



## MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) ▼

Press Release

March 19, 2018

LIRR

IMMEDIATE

### LIRR Outlines Performance Improvement Plan

#### *Slate of Nearly 60 Actions Focused on Improving Service Reliability, Seasonal Preparedness and Customer Communications*

The Long Island Rail Road today offered the MTA Board details on a comprehensive, multi-faceted slate of nearly 60 actions the railroad will take to improve the railroad's performance. Officially known as the LIRR Performance Improvement Plan, or PIP, the actions in the plan touch on virtually every department of the railroad and concentrate on improving three aspects of railroad operations: service reliability, seasonal preparedness and customer communications.

The railroad will provide details every month to the MTA Board and the public on the nature of the activities and progress the railroad is making toward each using clearly defined metrics compared against pre-determined timelines.

"This plan lays out the steps toward doing everything we can to prevent incidents that can impact service and when incidents do occur, to recover service faster by improving our response times to the issues impacting us and our customers," said LIRR President Patrick Nowakowski. "Just as important, whether we have a disruption or are providing normal service, we know that improved communication with customers is vital. That extends to this plan itself. We are developing a host of methods to gauge customer feedback on our performance, from upcoming public engagement sessions and focus groups, to working with the LIRR Commuter Council and soliciting customer comments."

#### Service Reliability

The plan includes efforts to improve fleet reliability, maintain and upgrade critical infrastructure such as signals, switches, and track, as well as approaches to better respond to fleet and infrastructure issues that do happen, with the overall goal of targeting investments that deliver the most improvements for the most customers.

Examples of actions in this category include:

- Infrastructure Upgrades: Harden or upgrade assets such as PSEG poles alongside the tracks systemwide, the Atlantic Avenue Tunnel in Brooklyn and ties at Queens high-speed crossovers; accelerate M7 heated threshold replacements; install flexible delineators at high priority railroad crossings to deter vehicles from turning onto the tracks
- Inspections: increase frequency of rail flaw detections; implement special inspections at railroad crossings; improve quality of track inspections by reducing the length of track inspected per tour
- Better Monitoring of Conditions: Implement enhanced monitoring of railroad conditions, by installing bridge strike monitoring systems at five priority locations, as well as a wheel impact load detection system to automatically detect flat spots, and reviewing the top 20 late trains system wide to identify opportunities for schedule adjustments
- Better Administration: Realign track maintenance subdivisions to conform with signal subdivisions to better coordinate maintenance activities; add mobile response crews to address equipment issues; implement an engineering crew office with five new staff members to allow more effective planning and execution of proactive infrastructure maintenance and repair
- Better Maintenance: Increased rail joint welding; increase frequency of surfacing at switches; increase rail grinding

#### Seasonal Preparedness

The LIRR faces known seasonal challenges that are all too familiar to its customers. These include snow and ice in winter and falling leaves in autumn that result in slippery rail conditions, repair of wheel flat spots and resulting short trains. The plan overhauls the railroad's efforts to ensure resilience against weather events and improve recoverability from weather-related service disruptions.

Examples of actions include:

- Spring-Summer: Increase vegetation management
- Winter: Acquire switch snow covers, additional snow fighters and additional third rail heaters
- Winter: Improve efficiency of Glycol-dispensing trains that combat ice and snow buildup on the third rail by upgrading controls
- Autumn: Ensure the Arch Street wheel truer is online throughout the autumn leaf season and work with developers to ensure the high-capacity West Side Yard wheel truer is installed and commissioned as quickly as possible.
- Autumn: Improve train handling training for the fall season to reduce slip-slide incidents and wheel flat spots
- Year-round: Add signal system grounding to create lightning protection at 30 locations, reducing instances of signal system problems.
- Year-round: Add additional signal personnel and overnight track emergency crews
- Year-round: Add new drainage systems and enhance inspection and maintenance practices in key areas

**Customer Communications**

The LIRR's customers depend on the railroad to provide them with timely, accurate information during planned and unplanned service disruptions to assist them in making quick decisions about their commutes or to plan ahead. The LIRR must improve in this area to make information more timely, more accurate and easier to access.

Examples of activities in this category include:

- Create a Chief Customer Advocate, reporting directly to the LIRR President
- Enhance communications on board trains by being more proactive in our communications with train crews, encouraging train crews to be more proactive, and utilizing crew expertise in making announcements; amend employee training procedures including procurement of professional announcer training
- Conduct market research and focus groups to allow staff to better understand customer expectations and perceptions about LIRR communications, and to determine how to improve the way LIRR customers receive information
- Hold "LIRR Listens" public engagement sessions with LIRR senior leadership
- Increase coverage, visibility, branding, and tools for customer ambassadors and ushers at Penn Station, Jamaica, and Atlantic Terminal
- Display countdown to train arrivals on digital screens at suburban stations
- Establish wireless connectivity at Penn Station and Atlantic Terminal to allow customers to remain connected and receive real-time alerts while on the railroad.
- Improve customer awareness of MyMTAAlerts.com and the LIRR TrainTime app as tools for real-time train updates.