



Empire State Passengers Association

Working For A Balanced Public  
Transportation Network

For All New Yorkers  
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# ESPA EXPRESS

News From The  
Empire State Passengers Association

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**ESPA  
2023 Annual  
Meeting  
& Lunch**

**Saturday, March 11, 2023  
11:00am - 4:00pm  
DoubleTree Hotel  
Schenectady, NY**

**Complete Details On Page 7**

*In This Issue...*

Amtrak 'Airo' Trainsets

New US Border Facility For Adirondack

FY '23 Federal Transportation Budget

LAB Bridge Moves Forward

FY '22 NYS Station Stats

Grand Central Madison Opens

*And Much More...*

## Amtrak Brands Future Trainsets as 'Airo'

- Benjamin Turon

Amtrak has branded its future 'Intercity' Trainsets for its Northeastern and Cascades corridor services as 'Amtrak Airo'. Amtrak President Roger Harris announced the new name at a December 15, 2022, press event at the Moynihan Train Hall in New York City.

The \$3.4 billion order, placed in July 2021, is for 83 trainsets to be manufactured at the Siemens Mobility plant in Sacramento, California. The new Airo trainsets are slated to start entering service in 2026, replacing the nearly fifty-year-old Amfleet I cars and the late 1980's-era Horizon coaches.



Amtrak

Airo trainsets will operate on corridor routes throughout the country: Northeast Regional, Virginia Services, Keystone Service, Vermonter, Pennsylvanian, New Haven/Springfield Service, Palmetto, Cascades Carolinian, Downeaster and in New York State on Empire Corridor Services, Maple Leaf, Ethan Allen Express and the Adirondack.

(Continued on Page 5 - Airo)

## New US Border Facility to Serve Adirondack

- Benjamin Turon

A change is coming to cross-border inspections for Amtrak's Adirondack. Construction of a new 'Land Port of Entry' at the US-Canada border north of Rouses Point, New York, will allow US federal agents to inspect passenger trains and motor vehicles from the same facility.

The General Services Administration is working with the US Customs and Border Protection Agency on the new facility to be located immediately south of the border at the start of US Route 11 and adjacent to the Canadian National (CN) railway track that Amtrak uses to reach Montreal, after diverging from the Canadian Pacific (D&H) line just north of Amtrak's Rouses Point station (Continued On Page 6 -Border)

## Congress Finalizes FY2023 Transportation Budget - Tony Rudmann

Just before its late December adjournment, Congress finalized the federal budget for federal fiscal year 2023 which began October 1, 2022 and continues until September 30, 2023. The adopted Consolidated Appropriations Act provided \$16.6 billion for passenger and freight rail as well as \$21.2 billion for public transit.

Amtrak funding totaled \$2.45 billion with \$1.26 billion allocated to the Northeast Corridor and \$1.19 billion earmarked for the National Network. The Amtrak total was \$121 million above FY 2022 funding. From FFY 2021 through FFY 2023, Congress has dedicated \$6.7 billion to Amtrak.

Additionally, the Federal Railroad Administration was given \$44 million for railroad research, \$100 million for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grants and \$560 million for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants. The CRISI grant dedicates not less than \$150 million for development of new passenger rail corridors.

The Appropriations Act, signed into law by President Joe Biden on December 29th, directed that no Amtrak National Network operating funds can be used by Amtrak to discontinue, reduce the frequency of, suspend or substantially alter the route of any long-distance route. Also, \$30 million of the CRISI grants will be used for "congressionally directed spending" (known as "earmarks") recommended by legislators.

Public transit received \$21.2 billion, an increase of \$704 million from the FY2022 enacted level. That total included \$13.6 billion in formula grants and \$2.6 billion in Capital Investment Grants to create new transit routes.

## Executive Director's Report: Steve Strauss

The New Year is starting off well for passenger rail riders and advocates. The Federal Railroad Administration continues to roll out additional federal funding opportunities from the bi-partisan infrastructure bill and New York State has been aggressive in applying for funding for several Hudson Valley and Capital Region projects.

The FRA is kicking-off a Congressionally-mandated study of Amtrak's long distance network, both existing routes and former routes, and several New York groups have been invited to join the Northeastern stakeholders committee.

ESPA will join the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council, CSX and NYS DOT, among others, on that regional committee. I'll be attending the first session in Washington on February 3rd and will report back to the Board and ESPA members. I'll be particularly interested in the New York to Florida trains and the Lakeshore corridor.

