

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD COMMUTER COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 2017

A meeting of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) was convened at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 6, 2017, in the LIRR Transportation Services Conference Room at Penn Station New York.

The following members were present:

Gerard P. Bringmann
Ira Greenberg

The following members participated in the meeting via phone:

Michael Godino
Larry Rubinstein

The following members were absent:

Sheila Carpenter
Owen Costello
Mark Epstein
Raymond Pagano
Bryan Peranzo

In addition, the following persons were present:

William Henderson	-PCAC Executive Director
Bradley Brashears	-Transportation Planner
Chris Greif	-NYCTRC
Debra Greif	-Concerned Citizen

Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The agenda for the April 6, 2017 meeting was accepted by those in attendance. The minutes of the January 12, 2017 meeting were not approved due to the lack of a quorum.

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Chair's Report

The Chair's Report is attached to these minutes.

The members discussed the election of Tom Suozzi to Congress and whether the Council could work with him regarding recurring issues with the maintenance of Amtrak facilities that are used by the LIRR. Mr. Henderson noted that Mr. Suozzi is a new member of Congress in the minority party and this may limit his power, but that a member of Congress is nevertheless an individual who Amtrak will take seriously.

Mike Godino noted that the Trump Administration is talking about restoring the nation's infrastructure and that addressing Amtrak's maintenance deficiencies within the area covered by Penn Station Central Control would be a good starting place for this restoration.

Larry Rubinstein said that he has heard from many riders that they do not trust the on-time performance statistics that are produced by the LIRR and suggested that these figures should be eliminated from Train Talk due to the negative reaction that they produce among riders.

The Council briefly discussed improvements that can be made to delay and performance measures that are released by the LIRR. Ira Greenberg said that the fundamental problem with the statistics that are used is that they do not truly reflect the passenger experience.

Board Report

Ira Greenberg delivered the Board Report. He said that there are indications are that Amtrak's failures may ultimately lead to further delays in the East Side Access project. Amtrak has to date not provided the level of resources that they had promised in connection with the project and the MTA has delivered the message to Amtrak that they must keep their commitments. At the current pace of work, the entire schedule contingency for East Side Access would be exhausted because of delays caused by Amtrak's failure to meet its commitments.

Mr. Greenberg said that there is also a financial issue associated with the Gateway Tunnel project. The path for the Gateway Tunnel was preserved in advance of the development of Hudson Yards, but this required demolition of a West Side Yard shop building that was to be replaced. This replacement has not taken place, which does not delay operations but costs the LIRR money. Under the terms of the agreement, the LIRR is being reimbursed for this cost as a project expense. Mr. Greenberg noted that the LIRR has invested a lot of money

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in Penn Station, and this fact is not often considered in conversations about the future of the station.

Mr. Greenberg said that work on the Farley Post Office is moving ahead and that riders will soon be able to board trains more easily from west of Penn Station. He said that although he had some skepticism about the usefulness of these improvements early on, they seem to be a better and better idea as the West Side develops.

Mr. Greenberg also noted that stated that Mitch Pally is trying to ban the sale and consumption of alcohol on the MTA's commuter trains. This latest push has been aided by financial irregularities in the Metro-North commissary program, which in turn has led to the suspension and probable permanent termination of the use of bar carts on platforms at Grand Central Terminal.

Communications Working Group

Gerry Bringmann stated that communication has not been terrible during the recent disruptions, but the Rail Road is still not telling riders what is happening in relation to connections that some riders must make to complete their trips. He stated that today was the first time that the 4:03 departure from Penn was announced as running local in the alerts that were issued, which impacts connections that riders can make. Mr. Bringmann said that he has heard that there is a mobile phone app giving incorrect information on cancellations of trains and that he is uncertain which app is being discussed, but it may be the MTA Train Time application.

Mr. Rubinstein said that one of the communication complaints that he most frequently receives is that the alerts are written to cater to Penn Station passengers. People at other stations do not know what the alerts mean for them, as trains are identified only by their scheduled departure time from Penn Station.

Mr. Godino noted that the LIRR used to announce revised stopping times for trains at outlying stations when they are diverted, but they no longer do so.

Mr. Godino questioned whether the LIRR turns off announcements in some corridors in Penn Station after a particular hour. He said that he has missed out on some information because an announcement did not play in a location in the station where he was waiting.

Old Business

Mr. Rubinstein reported that parking permits at Bellmore are now \$10 per year. Although this is an increased cost, the main problem in this parking area has been enforcement officers writing tickets for vehicles being out of their stalls. This

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is particularly unfair when drivers cannot see the lines defining parking spaces because of snowfall.

New Business

The members discussed the recent disruptions connected to Penn Station derailments. Mr. Bringmann related that he was able to board some LIRR trains that operated on tracks that were south of the Track 11-12 platform, but many riders were unable to take advantage of these trips because they are unfamiliar with the locations of these tracks , as they are mainly used for NJ Transit trains.

Mr. Rubinstein asked why LIRR President Pat Nowakowski has not been more visible during the disruptions. Mr. Greenberg said that it is likely that the MTA wanted the highest levels of the organization to be out in front on these issues.

Mr. Bringmann asked what the impact of political changes in Washington would be on public transportation. The consensus of those in attendance is that this is at present uncertain.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Henderson
Executive Director