

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD COMMUTER COUNCIL
MINUTES OF May 10 2018

A meeting of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) was convened at 4:30 p.m. on May 10, 2018, in the LIRR Transportation Services Conference Room at 1 Penn Plaza, Penn Station, New York.

The following members were present:

Gerard P. Bringmann	Ira Greenberg
Mark Epstein	Bryan Peranzo

The following members participated in the meeting via Phone:

Michael Godino
Larry Rubinstein

The following members were absent:

Sheila Carpenter	Raymond Pagano
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In addition, the following persons were present:

William Henderson	-PCAC Executive Director
Sheila Binesh	-PCAC Transportation Planner
Richard Mulieri	-MTA
John McCarthy	-MTA
Ryan Attard	-LIRR
Stanley Davis	-LIRR
Rosemary Mascali	-Transit Solutions

Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The agenda for the May 10, 2018 meeting was approved. The minutes of the April 12, 2018 meeting were approved.

Presentation – Status of the East Side Access Program

The presentation was made by Richard Mulieri, Senior Director – Public Affairs. MTA Capital Construction Company. He said that there are over 100 individual projects in progress or in the pipeline on the LIRR. Among the efforts that are underway on the LIRR are the Ronkonkoma to Farmingdale double track, which has received a lot of support from elected officials and groups such as the Long

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Island Association, and the construction of a Main Line third track, which impacts a section of track that serves 40 percent of the Rail Road's riders.

The Long Island Rail Road Expansion Program, as the third track is formally known, is different in terms of the degree of advance consultation that was conducted with the affected communities and the procurement of the project through a design-build process. Because of the advance work that has been done, the environmental process for the project took only one year and the completion date is set for 2022.

The MTA is committed to complete the East Side Access Project by December 2022. It is critical that this project be finished by the time that Amtrak undertakes its repairs on its East River tunnels. In addition to providing capacity during Amtrak's work, the project is the first major expansion of the LIRR system in a century. While there have been some delays in the project, the construction of tunnels was advanced through the use of precast concrete structures, which accounted for 75 percent of this project element.

The major problem with keeping East Side Access on track is the work at Harold interlocking, which is in large part due to Amtrak's failure to keep its commitments to provide support to the project in Harold. The delays that resulted from this failure cost \$340 million, and the total project budget was recently increased by \$955 million, for a total project cost of \$11.1 billion.

To contain costs and delays in the project, MTA Capital Construction is taking a new approach to the East Side Access where there will be no further discretionary change orders on the project and LIRR personnel will be better integrated into the project. The amodernli.com website will transition from discussing the third track project generally to providing more detailed information on the 100 projects that will be executed on the LIRR.

Gerry Bringmann asked whether the Sunnyside station has been eliminated from the project. Mr. Mulieri said that there is funding in the Capital Program for a study of potential stations in the area, but a Sunnyside station was not a part of East Side Access. Mark Epstein said that improved train schedules are the primary concern of riders and asked what changes would be forthcoming. John McCarthy of the MTA said that work that will be affecting schedules is moving along. The double track project will begin to allow for improved schedules in the fall of 2018, but the full capability unlocked by this project will not be available until other projects are complete. In the meantime, construction will cause some service outages, but when East Side Access comes on line, service could increase by a factor of up to 50 percent, depending on the availability of cars.

Mr. Epstein said that a public information effort must start early because riders have sacrificed a lot and want to receive a return from these sacrifices. The MTA must explain what is happening now and what benefits will result. Mr. McCarthy

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said that bringing the LIRR into a new terminal will make for major changes. Many decisions will need to be made, including whether Brooklyn's Atlantic Terminal will be served by "scoot" service and to what degree that will happen. He said that LIRR President Phil Eng and MTA Chief Development Officer Janno Lieber are considering the pros and cons of shuttle service between Brooklyn and Jamaica.

Mr. Bringmann asked when the Council would see a master plan for service changes, including what will happen to the Hunterspoint terminal and how many trains will serve Penn Station. Mr. McCarthy said that much of the scheduling will be done in response to demand and that the LIRR will have the flexibility to adjust service. Mike Godino said that changing Brooklyn service to a shuttle would be done to the detriment of Brooklyn commuters and that this would affect thousands of riders. Mr. McCarthy said that this issue has been raised at the MTA Board and that senior management are hearing the objections to converting Brooklyn service to a shuttle.

