

Minutes of the Regular Meeting  
Joint Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad Committees  
Monday, December 15, 2025  
10:00 a.m.

Meeting held at  
2 Broadway, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10004

**The following Committee Members were present:**

Hon. Marc Herbst, Co-Chair  
Hon. Gerard Bringmann  
Hon. Daniel Garodnick  
Hon. Randolph Glucksman  
Hon. Christopher Leathers  
Hon. Melva M. Miller  
Hon. James O'Donnell  
Hon. Lisa Sorin  
Hon. Midori Valdivia  
Hon. Edward Valente  
Hon. Neal Zuckerman

**The following Committee Members were not present:**

Hon. Samuel Chu  
Hon. Blanca López, Co-Chair  
Hon. Michael Fleischer  
Hon. David Mack

**Representing Metro-North Railroad:**

Justin Vonashek – President  
Brian Pina – Vice President, System Safety  
Eamonn Foley – Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary  
Yvonne Hill-Donald – Chief Administrative Officer

**Representing Long Island Rail Road:**

Robert Free – President  
Paul Dietlin – Senior Vice President, Operations  
Chris Gough – Vice President, Corporate Safety  
Haley Stein – Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary  
Kelli Coughlin – Senior Deputy Chief, Labor Relations

**Representing MTA Police Department:**

Thomas J. Taffe – Chief of Police

**Representing MTA Safety and Security Department:**  
Carl Hamann – Chief Safety Officer

**Also present:**

Paige Graves – MTA General Counsel  
John McCarthy – MTA Chief of Policy and External Relations  
Shanifah Rieara – MTA Senior Advisor for Communications and Policy, Chief Customer Officer  
Quemuel Arroyo – MTA Chief Accessibility Officer  
Jessica Cooke – Agency Deputy Chief Equal Opportunity 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 Herbst called the joint meeting to order.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

The following public speakers commented:

Christopher D. Greif  
Oliver Chester\*  
Jesse Figueroa\*  
Iris Kelley  
Aleta Dupree\*, Team Folds  
Joseph Morales  
Andy Pollack\*  
Jason Anthony, LIRR ADA Task Force  
Jack Connors, PCAC Research and Communications Associate

\* Appeared by audio/video

To hear the content of public comments, details of Committee presentations, and Committee Members’ comments and questions as well as any part of the Committee meeting, please refer to the video recording of the meeting produced by the MTA, available and maintained on the MTA website:

<https://www.mta.info/transparency/board-and-committee-meetings/december-2025>

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved the Joint Railroad Committee portion of the minutes of the November 19, 2025 meeting of the Triborough Bridges & Tunnel Authority, the Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North Commuter Railroad, Capital Program and New York City Transit Committees.

**4. METRO-NORTH AND LIRR 2025 WORK PLANS:**

Metro-North President Justin Vonashek (“President Vonashek”) stated that the Metro-North Work Plans for 2026 were updated to include schedule changes and “Year in Review” has been moved from February to January.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee approved the 2026 Metro-North and LIRR Work Plans as amended.

The 2026 Metro-North and LIRR Work Plans are filed with the records of this meeting.

**5. METRO-NORTH PRESIDENT’S REPORT:**

President Vonashek stated that Metro-North’s reliability and ridership remained strong. In November, Metro-North served nearly 5.8 million customers, an increase of 2.3% from last year, representing 83.2% of pre-pandemic ridership. Average weekday ridership increased 7.3% from 2024, at 82.5% of pre-COVID levels. Weekend ridership remained strong, up 1.9% from last year, at 99% of last year.

President Vonashek stated that Thanksgiving ridership increased nearly 7% over the same period last year and almost 15% increase on Thanksgiving Day compared to last year.

President Vonashek announced that due to heavy ridership on the New Haven Line, Metro-North will provide a Super Express train beginning tonight departing Grand Central at 8:48pm, stopping at Stamford, Bridgeport, and New Haven stations. The total travel time will be approximately 95 minutes, which will save riders about 30 minutes. The train will run through January 2.

President Vonashek stated that Metro-North is getting people where they want to go on time with 97.8% of train operating on time in November and year-to-date (“YTD”) on-time performance (“OTP”) at 97.9%. President Vonashek credited the dedicated team who continued to deliver these strong results.

President Vonashek stated that the Holiday Lights Train began service on the day after Thanksgiving. President Vonashek reminded everyone to check the website for details if they wanted to catch one of these trains.

