



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Monica R. Martinez

In Wake of Recent LIRR Woes, Senator Martinez Puts Forth a Four-Pronged Plan to Protect LIRR Commuters and Long Island Businesses

MONICA R. MARTINEZ May 24, 2023

| ISSUE: **LIRR, MTA, MTA (METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY), MTA PAYROLL TAX INCREASE**

State Senator Monica R. Martinez, Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre, and Assemblymember Steve Stern, representing Suffolk County, Long Island, introduce NYS bill S5685, that appoints a five-year fiscal monitor for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, bill S5686, which repeals the MTA Payroll Mobility Tax, and bill S.5687, which requires an MTA executive pay freeze each year there is an increase in disruptions or delays in MTA service. In addition, Senator Martinez, Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre, and Assemblymember Steve Stern, in a letter, call for the appointment of a full time Long Island Railroad (LIRR) president.

While the MTA has made attempts to improve its services to Long Island through various projects and service changes, these efforts have rarely produced positive outcomes. The recent opening of the East Side Access project, which was intended to improve the lives of many Long Islanders who commute into the city, is a prime example. Instead of delivering the promised improvements, the MTA's rollout has exposed the lack of planning and expertise, which has devolved into improvisation with last minute schedule changes and trains with fewer cars causing chaos for commuters.

“We must do better. To assume Long Islanders, both commuters and businesses, can continually bear the burden of mismanagement is categorically wrong,” said Senator Martinez.

An MTA fiscal monitor will provide the proper oversight so the LIRR and Long Island businesses will not be continually asked to bear the burden of mismanagement. The MTA's proposed solution to their continued financial woes is to increase the MTA fares, a significant burden on Long Islanders. Moreover, the negative impact of a potential MTA payroll mobility tax increase impacts small businesses on Long Island. Small businesses are already struggling to survive in the post-pandemic economic climate and an additional tax burden would only exacerbate their financial challenges.

“What the MTA needs is a leader who truly understands Long Island's transportation needs,” says Senator Monica R. Martinez. It was never more apparent than when, at a NYS Budget Hearing, the MTA blamed financial woes on white collar commuters who ‘dial it in from East Hampton’.”

Bill Sponsor Assemblymember Steve Stern: “I am proud to join with Senator Monica Martinez to sponsor legislation in the Assembly to appoint a five year fiscal monitor for the beleaguered Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which has for far too long acted without independent oversight. Long Island commuters already pay some of the highest fares in the nation and in return, face chaos, with incoherent scheduling, service disruptions, and an absolutely unacceptable lack of transparency and accountability. The MTA cannot continue to reasonably expect commuters to pay ever increasing fares and taxes for ever diminishing service.”

"As an elected leader on Long Island, I recognize how vital the MTA and the public transit system as a whole are for our communities and for the thousands of Long Island commuters who rely on the LIRR every day, but for too long the MTA has been defined and plagued by financial mismanagement and waste, and we can not expect hardworking Long Island business owners to bear the burden of yet another bailout for this institution without real accountability, oversight and reform. Before we rush to impose yet another tax on Long Islanders, we need at the bare minimum leadership that reflects and understands the unique challenges faced by our region as well as proper fiscal oversight to ensure every dollar spent is truly being used to support critical infrastructure and enhance service reliability throughout the MTA transit system." said Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre

In a letter, Senator Martinez, Assemblymember Jean-Pierre, and Assemblymember Stern, call on the MTA to appoint a full time LIRR President who understands the needs of Long Islanders. For over a year, since the retirement of former LIRR President Philip Eng in February 2022, the LIRR has not had a full-time President.

The LIRR and the MTA Metro North Railroad are two of the largest commuter rail systems in the country which is why for decades both the LIRR and Metro North Railroad have had two separate Presidents within the MTA system. While current interim President Cathy Rinaldi is extremely gifted and experienced, the role of overseeing both rail systems is too daunting of a task to be held by one individual and precisely why two Presidents have existed.

"It's time for the MTA to step up and truly understand the needs of Long Island commuters. We deserve a public transportation system which is efficient, reliable, and serves the needs of all of our communities," stated Senator Martinez.

“I also join in her call for the appointment of a Long Island Railroad (LIRR) president. One person cannot oversee the operations of both the LIRR and Metro-North, which serve geographically distinct regions with different service needs and logistics. The LIRR is the busiest commuter railroad in North America, carrying more than 300,000 passengers a day. As we continue to transition from the COVID economy, it will be more important than ever to have dedicated, focused management to lead the LIRR into the future,” said Assemblymember Steve Stern.

Below is a copy of the joint letter to the MTA requesting the appointment of a full time LIRR President who resides on Long Island.