

AUG -1 2011



July 26, 2011

The Honorable Carl Marcellino
New York State Senator
250 Townsend Square
Oyster Bay, NY 11771

Dear Senator Marcellino:

Thank you for presenting us with the results of your constituents' survey, "LIRR Riders Speak out." Asking constituents to pose a question to MTA Chairman Walder has provided us with important insight into the concerns of both LIRR customers and the communities we serve. This innovative approach also has provided an opportunity to increase the dialogue between the LIRR and customers, allowing us to provide facts in response to questions about the LIRR.

The LIRR is constantly looking for ways to improve operations and this survey is a valuable tool toward that goal. We have read and reviewed each of the 600 questions and comments submitted, grouped those with similar topics along the lines of key issues and shared relevant questions with responsible departments within the LIRR so that front line managers are aware of customer and community concerns. To address the overwhelming response you received to your survey, we are providing answers to questions in the following general categories:

- LIRR Service
- Disability Pensions
- MTA Payroll Tax
- Fares/Refunds
- Communications
- East Side Access and other service improvement projects

I hope you will find these answers to be of assistance to you and to your constituents. Please let me know if there is any other information that we can provide.

For your background, New York State's Fifth Senate District is served by the Oyster Bay, Ronkonkoma, and Port Jefferson Branches, and there are 12 MTA Long Island Rail Road stations within your district. As of June 2011, the year-to-date Overall On-Time Performance for these branches was: Oyster Bay Branch, 93.7%; Port Jefferson Branch, 90.2%, and Ronkonkoma Branch, 91.4%.

As you are aware, the LIRR has long term plans to improve service and operations on the Oyster Bay Branch. By making future investments in track and platform infrastructure in Mineola, the LIRR is planning to implement a "scoot" service between Mineola and points east on the Oyster Bay Branch. This scoot service would allow for more frequent service to and from stations on the branch, improving connections between North Shore communities and the key government and economic hub at Mineola, where frequent connecting electric train service is available to Penn Station.

Following the opening of East Side Access service, customers transferring from the Oyster Bay Scoot service at Mineola will be able to enjoy train service to both Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal, allowing vastly expanded travel choices, providing direct service to high-skilled, high paying jobs on the East Side of Manhattan and helping to protect Long Island's housing market.

Once again, we appreciate your efforts to forge a better relationship between the LIRR and residents of the 5th senatorial district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helena E. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "H" and "W".

Helena E. Williams
President

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Senator Marcellino 's "LIRR Riders Speak Out." Constituent Survey

Disability Pension

What steps are being taken to mitigate exposure to comp, disability frauds and pension abuses?

Answer: Please be assured that no one from the LIRR or from our parent agency, the MTA, is involved in the granting of the occupational disability pensions to which you refer. They are granted by a federal agency, the US Railroad Retirement Board ("RRB"), based upon standards that were established by the federal government, not the LIRR. The rate of occupational disability pensions awarded to LIRR retirees by this federal governmental body is out of sync with LIRR's workplace safety record. The LIRR's on-the-job injury rate has been in steady decline over the past several years due to a sustained effort to make our workplace a safe environment.

The LIRR currently has no meaningful opportunity to participate in the RRB's decision-making process. The LIRR has advocated for amendments to existing federal law that would provide for the greater use of independent occupational disability medical professionals; for an increased role for the railroads in making the determination of disability; and for new and better standards that would, among other things, contain more stringent standards for applications filed by administrative personnel (as distinct from operational personnel, whose jobs often involve physical labor). To date, however, Congress has not adopted any of these reforms.

Despite the fact that these disability benefits are awarded by a federal agency to individuals who no longer work for LIRR, President Helena Williams has implemented a series of steps to improve how the LIRR polices its own workforce with regard to this issue. She created a compliance unit to ensure that the LIRR has provided all relevant information to the RRB in connection with applications for occupational disability benefits. All employees are given ethics training on their obligation as public servants to safeguard public funds and to apply only for those benefit programs for which they are legitimately eligible. In fact, a training DVD on RRB occupational disability benefits was mailed home to all employees and is posted on the main page of the LIRR's internal Intranet site. Finally, the LIRR has undertaken a concerted effort to encourage its employees to report any waste, fraud or abuse to the MTA Inspector General. In short, LIRR is doing everything that it can to make sure that only those retirees who deserve a federal disability pension receive one.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Senator Marcellino 's "LIRR Riders Speak Out." Constituent Survey

Fare Collection/Ticketing

What internal control steps are being taken to improve efficiency of fare collection?

