



# Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2021

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A virtual meeting of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) was convened at 4:00 pm on Thursday, May 13, 2021 via Zoom.

## **Member Attendance**

Gerard P. Bringmann (Chair)	Present
Bryan Peranzo	Present
Marilyn Poterson	Present
Larry Rubinstein (Vice Chair)	Present
Christy Tolbert	Present

## **Staff Attendance**

Lisa Daglian (Executive Director)	Present
Bradley Brashears (Planning Manager)	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
Joseph McGrann	MTAPD
Randy Glucksman	MNRCC
Andy Pollack	Concerned citizen
Charlton D'Souza	Concerned citizen
John Mitchell	Concerned citizen

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*Presentation: Joseph McGrann, Chief of Operations, Administration, MTA PD*

G. Bringmann: We raised the issue of cooperation among police because in Penn Station there are 5-6 entities.

J. McGrann: There are about a dozen Amtrak police, and they cover the Northeast Corridor, so they are pretty restricted. NJ Transit has an agreement with Amtrak, allowing Amtrak police to cover their station at Penn, as NJ Transit polices New Jersey stations. Cooperation is very good. The NYPD gives me as many people as they can accommodate. We are trying to start an aggressive program to get more cameras in Penn Station.

L. Rubinstein: Are you also responsible for cameras on trains?

J. McGrann: We do not monitor or install them, but use them when a need arises, and can grab the footage and use it to solve the issue. The data is only pulled when needed.

L. Rubinstein: Are the cameras at stations being monitored?

J. McGrann: Yes. I have a number of cameras at Penn next to the district desk at Penn Station so they can be monitored by the district office. Those cameras we have in problem locations. We have other cameras in different locations that are not being monitored.

L. Daglian: Did you say were a dozen Amtrak police for the entire Northeast Corridor?

J. McGrann: I would need to confirm the actual count but it is a low number. They are spread thin.

L. Daglian: Whenever I hear Amtrak has a situation under control, Amtrak is in charge of Penn Station, I think of them having more of a presence. Even if it were 12 people on a rotating basis, that is not as many as I would like to think were there. How much additional overtime is the additional overtime approved for train patrols? How many people do you have all-together now?

J. McGrann: 950, with 47 in the police academy

L. Daglian: Do you apportion your teams by railroad?

J. McGrann: We apportion them by the area we cover, and amount of issues. I try to keep it even. There are likely a few more out east than up north based on the amount of issues.

L. Daglian: Is there a sharing agreement on the properties? Gerry tells a story about how far you can go in a station.

J. McGrann: There are specific areas we patrol, but if there is a serious issue that needs to be addressed, we will address it.

L. Rubinstein: Is there a command structure at Penn Station, in regard to an emergency?

J. McGrann: There is one. Amtrak has the responsibility, so they are the lead, but we are probably the bigger presence so we are there to assist as is the NYPD's transit bureau.

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G. Bringmann: That is a bit of a concern, seeing that Amtrak only has a handful of guys. I would be more comfortable if you or the NYPD were in the lead.

J. McGrann: In reality, NYPD is the big dog in town, and has the resources, personnel, and expertise. Same thing if something happened at Grand Central.

We have interoperability on our radios so we can communicate with each other, which we did not have not that long ago. We are tweaking it, and we are just about there.

B. Brashears: Within the coordination, do you do tabletop exercises like scenario planning?

J. McGrann: We have another tabletop coming up next week, with this one for Moynihan.

L. Daglian: How are your interactions with the BRC, how could they be better, and how could we help to improve that?

J. McGrann: There has been a recent change in that the city will be paying the BRC, not the MTA. The relationship is good now, but I hope they get better. They have been very receptive to our requests. They have a tough job and do the best they can.

R. Glucksman: In Penn last week, I saw many places with two or three officers standing together, chatting, cellphones in hand. Are there any rules that they should be dispersed or walking around?

J. McGrann: The cell phone is the bane of my existence. They shouldn't be staring at them like my teenager, and I raise this as an issue with their supervisors. For safety reasons, they patrol in pairs. When they congregate in groups of 3-6, we break that up as much as we can. It is something that is constant struggle, and we have regulations that they have to be out on patrol.

B. Brashears: Is it true that when they are looking at their cell phones that they are actually looking at data or communication within the agency?

J. McGrann: Many times, we put out wanted notices. It is a double-edged sword. We like them to have it when we need to communicate.

C. D'Souza: Is there any way you can add a post between Moynihan and the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Concourse? I was talking to one of your officers the other day, and they said there was no one guarding the area and suggested putting an officer in a booth there. There is a lot of drug dealing going on and a lot of homeless people sleeping down by the turnstiles.

J. McGrann: It is something both the Transit Bureau and my people are supposed to be focused on. This is a chronic issue I will address.

C. D'Souza: There are homeless people now sleeping on the platform and going in the trains, hiding in the restrooms. This is a major problem at LIRR storage.

J. McGrann: I am glad you mentioned that one. I knew about their coming down to the platforms, but did not know about their using the restrooms. We will have to address this.

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C. D'Souza: In Moynihan, they are coming there, and someone was washing themselves in the restroom. Sometimes Amtrak cops get bored, and are talking and are not paying attention. Sometimes when you approach them and give them a suggestion, some will say it is the NYPD's job, or that it isn't their job, or come up with an excuse. At Hollis and Queens Village, there are people smoking weed on the platforms and doing drug sales.

