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One Month Into New LIRR Schedules, Changes Still Needed MTA Joint Metro-North/LIRR Committee Testimony

Good morning! My name is Kara Gurl, Planning and Advocacy Manager at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA (PCAC).

Today marks a full month of the new LIRR schedules, the biggest overhaul of the Rail Road's timetables since its inception.

I'll start with the good: the opening of Grand Central Madison is a huge achievement! It's symbolic of a more unified system where riders can transfer between railroads and the Subway under one roof. We've testified about the need for better wayfinding and signage and have seen improvements, but hope to see more as the Task Force continues its work.

For riders to benefit from Grand Central Madison, getting the service plan right should be the top priority. We've certainly heard praise and excitement about time savings for riders traveling to East Midtown. But Grand Central service shouldn't come at the expense of other riders, many of whom had a very difficult first few weeks of new schedules, made worse by frequent signal and capacity issues at Jamaica.

We appreciate the Rail Road's willingness to make adjustments, including increasing frequencies to Brooklyn, diverting some Grand Central trains back to Penn, and lengthening some trains. These changes have made a difference, and we've seen a bit of decline in frustrated commuter complaints since.

But issues remain, and there is work to be done. This includes adjusting schedules to increase service to Penn on weekends and nights with major events, fixing capacity issues at Jamaica, improving the timeliness of trains, and working with the Port Authority to fix Jamaica's elevators. Every effort should be made to restore timed connections, the lack of which has frustrated riders who may miss connecting trains by a matter of seconds and have to wait 20 or 30 minutes or more for another train. We also understand rolling stock limitations, and hope that orders of new cars can be expedited.

Most important is making sure that riders feel heard throughout this major change. We hope you will create a formal system for riders to submit feedback and get responses—this could be an online form, or as we've called for since last June, branch-by-branch public meetings. Riders know the system best, and taking their concerns seriously will only serve to improve the Rail Road for all. Thank you.