train consist.

Work engines: Historically work engines were left in remote areas. Now they will be located in 2-3 centralized locations and running over rails to keep lines clear.

Alcohol trains: The LIRR is reconfiguring an old M3 train without seats into an alcohol train with locomotives and scraper shoes at both ends. The capacity allows the LIRR to run 36-40 hours without stopping, rather than losing 2-3 hours to refill for alcohol. Next year, the LIRR will use 4 sets of M3 and locos. Mr. Rubinstein wanted to know what the risk of ignition is.

Maintenance: Mr. Epstein asked if maintenance is reduced in the winter. Mr. Kubicek said that they do both snow fighting and maintenance, although sometimes low temperatures can prevent some maintenance.

Snow Blower Noise: Mr. Costello asked about old blowers with jet engines, noting they are noisy. He asked how the decibel level is controlled. The jet engines are part of the snow fighting program common to all railroads. The LIRR will have snow fighters with brushes delivered next year. Mr. Costello said he is concerned about the noise level and how it is it controlled. Mr. Kubicek said he would follow up on this.

Mr. Epstein wanted to know if there was any other equipment the LIRR wanted, but could not get. Mr. Kubicek said the LIRR is doing pretty good with what they've got. Needed 4-wheel drive pick-ups, trucks, skid loaders, brush attachments, snow blowers. Now some of these snow fighting machinery, is

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getting set up well. If snow and platform equipment need to be taken from one station to the next, it can now be taken down the line via rail. They have a lot more flexibility. The Control Center now plays a role in making that happen. LIRR has crews that are out there. They are repurposing to move people, goods and services is making it easier. Engineering may look at some larger blowers that can blow the snow further away than just the 3rd rail. They are busy deploying the new equipment. Mr. Kubicek said that the LIRR is in pretty good shape and has ordered new equipment.

If they see a major storm, they start talking early on in press releases to communicate it as early as they can. The storm that came in was 2 to 3 times larger than they predicted.

The M3s are coming in and is above and beyond normal practice. The one benefit to these is he can move salt, people and equipment by rail.

Snow Height and Cancelled Service: Mr. Epstein asked if it is still the LIRR's policy to stop LIRR service when snow reaches a certain height. Mr. Kubicek responded yes and that they communicate possible closings in their press releases.

Heater Tape: Ira Greenberg stated he had seen improvement on the 3rd rail heater tape between CSH and Syosset. The next challenge is to install heater tape in open cut ROW.

M9 Cars: The LIRR is finalizing the M9 car design. The first cars will be tested on the LIRR in the third and fourth quarter of 2017. The M9 is a base car and federally funded. They have to competitively bid the project and have not yet begun to advertise the M9A bid. The basic specifications are the same as the M9.

Car Plugs: The M9's have one location with two plugs, a railroad standard.

Wi-Fi: Mr. Epstein asked about Wi-Fi, Mr. Kubicek stated that this was not a priority based on customer input.

Waiting Room Issues: The LIRR tries to keep doors open, but police sometimes key them shut. They then reopen them and talk to security. Sheila Carpenter said the homeless get blamed for lots of things that sports fans and others do. Mr. Kubicek pointed out that the LIRR must keep waiting rooms clean and well maintained. The LIRR is not set up to keep them open 24/7. Mr. Epstein stated that they did not know of the waiting room closure at Patchogue until riders told us. The question is the best way to resolve the homeless issue. If you close waiting room, people just move outside.

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Mr. Garcia stated that the problem is beyond homeless, sometimes drinking in the waiting room. Mr. Rubinstein wanted to know if anyone reached out to the local municipalities who have enforcement. The Patchogue Mayor is willing to use enforcement people to keep things open longer. Mr. Garcia stated that in some areas there is a resource issue where localities do not want to respond to calls about problems at stations.

Sleep Apnea: Mr. Epstein wanted to know if they could discuss the NTSB investigation regarding the Atlantic Terminal derailment and if LIRR will be speeding up sleep apnea screenings. Mr. Kubicek stated that the sleep apnea study is an MTA initiative. The MTA is working on a larger sleep apnea program. When MTA Headquarters gives us the green light we are ready to go.

Third Track: Mr. Epstein said he wanted to make sure that they are still on same page with position on the project. Mr. Greenberg stated that he wanted to make sure that costs are independently evaluated.

Old Business

Mr. Costello mentioned about trash- the Council has talked about this many times- and crews throw trash out onto the track. It is a problem at Port Washington. A rider sent a letter to everyone at a citizen's group. He told her she should go onto the MTA website to submit the complaint. It gets fixed once, but there is no follow-up. There has to be a manager and follow-up to be sure it is consistently prevented from happening again. The same with the pigeon problem. A woman comes in and cuts the nets.

Mr. Epstein said he heard on News 12 that dozens of people received \$135 parking tickets at Wantagh when signs were changed to 90 minutes only. Hector Garcia will follow-up on that to find out what happened.

Right-of-Way

The contractors are not picking up the old discarded rails, when work is done. It is a pet peeve of LIRR senior management. The LIRR has been working on this. Where the North Fork crosses over the LIE you can see the disused ties.

Active Broken Rail Announced

Ms. Carpenter mentioned a broken rail. Mr. Kubicek stated that there were a few years when testing and resurfacing was not aggressive. What used to take 3 years is now being done in 6 months. The LIRR is catching up. The temperature swing of going from cold to warm is a problem.

Second and Third Track: Mr. Epstein asked whether that track will be better. In response the LIRR representatives cited concrete ties, continuous welded rail, e-clips, and different configurations that are being employed to reduce rail breaks.

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Amtrak

Second and Third Track, are there new possibilities to prevent broken rails? The Amtrak problem the night before was specialized rail that they did not have. It was not stock rail, one end was ok, the other end is a special rail that ties into a switch. They can't even find a rail to repair it. They had to machine a piece to get a line back. They fabricated a piece of rail to help the problem. This is part of the Amtrak funding problem.

Mr. Epstein mentioned they will be having a Meet the Council event in March. Is there a day of the week people cannot do? Sheila, any afternoon except Fridays. Hold it in Penn Station. Will prepare a hand out of 5 or 6 things riders may not but should know about the LIRR. A late note that LIRR will supply for a late trains. Hector Garcia said that the first week of the month is good. 4:30-6/6:30.

An op-ed piece will be done for Newsday. It will list some things like service quality.

LIRRCC is putting together our goals for this year. Email us to let us know what you would like on the list.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellyn Shannon
Associate Director

Follow up items:

What has President Nowakowski has done to follow up on the trash problem

How is noise of old snow blowers with jet engines controlled?