

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD COMMUTER COUNCIL
MINUTES OF Thursday, November 2, 2017

A meeting of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) was convened at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 2, 2017 in the LIRR Transportation Services Conference Room at 1 Penn Plaza, Penn Station, New York, New York

The following members were present:

Gerard P. Bringmann
Michael Godino
Ira Greenberg
Bryan Peranzo

The following members were absent:

Sheila Carpenter
Mark Epstein
Raymond Pagano
Larry Rubinstein

In addition, the following persons were present:

William Henderson	-PCAC Executive Director
Bradley Brashears	-Transportation Planner
Hector Garcia	-LIRR
Vanessa Lochel	-LIRR

Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The agenda for the November 2, 2017 meeting was approved. The minutes of the October 2017 meeting were approved.

Chair's Report

The Chair's Report is attached to these minutes.

Gerard Bringmann delivered the Chair's Report.

Ira Greenberg said that Janno Lieber gave a presentation at the Capital Program Oversight Committee on East Side Access. East Side Access is no longer to be a seven year project, where completion always seems to be seven years away. Instead, here will be an emphasis on shortening the time to completion and developing a real plan to make the 2022 completion date.

Mr. Greenberg commented that the East River Tunnels cannot be reconstructed until the East Side Access project is completed. He questioned what the plan is to keep the tunnel in operation until that point in time. He said that the Council should ask that Amtrak share its plan for keeping the tunnel in service.

Mr. Bringmann commented that Amtrak has remaining Penn Station work to be completed. The members discussed the work and the likely impacts that it would have on LIRR service.

Hector Garcia stated that the Rail Road is in discussion with Amtrak on the scheduling of future work. He said that each track that is rehabilitated may lead to a month worth of impact on operations.

Board Report

Mr. Greenberg discussed the delays that are impacting the installation of Positive Train Control (PTC). He said that this is a complex system and that it is overlaid on the existing cab signaling system. Implementation of the system may go beyond December 31, 2018, the deadline for these systems to be installed. On this date, PTC may not be totally operational at the MTA's commuter railroads. The schedule is not entirely clear, but PTC is not a panacea that ensures rail safety.

Mr. Greenberg also said that he has noticed that on-time performance has been running close to goal for the past two months.

The MTA Board is being used as a surrogate in the competition between Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio, Mr. Greenberg continued. Governor Cuomo's emergency declaration on transit affects whole MTA, even though many people thought it only pertains to NYC Transit.

Grand Central Terminal is a giant facility with lots of unused capacity, but this does not mean that East Side Access is not needed. Mr. Greenberg said that he believes that there will be increasing dissatisfaction about the LIRR's Brooklyn operating plan after East Side Access goes into service.

William Henderson noted that the pilot cars for the M9 contract have just been shipped.

Staff Report

Mr. Henderson said that he is working with the MTA Human Resources department to fill the part-time outreach position for Long Island. He said that the PCAC is also working to fill the vacancy resulting from Angela Bellisio leaving the staff. Bradley Brashears has been promoted to the planning manager position and a search is currently underway to fill the planner position that Bradley vacated.

Member Reports

Bryan Peranzo said that he continues to be interested in work at Hicksville station, and in particular the passenger information features being installed. Vanessa Lockel said that new electronic signage will have more flexibility in terms of signs' color and font size. The LIRR will be adding two sets of signs at the station, at the west and east end staircase.

Mr. Peranzo replied stated that there is a need of "Next Train" sign at the west end as riders may have to use four possible staircases. Signage that only tells that a train is coming may be confusing.

Mr. Garcia stated that he has nothing to report on progress on the waiting rooms.

Mr. Bringmann said that he has been following an LIRR rider site on social media. Most things reported there are not very important, but there are clear trends that can be seen in the postings. One area where problems have been raised is the performance of conductors. Mr. Greenberg remarked that conductors do not want confrontation and often do not even mention problems that are occurring.

Mr. Bringmann stated that there are also quality of life issues discussed on the site. Missed platforms are happening in other places that have not previously been discussed among LIRRCC members. Some of these incidents are related to slip slide, but some are not. On-time performance is good, but some of this improvement is because corrections are not being held more than 3 to 4 minutes in some cases. To compensate for he missed connection, the Rail Road will stop the next train, passing the connecting station, but there are often fewer cars in these trains and there is still a 15 minute wait. Also, issues of safety due to the homeless population are being raised on the site.

Mr. Garcia stated that the LIRR has contracted for homeless services. Many of the homeless individuals whom riders encounter are in shelters, but are required to leave the shelter each morning. Mr. Garcia said that the LIRR has one social media staff person and is hiring two other people to monitor social media.

Mike Godino stated that people have been asking about trains idling in Babylon and complaining they cannot hear the announcements in the station. Mr. Garcia replied that the LIRR will soon have to make decision on electrification or continued use of diesel equipment on the South Shore. He noted that new locomotives will meet Tier 4 emission standards, which should eliminate some environmental problems.

Old Business

The members noted that they had a discussion of PTC earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Bringmann said that he has reviewed resumes for new members.

New Business

Mr. Henderson noted that work is progressing rapidly on the MTA's New Fare Payment System.

Mr. Garcia stated that the LIRR wants to have its New Fare Payment System managers come to an LIRRCC meeting to explain where the project is going and gather the members' impressions about how the system should function

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Henderson
Executive Director