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Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council

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Statement of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council at the Public Review Meeting for the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council Draft Regional Transportation Plan

July 15, 2009

Good evening. I am Gerard P. Bringmann, the Vice Chairman of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council (LIRRCC). The LIRRCC is the legislatively mandated voice of Long Island Rail Road riders, formed by the State Legislature in 1981.

We welcome the opportunity to comment upon NYMTC's Draft 2010-2035 Regional Transportation Plan. The LIRRCC believes that improving transportation on Long Island will require meaningful long-range planning, and we encourage NYMTC to continue to stimulate discussion of the Island's future as part of this planning process.

The draft plan includes several projects that are keys to the future of the LIRR and Long Island. We welcome the new flexibility that will be created by the East Side Access project, but much more needs to be done to unlock this project's potential. Adding a third track to the Rail Road's Main Line is critical to provide operational flexibility and opportunities for reverse peak service, and we support its timely completion.

We are pleased to note that several needed capacity enhancement and modernization projects on the LIRR are included in the plan with a stated timeframe:

- Main Line capacity enhancements including double track, Republic Station, and strategic hub developments
- Centralized Train Control
- Jamaica Station area improvements to increase capacity

The plan also contains a number of important improvements without a stated timeframe for implementation. Many of these improvements are critical to taking full advantage of the East Side Access project and improving lagging service in current diesel territory, including:

- LIRR Huntington/Port Jefferson electric yard
- LIRR Mid-Suffolk electric yard
- Extension of electrification into eastern Suffolk County
- Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) service on LIRR branches

These projects must move from good ideas to be implemented “sometime” to firm commitments to action with specific timeframes. Likewise, issues addressed in the plan such as station area planning, station access, and new transit services in heavily traveled corridors must progress from studies to projects to be implemented.

Finally, much remains to be done in the area of funding. While this plan addresses funding and we recognize its complexities, its importance demands that an explicit program for funding these necessary improvements be developed.