



May 31, 2017

Veronique Hakim, Interim Executive Director  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
2 Broadway  
New York, NY 10004

Dear Ms. Hakim:

We are writing in regard to the plan to fix the recent problems at Pennsylvania Station that will require major Long Island Rail Road service disruptions during this summer, as well the proposal to amend the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's 2015-2019 Capital Program. While some of the incidents at Penn Station were apparently caused by Amtrak's inadequate investment in maintaining the station's track, switch and signal infrastructure, the LIRR **must** do all it can to significantly improve its passenger operations and service reliability.

Amtrak, as the owner and operator of Penn Station, should be responsible for making the necessary infrastructure improvements so that LIRR riders are not overly inconvenienced. Since the LIRR is the largest user of Penn Station, the MTA should ensure that the best interests of LIRR riders are prioritized. In addition, given recent events, the MTA should reevaluate the priorities in the LIRR's capital spending program in order to improve service and the customer experience at Penn Station and throughout the system. As I assume you would agree, it is essential that the 'nuts and bolts' of the LIRR's infrastructure is in a state of good repair and is adequately maintained. While LIRR riders are justifiably upset about the all too frequent problems at Penn Station, we believe their frustrations are also borne of a failure to adequately prioritize the growing ridership of the LIRR and to maintain that system in a state of good repair.

Any proposed change in the MTA's Capital Program should consider additional LIRR capital investments in the following areas.

- **Signals and Communications.** The LIRR needs to move toward an advanced and modernized communications and signal infrastructure to increase operational capacity and provide safe and reliable service. It should be clear that the LIRR is making the necessary investments in upgraded signal and communication technology, including moving toward the implementation of centralized train control. The LIRR also needs to meet the federal deadline to install positive train control (PTC) by the end of 2018.
- **Rolling Stock.** The LIRR needs to be making the necessary investments in rolling stock to better accommodate ridership growth and increase maintainability and reliability. The LIRR needs both electric and diesel fleets that are reliable and dependable.

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- **Stations.** The LIRR has 124 stations in Nassau and Suffolk Counties and New York City. The LIRR should be doing more to improve its stations, including its facilities at Penn Station. Apart from the MTA's new Customer Service Initiative, many LIRR stations are in need of upgrades, including platform, lighting and signage improvements. Given current conditions, there certainly has to be more that the MTA can do to make the experience at Penn Station better for LIRR riders.
- **New Parking Facilities.** The LIRR should be making increased investments in providing additional parking facilities, including garages at communities that are interested in transit-oriented developments.
- **Line Structures and Bridges.** Within its right-of-way, the LIRR has 490 bridges, 176 culverts, 29 viaducts and 4 tunnels. According to the MTA, these assets will not be in a state of good repair until 2024. The LIRR should aggressively rehabilitate and replace its railroad bridges to improve the integrity of these structures. The MTA should also work with Amtrak to advance the rehabilitation of the East River tunnels, which are owned and maintained by Amtrak but which are essential to LIRR service in and out of Penn Station.
- **Reconfiguring Jamaica Complex.** The LIRR should consider accelerating plans to redesign the tracks, signals, and switches both east and west of Jamaica station, to allow for increased train throughput.
- **Storm Resiliency.** The LIRR needs to complete the infrastructure investments to protect the railroad from another storm such as Superstorm Sandy.
- **Power - Electrification.** While it would be a major undertaking, the LIRR should exam the feasibility of extending electric train service. Currently, 85 of the LIRR's 124 stations have electric train service. Electrification efforts could address increasing travel demand within Suffolk County.

In view of the recent service disruptions at Penn Station that have been attributed to Amtrak and Amtrak's renewal work at the station this summer that will require train cancellations, we are also interested in knowing whether the MTA is considering withholding payments from Amtrak and using these funds to compensate LIRR riders. The MTA must do something to assist LIRR riders who have endured too many bad commutes in recent months.

To summarize, we feel strongly that recent events, including the incidents at Penn Station, have highlighted the need to refocus on basic infrastructure improvements to ensure safe and reliable LIRR service. Only once the integrity of the LIRR's system has been strengthened and enhanced, will it be appropriate to consider other projects to expand the system.

Sincerely,



Kemp Hannon  
Senator, 6<sup>th</sup> District



Elaine Phillips  
Senator, 7<sup>th</sup> District