

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Joint Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad Committees
Monday, September 23, 2024
10:45 a.m.

Meeting held at
2 Broadway – 20th Floor
New York, New York 10004

The following Committee Members were present in person:

Hon. Marc Herbst, Co-Chair
Hon. Blanca López, Co-Chair
Hon. Gerard Bringmann
Hon. Norman Brown
Hon. Samuel Chu
Hon. Randolph Glucksman
Hon. David Mack
Hon. Lisa Sorin
Hon. Neal Zuckerman

The following Committee Members attended via video:

Hon. Vincent Tessitore, Jr.

The following Committee Members were not present:

Hon. Michael Fleischer
Hon. Daniel Garodnick
Hon. Midori Valdivia

Representing Metro-North Railroad:

Catherine Rinaldi – President
Justin Vonashek – Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer
Shelley Prettyman – Vice President, System Safety
Michael Loney – Vice President, Maintenance of Way
Yvonne Hill-Donald – Chief Administrative Officer

Representing Long Island Rail Road:

Robert Free – President
Lori Ebbighausen – Vice President, Corporate Safety
Paul Dietlin – Vice President, Maintenance of Way
Haley Stein – Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary (also representing Metro-North)

Representing MTA Police Department:

Thomas J. Taffe – Chief of Operations

Representing MTA Construction and Development:

Jamie Torres-Springer – President
Anthony Tufano – Senior Vice President, Railroads Business Unit
Stephen Berrang – Senior Vice President, Program Oversight
Donna Betty – Vice President, Railroad Project Development

Representing MTA Safety and Security Department:

Carl Hamann – Acting Chief Safety Officer

The members of the Metro-North Railroad (“Metro-North”) Committee met jointly with the members of the Long Island Rail Road (“LIRR”) Committee.

1. OPENING MEETING:

Co-Chair López called the joint meeting to order.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

The following public speakers commented:

Kara Gurl, PCAC Planning and Advocacy Manager (in person) lauded the new Capital Plan that will help hundreds of thousands of riders and suggested expanding fare incentives like CityTicket with transfers, morning peak half-fares for seniors and the disabled, and Fair Fares.

Miriam Fisher (via video) advocated for raising awareness for accessibility for subway riders and complained of lack of accessibility in Chelsea for both subways and buses.

Murray Bodin, Concerned Grandparents (in person) stated that safety is important to the railroads and he welcomes a discussion with the railroads to fix any issues.

Matthew Buchys-Hyland (via video) suggested a combo-ticket for riders using both railroads.

Omar Vera (in person) asked for the rollout of OMNY into commuter railroads.

Christopher D. Greif (via video) stated that railroads need more cameras and police, and urged additional education about fare evasion and the Care programs for both railroads.

Jason Anthony, LIRR ADA Task Force (in person) stated that he is pleased to see East New York Station in the Capital Plan, requested additional advertising for the Metro-North Care program, and hopes to see Metro-North get to one hundred percent ADA accessibility.

Andy Quito (via audio) stated that the LIRR service during the recent VMA event was inadequate by not providing extra train service to UBS arena and stated that Hollis Station needs modern updates such as elevators and new platforms.

The video recording of the meeting produced by the MTA and maintained in the MTA records contains a complete record of the public comments.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved the minutes of the July 29, 2024 Joint LIRR/Metro-North Committee Meeting.

4. METRO-NORTH AND LIRR 2024 WORK PLANS:

There were no changes to the LIRR or Metro-North Work Plans. The 2024 Metro-North and LIRR Work Plans are filed with the records of this meeting.

5. METRO-NORTH PRESIDENT'S AND OPERATING REPORTS:

Metro-North President Catherine Rinaldi (“President Rinaldi”) presented the combined President’s and Operating Reports.

President Rinaldi stated that August ridership was strong. Metro-North served 5.45 million customers, which is a 6.5% increase compared to August 2023 and represented 74.7% of August 2019 ridership. Average weekday ridership decreased but average weekend ridership remained strong at 83.5% of August 2019.

Return-to-work is evidenced in early September ridership post Labor Day. The week ending Sunday, September 15 was a post-COVID record-setting week for Metro-North ridership. The first full week after the end of the summer vacation season produced the following records, which represent highs in terms of both trips and recovery against 2019. Average weekday ridership rose to a record 224,932; weekday ridership stood at 78.0% of September 2019. Tuesday-Thursday ridership rose similarly to a new record of 230,176, the first time this metric has topped 230,000, at approximately 79.8% of September 2019. Weekend ridership, boosted by beautiful weather and an average of just over 10,000 trips each day to and from the Yankees’ always-popular series against the archrival Boston Red Sox, for which Metro-North operated extra service, was up 24.6% over the previous weekend, setting a new record average of 127,584 per day, up 5% over the previous post-COVID record weekend of June 8-9. New post-COVID day-of-week records were also set for Thursday, Friday, and Sunday.

