

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



ELAINE PHILLIPS
SENATOR
7TH DISTRICT

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August 20, 2018

Hon. Joseph J. Lhota, Chairman
MTA
2 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

Dear Chairman Lhota:

For hundreds of thousands of LIRR daily commuters, there is nothing more important than safe, reliable and efficient service. In recent months, LIRR commuters are not getting what they paid for.

In 2017, LIRR commuters experienced the worst levels of service in nearly 20 years. While some of the fault is directly attributable to the long-delayed "summer of hell" repairs at Penn Station, a recent report by the State Comptroller reveals that things have not gotten better.

Indeed, a recent State Comptroller's audit identified 2,004 trains that were delayed 15 minutes or more in just the months of December and January. And in just the past two weeks, LIRR commuters endured three derailments and three straight days of interrupted rush hour service and overpacked trains.

I was pleased that the MTA board chose to heed my suggestion during last year's Penn Station service disruption and authorized reduced fares for impacted commuters. The result was a savings of \$7.9M that offered some consolation to harried commuters who had to cope with schedule changes, cancellations and delays that interrupted their business and family obligations. It was the right thing to do.

Yet, despite the continuing lack of reliable service even months after the Penn Station disruptions, the MTA, by all accounts, still plans to begin next year a 2% annual fare increase for four years. This will be its seventh fare hike over the past decade. It's even been suggested that the MTA should adopt an uneven fare hike plan weighted more heavily on Nassau County residents who I represent in the State Senate.

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Rather than add to the stress and expense of commuters for service that is by almost any measure not holding up to its promises or commuters' expectations, I believe the MTA should delay any fare increase until the LIRR meets a specific set of predetermined standards of improved service, including improvements in on-time performance and customer satisfaction, as well as reduced incidences of equipment breakdowns and avoidable delays.

The LIRR needs to step up its game before turning to already overburdened farepayers for more revenue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elaine Phillips".

Elaine Phillips
State Senator

cc: Phillip Eng, President, MTA Long Island Rail Road
MTA Board Members