

News and Notes from The LIRR Today

January 19, 2015

LIRR FINISHES 2014 WITH 92% OTP

The LIRR finished off 2014 with an On-Time Performance of 92.0%, down 1.5% from 2013. By industry standard, a train is defined as “on-time” if it arrives at its final destination within five minutes and fifty nine seconds of its scheduled arrival time. The LIRR operated a total of 245,400 trains in 2014, nearly 5,000 more trains than 2013.

The LIRR continues to struggle in the PM Peak period, with only 86.5% of all trains arriving at their destinations on-time, or 4.1% less than all of 2013. The combined average for the AM and PM peak periods was 89.1%. On-time performance decreased for all but one branch (OTP for the Oyster Bay Branch remained constant at 92.8%). The Port Jefferson Branch saw the steepest decline over last year’s performance, at -3.3%, followed by West of Huntington trains, which declined by -2.9%:

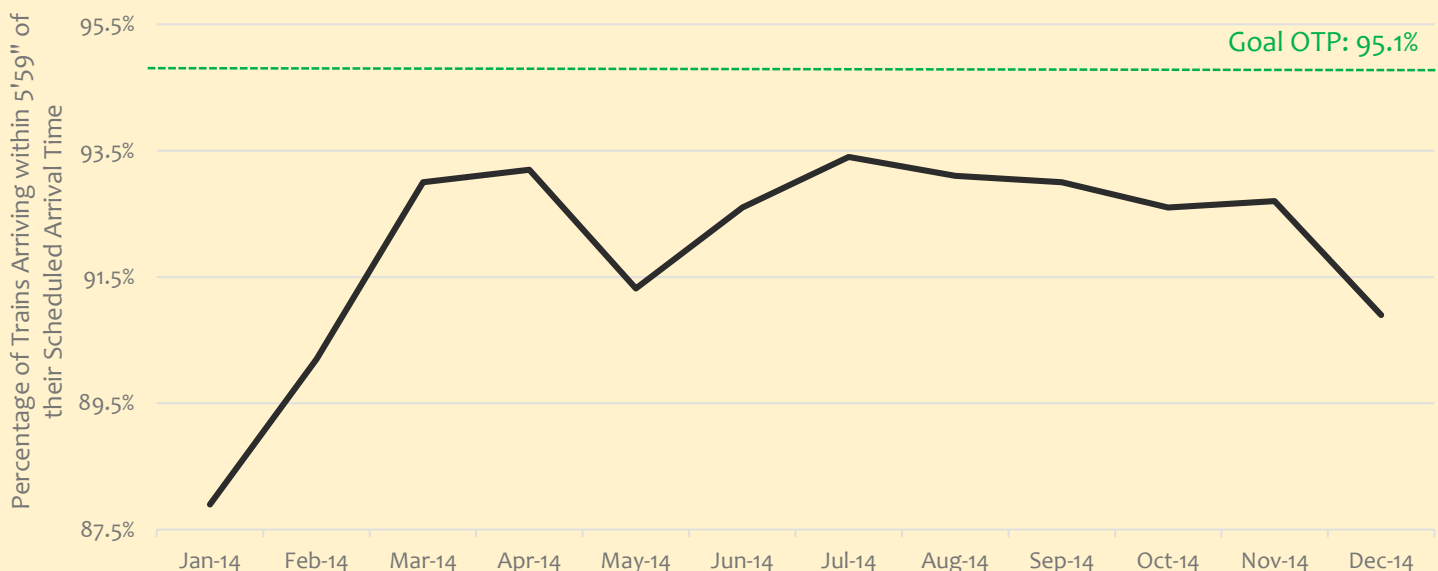
Branch	2014 OTP	Chng vs. 2013
System	92.0%	-1.5%
West of Babylon	91.4%	-1.3%
Far Rockaway	95.6%	-1.1%
West of Huntington	89.6%	-2.9%
Hempstead	95.1%	-1.3%
Long Beach	93.7%	-1.6%
Montauk	89.9%	-0.9%
Oyster Bay	92.8%	0%
Port Jefferson	88.0%	-3.3%
Port Washington	93.0%	-1.3%
Ronkonkoma	90.3%	-0.9%
West Hempstead	94.3%	-0.9%

The Far Rockaway Branch was the LIRR’s most reliable branch in 2014, with 95.6% of trains on that branch arriving on-time. The runner up was the Hempstead Branch, at 95.1%, and along with the Far Rockaway Branch, were the only two of the twelve branch categories to meet the LIRR’s 95.1% OTP goal. The Port Jefferson Branch continues to struggle and had the railroad’s lowest On-Time Performance this year.

A tough winter on Long Island resulted in the LIRR getting off to a rough start in terms of on-time performance, with January’s On-Time Performance coming in at 87.9%, the first time the railroad’s system OTP dropped below 90% since January 2011. The graph

below shows the LIRR’s System OTP for each month of 2014. Following the rough winter, the LIRR’s OTP jumped up a bit and stayed relatively consistent for the remainder of the year.

