**Riders Thank Cathy Rinaldi, Welcome Rob Free as acting LIRR President**

**September 18, 2023**

“Cathy Rinaldi stepped in and stepped up at a crucial time for LIRR riders, and we thank her for serving as Interim President for these past 18 months. As a longtime rider of both the LIRR and Metro-North— and a proven and dedicated transit leader— there was no better person to be the first leader of both railroads at once. She brought home major projects — including opening Grand Central Madison and completing Third Track, improved accessibility, created better synergy between the railroads, and found efficiencies to save millions of dollars, all of which will benefit the riding public for many years to come. Benefits of her dual role leading both railroads include expanding laser trains, the creation of the first inter-railroad Combo Ticket, and improved connectivity between the two. LIRR riders will feel the benefits of her leadership for decades to come, while Metro-North riders remain in good hands with their established leader at the helm as more mega-projects like Penn Station Access are underway. Having her continue in an advisory role over both railroads will continue the improvements we have been seeing, and we look forward to more shared best practices.

“This is the perfect time to turn the LIRR leadership job over to Rob Free, a seasoned LIRR vet who knows the railroad from the bottom up and has shown he cares about commuters and workers alike. He knows his stuff and has seen the railroad's operations through some of the biggest changes in generations. We’re glad to have him in this role. It's particularly fitting that Rob knows all of the moving parts of the new LIRR schedules inside and out, including what the LIRR needs to do to continue to improve. This continues to be a big year of change for the LIRR, and we’re glad to see a dedicated President at the helm and look forward to working with Rob in his new capacity.”