Answer: We staff all trains for 100% fare collection. The lack of fare collection can often be attributed to a variety of factors: typically, fare evasion and crowding. The recent 14-day and 6-month validity periods were intended to address some of the issues associated with this issue. In addition, when we have crowding associated with "cancel/combos" we sometime are unable to collect all tickets and obviously we do not staff for such perturbed situations.

We also have a robust process where we work with MTA Auditors to address fare collection deficiencies and we make corrections based upon these and our own observations. The LIRR is constantly evaluating ways to improve fare collection onboard trains based on changing ridership patterns, reports from train crews and internal auditing procedures designed to identify trains that may need more collectors. A special LIRR task force addresses this issue by riding trains each month to observe and interact with crew members concerning fare collection issues. So far, this year alone, 13 crew reassignments have been recommended to enhance fare collection on various trains. Simply adding additional collectors across the board is not necessarily the answer to better fare collection. Strategic deployment of existing staff is a key to improved fare collection.

Why can't I buy a student monthly ticket via mail or internet?

Answer: Regretfully, we cannot issue monthly school tickets online because we need original documentation from school officials to verify a students eligibility. However, a recent change now allows parents and students the convenience of printing out a blank application form from our web site. To make the application process easier, the LIRR recently made a printable version of the form available on our web site. Parents and students can now print out the form at home. However, the form must still be completed by a parent and stamped/approved by a school official, then submitted in-person to an LIRR Ticket Agent in order to get the student monthly ticket.

Link to this page from our web site:

<http://mta.info/lirr/about/TicketInfo/#Multiple> and scroll down to the words "Monthly School Tickets" and you can print out an application form.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Senator Marcellino 's "LIRR Riders Speak Out." Constituent Survey

MTA Payroll Tax

Why must Long Island businesses and homeowner, who almost never use the trains, pay taxes to the MTA, to subsidize those who use the LIRR daily?

Answer: The MTA payroll tax is one of several New York State Legislative measures that were approved and implemented to help balance the MTA's operating budget in order to minimize devastating fare and toll increases and severe service reductions throughout the 5,000 square mile service region. The fiscal solvency of the MTA is of tremendous importance to everyone in the 12-county MTA service area, for subway, bus and railroad commuters and non-commuters.

The New York State Legislature approved a package of taxes and fees to help support the transportation services provided by the MTA.

Every MTA transit user reduces traffic congestion and air pollution. Every full rail car keeps 75 to 125 automobiles off the road and every bus full of passengers removes about 40 cars from traffic. Further, on a national scale, public transit saves billions of gallons of fuel a year, thereby reducing our nation's dependence on costly and undependable foreign oil.

A viable MTA Capital Program also yields enormous benefits on the economy and workforce of New York State. For instance, the 2005-2009 \$22.6 billion MTA Capital Program produced estimated benefits of 167,000-346,000 total worker-years of employment (an average of 18,500-38,500 jobs annually for 9 years,) \$29.2 billion in economic activity/sales, \$1.1 billion in state and local personal income and sales taxes, and \$11.8 billion in wages and salaries. Therefore, non-MTA transit users and businesses in the MTA service region benefit directly and indirectly by having a viable MTA transit network.

Fare increase/Service Cuts

Why do fares keep going up and we keep getting less service?

Answer: Our parent agency, the MTA, is trying to close a \$900 million budget gap, created in part by a drop in government subsidy funds. State and national economies have been hit hard by the recession, and as a result, tax revenue and other state aid earmarked for the LIRR and other MTA agencies has materialized at lower levels than projected. The December 2010 fare and toll increase for the LIRR and all MTA agencies was approved by the MTA Board to generate an additional 7.5 percent in new revenue. The LIRR has worked to be more efficient. Some service reductions were required to address the budget gap.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Senator Marcellino 's "LIRR Riders Speak Out." Constituent Survey

What do you plan to do about cutting costs? Please articulate the LIRR's initiatives to reduce costs.

Answer: We recognize the effect that the downturn in the economy has had throughout the metropolitan region, which is why the MTA and LIRR have also undertaken an overhaul of the way we do business. This ongoing effort includes reducing our administrative staff, consolidating business functions, reducing overtime, eliminating positions, curtailing projects, and limiting service in certain instances in an effort to be more efficient. The LIRR is committed to providing safe, secure and reliable train service to the region, and we will continue to strive to improve our service.

Why aren't your managers out in the field riding trains and evaluating the system?