LIRR On-Time Performance by Month



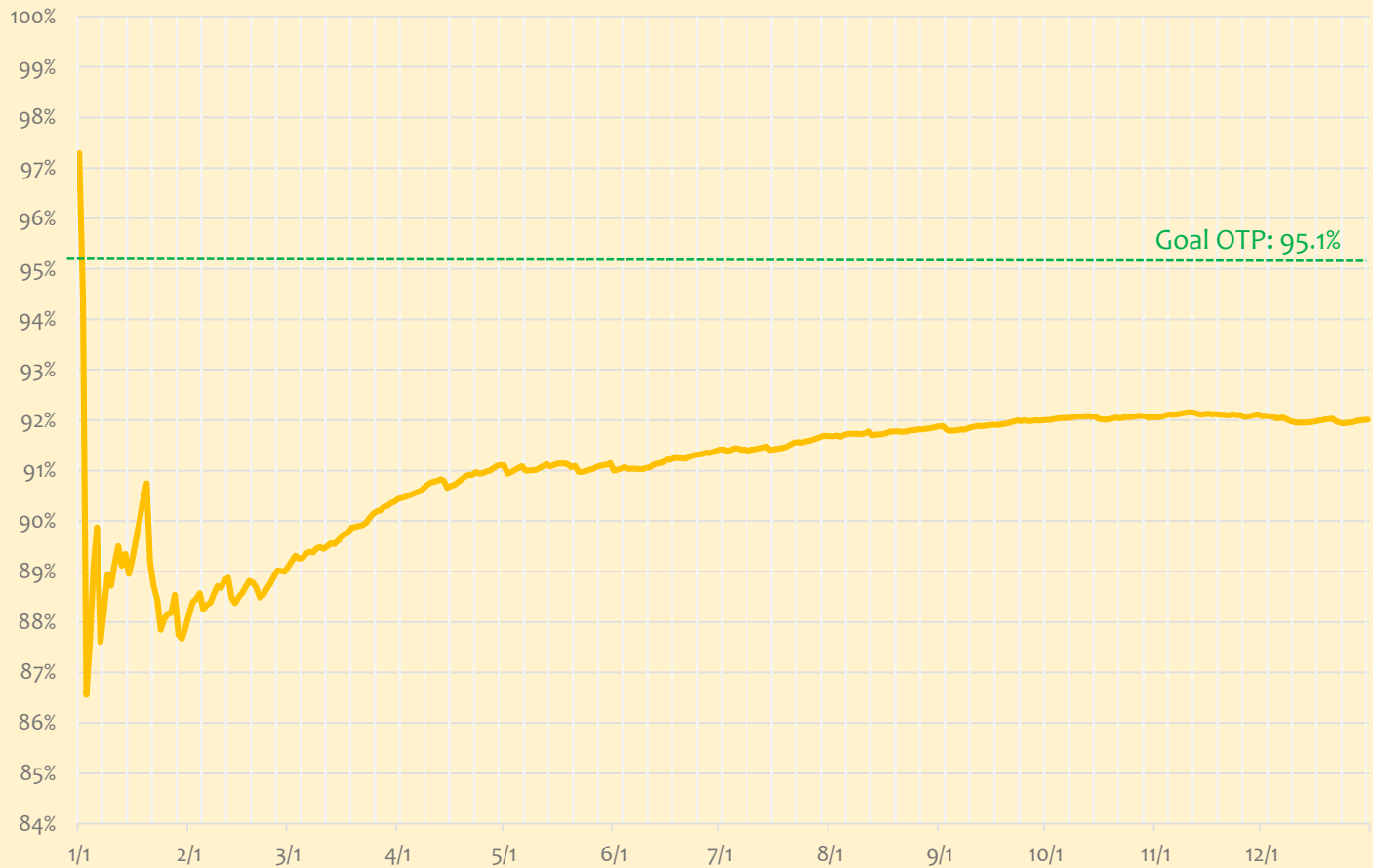
The LIRR's daily on-time performance varied widely in 2014, from 61.9% on Sunday, June 1st, to 99.6% on Sunday, January 19th. The LIRR met their goal on-time performance on 125 days in 2014. The five worst days for the LIRR in 2014 were as follows:

Day	Cancel	Pt. Cncl.	Late	Total Dlys.	Delay Mins.	Avg. Delay	Max Delay	Runs	OTP	Significant Incidents
Su Jun 1	43	1	150	194	2978	19.9	66	509	61.9%	Loss of signals in HAROLD
Tu Jan 21	18	2	259	279	4254	16.4	68	739	62.2%	Inclement weather
Fr Jan 3 [Wknd Sch]	3	5	158	166	2392	15.1	89	499	66.7%	Inclement weather
We Jan 29	37	38	161	236	2242	13.9	106	756	68.8%	Third rail problems in East River Tunnel, inclement weather
Th Feb 13	27	28	144	199	2219	15.4	88	745	73.3%	Inclement weather

The LIRR's worst days tend to come on days when the weather is bad, as inclement weather was cited as the cause of delay for four of the five worst days in 2014. This is in contrast to the five worst days in 2013 where most of the worst delays were caused by one or more service disruptions (2013 saw two derailments, and a couple of unlucky incidents on the Main Line that delayed a significant number of trains).

