



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) ▼

Press Release

September 8, 2020

LIRR

IMMEDIATE

LIRR Unveils New Technology That Identifies Least Crowded Trains Before Riders Leave Home

Customers Can Now Plan Trips Based on Data Provided for Each Train and Station

LIRR Is First Transportation Agency Globally to Deploy This Targeted Planning Tech

TrainTime App Also Expands Real-Time Ridership Data to 100% of Fleet

[View Press Conference and Live Demonstration](#)

[View Video of App](#)

Long Island Rail Road officials today unveiled a first-of-its-kind planning tool that allows customers to choose trains based on recent crowding data. LIRR is the first transit agency globally to deploy the crowding data feature, which empowers customers with information so accurate and precise that they never have to second guess the best time to use the system.

The newest feature gives customers access to the median ridership of the past 7 trips of a specific train, at any station, updated every morning to include the prior day's data. Customers can plan their trip by selecting the time of their trip and which stations they are traveling between, and will see icons below specific trains gauging the capacity of each train. The icons range from 1 to 4, with 4 being the most crowded and 1 being the least crowded. By clicking on a specific train, customers can then see the crowding data.

For instance, someone traveling from Babylon to Penn Station around 7:00AM can know ahead of time if the 6:49AM or the 7:10AM is least crowded based on the icons. For riders that do not board at end-of-line stations they can track how crowded a train gets at each station by clicking on that specific train. A customer traveling from Amityville to Penn Station for example would know ahead of time if their train will become more crowded as they approach Jamaica station. This gives customers interested in maximizing their social distance while riding the tools necessary to know their commute.

The function works by utilizing sophisticated sensors which can determine how many passengers are on board a train at any given moment. LIRR then securely transmits and processes all of this encrypted data in the cloud, and seamlessly provides it back out to customers in a useful form in real time.

"In the days and months following the start of this global pandemic, MTA Chairman Pat Foye openly discussed the possibility of instituting a reservation style ticketing system on the railroads. What we've developed is even better," said **LIRR President Phil Eng**. "In effect, the historical loading feature updates daily and provides our customers with perfect data. Our riders can rest assured that this information is reliable and never subject to human error. Our customers will be able to understand the exact ridership trends of their particular trip so that they can make the most ideal decision possible about when to ride with us. MTA LIRR TrainTime is first in class and our customers deserve nothing less."

"Make no mistake, the features in this app are as innovative as anything we're seeing in public transportation globally in the aftermath of the pandemic," said **LIRR Chief Innovation Officer Will Fisher**. "These are immensely challenging times, but this unprecedented crisis has also given us a rare opportunity to rethink the ways we interact with and empower our customers. This new feature will seamlessly provide the kind of data our riders are seeking as they begin returning to LIRR."

"We're using a trio of different systems to determine real-time customer loading: airbag pressure transducers, which continuously monitor car weight; infrared sensors above the doorways to detect entrances and exits; and for the cars where neither technology was available, we tapped into the pre-existing security cameras and used AI to determine how many passengers are on board," said **Sunny Zheng, Process Improvement Specialist at Long Island Rail Road**. "Between the real-time data, the historical analysis, and the other features of the app, this is a transformative leap forward in rider-facing data unmatched by any railroad anywhere in the world. Our customers can now access all these innovations in one place, in every phase of their trip, whether they've been continuously riding with us or planning their return to the system over the coming weeks and months."

"The more information we have the better and this is information that makes the riders safe," said **Gerard Bringmann, Chair of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council**. "I think this is critical technology, I'm glad the railroad instituted it, and it will give the ridership an opportunity to make their own decisions about where they want to sit and give them a better comfort level. I think that's the most critical thing."

The agency also expanded its customer crowding information feature that debuted in June to its diesel fleet, ensuring that 100% of the LIRR fleet has this real-time data for customers to use when waiting on a platform for the next train. The quality of the data available puts the LIRR significantly ahead of any other railroad app globally, with customers now able to determine the number of passengers in any at any minute in real time.

The app, including these new features, was built entirely in-house by LIRR developers and staff. The team designed numerous bespoke solutions that are highly customized and tailored specifically to the needs of LIRR customers.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIRST SERIES OF APP UPDATES RELEASED ON THE NEW TRRAINTIME APP IN JUNE INCLUDE:

- Real-time car seat availability for M9 and M7 fleets (90% of LIRR's electric fleet).
- Real-time train location updated every three seconds.
- Push notifications for track assignments at Penn Station, Atlantic Terminal and Jamaica Station.
- Ability to share trips with others to coordinate i.e. picking up at stations.
- Ability to bookmark favorite trips.