



Meeting Minutes of April 14, 2022

A virtual meeting of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) was convened at 4:00 pm on Thursday, April 14, 2022 via Zoom.

Member Attendance

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

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)
Robert Paley	Sr. Dir., TOD, MTA
Emily Provonsha	Manager, Station Area Planning, MTA
Christopher Greif	NYCTRC Member
Ron Troy	Concerned Citizen
Debra Greif	Concerned Citizen
Mindy Germain	Transit Solutions
David Colon	Streetsblog
Gabriel Brunswick	Concerned Citizen
Robert Hale	Concerned Citizen

Approval of Agenda for April 14, 2022 meeting.
Approval of Minutes for February 10, 2022 meeting.

Chair's Report:

- The LIRR has come under fire by the MTA IG's Office for accepting M-9 cars from the manufacturer that had defects. It was also reported that the LIRR should be going after Kawasaki for millions of dollars in damages. Lisa & I had a Zoom Meeting last week with LIRR Interim President Cathy Rinaldi & her Senior Staff to discuss the matter and were informed that the defects were relatively minor in nature and that repairs were made during road testing conducted before putting the cars into revenue service. Ms. Rinaldi was not prepared to discuss the LIRR's plans to recover damages from the manufacturer but did say that she would give an update on the M-9 situation at the April LIRR/MNR Committee Meeting. She also assured us that there would be an appropriate amount of rolling stock available when East Side Access opens to the public at the end of this year. M-3's will be returned to service until we start receiving the M-9A fleet.
- As part of the NYS Budget for 2022-23, which was recently adopted, there will be a "gas tax holiday" which is a concern to the MTA, as we receive a portion of that tax money for mass transit. We have been told that NYS will make up any lost revenue, but there is still some concern about the precedent for this being set.
- I have been asked to serve on the MTA Board Working Group that will be addressing Resiliency Issues throughout the MTA system. We have held two meetings, with two more scheduled before we report to the full MTA Board.
- There is also an MTA Board Committee addressing trespassing throughout the system. While I'm not on that committee, I have asked that an appropriate amount of time & attention be paid to Commuter Rail, as between the LIRR & Metro-North there are approximately 30 fatal incidents involving trespassers each year.

G. Bringmann: Lisa and I attended a meeting regarding unsafe conditions at Penn Station, and we expressed our concerns to them about what we wanted to see done. They told us what they were doing but there are not any concrete plans. They are monitoring the situation and we will be staying on top of it. I just wanted to bring this up to let you know that we are looking into it, and we are reaching out to people, but we don't have anything positive to report back to you at this time.

L. Daglian: One of the things I think came out of the meeting was that there are so many different entities and organizations that are involved in the care and keeping of Penn Station. I couldn't believe it when they showed us the list-- it was some two dozen different organizations that had some sort of piece, whether it's business development or safety and security or all of the different aspects of it. Nobody is really in charge, so the MTA is basically taking control of it, which is good, and it sounds as though they're calling people to some levels of accountability. From what it sounded like, that basically is elevating their level and the other agencies' levels of participation, including Amtrak and New Jersey Transit and their police forces. I asked them if there was something that could be done, and they said one of the issues that they see is that

when drug treatment centers in the neighborhood close, people have no place to go, so they go to Penn Station.

G. Bringmann: Didn't they close the BRC office there?

L. Daglian: Yes, the location at Penn closed and they moved down to 25th Street.

G. Bringmann: This isn't a one-and-done issue, we are going to follow back up next month.

G. Bringmann: Next on our agenda is the Executive Committee appointment affirmation. With Marilyn Poterson resigning from the Commuter Council, we have an opening on the PCAC Executive Committee. Larry indicated that he would be willing to serve in that capacity. I would love to have him in that capacity, but we need to make it official and bring it up at this meeting and take a vote on it. I'll move the nomination, Larry is listening in, and Christy would you second that?

C. Tolbert: I second the nomination.

G. Bringmann: Great, so that's 3 votes, Congratulations Larry, you are now a member of the Executive Committee with the PCAC.

Staff Updates

Social media/ emails:

L. Daglian: Most of the social media posts and emails we received pertain to Penn Station safety concerns and the cleanliness of the trains. Kara monitors our social media, and she can speak on that in a few minutes. I also want to discuss the events of this week-- the shooter on the subway on the N train at 36th street is something that was very scary. It's something that captured everybody in the city, anybody who rides the subway, and some people who were thinking about getting back on the subways but maybe haven't. They got the guy, and a lot of buzz has been made about whether the cameras were functioning in the system. That's sort of one piece of it, there are a lot of moving parts. Out of the 10,000 cameras in the system, three weren't working, and sometimes that happens. We know how many cameras there are and what they're used for but also some of the flaws in the system, so the MTA is going to be looking at that. The highlights are that cameras are one aspect of the public safety elements that go into keeping riders safe and I think that that's sort of gotten lost in the conversation so it's going to be part of what we're continuing to look at.

G. Bringmann: Cameras are a reactive function. They are helpful to have and to rewind surveillance for incidents that occur, and they might deter someone from committing a crime, but they are not going to stop crime.

L. Daglian: I wanted to bring an update for those who have money stuck in WageWorks. We heard from Senator Schumer's office that Senator Gillibrand is now working on this issue. This won't address everybody's problems, but it will address a lot of the outstanding issues about people who were unable to get access to their funds.