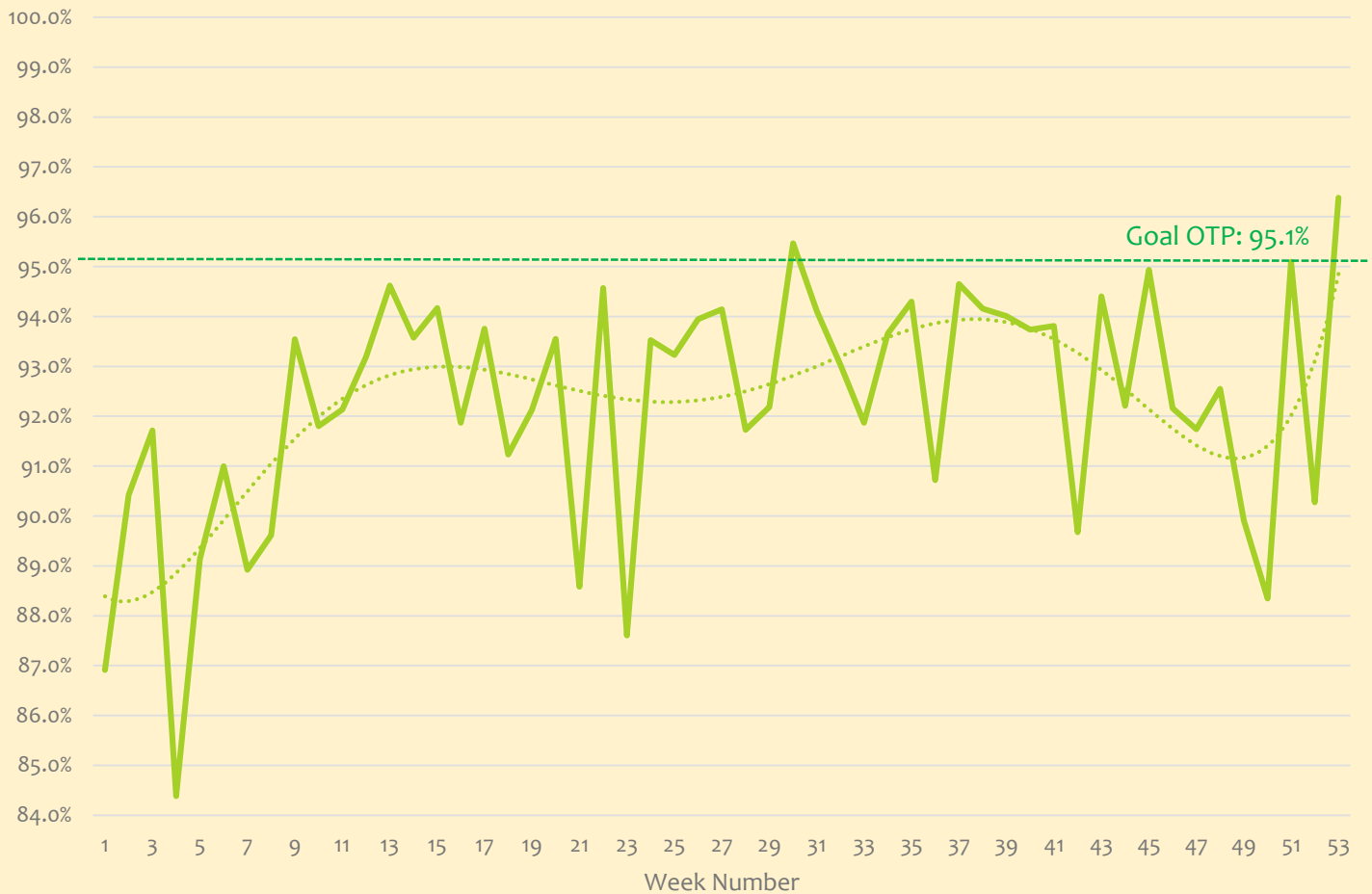
The graph below shows the LIRR's year-to-date On-Time Performance for each day in 2014. The graph clearly shows a rough winter for the LIRR, and a slow recovery from that.

Year-to-Date OTP for Each Day in 2014



The LIRR's weekly average OTP also bears out a similar tale, as shown on the next page. The trendline starts out low, and then climbs back up in March before slouching down slightly ahead of a December that saw a number of significant incidents which resulted in OTP slouching down slightly towards the end of the year.