Metro-North’s service-delivered rate for August was 99.8%. Systemwide on-time performance (OTP) for August was 97.9%, above goal of 94%, while year-to-date OTP was also above goal at 98.3%. Eight major incidents negatively affected August’s OTP, with the most significant occurring on August 9. A continuous conditional power supply alarm caused Hudson Line trains to run at restricted speeds for five miles near Beacon.

Mean distance between failures (MDBF) for the fleet was 354,788 miles in July 2024, above the goal of 200,000 miles.

Metro-North's fall schedule change on the Hudson, Harlem, and New Haven lines will be in effect beginning Sunday, October 6 to accommodate major trackwork and ongoing projects. Morning and afternoon rush hour and all weekend trains on the New Haven Line will see a 1-2 minute reduction in trip time, reflecting recent improvements in the signal system. The popular Hudson Line Leaf Peeper Fall Foliage trains will return in October. The October schedule will also support the return of Shopper Schedule Trains on the New Haven Line, and modified schedules for fall and winter holidays trains.

President Rinaldi introduced a new pilot program to improve restroom cleanliness. QR codes on posters in select restrooms on trains and in stations will allow customers to provide real-time feedback on their experience. Feedback will be provided immediately to either the Mechanical or Stations department for prompt action. All 65 posters will be installed by October 3.

August was a difficult month for weather events, with storms on August 3 and August 18 having detrimental effects on the railroad's service. The August 18 storm dropped between 6-8 inches of rain across Connecticut. The Waterbury Branch sustained the most damage and will remain out of service for the next several weeks. There were washouts and track damage at Seymour and Beacon Falls, CT. The washout at Seymour, alongside the Naugatuck River at Kinneytown Dam, was particularly damaging. The Connecticut Department of Transportation, which owns the trackage in Connecticut, has engaged a contractor to restore and harden the embankment. Metro-North will begin restoration of the track bed and signals in the third week of October, with service estimated to resume by early November. In the meantime, Metro-North is operating a full-schedule substitute bus service for the Waterbury Branch customers.

President Rinaldi highlighted the launch of a mini-survey for customers of the Hudson and Harlem Lines to ascertain the root cause of slightly lower scores during the Spring customer satisfaction survey regarding perceptions of capacity concerns on the trains and also a stated desire for more frequent peak and off-peak services. Metro-North has some of the highest customer satisfactions scores of any commuter railroad in the nation and is a firm believer in the maxim that "frequency builds ridership" and takes seriously the slight dip in satisfaction about capacity and service frequency. Metro-North will report to the Committee the results of the survey.

President Rinaldi acknowledged Hispanic Heritage Month and the many employees of Hispanic background that drive the success of the railroad. President Rinaldi highlighted Deputy Director of Maintenance of Way Training Kendal Ortiz, whose dedication and leadership has earned him recognition in the transportation industry, and he was named to Mass Transit magazine's 40 under 40 list.

President Rinaldi highlighted the ongoing Park Avenue Viaduct Replacement project, which is an important state of good repair project for the railroad.

The complete presentation and Operating Report are filed with the records of this meeting. The video recording of the meeting produced by the MTA and maintained in the MTA records contains a complete record of President Rinaldi's remarks.

6. LIRR PRESIDENT'S AND OPERATING REPORTS:

LIRR President Rob Free (“President Free”) presented the combined President’s and Operating Reports. Summer ridership remained strong. July ridership increased by 14.9% and August ridership increased by 12% over the same months in 2023. Non-commutation July and August ridership exceeded 2019 numbers for those same months, marking 12 straight months that ridership surpassed 2019 numbers. Year-to-date (“YTD”) ridership ending in August is 16.3% above 2023 YTD ridership, and monthly commutation ridership increased 18.9% compared to 2023. In September, LIRR broke the one-day, post-COVID ridership mark on Wednesday, September 18 with 281,624 customers, surpassing the previous post-COVID record by 10,000 customers.

President Free stated that on-time performance (“OTP”) was 95.6% for July and 94.5% for August and YTD OTP was 95.5%, all above goal. The mean distance between failure (“MDBF”) for July was 166,391 miles, and YTD MDBF was 160,347 miles, both above goal of 150,000 miles. Service delivery for August was 99.6% of trips completed.

