

H. CARL McCALL
STATE COMPTROLLER



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ALBANY, NEW YORK 12236

STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

November 20, 2002

Mr. Peter S. Kalikow
Chairman
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
347 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Re: Availability of Parking
Report 2001-S-10

Dear Mr. Kalikow:

Pursuant to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article X, Section 5, of the State Constitution, and Section 2503 of the Public Authorities Law, we have audited the availability of parking at the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad train stations. Our audit covered the period December 1, 1998 through January 7, 2002.

A. Background

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is a public benefit corporation that operates, maintains, and improves public transportation in New York City and the adjacent suburban areas. The MTA has two commuter railroads: The Long Island Rail Road (LIRR), which provides rail service between New York City and communities on Long Island; and the Metro-North Railroad (Metro-North), which provides rail service between New York City and communities in Westchester, Dutchess, Putnam, Orange and Rockland counties in New York State, and New Haven and Fairfield counties in Connecticut.

The LIRR is the busiest commuter railroad in the United States, with an annual ridership of 85.4 million passengers. The LIRR's 11 branch lines are served by 124 stations, including 3 terminals in New York City. Metro-North is the third-largest commuter railroad in the United States, with a yearly ridership of 71.9 million passengers. Its 5 branch lines are served by 88 stations.

Both LIRR and Metro-North officials recognize the importance of providing their customers with adequate parking facilities. According to the MTA's Parking Policy, "A well-managed parking strategy can help attract new riders and, to the extent this occurs on services where existing capacity is underutilized, will also increase operating cost effectiveness by filling empty seats."

The LIRR's Parking Strategy Vision Statement states that "The Long Island Rail Road customer will have ample, convenient, well maintained, and safe self-sustaining parking facilities available to them at stations where alternatives to access by car are an unacceptable option. It is therefore necessary to the successful and effective operation of the railroad that the parking facilities be convenient, have ample capacity, and that the parking experiences are uneventful." The MTA considers a parking facility to be heavily utilized when it reaches an 85 percent utilization rate.

The MTA's capital program for the five years 2000-2004 allocates a total of \$2.1 billion for LIRR capital improvements. Of this total budget, \$5 million has been designated for commuter parking projects. It also allocates a total of \$1.3 billion for Metro-North capital improvements, including approximately \$50 million for commuter parking projects.

B. Audit Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

In November 1998, our Office reviewed the adequacy of LIRR and Metro-North commuter parking facilities. At that time, we identified significant shortages of parking spaces at many LIRR and Metro-North stations. Our current audit reviewed the steps the LIRR and Metro-North have since taken to increase the number of spaces at these overcrowded stations. We audited selected aspects of parking facility improvements and enhancements both railroads have made during the period December 1, 1998 and January 7, 2002.

The objectives of our performance audit were to determine whether the LIRR and Metro-North have increased the number of parking spaces in general; improved overcrowded parking conditions, particularly at those stations experiencing the highest utilization rates; and developed a long-term plan that specifically addresses future increases in demand. We reviewed documentation, including design and construction folders, future needs assessments, and parking expansion projects, and made site visits to selected stations.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Such standards require that we plan and perform our audit to adequately assess those operations of the LIRR and Metro-North which are included in our audit scope. Further, these standards require that we understand LIRR's and Metro-North's respective internal control structures and compliance with those laws, rules and regulations that are relevant to the operations which are included in our audit scope. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting transactions recorded in the accounting and operating records and applying such other auditing procedures as we consider necessary in the circumstances. An audit also includes assessing the estimates, judgments, and decisions made by management. We believe our audit provides a reasonable basis for our findings, conclusions and recommendations.

We use a risk-based approach to select activities for audit. We therefore focus our audit efforts on those activities we have identified through a preliminary survey as having the greatest probability for needing improvement. Consequently, by design, we use finite audit resources to identify where and how improvements can be made. We devote little audit effort to reviewing operations that may be relatively efficient or effective.

C. Results of Audit

Overall, we conclude that both railroads have acted to enhance commuter parking and plan to continue such actions. However, their plans do not provide sufficient measures to accommodate projected increases in ridership. Specifically:

- Our review of the LIRR's and Metro-North's parking project reports found that both railroads have taken steps since November 1998 to enhance commuter parking.
- Our review of the steps taken to address parking at overcrowded stations found that the LIRR has increased parking capacity at two of the five stations we visited. LIRR officials advised us that community opposition had prevented them from providing additional parking at the remaining stations.
- Metro-North is increasing parking capacity at three of the five overcrowded facilities we reviewed, and officials advised us that they are in the process of planning the expansion of parking at the fourth facility. The officials also stated that they had met with private developers and government officials in an attempt to add parking at the remaining station.
- The LIRR and Metro-North have not developed system-wide plans for addressing the projected increase in demand for parking at their respective stations.

