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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

MTA LIRR Plans to Modify Use of Train Horns

MTA Long Island Rail Road President Helena Williams today announced plans to reduce the use of train horns and their decibel level at numerous locations where residents have complained about noise in the past.

"I have heard the complaints of our neighbors along the LIRR's right of way loud and clear," said Williams. "Now we are doing something about it."

After careful study, Williams said the LIRR has concluded it could, in certain circumstances, achieve these aims without compromising the safety of passengers, employees or the general public.

The LIRR is amending its operating rules to reduce horn use and is seeking two federal waivers that would permit further reductions. The Railroad is also installing a muffling-type device on its M-7 electric trains designed to direct the sound of the horn forward rather than letting it disperse to the sides.

"This directional muffler developed by the very resourceful members of our Maintenance of Equipment Department is an important part of our strategy to lower the volume on this railroad and improve the quality of life for the thousands of people in Nassau, Suffolk and Queens who live and work close to our tracks," Williams said.

The LIRR is also eliminating horn soundings previously required when trains passed stations without stopping during morning and evening rush hours.

Instead, engineers will only be required to sound the horn when they see someone standing too close to the edge of the platform or for other safety reasons.

The waivers being sought from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) address two issues.

Since 2005, FRA regulations have required train engineers to sound two long blasts, one short one and one additional long blast at all public highway rail grade crossings. The LIRR is seeking permission to return to its former practice of one short blast of the horn when trains depart from stations located within 50 feet of these crossings. The Railroad has identified 24 such locations, 18 in Nassau, five in Suffolk and one in Queens.

The second waiver seeks to lower the minimum 96-decibel level required by the FRA on the LIRR's electric fleet.

"Train horns are critical safety devices, warning motorists and pedestrians to remain clear of the track when a train approaches a grade crossing," President Williams said. "They also remind passengers on station platforms to stand back from the edge and protect track workers and other employees engaged in projects along the right of way."

"While we cannot eliminate horns, we can and have taken a careful look at our equipment and our operations, and have developed the steps I am announcing today which we believe can be taken to reduce train horn noise without compromising public safety or the essential transportation services we provide to 86 million people annually."