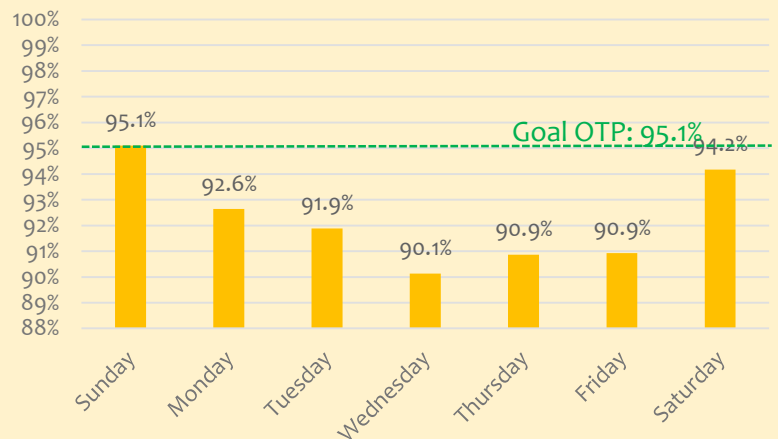
Weekly Average OTP for 2014



There were only three of 2014's 53 different calendar weeks that had averages above goal, with the worst calendar week coming in January with an OTP of 84.4%. The LIRR saved its best for last, and thanks to the lightly traveled rush hours following Christmas, the final four days of 2014 saw the LIRR's highest calendar week OTP at 96.4%.

The LIRR's On-Time Performance tends to be the best on Sundays, although Sundays tend to have the greatest variation in performance (the best and worst days in 2014 were both Sundays). The LIRR's OTP tends to be the lowest on Wednesdays, which does seem to be a bit counter-intuitive, as one would think that Fridays or Sundays would give the LIRR the most headaches with heavy holiday or seasonal travel. Nevertheless, of the 53 Wednesdays in 2014, 35 of them saw one or more significant incidents (incidents that resulted in 10 or more late, cancelled, or partially cancelled trains).

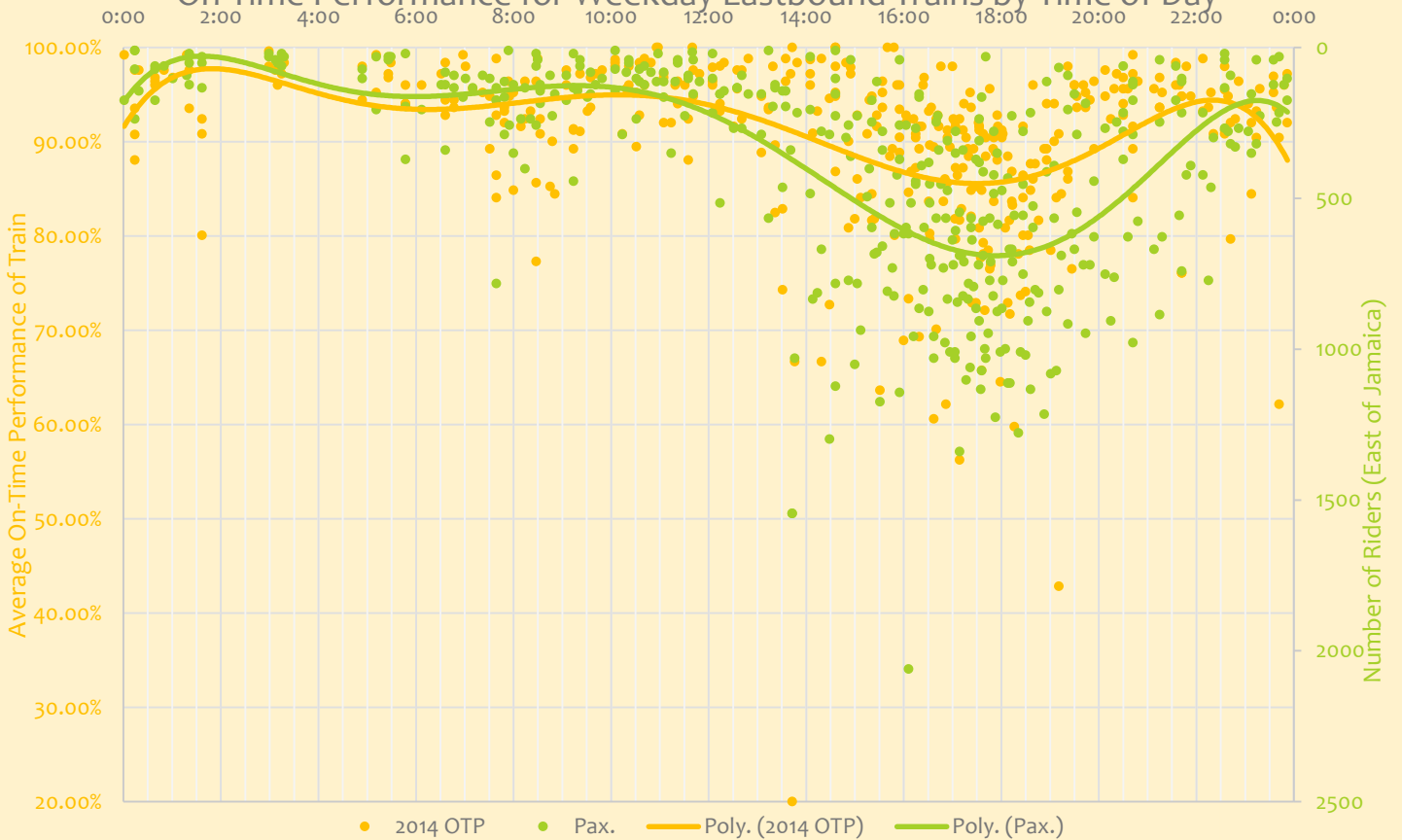
LIRR Average On-Time Performance by Day of Week



