

Meeting Minutes of February 10, 2022

A virtual meeting of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) was convened at 4:00 pm on Thursday, February 10, 2022 via Zoom.

Member Attendance

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

Staff Attendance

Lisa Daglian (Executive Director)	Present
Bradley Brashears (Planning Manager)	Present
Kara Gurl (Research & Comms. Associate)	Present
Jessica Spezio (Administrative Assistant)	Present
Shaul Picker (Research Intern)	Present

Non-member Attendance

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Hector Garcia	Senior Director External Affairs (LIRR)
Christopher Greif	NYCTRC Member
Ron Troy	Concerned Citizen
Phil Eng	President- LIRR
Jason Anthony	Concerned citizen
Kevin Call	Sr. Dir. Service Comm. (MTA)
Sarah Meyer	SVP & Chief Customer Officer (MTA)
Mark Young	VP Mgmt. & Finance (MTA)
Alfonso Castillo	Newsday
Mathew Kessler	Concerned citizen
Tariqua Morrison	Queens Borough Pres. Office
Tatiana Zarmehrbakhsh	Concerned citizen
Matt Kessler	Concerned citizen

P. Eng: I want to say thank you to everyone on this call. I couldn't do my job without folks like Hector and all the leadership at the MTA LIRR. We have a strong team and a lot of the major deliverables for this year. I'm confident they will all be successful as we keep looking to build on what we've done and take it from there. I want to say thank you again to everyone for your support and your openness with me.

G. Bringmann: I think I speak for the Council when I say that you did a phenomenal job over the last four years. I'm not just talking about the big mega-projects but also the simple stuff that's very important to us like getting switches repaired and things of that nature. It was really great to work with you and although we have some mixed emotions too, we're very sorry to see you go but we are happy for you. Thank you for stopping by to say goodbye to us.

Approval of Agenda for February 10, 2022 meeting.
Approval of Minutes for January 13, 2022 meeting.

Chair's Report:

- First off, I'd like to welcome our newest LIRRCC member, Mr. Peter Gorry of Islip, who will be attending his first meeting as a Suffolk County representative this afternoon. We are starting to see some movement in the Governor's Appointment Office and we're hopeful that the new Nassau County Executive will be submitting the names of his nominees sometime in the near future. We will be reaching out to him, and also continuing to follow up with the Brooklyn & Queens Borough Presidents about their nominees.

P. Gorry: Hi, I'm Peter Gorry and I live in Islip, Suffolk County. I've been going through the process for about 2 1/2 years, so it has taken a long time to get here but I'm happy to be here. I'm looking forward to working with each of you.

- I had a brief conversation with Phil Eng last month regarding the waiting room hours and the need to keep these rooms open during extremely cold weather. As you may have seen, Newsday ran a front-page article on this subject. During the first cold snap, the LIRR kept the stations open 24/7, but failed to announce it in advance. In the cold snaps after that (including just this past week) the LIRR has made email announcements to that effect. While we "agree to disagree" on station waiting room hours during non-extreme conditions, I will attempt to keep the dialogue going with Cathy Rinaldi.
- The "all off peak / all the time" policy will be ending at the end of February. New ticket types, including a 20-trip ticket with a 20% discount (geared to new ridership patterns) will be introduced as a pilot program, along with 10% off monthly tickets and a \$5 weekday off-peak CityTicket for travel within city limits on both railroads. Atlantic Ticket will continue. We will get a brief presentation on this today.
- Problems with homeless and panhandlers persist throughout the system, most noticeably at Penn Station, and we have sent an email asking for a meeting to bring all concerned parties to the table to discuss possible solutions. It is hoped that the

Governor's new initiative of an increased social worker presence will help, but that program appears to be more geared to the subways than commuter rail.

- The Governor introduced her executive budget on January 18th, including 18% in additional funding for the MTA that will keep fares from being raised for the rest of the year. The MTA's budget is in decent shape through 2025, but the long-standing structural issues remain, and it is essential that recurring operating revenue streams be identified and put in place before the next fiscal cliff. The Senate and Assembly are holding their budget hearing on Tuesday, and Lisa is planning to testify, including supporting a proposal to help fund the MTA by "flipping the gas tax" and spending more on transit than on highways and bridges. There is still a lot of negotiating to be done, with the final budget due on April 1st.
- The Governor also announced that the Interborough Express, or IBX, would be moving ahead to the next planning stage. The IBX would go from Jackson Heights to Bay Ridge and could connect 17 subway stations and several LIRR stops, depending on its configuration.

C. Greif: I think this would be a great idea as an alternate route from Brooklyn to LaGuardia Airport and relieve some ridership on the Queens corridor. This would also be good for disabled riders who can get the AirTrain to JFK as well.

G. Bringmann: I have no doubts it's a good idea. I was just saying that I'm not sure what type of rail this will be, it's still up in the air so let's see how this plays out.