President Vonashek provided safety performance information for the twelve-month period ending in October 2025. The reportable lost time injury rate was 1.68 for 200,000 hours, essentially flat from the previous year. The reportable customer injury rate was 1.5 per million customers, a slight increase from previous year. This rate has declined steadily since August, reflecting the positive impact of ongoing safety initiatives.

President Vonashek described the new ticketing changes for both railroads that will be taking effect on January 4. The railroads are introducing a new day pass for unlimited rides for the whole day within the ticketed zones, which is a 10% savings from two one-way peak fares during weekdays. There is also a new buy ten rides get one free option for mobile customers who take ten rides in any combination of peak or off-peak trips in a 14-day period, which is automatically awarded to frequent travelers in the TrainTime app. President Vonashek stated that the railroads are broadening eligibility for seniors, those with qualifying disabilities, and Medicare recipients to help more riders access the system. Reduced fares will be valid on any ride at any time, including morning peak hours. There is also a new policy that will allow up to 4 children, ages 5 to 17, to ride for \$1 each when traveling with an adult. One way ticket expiration times are also changing to be valid from time of purchase until 4:00 am the following day. Finally, the railroads are implementing new onboard surcharge rules for mobile ticket activations, ensuring consistent fare collection across platforms and reducing misuse. Customer communications are occurring across all channels, including digital screens, email alerts, station posters, social media, onboard announcements, and in person outreach.

President Vonashek provided highlights of accomplishments for 2025. Metro-North continues to prioritize safety in every part of the operation. Virtual reality technology has been used to enhance community outreach and improve employee training. New Hudson and New Haven Line Super Express trains provide trips between Poughkeepsie, New Haven, and Grand Central in 90 minutes or less. Engagement Days and NXT Leaders program for Metro-North employees provide them with more opportunities to connect, learn and contribute to the future of the railroad. President Vonashek noted that continued investment in the infrastructure strengthens resiliency of the operation against major weather events, such as the raising of the tracks at Garrison and Mott Haven. The new Siemens charger locomotives are being introduced to modernize the fleet and improve performance and reliability. Phase 1 bridge replacement work of the Park Avenue Viaduct project was completed 51 months ahead of schedule and \$93 million under budget, with no impact to Metro-North's operations. Operational efficiencies have been achieved this year through the application of standard work principles and in collaboration with labor partners, which puts Metro-North on target to \$67 million in recurring savings simply by doing things differently. Metro-North is also harnessing the power of AI to capture and analyze passenger counting statistics to guide use of rolling stock and better align service and capacity with passenger demands and riding patterns. Metro-North has continued with the Heritage Series, with Engine 222 in February, Engine 203 in June, and Engine 216 in November for Veterans Day.

Board Member Zuckerman commented that the Holiday Train was joyful to watch from his office window. Board Member Zuckerman further commented that WiFi is a continued request from customers. Finally, in response to a question from Board Member Zuckerman regarding the discrepancy between the mean distance between failure (“MDBF”) of the two railroads, President Vonashek stated that the MDBF for Metro-North for the month was over 600,00 miles, and highlighted the positive impact of the new Siemens chargers, which are showing to be reliable, and the M3 door replacement project. In further response to Board Member Zuckerman’s question regarding LIRR’s MDBF, President Free noted that it is almost impossible to compare the MDBF of both railroads because of their significant operational and territorial differences.

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 Vonashek’s remarks and the Board Members’ questions and comments.

## **6. LIRR PRESIDENT’S REPORT:**

LIRR President Rob Free (“President Free”) shared that LIRR ridership remained strong in November with 6.6 million riders, which represents 91% of November 2019 ridership. November YTD ridership is 9.1% above last year. Commutation ridership is 10% higher than last year, while monthly ticket ridership is 10.3% higher than last year.

President Free stated that OTP for November was 95.9% while YTD OTP was 96.3%.

President Free stated that for the 12-month period ending in October, the customer injury rate decreased by 20% and employee injury rate saw a 11% reduction as compared to the same period last year.

