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IMMEDIATE

MTA Picks Helena Williams to Head Long Island Rail Road

Former Head of Long Island Bus Returns to Run Nation's Busiest Commuter Railroad

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority today announced the appointment of Helena E. Williams as President of MTA Long Island Rail Road (LIRR).

A long-time Nassau County resident, Williams' career is marked by top-level experience in transportation management and Long Island public office, with service as President of MTA Long Island Bus and later as Nassau County Deputy County Executive. In five years at the helm of the bus company Williams oversaw an array of innovations and improvements to service. These included implementation of Metrocard, transition to a fleet of clean, eco-friendly buses, initiation of a new paratransit service and development of an employee availability program that dramatically cut costs.

"Helena's unique combination of experience in transportation management and Long Island policy issues made her the obvious choice to lead the LIRR to the next level," said Elliot G. Sander, MTA Executive Director and CEO. "We interviewed candidates from throughout the MTA family and around the world, but Helena rose to the top and I expect her to hit the ground running."

Williams' initial priorities for the LIRR include customer safety, service reliability and laying the groundwork for meeting future transportation demand. She starts in her new role on June 18, as the first woman to lead the nation's busiest commuter railroad. The LIRR employs approximately 6,300 employees and runs a system comprising more than 700 miles of track on 11 different branches, stretching from Montauk to Penn Station, approximately 120 miles away.

Williams takes over for Acting President Raymond P. Kenny, who oversaw the agency since James Dermody departed in September. Dermody was president of LIRR from September 25, 2003 to September 1, 2006.

"Ray stepped in at a challenging time and did a terrific job running the Rail Road," Sander said. "Ray's leadership and the hard work of the men and women at LIRR were critical to delivering exceptional service every day, while promoting system expansion and dealing with safety concerns associated with platform gaps."

A lawyer by training, Williams began her career in New York City, working for the Mayor's Office of Municipal Labor Relations. After a brief stint in private practice, Williams began a fruitful 13-year career at the MTA in 1985, where she rose from labor counsel to chief of staff of Long Island Bus before assuming the presidency of Long Island Bus in 1993. She most recently worked as Senior Counsel at Cablevision and previously served as Nassau Deputy County Executive where she was a key member of the team that helped turn around Nassau's nearly bankrupt finances. Williams holds a J.D. from the St. John's University School of Law and a B.A. with honors from the State University of New York at Oneonta.