ESPA and western Massachusetts rail advocates are already working on actions to make this summer's Berkshire Flyer service bigger and better. The 2023 season begins Memorial Day weekend and runs through the Columbus Day weekend.

Lastly, I'll be attending the NYS Business Council's Legislative Reception in Albany in early February. This will be my first opportunity to meet new and returning Assemblymembers and State Senators in person and begin building the relationships to boost support for better Amtrak service. You can help by reaching out to your Assemblymember and State Senator and telling them how important more trains and faster trains are to you and to New York State.

Hope to see you in Schenectady at our Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 11th.



As of press time, the release of the Empire Corridor Final Tier One Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) & Service Development Plan has once again been pushed back, now to February 17, 2023. The target date for the Record of Decision for the Statement & Plan is now listed as being March 20, 2023.

Given that this EIS process started in 2009 (**ONLY** fourteen years ago) perhaps the Federal Railroad Administration is trying to set a record for the longest such environmental review ever undertaken?

You can track the progress (or lack there of) of the EIS process on the Federal Infrastructure Permitting Dashboard at this link -

<https://bit.ly/3jfeRZF> -  
or by scanning this QR code.



## LAB Bridge Moves to Final Design Phrase - Benjamin Turon

The Livingston Avenue Bridge (LAB) replacement project has passed the last environmental hurdle with the [Federal Railroad Administration issuing a finding of 'no significant impact'](#). This clears the way for a new \$400-million bridge over the Hudson River between the cities of Albany and Rensselaer. Construction is expected to start by the end of 2023.



The new 3-span, thru-truss, steel superstructure (with its middle truss span to be a vertical lift design), and six approach spans, are designed for 40-mph train speeds. The bridge will be built just south of the current movable swing bridge where train speed is currently

limited to 15-mph (primarily due to post-Civil War substructure and turn-of-the-last-century superstructure construction). The new LAB will include a shared-use path connecting with the Empire State Trail, Albany Skyway Park and a planned riverfront park in Rensselaer. A mix of federal and state monies is funding the new bridge.

## New York State FY '22 Station Stats

Station	FY 2022	FY 2021	FY 2020	FY 2019	Percent Change 2019 to 2022	Percent Change 2021 to 2022
Albany-Rensselaer - ALB	640,353	379,209	450,965	806,960	-20.6%	68.9%
Amsterdam - AMS	11,900	9,139	7,909	11,183	6.4%	30.2%
Buffalo-Exchange St. - BFX	47,884	34,004	29,135	43,384	10.4%	40.8%
Buffalo-Depew - BUF	96,049	57,994	60,926	107,780	-10.9%	65.6%
Croton-Harmon - CRT	40,834	22,123	25,891	46,403	-12.0%	84.6%
Fort Edward - FED	6,096	1,638	3,394	9,365	-34.9%	272.2%
Hudson - HUD	208,302	145,187	131,357	237,268	-12.2%	43.5%
Niagara Falls - NFL	31,689	20,145	15,983	34,965	-9.4%	57.3%
New Rochelle - NRO	92,929	52,410	51,730	96,057	-3.3%	77.3%
NY State Fair - NYF	2,437	967	n/a	n/a	n/a	152.0%
NY Moynihan Train Hall - NYP	8,008,700	4,061,379	5,432,851	10,811,323	-25.9%	97.2%
Plattsburgh - PLB	0	0	5,854	13,386	n/a	n/a
Port Henry - POH	0	0	1,291	2,846	n/a	n/a
Port Kent - PRK	0	0	0	402	n/a	n/a
Poughkeepsie - POU	111,135	66,403	65,910	109,877	1.1%	67.4%
Rhinecliff - RHI	171,567	104,407	110,703	211,139	-18.7%	64.3%
Rochester - ROC	119,797	77,964	83,655	132,434	-9.5%	53.7%
Rome - ROM	8,496	6,228	5,436	6,924	22.7%	36.4%
Rouses Point - RSP	0	0	540	1,454	n/a	n/a
Saratoga Springs - SAR	22,710	4,753	16,543	41,611	-45.4%	377.8%
Schenectady - SDY	50,041	34,225	40,006	62,180	-19.5%	46.2%
Syracuse - SYR	124,000	78,673	82,067	131,515	-5.7%	57.6%
Ticonderoga - FTC	0	0	557	2,008	n/a	n/a
Utica - UCA	61,180	39,834	42,319	63,968	-4.4%	53.6%
Westport - WSP	0	0	1,467	4,733	n/a	n/a
White Hall - WHL	0	0	648	1,893	n/a	n/a
Yonkers - WNY	34,717	23,839	21,390	32,109	8.1%	45.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,890,816</b>	<b>5,220,521</b>	<b>6,688,527</b>	<b>13,023,167</b>	<b>-24.1%</b>	<b>89.5%</b>
<b>Total Without NY Moynihan Train Hall</b>	<b>1,882,116</b>	<b>1,159,142</b>	<b>1,255,676</b>	<b>2,211,844</b>	<b>-14.9%</b>	<b>62.4%</b>