1. Review of LIRR Parking Project Report

LIRR officials provided us with a list entitled "All Parking Projects" that shows all such projects funded since 1986. This list included 46 projects for which actual or targeted completion was scheduled to occur after November 1998. Some of these projects involved the actual expansion of the parking lot area, while others were designed to increase parking capacity through reconfiguration or re-striping of existing spaces. In total, the 46 projects involved the addition of 2,956 spaces and the rehabilitation of 8,868 spaces. Rehabilitation involves improving drainage, repairing, restriping, and landscaping the parking facility. These actions are primarily aimed at improving the quality of the parking sites.

To verify the accuracy of the All Parking Projects list, we judgmentally selected a sample of 10 stations (out of a total of 46 projects) that represent 48 percent of the reported number of new spaces added. Our selection focused on larger projects that were in various stages of completion. On July 17, 2001, we visited the completed stations (Bay Shore, Lynbrook, Farmingdale, Speonk, Hempstead and Port Jefferson) to confirm that the status of the parking expansion projects had been reported accurately. We also reviewed supporting documentation for each project in the form of design drawings, contract folders, or other relevant documentation.

The following table shows the results of our review:

Station	Estimated or Actual # of Spaces Added	Project Completion Date*	Project Status (July 2001)
Bay Shore	25	May 2000	Completed
Lynbrook	100	July 2000	Completed
Farmingdale	118	Oct. 2000	Completed
Speonk	125	July 2001	Completed
Hempstead	50	July 2001	Completed
Port Jefferson	259	Aug. 2001	Completed
Deer Park	312	Dec. 2001	Design
Bellmore	212	Dec. 2002	Design
Lindenhurst	217	Oct. 2003	Design
Island Park	51	Dec. 2004	Design
Total	1,469		

* Actual or projected

On the basis of our review of pertinent documentation, as well as our field visits, we concluded that the number of new parking spaces reported as being completed or in the planning process for the ten stations listed in the table accurately reflected the current status of the projects.

2. Review of Metro-North Parking Project Report

Metro-North officials advised us that they have added parking spaces at a number of stations since November 1998. In this connection, they provided us with a list entitled “Current Status of Commuter Parking Projects,” which shows a total of 40 parking-related projects they have undertaken since 1998. Some of these projects involved the actual expansion of parking lot area, while others were designed to increase parking capacity through reconfiguration or re-striping of existing spaces. In total, the 40 projects involved the addition of 7,690 spaces and the rehabilitation of 5,345 spaces.

To verify the accuracy of the Current Status of Commuter Parking Projects list, we judgmentally selected a sample of six stations (out of a total of 40 stations), which represent 53 percent of the reported number of new spaces added. Our selection focused on larger projects that were in various stages of completion. On December 19 and 20, 2001, we visited the Wassaic, Goldens Bridge, and Poughkeepsie stations to confirm that the status of these parking expansion projects had been reported accurately. We also reviewed supporting documentation for each project in the form of design drawings, contract folders, or other relevant documentation.

The following table shows the results of our review:

Station	Estimated or Actual # of Spaces Added	Project Completion Date	Project Status (December 2001)
Wassaic	319	July 2000	Completed
Middletown	750	October 1999	Completed
Goldens Bridge	369	December 2001	Completed
Poughkeepsie	546	November 2001	Completed
Beacon I	400	N/A	Planning
New Woodbury	1,800	N/A	Planning
Total	4,184		

N/A = Not Available

On the basis of our review of pertinent documentation, as well as our field visits, we concluded that the number of new parking spaces reported as being completed or in the planning phases for the six stations listed in the table accurately reflected the current status of the projects.

3. Steps Taken To Address Parking at Five Overcrowded Stations

The parking project reports only listed stations where actions had been taken or planned to enhance parking. To determine what actions the LIRR has taken to address the overcrowded parking conditions at all of its 124 stations, we judgmentally selected five (of 53) stations that had over 85 percent utilization rates, as shown in the following table:

Station	Parking Capacity
Deer Park	1,201
Central Islip	922
Syosset	1,299
Ronkonkoma	5,145
Massapequa	1,951

Our review showed that the LIRR had addressed overcrowding at the Deer Park station by adding approximately 300 spaces.