Answer: Our managers not only ride the trains to evaluate the "system," they do so in order to ensure the all crew members perform their responsibilities in a professional manner. There are times when a complaint may be filed against a particular crew member. Often, as part of the investigation into the employee, managers will ride the train "under cover" to observe and note if the conduct complained about by the customer is observed. In addition, this year LIRR managers met directly with customers of each branch during monthly "Meet the Managers" at Penn Station.

Why is it that during the snow storms last winter the LIRR wasn't running?

Answer: The Railroad's aim is always to keep as much train service operating as long possible on all branches as long as it is safe to do so. But to ensure customer and employee safety, service may be temporarily suspended if snow continues to accumulate through morning service and accumulations reaches 10 to 13 inches. These suspensions permit our employees to make maximum use of snow removal equipment to clear drifting snow and ice from our tracks, switches and train yards so safe and reliable service can be restored. This policy was widely publicized prior to the December Blizzard of 2010

Quiet Cars

Why can't some you make some trains Cell Phone free?

Answer: The LIRR is addressing the issue of common courtesy using an educational approach that encourages good manners. As part of our "Courtesy Matters" campaign, the LIRR urges customers not to be "cell-fish" by keeping onboard cell phone use to a minimum, by going to the vestibule of the train for unavoidable conversations and by using the vibrate mode on their phone instead of an annoying ring tone. This campaign has included announcements and courtesy reminders published in our monthly customer newsletter. In addition, several celebrities (Alec Baldwin, Mike Lupica, Carl Bernstein, Maria Bartiromo, Steve Guttenberg, and Osi Umenyora of the NY Giants) have graciously donated their time to record public service announcements that reinforce the LIRR's courtesy messages.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Senator Marcellino 's "LIRR Riders Speak Out." Constituent Survey

We intend to continue our current courtesy efforts and will work to develop additional methods of educating our customers about civil behavior onboard our trains. We hope these continued reminders encourage others to be thoughtful and courteous. In addition, the LIRR is studying a Quiet Car pilot program currently ongoing at MetroNorth.

Service Disruptions/Delays

Why do they continue to combine trains? There is no guarantee of seat going eastbound from Penn?

Answer: The LIRR resorts to canceling and combining trains only when our ability to operate the usual number of trains is compromised. When such a situation occurs, we use a service plan intended to minimize, to the extent possible, the impact to our customers. For example, during the week of May 9, LIRR rush hour capacity was reduced by 25% because of a derailed Amtrak train in one of the East River Tunnels, and the LIRR had to cancel and/or combine some trains.

Trains selected for cancellation/combination are typically targeted because they have some available seats. Certain branches, like the Babylon and Port Washington Branches, have a mix of service that provides us with an opportunity to combine trains while still maintaining the timeliness of our schedule for our customers. During peak hours, some trains on the Babylon and Port Washington lines operate in what is known as a "skip-stop" service pattern. In other words, these trains stop at a few stations that are grouped into sections. One train may have its first stop at Merrick, while the train behind it might have its first stop at Rockville Centre. During a service disruption, we combine two trains that normally pass the same location within minutes of each other. This allows us to cancel a train while minimizing passenger delays

How do we minimize service disruptions due to weather?

Answer: The LIRR works closely with emergency officials in New York City, and the outlying counties north and east on hurricane and blizzard contingency plans. When a storm is on track to impact the region, the railroad mobilizes its maintenance of way employees, gathering teams to respond to fallen trees, downed power lines, clogged culverts, mudslides, washouts and snowdrifts. In preparation for storms, the railroad ensures that all equipment necessary to deal with the effects of the storm are ready to go – for hurricanes: chain saws for clearing downed trees, pumps for flooded areas, supplies for replacing damaged utility poles and crossing gates – for snowstorms: snow blowers, plows, salt and shovels. Vehicle fuel tanks are topped-off and generators are tested and fueled. LIRR managers and staff mobilized across the board to respond.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Senator Marcellino 's "LIRR Riders Speak Out." Constituent Survey

Last fall, LIRR customers heard about how the Jamaica Switch & Signal Modernization project was going to significantly affect their train service on two weekends. Now that the cutover to the new system was successfully completed, what does it mean?

