



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
John J. Flanagan

Senate Majority Delegation Calls For MTA To Protect LIRR Riders From Fare Increase

JOHN J. FLANAGAN September 17, 2018

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Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan (2nd Senate District) was joined by the Senate Majority's Long Island Delegation at a press conference at the Bethpage Train Station to announce their efforts to force the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) to provide fare relief to the region's long-suffering commuters. The focus of the press conference was the delegation's joint call for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to put any proposed 2019 fare hike on hold through at least 2021 until it makes measurable improvements in service, equipment failures and delays.

To further protect commuters from facing even more disruptions due to the LIRR's loss of any revenue, legislation sponsored by Senator Elaine Phillips (7th Senate District) and Assemblyman Dean Murray (3rd Assembly District), would create the "Long Island Commuter Relief Fund" which would provide a dedicated state fund that would provide operating money for the agency. This fund, which would consist of no less than sixty million dollars from yet-to-be allocated extraordinary monetary settlement funds, would be dedicated to the operating budget of the LIRR to ensure that LIRR riders are not forced to endure reduced service while simultaneously protecting fares at the current rates.

"Not a day goes by that I don't hear from constituents frustrated with the MTA's lack of reliability and service. Raising fares while service continues to falter is a misguided move and will only further hurt the thousands of commuters who are already facing the worst rail service in two decades. The MTA needs to start listening to the LIRR riders – and my colleagues and I are here to make sure those voices are heard. Any and all fare hike plans need to be scrapped until measurable improvements in service are made and there is better on-time performance and customer satisfaction," stated Senator Phillips.

"At a time when their service, reliability and fiscal management is perceived as questionable at best, the LIRR is once again planning to turn to the ridership to bail them out. That is unacceptable. Our plan will provide the LIRR with the opportunity to earn needed funding while ensuring that services are not reduced and fares are not increased," added Assemblyman Murray.

Currently, the MTA has scheduled an authority-wide four percent fare and toll increase that would take effect in March of 2019.

"The reality is that the Long Island Railroad has this year delivered what is measurably their worst performance year in the last twenty years, but still preparing to increase fares in spite of this poor service. To force commuters who have been asked to deal with cancelled trains and poor on-time performance to pay more is unconscionable, and we are joining together to say our residents deserve better. I thank my colleagues for joining this effort and calling on the MTA to do the right thing for our constituents," stated Senator Flanagan.

The LIRR would be able to receive their share of this funding only if they are able to achieve an average on-time performance of ninety-four percent or better and increase their overall customer satisfaction score by at least five percent commencing with their next scheduled

survey.

"Where I come from, delays, cancelations and derailments are not justification for a fare increase. The MTA and the LIRR should be exploring every option possible to reward their current customers and attract new daily riders. Absent that, my colleagues and I will take the necessary steps to hold the line on fares and keep the pressure on the MTA to put the needs of the commuter ahead of their bottom line," said Senator Carl L. Marcellino (5th Senate District).

Senator Ken LaValle (1st Senate District) said, "Long Islanders deserve reliable service with reasonable fares when they take the railroad. Instead, Long Island Rail Road customers have received historically poor service while paying a great deal to ride the trains. There should be no fare hike until the Railroad's performance is measurably improved."

"The MTA continues to make illogical attempts to drive up costs for commuters by proposing a 4% increase in the monthly LIRR commutation ticket," said Senator Kemp Hannon (6th Senate District). "The MTA needs to ensure proper and reliable service before another dollar is taken from Long Island commuters. Despite significant unreliability, equipment failures and delays, they continue to place a tremendous burden on working Long Islanders."

"Our commuting public deserves so much more than what they have been handed lately," said Senator Phil Boyle (4th Senate District). "We can do better by Long Island commuters and it needs to start now by eliminating this rate increase and work on corrective measures to repair the multiple ills of the LIRR."

The delegation, again led by Senator Phillips, has established a petition drive that enables their constituents to voice their disgust that the LIRR would increase fares while they continue to suffer from delays and cancelled trains. Any resident or commuter who would like to join the call for the MTA to provide riders with better service before considering fare increases should [click here](#) to add their voice to this effort.