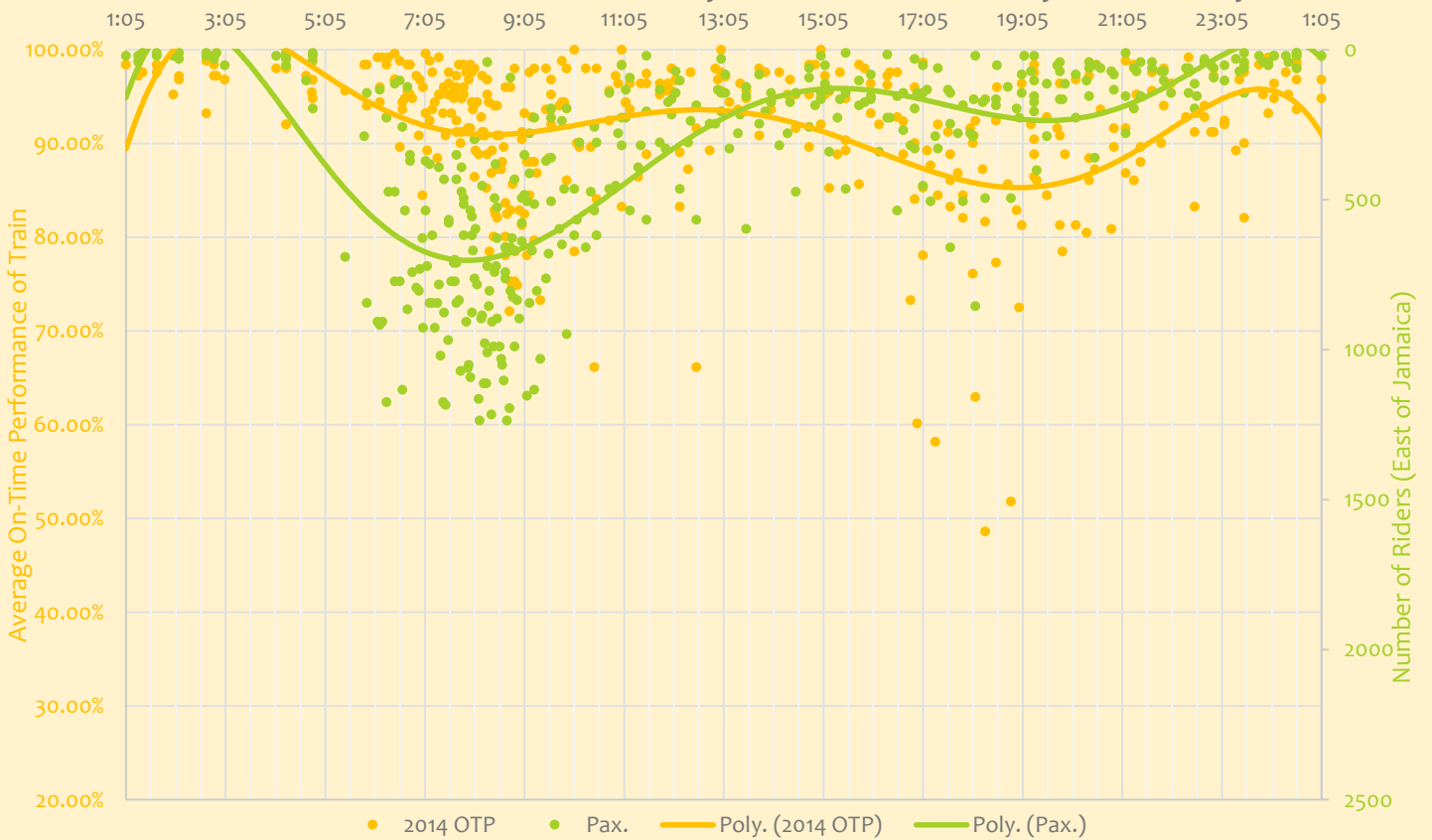
The LIRR continues to struggle with reliability in the PM Peak period with OTP declining 4.1% in 2014.