President Free reported that for summer ridership from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, the Long Island Rail Road transported over 20 million customers, which is a 13% increase over the same period in 2023. Travel to the East End always boosts ridership. This season diesel-only Montauk Branch ridership was up 19% overall. It was up 10% on Fridays and a whopping 44% on Thursdays, a trend that was predicted through constant analysis of ridership data, and the reason for the addition of a new train from Speonk to Montauk on summer Thursdays. Ridership numbers to the US Open flourished this year, surpassing last year’s tournament ridership by a healthy 24%.

On September 20, President Free joined Construction and Development (“C&D”) President Jamie Torres-Springer, Co-chair Herbst, and SMART Transportation Division General Chairman Anthony Simon as they broke ground on the two-year total renovation of Babylon Station. This long-awaited project will bring that heavily used station into the 21st century. The modern new transit facility will feature two new 12-car platforms with automated snow and ice melt technology; new canopies, stairs, handrails, escalators and brand-new ADA-compliant elevators. There will be elevators on both ends of the platforms with replacement of the east end elevator and the addition of new elevator on the west end of the platform.

The work will occur in two stages. Work on the western portions of the station is currently being done through May 2025. The work will break during the summer and will begin again on the eastern portion of the station beginning in September 2025. The new platform is scheduled to open in May 2026. President Free thanked the C&D team for their continued partnership.

President Free reported on improvements at Jamaica Station and highlighted the station enhancements, including four new large LED track posting boards on the east end overpass replacing one large board in the center and an increase in ticket vending machines in the overpass from three to six. These new installations have improved the customer flow and the overall customer experience.

President Free discussed the use of new technology as part of the strategic priority to run an efficient railroad. The LIRR has identified a more efficient way to monitor and identify issues along the right of way through the use of drones. The drones are operated by the Office of Security and used for emergency response while also providing operational support to various LIRR departments. For example, what would have historically taken 40 hours to inspect vegetation growth between Ronkonkoma and Greenport, approximately 55 miles in length, now takes 16 hours. The footage also identifies debris and other hazards that could damage tracks or rolling stock, and helps monitor unauthorized ingress and egress areas. This enables LIRR to better direct force account efforts and position security assets such as fencing or cameras. Real-time drone footage can be viewed on electronic devices at remote LIRR locations and are recorded and preserved for future use. President Free thanked LIRR Chief Security Officer Bob Murphy and the security team for the implementation of this new technology.

President Free highlighted another tale of heroism on the part of LIRR employees who were recognized as MTA Heroes of the Week. This incident could potentially have had a very different outcome if not for the actions of six members of one of their high-tension crews. While working in Hicksville on the morning of June 4, members of the crew noticed black smoke coming from a nearby house. It turned out to be a house fire and the foreman immediately notified fellow coworkers to call 911 as he and another crewmember ran to the front door of the house. They banged on the front door and told a young woman and small child to get out immediately. The woman mentioned that people also lived in the rear of the house, so the entire crew ran to the back to investigate. Luckily no one was inside at the time. The crew pulled debris away from the house and used a garden hose to slow down the spread of the fire until the Fire Department was able to arrive. That day, Brendan DiThomas, Chris Flood, James Bove, Shaun Cavanaugh, Steven Munday and Craig Laucella took quick action and bravely prevented what could have been a horrible tragedy had they not acted. President Free acknowledged the bravery of these employees and thanked them for making the Long Island Rail Road extremely proud.

Co-chair Herbst commended President Free for the opening of the Babylon Station project, and especially for the outreach at the station, including the employees working at the station during the disruptions. Co-chair Herbst also commended Metro-North's staff for their assistance during sporting events, even during late in the evening, guiding customers who may not be normal riders.

Board Member Glucksman thanked Metro-North for posting the new schedule for Pascack Valley Line. In response to a question from Board Member Glucksman regarding the QR codes on the station platforms, President Rinaldi confirmed that the QR codes are linked to updated information on the website.

The complete presentation is filed with the records of this meeting. The video recording of the meeting produced by the MTA and maintained in the MTA records contains a complete record of President Free's remarks.

7. MTA PROPOSED CAPITAL PLAN 2025-2029:

MTA C&D President Jamie Torres-Springer (“President Torres-Springer”) presented the proposed Capital Plan for 2025-2029, which was released the previous week.