Answer: In a word - Reliability. The new state-of-the-art signal system upgrade brought computerized microprocessor-based technology to Jamaica's critical switching area and centralizes the switching and signal control from three 1910's era signal towers at Jamaica -Jay, Dunton and Hall - into one facility, Jamaica Central Control. Switches that once were thrown by hand levers are now controlled by the click of a computer mouse. The new more reliable system also provides redundant signal control systems. It will allow for quicker recovery time in the event of a power surge, or lightning storm or fire-related service disruption like the one experienced in August 2010, when high voltage power entered the signal system and damaged the wiring to the signal control board in Jamaica's Hall Tower.

Why doesn't the LIRR have contingency plans for getting around a disabled train?

Answer: There are many number of contingency plans for disabled trains, most of which have been developed with the authority and expertise of over 175 years in the rail road business. The problem that sometimes occurs is when a train becomes disabled on a stretch of single track. For example, if a train becomes disabled between Great Neck and Port Washington, it is simply not possible to bypass the disabled train. It must be repaired where it encountered problems, or towed or pushed to an area where it can be laid up on a side track.

New Refund Policy

Why do the tickets now expire after two weeks? Why has the expiration dates on tickets changes? Why did you change the expiration on tickets?

Answer: The MTA imposed the refund processing fee in order to partially offset the significant cost incurred by the LIRR to process these transactions. The application deadlines were changed in order to remain consistent with the new Ticket Validity Policy. For all tickets purchased on or after December 30, 2010, a refund processing fee of \$10 will be charged for each requested transaction. There is no limit on the number of tickets that can be included with each transaction. Both policies are intended to address the MTA's \$900 million budget gap.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Senator Marcellino 's "LIRR Riders Speak Out." Constituent Survey

Oyster Bay Branch Service

Why don't we get more direct service without the change at Jamaica?

Answer: There are a limited number of dual-mode locomotives, and each diesel branch has some Peak period through service. The Port Jefferson Branch, with a significantly higher ridership than the Oyster Bay Branch, has two round trips. The Montauk Branch has a round trip and one additional AM Peak train, and the Oyster Bay has a round trip. Added through trains is impacted by the availability of equipment and the need for additional slots into and out of Penn Station.

Port Washington Branch Service

Are there any plans to restore the service on the Port Washington Branch back to every half hour on the weekends?

Answer: As the economy improves, we hope to restore some service that was cut.

Communication

Why can't I call the Jamaica headquarters with a customer complaint and actually get a human being on the line?

Answer: As a result of budget reductions, LIRR Public Affairs staff has been reduced and so you may indeed get voice mail. However, ALL phone calls are returned promptly. In addition, for travel information call the LIRR's Travel Information Line at (718) 217-5477.

Communication with commuters is either too little, too late, (not timely), or an over-abundance of useless information- especially pertaining to changes or disruptions to service. What is being done to address this?

Answer: The LIRR keeps customers informed of planned service disruptions via a wide range of media platforms including the MTA website, paid advertising, customer email alerts, notifications via Twitter, station posters, station announcements, onboard announcements, terminal announcements, message boards at major terminals, video messages at major terminals and on YouTube, the electronic marquee signs operated by Madison Square Garden, notifications to Transcom to issue alerts on electronic signs on major highways, the monthly LIRR customer newsletter Train Talk (which is placed on each train seat throughout the system and is available on the MTA web site), Mail & Ride inserts and constant updates to traffic reporting agencies and the media via press conferences, press briefings and on air interviews with radio, TV, cable and print reporters.

To help ensure customers are kept fully informed, the LIRR established a Public Information Office (PIO) in 2008. The PIO is located in the LIRR's command center in Jamaica and is staffed by communications and transportation

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Senator Marcellino 's "LIRR Riders Speak Out." Constituent Survey

specialists, operating around-the-clock to communicate with the public and train crews about conditions that might impact train service. Under the current leadership of the LIRR, Public Affairs staff have been given a mandate to be proactive in notifying customers of disruptions – both planned and unplanned – that might impact their travel plans.

Customers can sign up for email alerts by branch and by time of day. LIRR's Public Affairs Department is proud of its record of communicating to our customers on a range of issues, including those times when their commute might be delayed because of necessary maintenance or elements outside the control of the LIRR. The LIRR's efforts to improve communications with customers have been noted by the media and by the Long Island Rail Road's Commuter Council (LIRRCC). For example, during four days of service disruptions earlier this month due to a derailment of an Amtrak train inside one of the East River Tunnels, the head of the LIRRCC, Maureen Michaels, commended the LIRR for fine-tuning its "disruption" schedule and effectively communicating with thousands of customers impacted.