LIRR officials stated that the commuter parking available at three of the five stations we cited – Central Islip, Syosset, and Massapequa – are mostly, if not totally, owned by the municipality. The local municipalities manage all of the parking operations at these stations and have not been receptive to expansion of the facilities. In spite of this resistance, LIRR officials told us they are meeting with local municipal officials to explore various options that would increase parking capacity.

LIRR officials also indicated that in July 2002, the New York State Department of Transportation completed construction of 500 additional spaces at the Ronkonkoma station.

In a similar review, we judgmentally selected five (of 36) overcrowded Metro-North stations that had over 85 percent utilization rates, and sought to determine what the Metro-North has done to address the overcrowded parking conditions at those stations. The results of our review are shown in the following table:

Station	Parking Capacity (2001)
White Plains	1,226
North White Plains	1,222
Chappaqua	1,191
Brewster North	1,013
Croton Harmon	2,050

Our review showed that Metro-North officials have taken steps since November 1998 to address the overcrowded parking conditions at four of the five stations listed in the table. They have added 91 new spaces at the Brewster North station, and will soon begin preliminary planning for a new parking facility, for which they will acquire a 52-acre parcel of land.

Metro-North officials advised us that construction is under way at the Chappaqua and Croton Harmon stations that will include additional parking spaces. Because the local municipalities are conducting these projects, the exact number of new spaces is not known at this time. In addition to meeting with officials of the Village of Croton Harmon to discuss expansion of the existing parking facility, Metro-North officials told us they are continuing to explore additional sites for parking at or near the station.

Metro-North's Facility Planning and Parking Department is also preparing a plan jointly with the Westchester County Departments of Transportation, Planning and Parks, and Recreation and Conservation for a new parking facility at the North White Plains station. We contacted a White Plains municipal official who told us that no new spaces have been added to that facility in the past three years. However, Metro-North officials advised us that they have met with private developers and government officials to discuss parking improvements at the White Plains station.

4. Plans to Address Parking Capacity to Meet Increased Ridership

The projections of future parking needs that LIRR officials have done so far cover the period of 2000-2004 for 26 of the railroad's 124 stations. The officials advised us that they will prepare further projections for the remaining 98 stations in conjunction with their 20-year Needs Assessment document. They said the projections that have already been prepared were based on various customer needs and assumed preferences. In addition, they have prepared projections of the additional number of parking spaces they expect to need in the future. Under these scenarios, the officials projected that, taken together, the 26 stations would need as few as 6,597 to as many as 16,816 additional parking spaces, with an average of 11,706 – far more than the 2,956 spaces that the LIRR plans to add to its entire system during that period. The LIRR has not yet developed a plan for bridging the gap between its anticipated increase in ridership and its plans for parking lot expansion.

Contributing to the problem is the limited amount of resources the LIRR has allocated to the resolution of its parking problems. The MTA's capital program for the years 2000-2004 allocates a total of \$2.1 billion for LIRR capital improvements. Of this total budget, just \$5 million – less than 1 percent – has been designated for parking projects. By comparison, Metro-North has

allocated \$50 million (3.8 percent) of its \$1.3 billion capital budget to parking-related projects for the same period.

LIRR officials responded to our observations by saying that they intend to review and update the 20-Year Needs Assessment document. They pointed out that parking projects that would add capacity to the system have achieved beneficial use since the time the document was originally drafted, and that alternative working scenarios have since been developed.

Following completion of our fieldwork, Metro-North officials provided us with an updated inventory of parking spaces that indicated that currently there are approximately 34,000 spaces available to its riders. They said that Metro-North plans to construct an additional 2,000 new spaces and rehabilitate over 1,800 spaces by 2004. Long range plans over the next 10-15 years include adding 6,000-7,000 new spaces under the Strategic Passenger Facilities Program; eliminating the need to add 3,000-5,000 new spaces by providing commuters with alternate transportation (i.e., busses, shuttle vans) to their stations under the State Access Alternative Program; and adding 400-600 new spaces under a system-wide Private Operator Program. Additionally, local municipalities plan to construct an additional 1,350 spaces in the next two years.

Metro-North officials advised us that by using alternative methods and by factoring various customer needs and assumed preferences, they have prepared projections of the additional number of parking spaces they expect to need by 2015 for facilities on a station/segment specific basis. However, Metro-North officials stated that these projections cannot be used to estimate the size of the future unmet parking demand. They explained that these projections were based on the parking demand model and parking supply that existed in 1997. As such, the underlying assumptions and factors, such as diversions from one station to another, drop-offs, additional capacity, and population projections, have all changed. In addition, these projections were prepared on a station-by-station basis, as opposed to a system-wide basis. They are primarily used for internal purposes for a particular station and cannot be added to project system demand. The projections are about to be updated to reflect recent changes in ridership, demographics, station access services and local developments for all stations in their system.

