



# Meeting Minutes of November 12, 2020

A virtual meeting of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) was convened at 4:30 pm on Thursday, November 12, 2020 via Zoom.

## Member Attendance

Gerard P. Bringmann (Chair)	<b>Present</b>
Sheila Carpenter	Absent
Bryan Peranzo	Present
Marilyn Poterson	Absent
Larry Rubinstein (Vice Chair)	<b>Present</b>

## Staff Attendance

Lisa Daglian (Executive Director)	Present
Bradley Brashears (Planning Manager)	Absent
Sheila Binesh (Transportation Planner)	Present
Shaul Picker (Research Intern)	Absent
Gav Mazurek (Research Intern)	Absent

## Non-member Attendance

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Affiliation</u></b>
Hector Garcia	LIRR
Christopher Greif	NYCTRC
Debra Greif	Concerned citizen
Matt Kamper	Concerned citizen
Andrew Pollack	Concerned citizen
Jason Anthony	Concerned citizen
Charlton D'Souza	Concerned citizen
Matthew Kessler	Concerned citizen
Ron Troy	Concerned citizen
Mindy Germain	Transit Solutions

***Approval of Agenda for November 12, 2020 meeting.  
Approval of Minutes for October 8, 2020 meeting.***

**Chair's Report, attached**

G. Bringmann: On November 18<sup>th</sup>, the November financial plan will be discussed at the next meeting of the MTA Board, and the dates of fare hearings will be announced. I understand that the Board will release a plan if they get a bailout and a different plan if they do not get a bailout.

L. Daglian: Any of the cuts put into place will be reversible, and nothing will take place before January. The two scenarios include the 4% biennial fare increase.

**Hector Garcia, LIRR External Affairs**

*New ventilation*

H. Garcia: Metro-North is testing it first, and we will follow them. They are evaluating it and will have something to say by the end of the year to see if it is working.

Two weeks ago, a vendor came to us about demonstrating a device that atomizes and diffuses hydrogen peroxide across the train. It would have to be installed in the ceiling. One unit takes twenty minutes. While it is operating, no one can be in the car, and it needs to be plugged in. Nothing beats what we can do ourselves.

C. D'Souza: I have been seeing a lot of people on the packed afternoon trains refusing to wear masks.

*New Leaf technology*

We first tested it last year. The technology is a laser that is mounted on a train. It is aimed at the rail and disintegrates the residue and leaves. Initially the train could only do this when moving at 15 mph. In the past we used trains that would drop material on the rails to make them gritty and add friction. With the laser train, the speed is increased to 25 mph, so we can cover the entire system in two days. Now that we don't need to buy the other material to put on the tracks, money is saved.

G. Bringmann: It should save time in the shop as fewer wheels would need to be re-grinded.

H. Garcia: Three years ago, we had a big problem, and now we have additional wheel truing machines.

L. Daglian: Are you doing the same amount of tree trimming or are you going to pare it back?

H. Garcia: We still do that, and it is underway now in Queens and out east. Three years ago, we did it very aggressively and did our four-year plan in one year. In the past we would leave a buffer, but in the last few years we have been trimming from property line to property line, which is making some communities unhappy, as they do not like seeing trees in their yards. In the last year, every time there was a storm, trees fell off of our property, which we can't touch.

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G. Bringmann: How are we doing in terms of ridership?

H. Garcia: It is at 27%—ridership has been flat. We are a few percentage points ahead of what was anticipated in the report released in the summer. We are hearing that some companies are planning to come back in January, but many are deferring until July.

### **Old Business**

L. Rubinstein: The LIRR should get the word out about the various things that it is doing to keep riders safe. It has mailing lists and addresses from all the people who use mail-n-ride. They should use layman's terms to explain things like MERV filtration. You should figure out a way to get out fliers and inform the public to alleviate their fear of getting on the train. There are a lot of companies that have learned to work from home. People are scared to be on a train.

L. Daglian: Sheila has been working on a report for many months called Getting Riders Back on Board. It looks to address rider concerns from a variety of perspectives, including ventilation, cleanliness, and mask compliance. We have been meeting with and working with the railroads to address some of the topics talked about today. People are riding more on weekends, because they want to, rather than they have to.

A. Pollack: Metro-North has seen an increase in ridership on weekends. I expect ridership to go up after Thanksgiving as the city is getting ready for its holiday traditions.

G. Bringmann: A lot of the traditional things that bring people into the city won't happen this year as the Governor is increasing COVID-related restrictions.

