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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

### MTA LIRR Announces \$3.4M in Service Investments Including Restoration of Weekend Service to West Hempstead Branch

#### *Package Also Features Extra Cars to Relieve Crowding on Peak-Hour Trains*

MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast and Long Island Rail Road President Patrick Nowakowski today proposed a package of LIRR service investments including the restoration of weekend service on the West Hempstead Branch and the addition of two cars to six rush hour trains that are at or near capacity.

Some of the service improvements, including restoration of the West Hempstead weekend service, will be implemented as soon as this fall while others will occur in 2015. The \$3.4 million package of improvements includes upgrades on Huntington, Port Washington, Babylon, Hempstead, Oyster Bay and Montauk branches as well service to Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn and Barclays Center.

"Long Islanders rely on the LIRR, and adding service for our customers is an important part of our commitment to serve them," Prendergast said. "More trains, more cars and more service mean fewer cars on the road and more options for everyone on Long Island."

LIRR President Nowakowski said: "These investments will help address community and customer requests to strategically add service where it is needed most. We are especially pleased to be able to restore weekend West Hempstead branch service."

The proposals, which are contained in the MTA Preliminary 2015 Budget presented to the MTA Board today, come in response to continuing LIRR ridership growth as the region works its way back from the economic impact of the Great Recession. LIRR ridership has been above the prior year in eight of the last nine months, and in June, the LIRR, the nation's busiest commuter rail road, carried more customers than it has in any month in almost six years. The trends have been favorable in both the commutation and non-commutation categories.

#### **Weekend Service on the West Hempstead Branch**

Starting on Saturday, November 22, weekend service returns to the West Hempstead Branch for the first time in four years with trains running, as they had in the past, every two hours between West Hempstead and Penn Station and Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn with connecting service at Valley Stream and Jamaica. Service was cut in 2010 as part of an MTA austerity plan in the face of a large budget gap.

#### **Other Proposed Service Improvements:**

##### **Montauk Branch:**

- There will be 10 weeks of extra weekend service on the Montauk Branch to response to demand from customers who continue to extend leisure and tourist travel on the South Fork beyond the traditional summer season. So, beginning in October, the LIRR weekend service to the Hamptons and Montauk will feature one extra eastbound train and one extra westbound train through the Thanksgiving Weekend. Then in 2015, the extra trains will be added to the schedule in May.
- Beginning in September 2015, the LIRR will make extra summer weekend service between Babylon and Patchogue the norm in recognition that the village's booming entertainment and restaurant activity has made it into a popular year-round weekend destination.

##### **Oyster Bay Branch**

- Beginning in September 2015, the LIRR will add two trains to the weekend schedule on the Oyster Bay Branch, one in the morning and one at night to service city-bound customers.

#### **Adding Cars to 6 Crowded Rush Hour Trains**

Beginning in November, the LIRR will add two cars to the following peak period trains to address crowding issues. These trains currently run between 91% and 99% of capacity every day. Train lengths will be increased on the following trains:

##### **Hempstead Branch**

- The 7:36 AM train from Hempstead to Atlantic Terminal Brooklyn will go from six to eight cars.

**Ronkonkoma Branch**

- The 7:58 AM train from Bethpage to Penn Station will go from 10 to 12 cars.

**Babylon Branch**

- The 8:03 AM train from Babylon to Penn Station will go from 10 to 12 cars.
- The 8:35 AM train from Babylon to Penn Station will go from 10 to 12 cars

**Huntington Branch**

- The 5:46 PM train from Penn Station to Huntington will go from 10 to 12 cars.

**Port Washington Branch**

- The 7:01 PM train from Penn Station to Port Washington will go from 10 to 12 cars.

**Service to Atlantic Terminal & Barclays Center**

The railroad currently provides evening service to Atlantic Terminal specifically for events at the Barclays Center to meet the expanding schedule of New York's fastest growing entertainment venue. The July financial plan now will reflect the additional cost of providing the added service to Barclays events 250 days a year.