Counts are the total of all passengers boarding & de-boarding at each station.



## New York State Ridership Stats

Route	Oct 22	Oct 21	Oct 20	Oct 19	Nov 22	Nov 21	Nov 20	Nov 19	Dec 21	Dec 20	Dec 19	Nov 22 OTP
<b>Empire Service</b>	106,000 <small>96% of 2019 #</small>	93,300	37,800	110,700	99,800 <small>86% of 2019 #</small>	89,800	32,600	115,500	81,700	27,400	108,700	87.6%
<b>Maple Leaf</b>	36,300 <small>114% of 2019 #</small>	30,400	15,100	31,900	34,600 <small>112% of 2019 #</small>	32,100	15,300	30,800	32,500	12,900	41,800	77.3%
<b>Adirondack</b>	0	0	0	11,300	0	0	0	7,500	0	0	10,700	n/a
<b>Ethan Allen Exp.</b>	7,800 <small>181% of 2019 #</small>	4,200	0	4,300	8,000 <small>190% of 2019 #</small>	4,200	0	4,200	4,200	0	5,600	82.9%
<b>Lake Shore Lim.</b>	34,600 <small>112% of 2019 #</small>	26,900	12,300	30,900	31,600 <small>104% of 2019 #</small>	28,100	6,400	30,500	28,900	12,300	37,200	72.8%

Data Source - Amtrak Monthly Performance Reports

Customer OTP



See New York and Save 15%

**Reminder...** The popular ['I Love New York' 15% Discount](#) continues to be offered for travel to/from all New York State destinations on Empire Corridor trains & the Ethan Allen Express. The current promotional offer is valid through May 2023. Reservations must be made at least 5 days in advance of travel; black-out dates and other restrictions apply. The 15% discount is not available for travel on the Lake Shore Limited.

Visit [Amtrak.com](#); click on 'Deals' at the top, then click on 'Deals & Promotions' and scroll down to the 'See NY & Save 15%' option to take advantage of this great offer.

[Get Carried Away on the Lake Shore Limited](#) with fares within the state of Massachusetts as low as \$9 and fares between Boston and select Upstate New York destinations starting at \$13. That's a savings of up to 50% off the base fare. An advance purchase of at least 14 days is required. Trip must begin or end in the state of Massachusetts to receive this discount. Tickets cannot be modified or changed 24 hours after purchase. Other terms & conditions apply.



Lake Shore Limited Saver Fares

Fares Starting at Just \$9

Visit [Amtrak.com](#); click on 'Deals' at the top, then click on 'Deals & Promotions' and scroll down to the 'Lake Shore Limited Saver Fares' option to take advantage of this great offer.



Save on Group Travel with Share Fares  
Up to 60% Off

[Amtrak Share Fares](#) make it easy to bring the whole crew by helping you save with each plus one. Share Fares provides a group discount of up to 60% off tickets for 8 passengers traveling together on the same reservation.

Passengers will receive the following discounts off the adult rail fare: Passenger One (1) - full price (or lowest available fare); Passenger Two (2) - full price (or lowest available fare); Passenger Three (3) will receive a 50% discount; Passenger Four (4) will receive a 70% discount; Passenger Five (5) will receive a 75% discount; Passenger Six (6) will receive an 85% discount; Passenger Seven (7) & Eight (8) will receive a 100% discount! Valid through September 30, 2023 - 2-day advance purchase required. Other terms & conditions apply.

Visit [Amtrak.com](#); click on 'Deals' at the top, then click on 'Deals & Promotions' and scroll down to the 'Save on Group Travel with Share Fares' option to take advantage of this great offer.



