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## LIRRCC Fare Increase Testimony to MTA Board by Mark Epstein Chair, Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council

I rarely comment at these meetings however, considering the issue of fare hikes before you today and the fact that Long Island still has a vacant seat leaving us not fully represented, I feel compelled to speak today.

As a regular commuter on the LIRR and NYCT, I want to speak to you from the trenches, or rather the platforms. We are at a breaking point – riders cannot afford higher fares. Monthly commuters from my station pay \$464 per month through Mail & Ride for a LIRR ticket and a NYC Transit MetroCard. In addition, we pay \$70 per month for LIRR parking. Many Long Island homes have two people commuting – so double that. We are caught in the middle here – we cannot afford a fare hike, but also cannot bear service cuts, maintenance cuts, or safety cuts, which we are told may happen without a fare increase.

We have all been saying for too long that this can't go on, but it has. We need a solution and it can no longer be to pass it onto the riders. In this relationship, we the riders are doing our part – LIRR ridership is up –but now the MTA and the State need to do their part. Provide us with affordable, timely, and safe transportation. We understand and appreciate the difficulty of the choices you have to make and we ask that you understand and appreciate ours. Thank you.