

**Testimony by Helena E. Williams, President  
MTA Long Island Rail Road  
Before the New York State Senate Committee on  
Transportation - Public Hearing  
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11:00 AM**

**250 Broadway, Suite 2034  
New York, NY 10007**

Good morning, Sen. Fuschillo and other members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Long Island Rail Road's many recent achievements as well as the challenges we face and our goals for the future.

During the last six years, the LIRR has been focused on Safety, Security and Service Reliability. We continue to modernize our infrastructure, make improvements to expand capacity and improve our customer service.

I am very proud of our dedicated workforce. Our workforce does a tremendous job keeping the railroad running 365 days a year, 24 hours a day in all kinds of weather. And, as you are all keenly aware, we've had our share of weather in recent years - from Irene to Sandy to Nemo and dozens of other snowstorms and windstorms.

Allow me to brief you on the state of LIRR's budget and capital plan as well as some of our important recent accomplishments – many of which we achieved with your input and support as well as that of our customers and the LIRR Commuter Council.

**OPERATING BUDGET**

The 2013 July Financial Plan contains the resources necessary for the LIRR to achieve its performance goals in train service, fleet performance and service reliability. Equally important, the financial plan lays the foundation for current and future customer improvements through investments in service, infrastructure and technology. These investments will support the post-Sandy reconstruction, provide for future service growth, and leverage technology to make the purchase of tickets more convenient for customers.

Various train service enhancements - announced in July - will attract new riders, improve service frequency for existing customers and relieve crowding.

The 2013 Operating budget is approximately \$1.6 billion and supports a headcount of just over 6,900 positions. The bulk of these positions are in the key operating departments – Transportation, 1,986; Engineering/Right of Way Maintenance, 1,722; and in the Maintenance of Equipment department, 2019.

Like all large operating entities, a key component of our staffing strategy calls for using overtime. Using overtime is essential when responding to weather events, emergencies, or unscheduled maintenance, backfilling open positions, and when working on projects of limited duration. In these situations overtime allows us to efficiently match workload to staffing.

It is also critical that overtime be managed and monitored closely. To this end, in each year the LIRR establishes an overtime budget that reflects our best estimate.

The 2013 Adopted Budget included almost \$90 million in funding to cover an estimated 1.8 million hours of overtime. Through the first half of the year, actual overtime was just over \$53 million, or which about was \$11 million, or 26 percent, above budget. This overrun was driven by a few key factors – the need to prepare and respond to weather events, two derailments, one on the main line and a second within the Penn Station area, and open operational positions. The cost of the open position related overtime is actually offset by savings in straight time. Still, the LIRR developed and is implementing an aggressive hiring and training schedule to fill open operational positions as quickly as possible.

The LIRR has also focused on budgetary savings from tighter inventory management. Purchase of parts is more closely tied to a production plan and we adjusted minimum stock quantities without impacting availability.

### CAPITAL PLAN

In addition, several major Capital funded initiatives are scheduled to come on line during the financial plan horizon of 2013 to 2017. This includes Positive Train Control, the rollout of the first M-9 cars, and the completion of the first segment of the Main Line Double Track project. The financial plan reflects the necessary resources to ensure the benefits of all these assets are fully realized and properly maintained.

The LIRR has made progress in a number of customer service areas in recent years:

- This year, we've been able to implement service enhancements, addressing some of the cuts that were made during the economic downturn. Specifically, customers on the Ronkonkoma branch will see new off-peak service as well as a new PM peak train. Port Washington customers will see half hour off peak service restored on weekends. Customers on the Babylon branch will have more options with the restoration of two PM peak trains. A late evening train to Hicksville will help address some crowding on the Mainline. And finally, we are able to expand the seasonal weekend service from Ronkonkoma to Greenport, which will now run from April thru Thanksgiving.
- We've also seen an increase in ridership on the Montauk branch this summer, following our decision to move the Cannonball, which runs express to Westhampton on Friday afternoons in 94 minutes, to Penn Station from a Hunterspoint Avenue departure. Our Hamptons service brings tens of thousands of visitors to the East End each season.
- As you may be aware, MTA has made improving customer communication a priority. LIRR's around-the-clock Public Information Office, located right in the LIRR Command Center in Jamaica, issues alerts and text messages on every train that is 10 minutes or more late to more than 43,000 customers who have signed up to receive them. They also coordinate station announcements, electronic sign messaging, web updates and stay in regular contact with traffic reporting agencies and the MTA Press Office to keep the public fully informed of any service related issues.
- Within the coming weeks, you will see new Customer Assistance Ambassadors on the floor of Penn Station and in Jamaica, equipped with special uniforms and smart phones to better assist customers seeking information.
- We also are continuing to modernize and get ready for the future, including when LIRR customers will be able to reach Grand Central Terminal in a one seat ride via the East Side Access project. Many of you have toured the tunnels and concourse areas that are being carved out of bedrock 140 feet below GCT. This will be the largest expansion of LIRR service in 100 years, bringing Long Islanders to jobs on the East Side, improving Long Island property values and keeping Long Island competitive in the region. It will transform LIRR service since we will no longer have scheduled connections in Jamaica which result in delays for customers.

This is all good news. But we know we have many challenges ahead. Much of our infrastructure is old and we need to maintain an aggressive track maintenance program and a robust Capital Plan to allow us to continue our modernization efforts. For that, frankly, we need your help. The Long Island delegation in Albany has always been a forceful advocate for the LIRR and we hope that support will continue. The reality of keeping the LIRR and the entire MTA system vibrant is a complicated undertaking. That's why we appreciate this opportunity to testify before you today.