### ***Approval of Agenda for May 13, 2021 meeting. Approval of Minutes for April 8, 2021 meeting.***

#### **Chair's Report, attached**

We have our first new member in a few years, Christy Tolbert from Wyandanch. We're still waiting on word of our 2<sup>nd</sup> Suffolk member, and now have an additional vacancy with Sheila Carpenter's departure. We are still waiting for Nassau County to submit names, and are awaiting word on my name being sent to the NYS Senate to be confirmed to the MTA Board.

Lisa represented the Council at a press conference in Oyster Bay where the LIRR announced its pilot program with BEMUs – dual mode battery-electric retrofitted M7 trains that we hope could start running on the Oyster Bay line next year. Oyster Bay would be the pilot, and if it works well, it could be used on Port Jefferson.

We met with the MTA IG regarding the homeless issue in Penn Station and throughout the system. The MTA has several open items, including its MOU with the city. We now understand that it might be funded by New York City. We anticipate the open items should come to the Board during the summer, and hope the Safety Committee will give a full report on new initiatives being developed.

In response to complaints about homeless/panhandlers at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street entrance to Penn Station, "pyramids" have been built to eliminate seating and an MTA Police post has been established there. The NYS Senate held a hearing on East River Tunnel repairs. There are renewed efforts to get Amtrak to use the "racking system" that was used on the L- and F- trains, but Amtrak is reluctant. We met on May 11<sup>th</sup> with LIRR President Phil Eng and Metro-North President Cathy Rinaldi, and others, to discuss the possible expansion of Freedom Ticket. We hope to hear any issues or concerns they have in the next few weeks. We are still reaching out to our elected to get the WageWorks issue resolved with the IRS. No luck yet, but we are getting positive responses from the elected.

L. Daglian: The office of Representative Rice got back to me and said they were reaching out again to the Treasury. Senator Schumer's office is holding a meeting with people from WageWorks this week, and we got a contact there. Len Resto of New Jersey, has been working with his member of Congress to work on that side of the river as well.

L. Rubinstein: The Governor is now aware of WageWorks. I talked to him about it for 30 seconds, and he asked what was going on, and said one of his people will look into it.

*Hector Garcia, LIRR External Affairs*

*Summer Update*

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We are mostly resuming our traditional Summer service. The Cannonball will be back at the end of the month out of Penn Station. There won't be any reserved seating. The consists will be slightly shorter as we won't raid cars from the Oyster Bay and Port Jefferson Branches.

#### *Penn Station Vendors*

There is a little hiccup. Based on all the construction, they are working on the ceilings, and many of the sprinkler systems have been removed in that area, so it has created a fire hazard we need to work through with code compliance. One of the spots they wanted to set up won't work, and they don't want to open up unless they have two areas so they can make money. We are trying to work with them so it can get operating.

C. D'Souza: We filed a complaint with the FTA regarding the lack of shuttle buses on the LIRR Main Line on weekends. Several disabled commuters and senior citizens reached out to us, saying the N22 and N24 are very unreliable. One of our members was stranded for almost two hours in Hicksville because a NICE bus broke down. We are going to put out a press release to the PCAC regarding the need for a shuttle bus just making Main Line stops.

#### *Dual mode M7 Battery-Electric Multiple Unit (BEMU) Pilot*

We are working with Alstom, for eight months, to find what it takes to make this operational. Then, next year, we would give them two cars to retrofit with batteries, and set up the charging stations, and test it on the Oyster Bay Branch. The plan would be to then convert 27 cars and replace all service on the branch with them, freeing up equipment to use on other lines. After that, it would be looking at what branches could be done next. This will help inform our requests for the next twenty-year capital needs assessment, and makes electrification more realistic. With the next generation of fleet, all new cars can come with batteries equipped.

A. Pollack: Has the LIRR looked into going back to its pre-pandemic schedule?

H. Garcia: As of now, we are staying where we are at. We might change it in the fall, but ridership is only at 30% of pre-pandemic levels.

C. D'Souza: What is the situation with crowding on the railroad as they have been very crowded in the evening? Is there a plan to add more trains in the evening coming from Penn?

H. Garcia: As of now, no.

C. D'Souza: John's comment was asking for a shuttle bus from Floral Park and Hicksville on the Main Line for people with disabilities and the elderly as they cannot walk to the N24 on the Jericho Turnpike because it is very far, and do not want to wait for so long.

H. Garcia: The next outage is June 12. We are exploring doing it overnight when there is no NICE Bus.

G. Bringmann: Thank you for addressing the Hunterspoint Avenue issues I asked about. The signage with the old schedules was removed, and the repairs to the platform were made.

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J. Mitchell: What happened last week was unacceptable. There was nothing east of Hicksville. They could have run a shuttle between Hicksville and Babylon. I had to use five buses. The problems on the Main Line are so bad that I might have to move to the South Shore.

### **Old Business**

C. Tolbert: Thank you all for welcoming me to the Council. I am a 13-year plus LIRR commuter. I joined because I am the eyes and ears of my daily commute and there are concerns I have on my own. I am looking forward to working with all of you so our commutes are safe and clean.

L. Daglian: Larry, you were with the Governor for an event on Penn Access, which will build four new stations in the East Bronx and provide access to Penn Station over the Hell Gate Bridge. It is timed for 2025, following East Side Access.

C. D'Souza: I think it should stop in Astoria or Long Island City in Queens, because many people in Queens work in the Bronx, and might want to work in Westchester or Connecticut.

L. Daglian: I saw some conversations on Twitter about this. I know there were some engineering issues with that.

C. D'Souza: Next week cross-honoring is ending on the railroad, and a lot of people are telling me they don't want to get on the subway because they think it is unsafe. Could it be extended?

H. Garcia: No, because the subways are an option.

### **Adjourned**

Meeting recording: [Linked](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Daglian  
Executive Director