Mr. Epstein said that the Council has always been told that direct Brooklyn service is not possible and now it is a subject for discussion. Mr. McCarthy said that there are issues of interference with other train movements, but riders concerns have been heard and management is deciding what to do.

Mr. McCarthy said that Hicksville, Westbury, and New Hyde Park are all pursuing zoning changes that are influenced by the project. Mr. Epstein asked whether there will be additional parking in conjunction with the changes. Mr. McCarthy said there will be some additional structure parking built.

Mr. Bringmann asked who is responsible for quality control on the project. Mr. Mulieri said that MTA Capital Construction has quality control operations. Mr. Bringmann noted that other MTA projects have not had good quality control and that the rider does not know the difference between MTA Capital Construction and other MTA entities that have undertaken projects.

Chair's Report

The Chair's Report is attached to these minutes. There were no questions on the report, which had been previously distributed to riders.

Board Report

Ira Greenberg delivered the Board report. He said that service has been a major issue, but that rolling stock is performing better than ever. Much of the problem with service involves Amtrak and unscheduled engineering work. Efforts are

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underway to improve performance; President Nowakowski developed a performance improvement plan and President Eng is reviewing and revising this plan.

Mr. Greenberg said that the M9 cars will be arriving at the end of 2018 and that at present the M3s won't be equipped with positive train control technology. The minimum that must be achieved is the installation of all equipment and training of operating personnel, along with the operation of positive train control on the Port Washington Branch. He said that he is concerned that the railroad will be keeping the M3 cars, which are in terrible shape. One remaining question is what will be done to avoid accidents in terminals, since they are generally not covered by positive train control.

Staff Report

Mr. Henderson briefly discussed the public contacts that the PCAC office has had with LIRR riders.

Member Reports

Mr. Bringmann said that he has encountered crowding on the 5:09 pm train from Penn Station to Speonk. Mr. Epstein said that he has seen bicycles on peak hour trains with no enforcement of the rule against them. Mr. Bringmann said that the culture of the Rail Road emphasizes avoidance of confrontation.

Mr. Godino said that horns sounded as a warning to passengers on an approaching platform are a necessary feature, as some people on platforms do not realize a train is approaching. Stanley Davis of the LIRR said that the LIRR has just installed new timing points 1000 feet from platforms at all station that will allow for an announcement of an approaching train. He said that riders should be hearing audible announcements of approaching trains now.

Ryan Attard of the LIRR outlined the upcoming station work that will occur this summer.

Communication Report

Mr. Davis said that the LIRR is implementing performance improvement measures and that his staff has been through training. Mr. Epstein noted that he has encountered fewer communication problems and asked what the members should do about problems that they do encounter. Mr. Davis said that the Council can forward complaints. Mr. Bringmann discussed a situation where there was a

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great deal of confusion about connections after a major delay. He said that the LIRR's estimated time of arrival function on its app sometimes does not work. Mr. Davis said that the Rail Road has not announced this function because it is still being tested.

Mr. Bringmann said that it is important to highlight positive stories as well as problems. Mr. Epstein said that station displays identify branch line managers but they should also be in stations in person. Mr. Davis agreed and said that the LIRR is working on ways to make this happen. He said that there are efforts at the Rail Road to get better information to trains crews as they work. Mr. Epstein said that better information on cars that will not platform. Mr. Davis said that a solution may be to increase the frequency of on board announcements about the need for some passengers to move to another car to leave the train. Larry Rubenstein asked whether short trains could be announced in Penn Station.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Rosemary Mascali of Transit Solutions spoke briefly on the loss of tax exemptions for employers providing transit benefits. She said that this is a recordkeeping problem as well as a financial loss for businesses.

The issue of LIRR employees using town parking spaces at the Hicksville station was raised. Also noted were delays on the Port Jefferson Branch that could be addressed through construction of a second track and the need for a third overpass between platforms at Jamaica. The upcoming weekend closures at the Northport Station for renovation work were also raised.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Henderson
Executive Director