The PM Peak has often given the LIRR more trouble than not. Reliability seems to be very closely related to the amount of passengers travelling. The two graphs on the next page show the OTP of individual trains compared to the ridership on those trains, shown by arrival or departure time in New York Penn Station.

On-Time Performance for Weekday Eastbound Trains by Time of Day



On-Time Performance for Weekday Westbound Trains by Time of Day



The PM Peak period seems a lot more susceptible to ridership swings, as the orange OTP and green ridership trendlines remain fairly close together all day. Westbound trains see a second slouch during the reverse peak period, presumably due to the limited number of reverse peak trains either getting bogged down with loading delays, or being otherwise delayed due to late eastbound trains.

The LIRR had a number of bad rush hours this year, and of the top five worst rush hours, all of them are in the PM Peak. Of the 87 different “unacceptable” rush hours in 2014 (OTP of less than 80.4%), 56 of them, or nearly 65% of them, were PM rush hours. The top five worst rush hours were as follows:

Peak	Cancel	Pt. Cncl.	Late	Total Dlys.	Delay Mins.	Avg. Delay	Max Delay	Runs	OTP	Significant Incidents
Tu 1/21 PM	15	0	100	115	1549	15.49	56	129	10.9%	Inclement weather
Tu 4/15 PM	19	0	75	94	1499	19.99	53	131	28.2%	High wind
We 1/29 PM	20	0	69	89	1069	15.49	40	129	31.0%	Third rail problems in East River Tunnel, inclement weather
Fr 2/21 PM	12	0	71	83	1306	18.39	47	130	36.2%	Track condition in HAROLD
Th 5/22 PM	3	0	78	81	894	11.46	37	132	38.6%	2094 third rail shoe malfunction, ESA work in HAROLD

There were 26 perfect rush hours this year (out of a possible 502). Out of those, 21 were AM peaks, and 5 were PM peaks. Using data from previous years, the LIRR’s OTP on each day was classified into one of six different ranges, shown below. The LIRR has a fair amount of days in the “Good” range, and often times OTP comes very close to being excellent for that day, so it’s often a matter of ending the day on a good foot—and improvements in reliability in the PM rush can go a long way to bringing up the LIRR’s overall OTP, and the perceived reliability of the system.

Classification	Range	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Total	AM	PM
Perfect	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	5
Excellent	95.1% to 99.9%	34	22	16	9	10	12	22	125	118	64
Good	90.2% to 95.0%	16	17	26	23	24	27	25	158	52	67
Acceptable	85.3% to 90.1%	1	9	3	12	12	7	5	49	17	37
Poor	80.4% to 85.2%	0	3	2	4	3	2	0	14	12	22
Unacceptable	0.0% to 80.3%	1	1	5	5	3	4	0	19	31	56

If we hone in on the performance of individual trains, the top-ten list of worst trains of 2014 boast some familiar suspects once again:

Train	Origin	Destin	NYK	West	Notes	Dirac	2014 OTP	Runs	Dly Mins	Remarks
2708	H'point Av	Montauk	13:43	13:49	Z	East	20.00%	15	187	Summer Fri
2718	Jamaica	Montauk	19:11	19:38	Z	East	42.86%	21	170	Summer Fri
1715	Huntington	New York	18:20		R	West	48.61%	251	1525	
133	Babylon	New York	18:51		R	West	51.79%	251	1362	
2714	New York	Montauk	17:09		Z	East	56.25%	16	70	Summer Fri
665	Pt. Jefferson	Huntington	1:20	0:10		West	57.77%	251	1169	
461	Pt. Wash'ton	New York	17:20		R	West	58.17%	251	871	
564	New York	Oyster Bay	18:16		P	East	59.76%	251	1043	
861	Long Beach	New York	16:58		R	West	60.16%	251	825	
146	New York	Babylon	16:37		P	East	60.61%	33	129	End Feb

The list is dominated almost exclusively by evening trains, either trains that operate in the PM Peak (564, 146) or the PM Reverse Peak (1715, 133, 461, 861), and you have to go all the way down to the 26-spot on the list before you come across a train that operates during the AM Peak. Train 665 is also unexpectedly high up on the list. Several of the spots just outside of the top-10 most delayed trains belong to a great number of eastbound, PM Peak West of Babylon trains. There are handful of different trains that routinely fight for the honor of being featured in the above

