



LIRRCC

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Immediate Action Needed to Address New Schedule LIRR Flaws and First Week Debacle

LIRRCC Statement

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New York, NY – With mounting concerns and complaints about the new Long Island Rail Road service that went into effect this week, the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) is calling on the MTA and LIRR to take immediate action to address major flaws in the new train schedules, which are causing dangerous overcrowding, delays, and longer trips for many riders.

LIRRCC Chair and MTA Board Member Gerard Bringmann said, “The opening of Grand Central Madison is a game-changer for those heading to and from Midtown East, but it should not come at the expense of other riders. This first week, we’ve seen overcrowded trains – at a time when ridership is at about two-thirds of pre-pandemic levels and service increased 41-percent; mad dashes to make missed connections over jam-packed escalators and staircases at Jamaica; and commutes made longer, rather than shorter, by the new service. To be sure, signal issues on the first two days added flame to the fire, but it’s clear regardless that improvements must be made. We’re trying to get riders back on trains, not give them reasons to get into cars or stay home.

“Since Monday, LIRRCC has received countless complaints from longtime LIRR riders who are furious about the negative changes to their commutes. These complaints don’t come as a surprise: they were raised repeatedly since the draft schedules were released in June 2022, and then again last month when the final schedules were published. Riders called for improvements every step of the way, including more direct trains, timed connections, and better scheduling of trains to reduce crowding and long gaps in service, among others. However, these concerns were largely ignored, and now riders are suffering the consequences.

“The major issues witnessed in recent days include extreme overcrowding at Jamaica Station, with crowds of people rushing and pushing up crowded stairs and escalators to change trains, especially to Brooklyn. Without timed connections, many riders can’t afford to miss a train, knowing the next may be up to 20 minutes away. While we can understand that scheduling changes are bound to happen, this one is particularly alarming and puts riders’ lives at risk, particularly those with disabilities or limited mobility. It could also have been foreseen by listening to regular riders, who have voiced concerns about the ‘up and over’ since construction of Platform F began.

“With fewer riders and more service, it is incomprehensible for there to be this many crowded standing-room-only trains. The LIRR must take immediate action to rectify this situation by adding cars to consists during peak times and adjusting schedules to meet the demand and lessen crowding situations.

“The experiment isn’t a failure, but it needs work. We’re calling on the LIRR to adjust schedules to better meet demand, reinstate timed connections and more direct service, and add cars to overcrowded trains to ensure that riders have a comfortable and efficient trip. The opening of Grand Central Madison is an opportunity to prove that public transit is the best way to travel throughout the region, but the LIRR must address the concerns and complaints of riders. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and hold the LIRR accountable for delivering the service that Long Island Rail Road commuters deserve.”