Senior Vice President of Program Oversight Steve Berrang and Vice President of Railroad Project Development Donna Betty are the “brains” behind the plan. The plan was built from the bottom up using the most rigorous Twenty-Year Needs Assessment of the six million component assets across the system that had ever been undertaken. The assessment determined that the railroad assets that required the most needs are those in poor or marginal condition, which remain the focus of this Capital Plan.

President Torres-Springer stated that state of good repair being the focus of the program, the Plan will address LIRR power and structures, and Metro-North station platforms and signals. President Torres-Springer noted, though, that the Plan will not bring every asset into a state of good repair, as they are constantly fighting against the “decay curve”, which means that as they repair assets, other assets leave the state of good repair.

President Torres-Springer stated that an assessment by JP Morgan found that annual capital expenditures of \$16-\$23 billion were necessary to match comparable peers. The NYS Comptroller independently estimated that total capital needed to be in the range of \$57.8 to \$92.2 billion for the 2025-2029 Capital Program. The Plan is within these ranges, and takes into account inflation of roughly thirty percent.

President Torres-Springer stated that for Metro-North, the Capital Plan yields a six billion dollar allocation that primarily focuses on state of good repair. In addition, in the recent past, there has been a focus on the Grand Central Artery, and to treat it like a “mega-project”, allocating funds for work performed by C&D and work by outside contractors.

President Rinaldi stated that the focus of the Capital Program for Metro-North is state of good repair. The repair on mostly invisible infrastructure is key to providing safe and reliable service. The replacement of rolling stock is one of the major components of the Plan. The 1980’s-era M3 rail cars are not ADA compliant and are suffering from parts obsolescence. Working with LIRR and the procurement team, they are procuring M9A rail cars, the latest electric fleet to replace the M3 fleet. They will also be replacing old coaches from the diesel lines and the locomotives from the West of Hudson service.

President Rinaldi stated that she is thrilled to have Grand Central Artery be recognized as a significant asset of the railroad that requires significant investment entirely separate from the core program. The Artery is comprised of three segments. The first is the Terminal itself, where investments were made in the nineties to the customer facing elements of the Terminal, but there are also many back-of-house systems that are in sore need of repair and investment. The second is the train shed, which is the structure over the rail yard, which has deteriorated over the years and will be a priority in the program. The third is the Park Avenue Tunnel, which will have fire life safety investments. The Viaduct, as mentioned earlier, is already undergoing replacement.

President Rinaldi stated that for track and structures, there will be double the investment in track replacement projects and preservation of bridge structures through painting and replacements as necessary. As for power, they will be building four new substations, and replacing steel third rails with aluminum. The need is significant due to 88% of Metro-North substations being in poor or marginal condition.

President Rinaldi highlighted the need to rehabilitate stations, many on the Harlem Line, replacing “hollow-core” platforms from the nineties. There will be two more stations that will be fully accessible, Wakefield and Ludlow stations.

President Rinaldi stated the Plan will also continue to shore up the railroad against climate change. Past storms have been devastating to the Metro-North infrastructure. The Plan will focus on the rehabilitation of the Hudson Line, especially the lower portion of the line south of Croton-Harmon. Metro-North recently received funding from the state legislature to begin the work. Both Amtrak and CSX utilize this line so the resiliency of the Hudson Line is important not just to Metro-North customers but to the entire region. They will be addressing the slopes as well as the drainage.

President Rinaldi stated that Mott Haven Yard is located in a low-lying area that frequently experiences flooding during heavy rain. The Capital program will help the resiliency efforts in the yard to reduce service disruptions.

President Free stated that the proposed \$6 billion LIRR Capital Plan will focus on state of good repair, as LIRR needs to upgrade aging infrastructure. The current fleet of M3s are forty years old and is costly to maintain. The Plan calls for the retiring of the M3 fleet and the purchase of new M9A cars, as well as replacing the fleet that is past its useful life including purchasing new tier-four dual-mode locomotives for cleaner and more efficient service. They will also replace and update the coaches and work locomotives.

President Free stated that with the purchase of new electric cars, power is vitally important. There are 57 substations that are at least 50 years or older so investment in this area is necessary. The Plan will renew or rehabilitate 16 substations.

The Capital Plan also includes repair, waterproof and paint for up to 45 bridges and viaducts to safeguard and preserve them. They will also rehabilitate and repair the Atlantic Avenue tunnels to maintain the frequent and reliable Brooklyn service, much of which has not been upgraded since it was constructed more than a hundred years ago.

