

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

July 16, 2008

Good morning, I am Gerry Bringman, 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.

As everyone knows, LIRR ridership is booming! Today the LIRR will report that the May year to date ridership was up 4.6% above 2007. We all know that the price of gas averaging \$4.32 on Long Island is a big motivator. This should be a time of celebration and investment; it is absolutely not a time to cut major capital projects.

The current East Side Access project will reduce commuting time for many Long Islanders by 20 minutes. The LIRR's proposed Third Track project will bring express rail service to thousands of Long Islanders and substantially improve the Rail Road's on-time performance. It is extremely upsetting that at a point in time, where Long Island riders are finally flocking to the rails, the state of New York is not investing the necessary money to insure the completion of these projects. In October, 2007, Assemblyman Richard Brodsky presented the MTA Board with the names of 46 legislators and urged the agency to "embrace" the offer of help from Albany. Mr. Brodsky said the group would "seek a bigger share of taxpayer funds collected by Albany for mass transit." He said "all we are asking you to do is ask us to give you money. It seems reasonable. Please ask us for more money." Well, the MTA has been asking, and it is time for Albany to step up to the plate.

On a related note, today, the LIRRCC asks this Committee to support President Helena Williams request to fund an examination of near term track, train, platform and signal improvements that could increase capacity on the Main Line. The Committee must support this request to ensure that

the LIRR is able to provide the highest train through put, highest rider capacity and most reliable infrastructure possible for the East Side Access project.

Thank you.