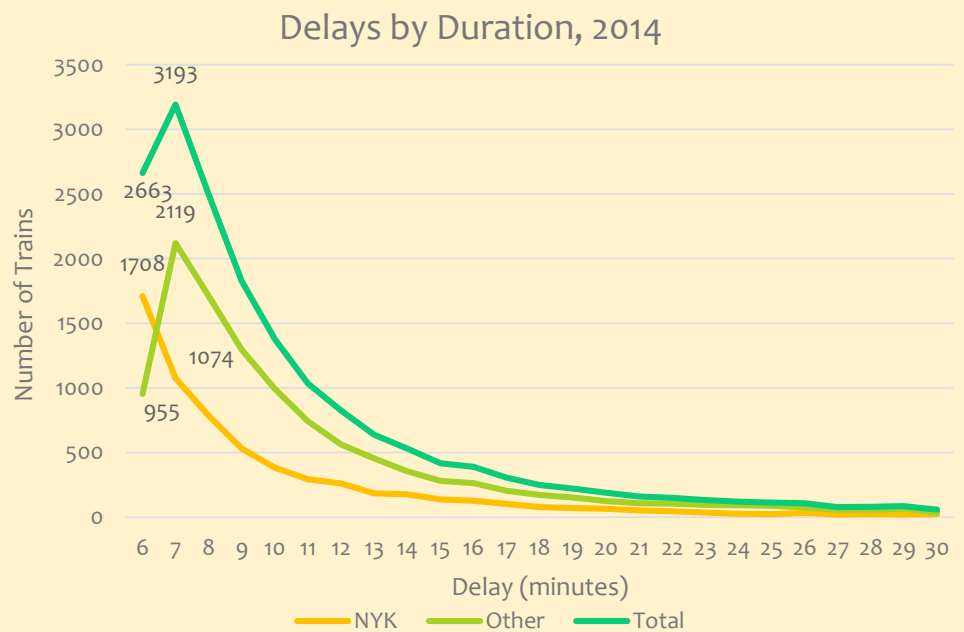
table, but the trains in the bottom 5% of OTP is remarkably consistent from month to month. Four of the 10 trains in the table above were in the bottom-10 trains in terms of reliability last year, and the remainder were not far outside the top 10.

With December over, we also got a look at the final tallies for the categories of delay. The table to the right shows the ten different categories of delay and the number of trains that were delayed due to each category. The table also shows what

Category of Delay	2014 Delays	% of Delays	%Chng vs 2013
NRPC (Amtrak)	1,458	7%	-21%
Penn Station Central Control	265	1%	12%
Other/Miscellaneous/Weather/Environmental	4,693	24%	47%
Public	7,520	38%	65%
Vandalism	247	1%	4%
Unpreventable Delays	14,183	72%	41%
Capital Programs	447	2%	56%
Engineering	2,280	12%	26%
Maintenance of Equipment	1,598	8%	9%
Transportation	495	3%	-14%
Maintenance of Way	575	3%	98%
Delays that could be considered Preventable	5,395	28%	22%
Total Delays	19,578	100%	35%

percentage of the total delay that that category makes up, as well as the change in number of delays versus 2013. Delays due to public remains the most significant category of delay, with 38% of trains having their final reason of delay determined to be public. Notice, however, that the amount of trains delayed due to “public” has increased 65% when compared to 2013—that’s a significant increase, and hopefully the LIRR is looking closely at how it can reduce these delays. In total, the number of LIRR trains late increased by 35% compared to 2013—there were 5,099 more trains late in 2014 compared to 2013. Of all of those delays, 5,395 of them, or roughly 22%, were due to factors that could be considered preventable (Capital Programs, Engineering, MofE, Transportation, and MofW). Delays due to work on capital projects rose 56% in 2014, and delays due to scheduled track work nearly doubled.

Of the 245,059 trains the LIRR operated in 2014, 3,233 of those trains arrived at their final destination fifteen or more minutes late. The average delay for late trains in 2014 was 12.1 minutes. When you consider the total duration of delay for each late LIRR train in 2014, the graph slopes downward pretty consistently, with one major exception. The number of trains that are delayed by six minutes is significantly less than the number of trains delayed by seven or eight minutes, something that doesn’t happen with any other of the duration of delay. And this only usually happens that terminals that aren’t New York Penn. It’s something to keep in mind when considering the veracity of on-time performance, as this suggests that the railroad falsifies the final arrival time of a significant number of trains that are on the cusp of being on-time, that is, unless there is some other explanation for this big statistical anomaly.



For now, as we roll into 2015, hopefully the LIRR will continue to work towards improving their reliability. 2015 so far is off to a rocky start, but there is certainly more than enough room to recover!

NEW YORK PENN FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS ‘VANISH’

Passengers whose commutes take them through New York Penn Station’s Connecting Concourse under 33rd Street may have noticed this past week that a number of restaurants that line the concourse disappeared. Several restaurants, included most Riese eateries, had their leases terminated by Vornado, the realty company that owns 1 Penn Plaza, the building that sits immediately on top of those restaurants. The move came as a surprise to many last week, despite Vornado announcing [back in May](#) that they would be [telling several of the restaurants along that strip to take a hike](#) as part of their efforts to being in some more ‘upscale’ eateries to replace them. This is part of the MTA and Vornado’s effort to ‘spruce up’ the LIRR’s section of New York Penn. Many have said that this is an attempt to make New York Penn more like its much nicer counterpart across town, Grand Central

Terminal. Some are optimistic of their plan, others are more skeptical (comparing the efforts to ‘putting lipstick on a pig’), but we will have to wait and see.



