

**Statement of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council
to the
MTA Committee on Finance**

November 10, 2008

Good morning, I am Gerard Bringmann, the Chairman of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter's Council, which was created by the State Legislature in 1981 to serve as the representative of Long Island Rail Road riders.

The riders of the LIRR recognize that the MTA has been severely impacted by the current economic slowdown. Many of our fellow riders are feeling the pain as well, but it is important to point out that LIRR ridership is at a level not seen since the late 1940's and, although its rate of increase has slowed, it is still growing. Commuters arrive at their stations to find packed trains every day, and, while they pay dearly for their ride, are often forced to stand for their journeys to and from work. In view of this, we are distressed to hear talk of service cuts and call upon this Committee and the MTA Board to do everything possible to maintain adequate levels of service on the LIRR.

The Long Island Rail Road is a critical economic lifeline for our communities. The wages earned by commuters riding the LIRR support not only the families of these workers, but the entire economy of Long Island. We cannot risk having this lifeline threatened, particularly with the current economic situation.

Even with existing levels of service, we have heard and discussed with LIRR management complaints of workers who were forced to endure long commutes as a result of gaps in schedules. We also heard from riders who faced a choice between taking an early train and jeopardizing their employment as a result of lateness caused by all too frequent service disruptions. Service reductions that would further compromise the ability of commuters to reach their places of employment are unacceptable.

Long Island is finding that it cannot prosper without improved transportation options. The Island is changing, and the demands on the Rail Road are changing also. Service is needed not only for the 9 to 5 commuter but also for off peak travel both to work and for other purposes, and the demand for this service has been growing rapidly in recent years. Hard economic times have not reduced our need for public transportation, and as the representative of LIRR riders we demand that the MTA continue to deliver the service that is critical to Long Island's future.

Thank you.