### Thanks To Our Corporate Members For Their Generous Support!



### Visit ESPA At These Upcoming Events...

#### [Western New York Railway Historical Society Winter Train & Toy Show](#)

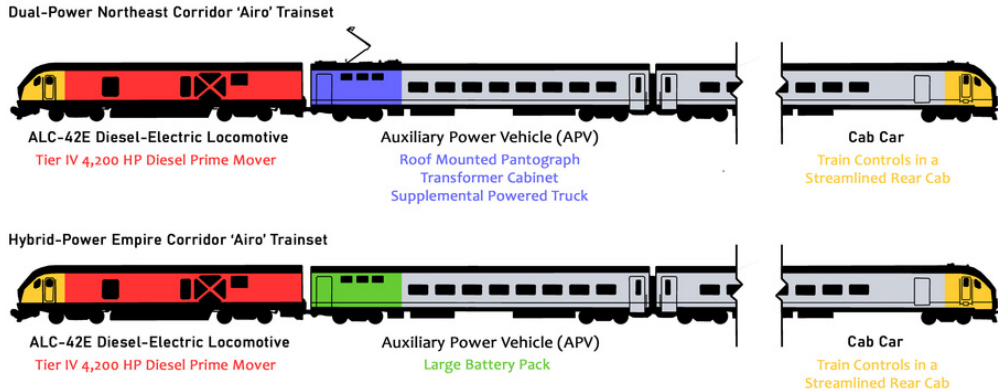
Saturday & Sunday, February 18 & 19, 2023 – 10:00am - 5:00pm – Hamburg (NY) Fairgrounds Events Center

**Airo Trainsets** (continued from page 1)

The Airo trainsets will come in several variations, including straight-diesel, six-coach trainsets hauled by a Siemens ALC-42E Charger locomotive – 125-mph capability and meeting EPA Tier IV standards for emissions – for Downeaster and Cascades services. These diesel locomotives are more fuel-efficient and produce 90% less particulate emissions.

Six-to-eight-car “dual-power” trainsets operating on the Northeast Corridor will supplement the ALC-42E with an Auxiliary Power Vehicle (a coach equipped with a pantograph to take power from overhead catenary when operating on electrified tracks). The “hybrid-power” trainsets destined for the Empire Corridor will also have an Auxiliary Power Vehicle, but one with an auxiliary battery pack to allow electric operation into Penn Station (and perhaps Grand Central Terminal).

**Amtrak ‘Airo’ Intercity Siemens Trainset Power & Control Features**



Janet Ho, the Assistant Commissioner for New York State’s Department of Transportation, was quoted in the [Amtrak press release](#) that the state was especially excited about the introduction of Amtrak Airo, stating that it will “help revitalize the passenger experience both in New York and across the nation with greater ADA accessibility as well as enhanced at-seat amenities.”

However, the Empire Corridor is at the end of the queue in receiving the new Airo trainsets, with an estimated delivery ending in 2031, making NYS a likely last hold-out in operating both the venerable Amfleet I coaches and the dual-mode GE P32AC-DM locomotives, which are well past their design-life expectancy.

Amtrak states that these ‘modern’ trainsets will offer an ‘elevated experience’ and include a spacious interior, panoramic windows, enhanced lighting, digital customer information systems and touchless restroom controls. The seating is described as ‘spacious’, with ergonomic design, plenty of legroom, bigger and sturdier tray tables, moveable headrests, and a dedicated cup and seatback tablet-holder. Business Class will feature a 2 & 1 seating arrangement.



**Business Class Will Offer 2 & 1 Seating**



**Coach Seating**

The Airo trainsets will have a redesigned Café Car featuring ‘contemporary food service’. A new system of wayfinding will identify and differentiate coaches and seating classes through a color-coded system, with both exterior and interior graphics & signage.

While the press event on the ‘Airo’ branding was not news, it did provide additional details (in new computer-rendered images and videos) for the future corridor equipment standard of the Northeastern, Mid-Atlantic, and Cascades passenger train services.