Metro-North officials also pointed out that they are faced with several obstacles and constraints when attempting to expand parking facilities. These include, most significantly, the lack of Metro-North-owned land near railroad stations, obstacles in gaining local community approvals, completing environmental reviews, poor access, local road capacity, and finally, financial limitations. They therefore continue to introduce transportation alternatives to access the railroad to reduce the long-term parking needs and related agency capital investments. As of 2002, over 3,500 commuters access the rail stations using Metro-North connecting service programs via various bus and train lines.

Recommendations

Metro-North should:

1. *As part of the 2015 projections, develop a system-wide estimate of parking demand and compare it with estimates of available parking figures to determine the number of additional spaces needed for the future.*

The LIRR should:

2. *In light of other priorities, consider whether it is allocating a sufficient portion of its capital program resources toward commuter parking projects.*

The LIRR and Metro-North should:

3. *Continue to improve commuter parking at those locations, where it is feasible. At other locations, work with affected local municipalities to develop alternative approaches and means for commuters to arrive at railroad stations. These could include enhanced municipal bus service, running shuttle vans to/from park and ride facilities, or other programs.*
4. *Develop a long-term plan for addressing the gap between the anticipated increase in ridership and the railroads' plans for parking lot expansion. Such a plan should consider both the construction of additional parking spaces and the implementation of alternative means of providing access to overcrowded stations. It should also consider the use of other forms of commuter transportation (i.e., bus and ferry service) to ease the burden of commuter railroads.*

A draft copy of this report was provided to MTA, LIRR and Metro-North officials for their review and comment. Their comments have been considered in preparing this report, and are included as Appendix A. LIRR and Metro-North officials agreed with our findings and indicated that they will implement our recommendations.

Within 90 days after final release of this report, as required by Section 170 of the Executive Law, the Chairman of the MTA shall report to the Governor, the State Comptroller, and the leaders of the Legislature and fiscal committees, advising what steps were taken to implement the recommendations contained herein, and where recommendations were not implemented, the reasons therefor.

Major contributors to this report were Stanley Evans, Abe Markowitz, Barry Mordowitz, Jeremy Mack, Ira Lipper, Legendre Ambrose, and Marticia Madory.

We wish to thank the management and staff of the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad for the courtesies and cooperation extended to our auditors during this audit.

Very truly yours,

William P. Challice
Audit Director

cc: Kenneth Bauer
Peter Cannito
Paul Spinelli

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New York, NY 10017-3739
212 878-7200 Tel
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Peter S. Kalkow
Chairman



Metropolitan Transportation Authority

State of New York

October 4, 2002

Mr. William P. Challice
Audit Director
The State of New York Office of the Comptroller
123 William Street
New York, New York 10038

Re: Report No. 2001-S-10 Availability of Parking

Dear Mr. Challice:

This is in reply to your letter requesting a response to the above-captioned audit report.

I have attached for your information the comments of Mr. Kenneth J. Bauer, President, MTA Long Island Rail Road and Mr. Peter A. Cannito, President, MTA Metro-North Railroad, which address this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Peter S. Kalkow".

Attachment

The agencies of the MTA

MTA New York City Transit MTA Long Island Rail Road MTA Long Island Bus MTA Metro-North Railroad MTA Bridges and Tunnels

Appendix A

Jamaica Station
Jamaica, NY 11435-4380
718 558-8252 Tel
718 657-9047 Fax

Kenneth J. Bauer
President



August 21, 2002

Mr. Peter Kalikow
Chairman
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
347 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Kalikow:

Detailed below is LIRR's comments to the State Comptroller's draft audit report (2001-S-10) regarding the availability of parking at the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and Metro-North Railroad train stations.

We appreciate that the State has acknowledged the actions taken by the LIRR to enhance commuter parking at our stations as well as recognized the efforts that are planned to continue to address this issue. We also concur with the report's recommendations. Our detailed response to the recommendations specific to LIRR follows:

Recommendation 2. Preliminary LIRR internal discussions in preparation for the 2005-2009 Capital Plan are focusing on, among other items, an increase in commuter parking projects now that other infrastructure priorities have been addressed.

