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**Testimony to the MTA Board
The LIRR Needs Federal Funds
By Larry Rubinstein, LIRRCC Vice Chair
October 28, 2020**

Good morning. My name is Larry Rubinstein and I am the Vice Chair of the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council.

First, I'd like to express our appreciation to the five heroic Long Island Rail Road workers who saved the life of a rider who fell onto the tracks at the East New York station last week. They exemplify the high caliber of the LIRR workers who have continued to serve riders and ensure their safety throughout these extraordinary times.

We also saw the LIRR's commitment to safety over the weekend with the elimination of the grade crossing in New Hyde Park. The Main Line is now fully grade separated from Queens as far as Mineola station. This is an important sign of progress and investment in the future of the Rail Road, Long Island and the entire region.

We're beginning to see a gradual uptick in ridership numbers on the LIRR, reaching 92,500 on September 25th – the highest level since March – according to the Partnership for New York City. But as Newsday notes, we may not see the same number of riders as pre-pandemic or we may see very different commute patterns in the near future. Our chair, Gerry Bringmann, was quoted in the article that appeared on Monday and I'd like to clarify that he did not under any circumstances mean that station improvements and system upgrades be reconsidered. We know that those investments are critical to the future of the Rail Road and to getting riders back on-board. He did, however, underscore the importance of funding to getting us to our new normal and being able to address what comes next.

The terrible truth is that without an infusion of federal funding, Long Island Rail Road riders are facing service cuts of up to 50-percent and even the closure of complete lines. Unaffordable fare increases could put commuting by train out of reach for many of us. To our elected officials: riders are counting on you to come through with the funding the MTA and LIRR needs. We need our elected officials to do the right thing for the future of Long Island and the entire region. Thank you.