President Free stated that a key component is to keep up with the track replacement program, the backbone of the infrastructure. This plan will implement the next phase of Jamaica Capacity Improvements, part of the long-term strategy to modernize the tracks that run through Jamaica and eliminate the “Jamaica crawl”. Signal is important, as the signal system dates back to the ‘40s and ‘60s.

President Free stated that the Plan includes an \$800 million allocation to be used across all agencies to advance promising expansion of capacity upgrade projects. These include possible upgrades to the Main Line from Ronkonkoma to Yaphank, and the Port Jefferson and Montauk Branches.

President Free highlighted the renewal of five stations as part of the Plan, including Floral Park and Port Washington. In response to customer feedback, there will also be upgrades to the western bridge at Jamaica to improve circulation and transfers. At least four more stations will be made ADA accessible, bringing LIRR to 98% accessibility. There will also be replacements of 15 elevators and escalators at stations.

President Free stated that the Plan includes addressing climate change. The resiliency efforts will be built into the state of good repair projects throughout the system. This includes raising infrastructure in known flooding locations.

Board Member Glucksman stated that he is pleased to hear that the locomotives will be replaced, especially on the West of Hudson side.

Board Member Bringmann stated that the program checks most of the boxes, including accessibility at Mets-Willets Point, and the building of the new Yaphank Station.

Co-chair Herbst stated that he is pleased to see the Yaphank Station project, the possible electrification of the Port Jefferson line, and improvements on the Montauk Branch.

In response to a question from Board Member Brown regarding the fact that 93% of the signal system is in a state of disrepair on Metro-North, President Torres-Springer stated that they are rebuilding the signals on the lower Hudson Line now, while the upper Hudson Line has funding for construction, and there is funding for the design of the upper Harlem Line so there is a \$600 million investment in signals for Metro-North in this plan. President Rinaldi stated that the level of operational achievement in the past few years may have masked the significance of the deterioration of the signal system but is a credit to the team that they have been able to hold together and operate at that level. President Torres-Springer stated that the signal investment of \$600 million is a six-fold increase from the prior \$100 million investment and a combined \$1 billion investment for power between the two railroads. President Rinaldi noted that the 93% figure for the signal system pertains only to the Hudson Line and not the entire system. Board Member Brown noted the discrepancy between the modernization of equipment that utilizes a signal system that is further behind, which does not match.

Co-chair López thanked everyone for the work on this Capital Plan, which will allow the railroads to move forward.

The video recording of the meeting produced by the MTA and maintained in the MTA records contains a complete record of the 2025-2029 Capital Plan presentation.

8. SAFETY REPORTS:

Co-chair López stated that the safety reports for both railroads are contained in the meeting material.

9. MTAPD REPORT:

MTAPD Chief of Operations Thomas J. Taffe reported that crime for the month of August remains low at only twenty incidents of major felonies for both railroads combined, ten for each railroad, representing a 17% decrease as compared to last year. With the increase in ridership, this makes the rate much more significant. The majority of these incidents were larceny, usually of unattended property. No police district reported more than four major crimes, with Grand Central Madison had no major crimes reported for the month of August. Regarding fare evasion, MTAPD continues to support train conductors and fare enforcement by increasing train patrols and positioning officers at key stations. MTAPD has experienced a significant increase of over 300% of calls relating to fare disputes, from an average of 300 calls per month to nearly 1200 calls a month.

The full MTAPD report is filed with the records of this meeting. The video recording of the meeting produced by the MTA and maintained in the MTA records contains a complete record of Chief Taffe's presentation.

10. INFORMATION ITEMS:

President Rinaldi noted the following Metro-North information items: (i) 2025 Preliminary Budget; (ii) 2024 Mid-Year Forecast; (iii) MNR October Schedule Change; (iv) Diversity/EEO Report – 2nd Quarter 2024; (v) Safety/Security Update; and (vi) conveyance of MTA property interests to Hudson Harbor LLC in relation to a TOD project in Tarrytown, NY.

President Free noted the following LIRR information items: (i) 2025 Preliminary Budget; (ii) 2024 Mid-Year Forecast; (iii) Diversity/EEO Report – 2nd Quarter 2024; (iv) Safety/Security Update; and (v) Fall Trackwork Program.

The details of the information items are contained in reports filed with the records of this meeting.

11. FINANCE:

The finance reports for July and August for both railroads are contained in the meeting material.

12. PROCUREMENTS:

There were no procurement items for LIRR or Metro-North this month.

13. ADJOURNMENT:

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Sarch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Susan Sarch
Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary
Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Haley Stein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Haley Stein
Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary
The Long Island Rail Road Company