

**Testimony of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council  
Before the MTA Board on Proposals for Service  
and Administrative Changes  
Chateau Briand, Carle Place, NY  
March 1, 2010**

Good Evening. My name is Larry Rubinstein and I am a member of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC), the legislatively mandated representatives of the Long Island Rail Road riders. The LIRRCC was established in 1981 by the State Legislature to represent the LIRR riders. Our volunteer members are recommended by senior elected officials of each county and borough, and appointed by the Governor of the state.

The members of the LIRRCC not only represent the riders, but we are riders ourselves. Our experiences led us to discover areas where improvements can be made and advocate for better service on the LIRR, but we are not here to discuss improvements. Instead, we are here to express our alarm at the service cuts that are before you this evening and belief that they threaten to degrade service on the Rail Road for years to come and to start us down the path where fewer people who have a choice will ride the railroad. We also recognize that there are great financial challenges ahead and are concerned that these proposed reductions are but a first step in a downward progression of service cuts.

The eliminations of individual trains are troubling enough for LIRR riders. The list of trains eliminated, trains combined, and trains shortened, distributed across the system to spread the burden over Long Island, will in the best of circumstances result in a slower, more crowded ride for those of us who use the Rail Road. When there are problems in the system, these cuts remove some of the capacity and flexibility that is sorely needed when service is disrupted. The LIRR is a complex system and we all know that there are operational problems from time to time. Further, as a rider with a varied schedule who uses the Rail Road in the early morning hours, I'm particularly concerned that the LIRR is headed down a path of restricting the range of options open to commuters.

More disturbing are the proposed reductions that would end entire classes of service. These proposed cuts would end regular service to Greenport, end Belmont Park service except for the Belmont Stakes, end weekend service on the West Hempstead branch and discontinue overnight service to Brooklyn. Eliminating some trains and combining others may be limited to a set of targeted cuts that preserves the basic structure of service, but these actions diminish the system itself. Add in cuts like the elimination of half-hourly service on the Port Washington line, despite substantial population and strong ridership, and we see real damage being done to the system. I emphasize that these are not reductions made as a result of declining ridership. There is a purpose and demand for each of the services that is being eliminated.

Sadly, all of these cuts fail to do much to fill the financial hole in which the MTA finds itself, as their value at \$7.6 million is only about one percent of the MTA's projected three-quarter of a billion dollar deficit for this year. The MTA's financial problems are clearly not a result of operating too much service. Instead they are the product of \$143 million in State funding cuts in the Governor's Deficit Reduction Program and shortfalls of \$229 million and \$378 million in 2009 and 2010 tax receipts from the levels projected by the State. We question what is being lost in making these cuts and whether the savings generated can justify the impact on riders and on the region.

We are asking this Board to not decide on service cuts and other measures without first meeting with riders and those that use system on a daily basis. Too many times management gets held up looking at numbers, and they don't deal with the reality of what will happen to the riders who are using the trains every day. We are the ones that ride the Rail Road every day, and we have some ideas and ways to save money that you may have not looked at before. The Council and its members are an asset that you need to tap. Our members and the members of our sister Councils represent the riders of both of the MTA's commuter railroads, as well as the City's transit riders. We are more than happy to meet with this Board anytime. The PCAC office is in the MTA building; talk to us. We might have things to put on the table that can help all the commuters in the MTA region, and lessen the blow to riders.

Thank you