"The LIRR has done an excellent job keeping people informed about the problems, cancellations and delays," Michaels told Newsday. ("LIRR Expects Normalcy By Tomorrow," May 12, 2011)

East Side Access

When will you begin service to "new" eastside terminal?

Answer: The \$7.3B ESA project, which will connect the LIRR to Grand Central Terminal, is well on its way to Opening Day in 2016. East Side Access is the most significant improvement in LIRR service in 100 years and will reshape how the LIRR operates. It will save commuters an average of 40 minutes a day, protect the Long Island housing market and deliver Long Islanders to high skilled, high paying jobs of the future on the East Side of Manhattan.

With the coming service to Grand Central Station, what will be done to keep Jamaica from becoming a bottleneck?

Answer: The Jamaica Reconfiguration Project
Phase 1 of the Jamaica capacity improvement project is a 400 million dollar effort to improve through output of LIRR trains in Jamaica. With Opening Day of ESA, all Manhattan-bound trains will make a station stop at Jamaica and because of the frequency in trains stopping at Jamaica, advertised connections are no longer necessary. No advertised connections in Jamaica means shorter dwell times, and shorter dwell times means less time for trains sitting around.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Senator Marcellino 's "LIRR Riders Speak Out." Constituent Survey

This means valuable seconds and minutes adding up to create open train slots, which ultimately means a greater flow of trains through Jamaica bringing an end to the Jamaica crawl.

Parking

Why can't you provide more parking at stations?

Answer: You may be surprised to learn that local municipalities have control of the parking lots at most LIRR stations, and are responsible for maintenance and the sale of parking permits. However, on occasions when funding is allocated through the MTA Capital Program, the LIRR has been able to partner with communities to provide funding for parking expansion projects where there is a need - meaning that existing parking lots are at least 95% occupied on a daily basis. In order to expand parking, there must be available land within reasonable walking distance of the station. If not, the community must willing to consider decked parking.

A recent success story took place in 2006, when the LIRR opened a new parking facility with 700 parking spaces on the south side of the Mineola Station. Commuter parking at the Mineola Intermodal Center is open to all, regardless of residency. The fee is \$6 a day (up to 20 hours) or - for long term parking (more than 20 hours per day) - the fee is \$12 a day. Customers can use credit cards or debit cards for payment at any of the 20 Payment Center machines located throughout the garage, in addition to the cash option. Here is a link to more information about this facility:

<http://mta.info/lirr/ConnectingService/MineolaIntermodal.htm>

On Time Performance

When I show up to work at 9:06 AM, I am considered late. Why is 6 minutes late considered on time for the LIRR?

Answer: The "5 minute-59 seconds" rule is a national standard for all rail lines, includes out sister commuter rail road MetroNorth.

Greenport Service

Why don't you have more service to Greenport?

Answer: Unfortunately, there are not enough regular customers to offset the cost of running additional trains to Greenport. In the future, the LIRR hopes to explore, provide more frequent scoot service, from Riverhead.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from Senator Marcellino 's "LIRR Riders Speak Out." Constituent Survey

Port Jefferson Branch Service

Syosset train station has always been a problem because of the curvature of the platform and parking. Why not move the station to Robbins Lane, Syosset where Cerro Wire was located?

Answer: There is no funding to build a new station near the old Cerro Wire plant. In addition to the costs associated with building a new station and platform, additional costs to be considered include the cost of constructing a parking lot or garage and personnel costs to maintain the station and parking facilities. At the present time, there are no funds allocated in MTA Capital Program to construct a new station at this location. As such, there are no plans to close Syosset Station.

Concerns regarding platform gaps – and specifically the gap at Syosset - are being taken very seriously by the LIRR. We have worked closely and cooperatively with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Public Transportation Safety Board (PTSB) on education and safety measures to help minimize gaps between trains and platforms.

Because of the wider gap at Syosset, for many years the LIRR has employed a "Platform Conductor" at this station during the busy AM Peak period. The Platform Conductor signals to train crewmembers when it is safe to close the doors and proceed. Similarly, the Platform Conductor can signal when it is not safe for a train to proceed and can render immediate customer assistance in the event of a gap incident or any other problem.

In our ongoing effort to raise awareness of the gap, we have developed new gap-warning sign that use a pictograph to more clearly demonstrate the need to step over the gap. "Watch the Gap" messages were stenciled on the platform at Syosset as an additional reminder.

A video with helpful tips to teach and encourage safe behavior when platform gaps are encountered may be viewed on the MTA web site at:

<http://mta.info/lirr/Video/GapSafety/>