President Free highlighted some 2025 accomplishments and successes. President Free noted the phenomenal gains in ridership this year, including post-COVID and all-time records in ridership. This year saw a post-COVID record of 1.81 million riders in a seven-day period and a single-day ridership record with 306,735 riders. The LIRR accommodated 177,738 riders during the US Open. October saw the highest post-COVID monthly ridership with 7.44 million riders and the highest commutation ridership with 3.1 million riders. August had the highest all-time non commutation ridership with 4.9 million riders. It was great year for OTP. This year had the best ever OTP for February and July. Even with the increased service, there was 99.6% service completion this year. President Free stated that LIRR achieved its \$71 million target in operating efficiencies in 2025. LIRR had a 97% fare collected rate YTD and achieved a rate of 98.9% revenue collected in April while November was a close second at 98.5%. President Free lauded the work of the on-board crews. Customer satisfaction is 81%, which is an 11% increase over last year. Safety from crimes and harassment is improved at stations and on platforms with 81% customer satisfaction, while on-board trains had an 89% customer satisfaction rate and reliability had an 87% customer satisfaction rate. President Free highlighted innovations at the LIRR this year. LIRR received an APTA Gold Award for Rail Security for the Office of Security’s new “OSCAR” dashboard. In addition, LIRR has commenced installation of the next generation of ticket vending machine throughout the system. The Office of Innovations team implemented an

app to manage and track insulated joints which is a main cause of delays. LIRR continued to protect its infrastructure with numerous state-of-good-repair projects this year, while also making significant progress in moving to 100% accessibility. St. Albans Station debuted its elevator in November, while Laurelton and Locust Manor stations will have new elevators this month, making LIRR stations 93% accessible by the end of the year. President Free thanked all the incredible employees of the LIRR.

President Free noted upcoming holiday schedule changes and reminded everyone to check the TrainTime app for the most up to date schedules.

President Free stated that LIRR employees and customers contributed food and personal care items to help City Harvest, Island Harvest and Long Island Cares support families so that no one goes hungry during the holidays. President Free wished everyone a happy holidays and happy new year.

Co-Chair Herbst congratulated and thanked both railroad Presidents and the entire railroad teams for all their work and achievements this year.

In response to a question from Board Member Miller regarding the LIRR Holiday Train, President Free stated that he is proud of the employees who worked on decorating the train and thanked them for all their work. In response to a question from Board Member Miller regarding fares not collected, President Free stated that auditors perform a check by riding trains throughout the entire system and at both peak and off-peak times.

Board Member Leathers thanked President Free and acknowledged a positive collaborative effort between managers and the labor force.

Board Member Glucksman noted announcements on Metro-North alerting passengers to the new ticketing policies.

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 and the Board Members' questions and comments.

## **7. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee voted to convene an Executive Session, in accordance with the Public Officers Law, Section 105(c).

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Committee voted to reconvene in public session. Co-Chair Herbst advised that the Executive Session was convened for a meeting with MTA Inspector General Daniel Cort, who attended at the Board's request, to discuss an ongoing

investigation. Co-Chair Herbst thanked Inspector General Cort and his staff for their efforts and input.

**8. MTAPD REPORT:**

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 the presentation.

**9. ACTION ITEMS:**

President Vonashek noted one Metro-North action item, which is in the Committee book, to approve a NYSDOT Grant for Connecting Services.

The action item was referred to the full Board due to lack of a quorum.

The details of the action item are contained in reports filed with the records of this meeting.

**10. INFORMATION ITEMS:**

President Vonashek noted that the Metro-North information items are in the Committee book.

President Free noted that the LIRR information items, including the Diversity Report for the Third Quarter, are in the Committee book.

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

**11. FINANCE:**

The finance reports for both railroads are contained in the Committee book.

**12. PROCUREMENTS:**

MTA Acting Assistant Deputy Chief Procurement Officer Thomas Voytek reported on one procurement item. Metro-North on behalf of itself and LIRR seeks Board approval for a non-competitive miscellaneous contract for the leasing of three laser train modules (one for Metro-North and two for LIRR) for rail-based cleaning to Laser Tribology. The contract term is for two years (January 2026–December 2027) plus a one-year extension option (January 2028–December 2028), if elected. The total amount of this contract, including the option period, is \$14,768,000

funded by MTA operating budget. The railroads are also seeking Board approval to authorize the MTA Assistant Deputy Chief Procurement Officer to approve the exercise of the one-year option.

Following each leaf season, typically from early October to late November, the Railroads have historically experienced slip/slide events due to contamination of the rail by leaf debris. This reduces the level of adhesion between the rail and train wheel, and adversely affects a train's ability to stop, resulting in damage to wheels in the form of flat spots. The resulting wheel damage requires removing passenger cars and locomotives from service for repair, thereby causing delays, and shorter or canceled trains. The module increases the laser train capability for LIRR to 60 miles per hour. Laser Tribology is the only currently known vendor providing this technology.

The procurement item was referred to the full Board due to lack of a quorum.

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

### **13. ADJOURNMENT:**

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

Respectfully submitted,



Eamonn F. Foley  
Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary  
Metro-North Commuter Railroad Company



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