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Presidential Emergency Board Calls on MTA to Settle Contract Dispute, Recommends Raises for Rail Workers

Recommendations should be foundation for a settlement and could help avoid a strike at LIRR, America's Busiest Commuter Railroad

NEW YORK – Today, Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) 253, assigned to the long-running contract dispute between a coalition of five railroad unions and the Long Island Rail Road called for raises and retroactive pay for rail workers of:

3.0%, effective June 16, 2023

3.0%, effective June 16, 2024

3.5%, effective June 16, 2025

4.5%, effective July 16, 2026

A $3,000 lump sum payment, payable promptly following full and final ratification

A payment of retroactive back pay to all eligible employees

The employer's request for sweeping changes were rejected.

"We had hoped to avoid a strike, that's why our coalition asked for a PEB." said Kevin Sexton a national vice president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. "While we don't agree with everything the PEB had to say, such as the length of the agreement and the raises were lower than our ask, this is a step in the right direction. Let's use this report as guidance, get back to the bargaining table and agree to a fair settlement. We can settle this and take away the threat of a disruption in service."

The members of five rail unions, comprising a majority of LIRR's unionized workforce, have been without a pay raise for over three years, since April 2022, despite near record inflation.

"What we've been asking for since negotiations commenced more than two years ago is exceedingly reasonable, essentially the status quo. In stark contrast, the employer has been seeking a concessionary contract that doesn't keep pace with the high cost of living in our metropolitan area," said Mike Sullivan who serves as general chairman of the Brotherhood of Railway Signalman.

The contract dispute between the employer and the coalition of rail unions has been in National Mediation Board-sponsored mediation since February 2024. NMB released the parties from mediation on August 18, triggering a 30-day cooling off period under the Railway Labor Act, ending at 1201 a.m. on Sept. 18.

At the request of the five unions President Trump ordered a Presidential Emergency Board under the rules of the Railway Labor Act. The board, by law, was required to announce their recommendation by October 17.

"Last week our coalition and management both made presentations to the board," said Nick Peluso national vice president of the Transportation Communications Union. "The board members reviewed the facts, and the facts supported labor. It's now the time for our employer and Governor Hochul to show some support for the workers. Let's get this done and keep the trains running."

The board members in their report made it clear that MTA should bargain in good faith with the five unions in the coalition and not wrap themselves around agreements made with other labor organizations at an earlier time.

The coalition of five rail unions includes the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS), the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), and the Transportation Communications Union (TCU).

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