Recommendation 3. LIRR will continue to work with all responsible parties to improve commuter parking and alternative access to LIRR stations. One alternative approach recently implemented is a joint program with the New York Power Authority entitled: THINK Clean Commute Program. LIRR has worked successfully with the Power Authority, the Towns of Oyster Bay and Huntington as well as a 3rd party private operator to introduce a station demonstration project for electric cars at Hicksville, Huntington and Little Neck stations. The project is designed to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion as well as promote national energy independence since electricity relies primarily on domestic fuel sources.

Recommendation 4. This year LIRR will begin to update its 20-Year Needs Assessment. The initial working document contains a significant funding request for Hub Development in each of the next three 5- year Capital Plan periods. When combined with other LIRR operating and strategic initiatives (i.e., implementation of East Side Access service and the Yard Strategy) LIRR will continue to have a balanced parking strategy that meets customer needs.

Mr. Peter Kalikow
August 21, 2002
Page 2

Implementing alternative means of station access is an issue the LIRR and the communities it serves have addressed for many years. LIRR will continue to keep an open mind and will work with any and all responsible parties toward alternative access to its stations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth J. Bauer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Kenneth J. Bauer
President



September 10, 2002

Mr. Peter Kalikow
Chairman
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
347 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Re: Availability of Parking Report 2001-S-10

Dear Mr. Kalikow:

Following are Metro-North Railroad's comments to the State Comptroller's Availability of Parking at MNR Metro-North Railroad draft audit report 2001-S-10.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment upon the report and concur with the findings of the audit. The report represents Metro-North's current parking programs and acknowledges our multi-faceted planning approach and the constraints faced with the planning and implementation of additional parking at rail stations.

- **Recommendation 1:** As part of the 2015 projections, develop a system-wide estimate of parking demand and compare it to the number of additional spaces needed in the future.

As part of the planned update to the current 2015 projections we will be refining the forecast methodology and expanding it to include a system-wide projection.

- **Recommendation 2:** Not addressed to Metro-North, applies only to the Long Island Rail Road.
- **Recommendation 3:** Continue to improve commuter parking at those locations, where it is feasible. At other locations, work with affected local municipalities to develop alternative approaches and means for commuters to arrive at railroad stations. These could include enhanced municipal bus service, running shuttle vans to/from park and ride facilities, or other programs.

Metro-North will continue to improve commuter parking at Metro-North owned locations and work with local municipalities to meet parking needs, as we do currently. Our current inventory of 34,000 spaces reflects significant parking expansion efforts by Metro-North. Forty (40) projects completed during the initial and follow-up audit periods (1998 – 2001) added more than 4,500 new parking spaces at rail stations. Major projects included the 540-space parking structure at the Poughkeepsie Station and, as part of the Harlem Line extension, more than 300 spaces were added at the new Wassaic and Tenmile River Stations.

Additionally, we will continue our partnership relationships with municipalities, and look to operate and expand our alternative rail access programs, including ferry, shuttle, and park & ride that are an integral part of our parking/access programs. The Haverstraw/Ossining ferry (which involved the construction of a 250 space commuter parking facility in Haverstraw), bus service to Katonah station from Ridgefield, CT, Newburgh/Beacon Shuttle, and Dutchess County Loop shuttle bus systems, and satellite parking at Dutchess County Stadium are recent examples of our success with these programs. These alternate forms of transportation allow us to increase ridership without a corresponding demand for parking at the station.

We will also continue our efforts to identify new opportunities and applications including partnership arrangements with local developers to solve parking needs such as our recent partnership with a private developer in Port Chester to provide needed parking for our rail customers.

- **Recommendation 4:** Develop a long-term plan for addressing the gap between the anticipated increase in ridership and the railroad's plans for parking expansion. Such a plan should consider both the construction of additional parking spaces and the implementation of alternative means of providing access to overcrowded stations. It should also consider the use of other forms of commuter transportation (i.e., bus and ferry service) to ease the burden of commuter railroads.

MNR has and will continue to introduce strategies for expanded parking and alternative commute programs to access rail stations, reduce the demand for parking, and encourage new ridership. As we look at system-wide needs, we utilize our long-term plan blueprint that includes strategic facilities, parking projects, and alternate station access programs as part of the planning process to fill unmet parking needs. Of course the availability of Capital funds ultimately can limit what can be implemented. Efforts to augment Capital dollars by pursuing private sector participation in projects, securing grants, and establishing public partnerships will continue.

If you require any additional information, please contact my office.

Sincerely,



Peter A. Cannito

Cc: H. Permut
R. J. Fleischer