**Scan To Watch**  
[Amtrak's 'Airo' Videos](#)



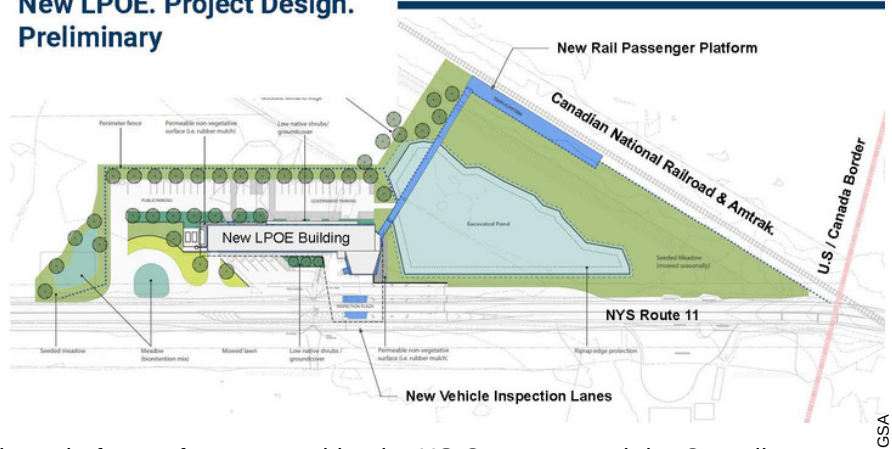
## US Border (continued from page 1)

(which has served as the U.S. Customs and Border Protection rail passenger inspection checkpoint prior to the COVID suspension of Adirondack service in March 2020). Amtrak has publicly stated its plans to resume the Adirondack service from Albany to Montreal this spring.

It is ESPA's understanding that the previous (pre-COVID) on-board inspection procedures used by both American and Canadian border agencies has been one obstacle to the train's resumption. A firm commitment to improve the train inspection facility on the U.S. side of the border should win their support.

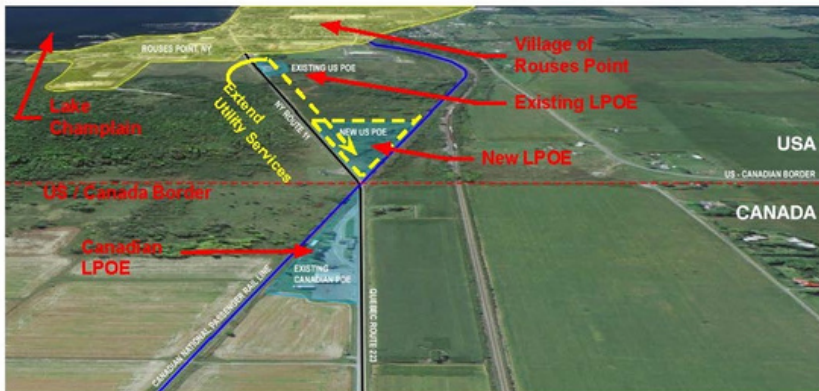
Current plans are for a short platform along the CN line, with a walkway leading across a small wetland to a main 'headhouse' fronting US Route 11. ESPA has expressed concern that the platform & walkway need to be covered. In addition ESPA has noted that existing federal regulations require full ADA accessibility and thus the required high-level platform may necessitate a freight bypass track. This new facility would not negate the need for the proposed preclearance facility at Montreal Central Station for Amtrak passengers, to be used by both US and Canadian border authorities.

### New LPOE. Project Design. Preliminary



A Canada–US Preclearance Agreement has been in force after approval by the US Congress and the Canadian Parliament in 2019. ESPA calls for both governments to expedite the long-planned construction & staffing of a Montreal facility so as to reduce the delays and inconvenience of the prolonged Adirondack inspection stop on both sides of the

### Aerial View from Canada looking South



border, as well as to facilitate the extension of the Vermonter beyond St. Albans, Vermont to Montreal. After preclearance at Montreal is initiated, the proposed border facility would still provide US officials with the ability to perform inspections as necessary.

This new Land Port of Entry has a budgeted cost of \$29.5 million, funded by the FY 2022 bi-partisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Construction is scheduled to start in February 2024 with projected completion in November 2025.

## ESPA Meetings

ESPA members and ALL other interested persons are welcome & encouraged to participate in ESPA Meetings!

Check 'Events' at [www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org) for the most current meeting information! Advance registration is required!

