
An in person meeting of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council (LIRRCC) was held at 4:30 pm on Thursday, May 8, 2025 at One West Street, Mineola, NY. The public and members unable to attend in person joined via Zoom.

Member Attendance

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

Staff Attendance

Lisa Daglian (Executive Director)	Present
Brian Fritsch (Associate Director)	Present
Kara Gurl (Planning & Advocacy Manager)	Absent
Jack Connors (Research & Comm. Assoc.)	Present
Jessica Spezio (Administrative Assistant)	Present

Non-member Attendance

Name	Affiliation
Ana Garcia	LIRR
Adam Wittenstein	Concerned Citizen
Matty Buchys Hyland	Concerned Citizen
Debra Greif	Concerned Citizen
Christopher Greif	NYCTRC Member
Stu Desser	Concerned Citizen

Approval of Agenda- May 8, 2025
Approval of Minutes- February 13, 2025

Nomination/ Election: Chair, Gerard Bringmann & Vice Chair, Larry Rubinstein

Chair's Report:

- Amtrak is on the verge of shutting down one of the four East River Tunnels to start long overdue repairs to damage caused by Superstorm Sandy. Schedules were adjusted to accommodate this closure, but there is serious concern that even minor problems could result in a tunnel being out of service during rush hours, causing severe delays to service. The MTA is strongly pushing for Amtrak to perform this work on nights & weekends, like they made the repairs to the Canarsie Tunnel on the L Train, but Amtrak is pushing back. Two tunnels need repair, and the total project will take approximately three years. Based on Amtrak's track record (no pun intended) and anticipated organizational layoffs, completing this project on schedule will be challenging. Any delays in meeting the projected completion date could also delay the start of Metro-North's Penn Station Access service.
- The federal government has also assigned Amtrak to lead the Penn Station renovation project. Again, there is concern that Amtrak may not have the proper staff/talent to run the project, but it is their right as the landlord to do so. Since the MTA is the primary tenant and runs the majority of the trains into and out of the station, they will fight to maintain a seat at the table to be sure that future work at Penn has minimal effect on LIRR operations. On a positive note, work on the LIRR's portion of Penn Station is around 90% complete.
- While the New York State budget is over a month overdue, an agreement has been reached to fully fund the MTA's 2025-29 Capital Plan, which is excellent news for the LIRR riders. The MTA will now be able to finalize orders on additional rolling stock. Of critical importance is the \$660 million purchase of M9As, which will replace the fleet of approximately 100 M3s that are at the end of their useful service life.
- MTA Construction & Development reports that they continue to make substantial progress on Hall Interlocking Expansion as part of the Jamaica Capacity Improvements Program. Expanding this interlocking is an essential step in improving service through Jamaica and eliminating the "Jamaica Crawl" by creating two new parallel routes east of Jamaica Station.
- On-time performance continues at record or near-record levels, slightly over 96% for March. Ridership numbers also continued to rebound as the month finished with 87.6% of pre-pandemic ridership.

Adam Wittenstein raised several questions:

1. Amtrak Tunnel Project
 - Asked about the number of East River Tunnels (four tunnels, one track each)
 - Concerned about potential delays with only three tracks available
 - Questioned why the schedule didn't change significantly despite reduced track availability
 - Worried about cascading delays during morning rush hour
2. Previous Inquiries
 - Noted he has been waiting since December and February for responses to his inquiries
 - Claimed no one from the community engagement team had contacted him
 - Asked Anna Garcia to follow up on his unanswered communications
3. Scheduling Concerns
 - Expressed frustration that trains are consistently early or late
 - Believed MTA LIRR could schedule trains much better
 - Argued that current schedules are not physically possible even under perfect conditions

Ana Garcia committed to following up with her team about his unanswered inquiries and acknowledged the concerns about scheduling and tunnel project disruptions.

LIRR Updates: By Ana Garcia

Ana Garcia's update, key points included:

Timetable Changes:

- Expanded Montauk weekday service
- New Sunday trains to Penn Station
- Two new early morning trains from Jamaica to Grand Central Madison
- Reduced midday service on the Port Washington branch due to track work

ADA and Station Projects:

- The Auburndale elevator is expected to open in September
- Hollis station platform demolition and foundation work
- Babylon station overnight work this weekend
- Montauk Street at St. Albans station closed for street repaving

Upcoming Work:

- Sperry testing on the Port Jefferson branch ending
- Bussing from Bayside to Port Washington on June 7 and 21 for: Little Neck Parkway grade crossing work, Webster Avenue bridge structure installation

Amtrak East River Tunnel Project:

- Recent disruption caused five train cancellations, 40 delays, six diversions
- Affecting tens of thousands of daily commuters
- Ongoing communication with Amtrak about infrastructure upgrades and operational planning

Social Media and Communications Update: by Jack Connors

- One rider **complained** that it took the LIRR three days to clean up human refuse at Hunters Point
- Another rider was **frustrated** that car 9945 had no AC, he remarked that the car was built in 1981
- Another rider **remarked** that conductors don't tell riders to keep their feet off the seats enough
- Finally, several riders complained about lackluster communication when an equipment issue knocked out service to Long Beach earlier this month

Executive Director update: by Brian Fritsch

In Brian's report, key points included:

1. MTA Capital Plan Funding
 - Fully funded in New York State Budget with a 0.3% increase in PMT region-wide
 - City will still pay a larger percentage than the MTA area outside NYC
 - Increases primarily on businesses with \$10 million or more annual payroll
2. Federal Funding and Congestion Pricing
 - Anticipating \$14 billion from federal government for 2025-29 MTA Capital Plan
 - MTA filed an emergency injunction to stop potential federal funding cuts in retaliation for congestion pricing
 - Judge agreed to hear concerns before potential action on May 27-28
3. Legislative Efforts
 - Did not get fare incentive bills into the state budget
 - Moving to standalone legislation for four bills
 - Three bills impact Long Island Railroad riders
 - Working on: Closing AM loophole for disabled/senior riders - Family fair bill for 17-year-old riders - Weekly city ticket with subway/bus transfers
4. Upcoming Legislative Progress
 - Long Island Rail Road nominating bill passed the Assembly committee
 - Hoping for Senate passage
 - Optimistic about the Rider Representation Act

Old Business:

None

New Business:

- Discussing the potential removal of a non-performing council member (Peter Gorry)
- Highlighting the ongoing efforts to find new council members, including a conversation with the Queens Borough President's new transportation staffer

Action items:

None

Adjourned

Meeting recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwABtp71FsY>

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Daglian
Executive Director