Staff Updates:

Social media/ emails:

L. Daglian: Most of the social media posts and emails we received pertain to Penn Station's safety concerns and the cleanliness of the trains. A particular incident was received by a woman who was approached by a homeless man who tried to touch her in Penn Station. She reported it to a police officer, and she reached out to us obviously out of frustration. There were a few complaints regarding icy steps and dirty headrests as well. Kara monitors our social media, and she can speak on that.

G. Bringmann: If I see something on social media, how can I report it or share it to the MTA? I also received an email from a woman who slipped on black ice in the Baldwin station, it would be great if we can report that in real time. It might not always be the MTA, it can be an issue with the town itself but if we can report it, it can get fixed.

S. Meyer: You can always take a screen shot. I often take screen shots and also receive them and if there is something I can do to help, I will try my best.

K. Gurl: There is a lot of engagement on social media either directly to the PCAC or just to the LIRR in general. The LIRR often responds directly to riders with complaints – the main buckets,

are as Lisa said, safety and cleanliness at Penn station, a few masking issues, ice conditions, and waiting room issues.

Presentation on Fare Pilot Programs: Sarah Meyer, Chief Customer Officer

View presentation here: <https://youtu.be/bq5bqiNxw-k?t=1503>

J. Anthony: I think suggesting to the people coming from out of town that it's faster to get to the Atlantic terminal from JFK using the LIRR instead of the subway is a good idea.

S. Meyer: Travel time is a good point as many people might not realize how much faster it can be if you took the railroad.

J. Anthony: I purchased an OMNY card and registered it for \$4.95 online. Is there a way for that charge to be used for fares?

S. Meyer: As soon as OMNY and the software allows us to do that we will start rolling that out. Our goal is for OMNY to not have that \$5 charge. There will be an option to purchase single rides as well that don't charge the fee. These cards cost more than MetroCards and are expensive to make because they do have a chip in them.

J. Anthony: When will we see the one-way ride for Atlantic Ticket on the e-Tix app?

S. Meyer: I'm hoping to have an update for you in two weeks and Lisa can give you an update.

B. Brashears: Referring to Atlantic Ticket, the weekly option has the built-in transfer to the subway and bus network. Since OMNY is a year late on the commuter railroads, are you guys working on any stop-gap measure where the weekly can be available until OMNY comes on board?

S. Meyer: Unfortunately, because eTix and OMNY are two different programs, that wouldn't be feasible.

L. Daglian: I'm asking this for Peter Gorry who wrote this in the chat. 'I've witnessed confusion of people coming from JFK who end up on the LIRR to get to Penn Station. Those people end up paying the onboard penalty often up to twenty dollars. Can we align with AirTrain and JFK to capture those passengers?

S. Meyer: Yes, AirTrain is still going to use OMNY, we are still a couple of years out. We are working on signage; we will try to send a better/ clearer message.

L. Daglian: Is it possible for multiple riders to use the twenty-trip?

S. Meyer: Yes, it's possible, we want more riders.

S. Picker: Can the vending machines be reprogrammed? It directs you to the higher fare, can it automatically go to Atlantic Ticket or City Ticket option based on your destination request?

S. Meyer: I know it has been asked before, I will find out and get you an answer on whether it can be done or not.

S. Picker Do you plan on providing details and regular updates on ridership and revenue impact from the fair initiatives to the MTA Board?

S. Meyer: Yes.

T. Morrison: Is there a timeline on e-Tix for it to be transferred on the App? There are long lines to purchase the Atlantic tickets at the Queens village, St Albans, Hollis Ave station on Monday mornings and people are rushing to get on the trains.

S. Meyer: I can investigate this issue as far as the long lines and I can try to see the OMNY options as well. I will get back to you.

G. Bringmann: Thank you Sarah for the presentation and now I'll turn it over to Hector for our updates.

Ridership and mask enforcement update:

H. Garcia: Ridership was up to 50% in November/ December, and we are back in the 40% ridership range compared to pre-pandemic levels.

G. Bringmann: We know that conductors try to avoid conflicts on mask enforcement but are there any new updates?

H. Garcia: We know they were making the announcements and there has been an increase in police presence.

B. Peranzo: I have also noticed an increased police presence.

Penn Station update:

G. Bringmann: Is Penn Station's progress still on track?

H. Garcia: Yes, we are still on track for completion of early 2023.

Signage/ sign board:

L. Daglian: Has the sign been fixed and or replaced at Penn Station?

H. Garcia: It was fixed, and it broke again so we reached out to the vendor to fix it again but possibly may need to be replaced.

New Business:

None

Old Business:

L. Daglian: The Bill of Rights and the Council priorities list were sent in an email earlier today. Please take some time to review these documents and provide any feedback or questions you may have.

Action items:**Follow-up items with Sarah Meyer:**

- Timeline for e-Tix to be included on the app.
- Atlantic Ticket one-way fare inclusion on e-Tix.
- Request for TVM's to be reprogramed to go to the cheapest fare option (i.e. Atlantic Ticket/CityTicket) based on destination request.

Adjourned

Meeting recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bq5bqiNxw-k>

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Daglian
Executive Director