G. Bringmann: I wanted to add, along with what Lisa said, is to talk about what the legislation says and to do some kind of event with them or however they're going to manage it. It may not be 100% what we want it but it's because of tax laws and the whole bit with the IRS. I had a conversation with Sen. Schumer's staffer and he explained the whole thing, and it's not quite as simple as just giving somebody a 1099 and giving them their money.

L. Daglian: I will now turn it over to Kara for an update on emails and social media.

K. Gurl: We received a couple of emails this month. One regarding printing paper schedules and another concerning safety issues at Penn Station. We monitored social media and saw complaints to the LIRR about better timing connections on trains and delays causing some riders to miss their connection.

G. Bringmann: We aren't looking to go back to printing paper schedules like they used to. We can look into having a schedule printed in the station on display and having them available at key stations for travelers who might not have access to technology.

Presentation: *First Mile/Last Mile Station Access Mobility Study*, Bob Paley, Senior Director, MTA Transit Oriented Development, and Emily Provonsha, Manager of Station Area Planning and TOD

View the presentation here: <https://youtu.be/WOIAoNkNOT4?t=1398>

G. Bringmann: A lot of our riders are accessing our trains with these motorized scooters, even more so than with bikes. You didn't mention it in the presentation but that's something to be considered. Also, I wanted to ask if they have considered adding back old-fashioned bike racks, is that something that can be considered as well?

B. Paley: That's one of the areas that overlap between our project and the Bike-Ped Act. We are looking more for 3rd parties, mobility that provides a service.

G. Bringmann: That's great to know because, with this new legislation that passed, we will need a new member on our committee as well representing the Bike-Pedestrian passengers. We'd love to work with you on this.

D. Greif: I agree that there should be racks for the bicycles but there should be ramps made available and accessible for people with disabilities and mobility issues and the elderly.

B. Paley: That's a great point and it requires thought and management and I will be sure to address that.

C. Grief: On the Ronkonkoma line there is a farm out in Suffolk County. We should try to work with them to get accommodations to the farm from the station itself.

L. Daglian: In terms of 1st mile/ last mile, are you looking at any walkable spaces as well?

B. Paley: Yes, we have 10 pilot projects at the moment. We are hoping that the different modes include walking and bike access and bike shares as well. Let's take those lessons and see how we can apply them.

G. Bringmann: Once we are done with East Side Access and we have the reverse commuter option running, can there be a connection to MacArthur airport from Ronkonkoma? It's literally a mile away. Even if it's just shuttle buses, it's something to think about.

S. Picker: Where do the local buses fit in with the overall strategy?

B. Paley: We aren't really getting into the bus line services at this time. There are other projects going on, we are in contact with the counties, and we do want to improve mobility issues.

E. Provonsha: I just want to add that during the scope of the studies we didn't want to interfere with the bus systems. We really wanted to find other options and possible solutions.

G. Brunswick: How does fare integration affect this?

B. Paley: That is a great question, but it is outside the immediate scope of this study.

G. Bringmann: Since we don't have any more questions, we thank you Bob for the presentation. We will move on to Hector for further updates.

Ridership and mask enforcement update:

H. Garcia: Ridership is hovering at the mid 50% compared to pre-pandemic levels. The mask mandate has been extended to May 3, 2022.

Penn Station update:

H. Garcia: Penn Station is making great progress. We will be opening half of it in August. We should be fully done with it in mid-fall.

G. Bringmann: Can you please find out if we have any updates on accessibility to Citi Field at Mets-Willets Point station?

H. Garcia: Sure, I will reach out and see what is going on.

L. Daglian: There is a question in the chat from Robert Hale regarding the M9 contract being renewed.

H. Garcia: There is no M9 contract currently in effect.

D. Greif: I just wanted to say thank you to Gerry for bringing up the issue about accessibility at Citi Field. This is a big problem and has been for many years.

L. Daglian: I wanted to add that Dave Colon asked the owner of the Mets earlier at the press conference to provide better walking/ biking options to get to Citi Field and post it on their website. He agreed to do so and post it but said he would need some time to gather that information.

R. Troy: Can they reconsider the headrest on the M7? They are very uncomfortable.

G. Bringmann: This is the first I'm hearing about this. Have you experienced any issues?

R. Troy: I haven't but people have been complaining about them being hard.

L. Daglian: Do we have any updates on the BEMU trains?

H. Garcia: We received the report on the data, and now we have to review it. Then they decide if they will go on to the next phase or not.

G. Bringmann: Yes, can you please keep us posted on that. If they decide to not pursue it, can they take a look back at gas turbine? I know it was considered back in the 70's but technology has advanced so much since then that it might be worth looking back at that option.

S. Picker: As we are getting closer to the start of East Side Access, when will they notify us of the service that will be run?

H. Garcia: We are working on that now; it will be announced within the next few months.

Old Business:

G. Bringmann: We have revised the LIRR Bill of rights. Does anyone have any feedback?

L. Daglian: No, I haven't heard anything back either, we are also going to suggest this for use in our other Councils.

G. Bringmann: Since there aren't any changes needed, we will move forward with them as is. Do we have anything else?

L. Daglian: We also have the Council priorities that we are working on, and we can discuss them further at our next meeting.

New Business:

C. Greif: After the train shooting incident earlier this week many people are saying the cameras need to be reviewed again. This is a big safety concern.

G. Bringmann: I understand why they would say that, but it was an internet issue, not a camera function issue, and unfortunately things happen. I believe it was one reporter who tried to make a bigger issue of the cameras not working but they indeed were working.

Action items:

NONE

Adjourned

Meeting recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOIAoNkNOT4>

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daglian

Executive Director