C. Grief: A lot of people are afraid of riding the train, but some people have said that they would be willing to ride as trains are being more thoroughly cleaned. I have seen more people going to Atlantic Terminal

C. D'Souza: Trackwork on the Main Line is one reason why weekend ridership is down. There are hardly any shuttle buses while the Main Line is closed, and many NICE buses were missing. Three weeks ago, it took 2.5 hours to get from Hempstead to Mineola. Shuttle buses were only running every two hours. How do you expect people to get back on the train if shuttle buses don't come, or if people have to go to Hempstead when people could take a shuttle bus from Hicksville to Floral Park, where people could get the Hempstead Branch? There are also many homeless people sleeping at Penn Station. The other night I saw people sleeping on the platforms. Why isn't the MTAPD doing anything?

J. Anthony: What are you going to do about the shuttle bus situation, given that if buses run infrequently, they will be overcrowded, making it impossible for people to socially distance.

**Action item: Look into NICE bus's handling of shuttle buses during Main Line track work**

H. Garcia: It is not realistic for people to be able to socially distance on mass transit.

L. Rubinstein: People can wear K95 masks, which are more effective than cloth masks. Doubling up cloth masks will make it safer for people while they are commuting.

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C. D'Souza: I wanted to thank Hector for cross-honoring on the LIRR during November. We heard that trains did not get more crowded.

L. Daglian: I took one of the LIRR getaways and it was very professionally done.

G. Bringmann: It looks like Moynihan is close to reopening. Could we get an update on it, and how it affects the LIRR?

H. Garcia: It is supposed to be completed and opened by the end of the year.

L. Rubinstein: How far ahead is the LIRR on Main Line? Has it has been able to do work more quickly with lower ridership?

H. Garcia: Third track is half way done. We are on the original schedule. We have four grade crossings completed, and School Street will open shortly. By next summer, most of the civil work - the grade crossings, the bridges, the retaining walls - will be done. The work left will be communications, power, track, and signals.

L. Rubinstein: Are they going to make announcements for the LIRR in the old Amtrak Concourse so riders can be there too.

H. Garcia: I am not sure what will happen there. The new entrance at 33<sup>rd</sup> Street will open in December. Construction to improve the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street concourse will begin.

C. D'Souza: What will be the hours for the Moynihan station be? I noticed that the West End concourse now closes at 11 p.m.

H. Garcia: I am not sure what their hours will be. I would think that it would be open 24/7 as Amtrak operates 24/7.

L. Rubinstein: The plan is for it to operate 24/7 like Penn Station.

C. D'Souza: The homeless situation is bad. I have seen people sleeping on the platform. Security is having a hard time getting them out. We need someone on the Eighth Avenue corridor, and by the 1/2/3 platform so cops can respond right away. It takes five minutes for a cop to get there if there are fights.

L. Daglian: Doesn't the Amtrak police have some role to play in this?

H. Garcia: Yes, it is a combination of Amtrak PD and MTA PD.

L. Rubinstein: Hector, can you reach out to the BRC on our behalf?

H. Garcia: Why don't you invite someone from there to come to the next meeting?

**Action item: Get someone from the BRC to come and speak at the next meeting.**

A. Pollack: Mineola needs patrols. I have heard of people, including children, walking on the train tracks.

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J. Anthony: There should be more outreach for suicide prevention. There needs to be signage telling people that if you are in distress, there is a hotline for you to call or text.

G. Bringmann: The signs are there, and the LIRR is a transit agency, not a social work agency. They do what they can, and there are limits.

R. Troy: The breakdowns in diesel territory are nonstop. I would love to know why these trains keep breaking down and what is going to be done about it.

### ***Action item: Find out more about breakdowns in diesel territory***

M. Germain: I started this summer with TransitSolutions. Our mission is to reduce traffic and improve air quality. We are funded by the EPA and work with the LIRR to inform people about local transit options, and educate hospitals, companies, universities on pre-tax benefits. I have been focusing on education and am launching a program calling it the Long Island library tour, meeting with companies to make them feel safer about using the transit system.

G. Bringmann: A lot of people have money in WageWorks they cannot use. We are trying to get the Federal government to have a one-time exemption so people can withdraw this money. Some riders are afraid of losing their money entirely. Lisa is going to do more follow-up with Federal elected officials in the next week or so.

L. Rubinstein: That money was taken pre-tax, so there is an issue is that there would need to be a formula for paying tax on that money.

L. Daglian: This needs to be resolved by the end of March.

G. Bringmann: We have two Congressmembers willing to work on this issue.

## ***Adjourned***

### ***Action items:***

- Look into NICE bus's handling of shuttle buses during the Main Line track work
- Get someone from the BRC to come and speak at the next meeting.
- Find out more about breakdowns in diesel territory

**Meeting recording:** [Link](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daglian  
Executive Director