### Tentative Upcoming 2023 ESPA Working Group Meetings

**April 22 - Visit The Events Page On The ESPA Website For Location/Format, Times & Registration**

*Dates, times & locations are subject to change!*

## ESPA Membership

- Introductory Membership (\$15.00 for first year)
- Regular Individual Membership (\$30.00 per year)
- Student, Senior, Fixed-Income Membership (\$20.00 per year)
- Family Membership (\$40.00 per year)
- Sustaining Membership (\$60.00 per year)
- Patron Membership (\$100.00 per year)
- Association/Non-Profit Org. (\$300.00 per year)
- Corporate Membership (\$500.00 per year)
- Lifetime Membership (\$500.00 One Time)

Join or Renew On-Line At [www.esparail.org](http://www.esparail.org) or

Send A Check Made Payable To 'ESPA' To 'ESPA', P.O. Box 434, Syracuse, NY 13209



**43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting**  
of the  
**Empire State Passengers Association**

and  
**Rail Passengers Association's Northeast Division**

**Saturday, March 11, 2023**      **11:00am – 4:00pm**

**DoubleTree Hotel** 100 Nott Terrace Schenectady, NY  
*Five Blocks From The Amtrak Station – Free Parking*

**Invited Speakers & Presentations:**

Representatives From Government, Amtrak And Allied Organizations

**Confirmed** – Meredith Richards – Chairperson – Rail Passengers Association

***Full Registration Includes The Meeting, A Three Course Luncheon & Beverage Breaks***

Full **Early Bird Discount** Registration - \$65.00 Per Person  
(Registrations Must Be Post Marked By February 28<sup>th</sup>)

Full **Late** Registration - \$75.00 Per Person  
(ALL Registrations Post Marked After February 28<sup>th</sup> And At The Door)

Meeting **ONLY** Registration (No Lunch or Beverages) - \$30.00 Per Person

Please complete and return this form with your check for the appropriate registration fee, to be received **NO** later than **March 6, 2023**. (**NO** cancellations after this date).

*Please Note:* Written confirmation of your meeting registration and payment having been received is **NOT** provided unless specifically requested (i.e. tickets are not mailed to you in advance of the meeting). **Meeting registration begins in the DoubleTree Ballroom foyer at 10:00am.**

Please make checks payable to **'ESPA'** and mail to: **Bruce Becker - ESPA**  
**8175 Old Post Road East**  
**East Amherst, NY 14051**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I will be arriving in Schenectady on:     Tr. # 280     Tr. #63     Other



**Click For Complete Information & Registration By Credit/Debit Card**



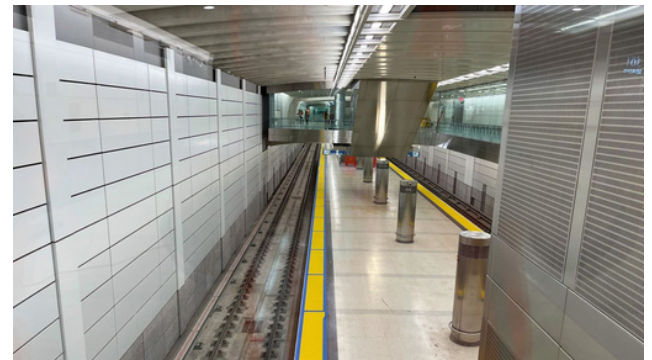


## LIRR Service To Grand Central Madison Starts

After years of planning, construction & seemingly endless delays, Long Island Rail Road service to the new Grand Central Madison (GCM) station (located below Metro North's legendary Grand Central Terminal) opened to the public on January 25, 2023!

Initial service will be only 'Grand Central Direct' shuttle trains operating between Jamaica, Queens and the new eastside Manhattan station. Weekday trains will operate hourly during peak hours and every half hour during off-peak hours; the first inbound train will leave Jamaica at 6:17am and the last outbound will train depart GCM at 8:04pm. Weekend service will offer half-hourly trains in both directions from 7:00am to 10:00pm. The best running time from Jamaica to GCM is 20 minutes for non-stop express trains; outbound the best running time is 21 minutes. Off-peak \$5.00 CityTickets will be valid between Jamaica and GCM.

Only the 'Grand Central Direct' shuttle service will be offered for the immediate future and the LIRR has stated that they will provide at least a three week public notice before the most comprehensive LIRR schedule re-configuration in over 100 years is implemented, bringing full service to GCM and an overall 41% system-wide increase in LIRR trains.



NY1 - Ari Ephraim Feldman



Governors Office

Gov. Hochul & MTA CEO Janno Lieber For The Inaugural Run



NY Post

ESPA Exec. Director Steve Strauss (R) On Inaugural Run



MTA