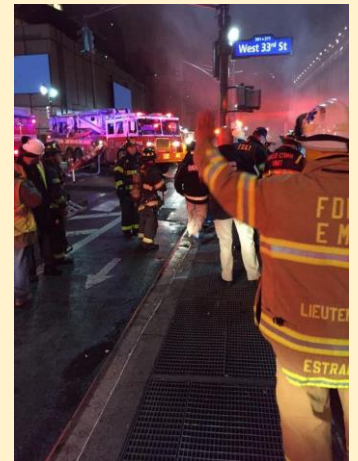
(Photo credit: [@FoxeinSocks](#))

FIRE CLOSES WEST END CONCOURSE, HAMPERS AN AM RUSH

The passengers that use the LIRR’s oft-forgotten West End Concourse at New York Penn Station, many have had to navigate around a number of obstacles these past few months as crews are currently working to extend the West End Concourse from platform G (tracks 13 and 14) where it currently ends, down to the lower station tracks, where Amtrak and NJTransit trains currently depart from, as part of Phase I of the Moynihan Station project, which will create a new waiting area for Amtrak passengers in the Farley Post Office building across 8th Avenue. In the midst of all this work, passengers looking to board the rear end of trains out of New York Penn have had to deal with a slightly smaller West End Concourse, more walking to get to or from the downtown C and E trains, and a less direct route down to platforms G and H.

Last Tuesday morning, around 2:22am, a three-alarm fire broke out in the West End Concourse. The fire took some effort to put out, and the damage done by the fire, and the efforts to contain it, impacted the LIRR’s morning rush hour on Tuesday morning. There was conflicting information on the MTA’s Website about just how much of New York Penn was out of service for the rush, with alerts saying that three of the LIRR’s nine tracks were out of service, and the MTA Website homepage saying that three of the LIRR’s nine platforms were out of service (the latter is about twice as bad as the former, considering each platform in NYK typically has two tracks next to it). Judging by how the rush

hour went, it seems as if it was just three tracks— tracks 19, 20, and 21 (among the three most heavily used tracks during the rush hour), were out of service. The LIRR was able to regain the ability to use the three tracks that were knocked out towards the end of the morning rush hour to turn trains in the station, and full access for trains coming from and going to West Side Yard was restored just before the beginning of the evening rush, and there were no notable effects of the fire on Tuesday evening’s rush. The West End Concourse remained closed for the



(Photo credit: [@zhzizizi](#))



(Photo credit: [@ACinSeaford](#))

remainder of Tuesday and through Wednesday before opening back up for commuters on Thursday morning.

MORE LEGAL TROUBLE FOR BROOKHAVEN RAIL TERMINAL

The Town of Brookhaven and the [Brookhaven Rail Terminal](#) were at odds again last week after the Town went after the rail terminal in court saying that the terminal “secreted and concealed their used oil transloading activities from the town for over a year.” The Brookhaven Rail Terminal has been “importing, exporting, storing, and otherwise transloading 300,000-400,000 gallons per month of ‘used oil’ and ‘waste oil’ without any permits or authority to do so” and, as a result, will “promptly cease all further” all shipments over concerns of groundwater contamination. [Newsday](#) continues saying that “the terminal has since argued that it was not subject to local environmental regulations because it was operating under federal rules after getting approval from the U.S. Surface Transportation Board in 2010 to operate a short line railroad... It also argued before the transportation board that it was not subject to federal licensing and environmental regulations because it was a spur, where rail cars are loaded and unloaded.” The terminal claims that the town was aware of the used oil shipments.

This latest battle is one in a series of skirmishes between the Town of Brookhaven and the Brookhaven Rail Terminal, coming not long after a federal judge ordered the terminal to cease sand mining for part of the terminal’s expansion after it was found that they had excavated “dangerously close to the underground water supply.” As freight traffic continues to steadily increase to the Brookhaven Rail Terminal as more and more businesses on Long Island are receiving their goods to Long Island by freight, hopefully the Town of Brookhaven and the terminal can sort out their differences quickly. The terminal is operated by a for-profit private company, and the town has been going after the terminal in several of these cases for the sake of protecting the underground water supply (or, they’ve been trying to extort large sums of money in fines and settlements from the terminal under the guise of protecting the underground water supply).

The Town of Brookhaven has also had its differences with the LIRR, including an announcement by the town Supervisor Ed Romaine that the town intended to sue the LIRR over its plans to [remediate a parcel of land adjacent to the Main Line in Yaphank](#). In this case, the LIRR discovered in the 1990’s that the land had been contaminated with elevated levels of 29 different contaminants, including mercury, lead, and arsenic. The LIRR allocated \$9 million in their 2010-2014 Capital

Program to cap the contaminated parcel of land, as per the state DEC’s recommendations. The town wanted the LIRR to completely remediate the soil instead of just capping it, citing the unstableness of the nearby Carmans River.



(Photo Credit: Newsday/Chris Ware)

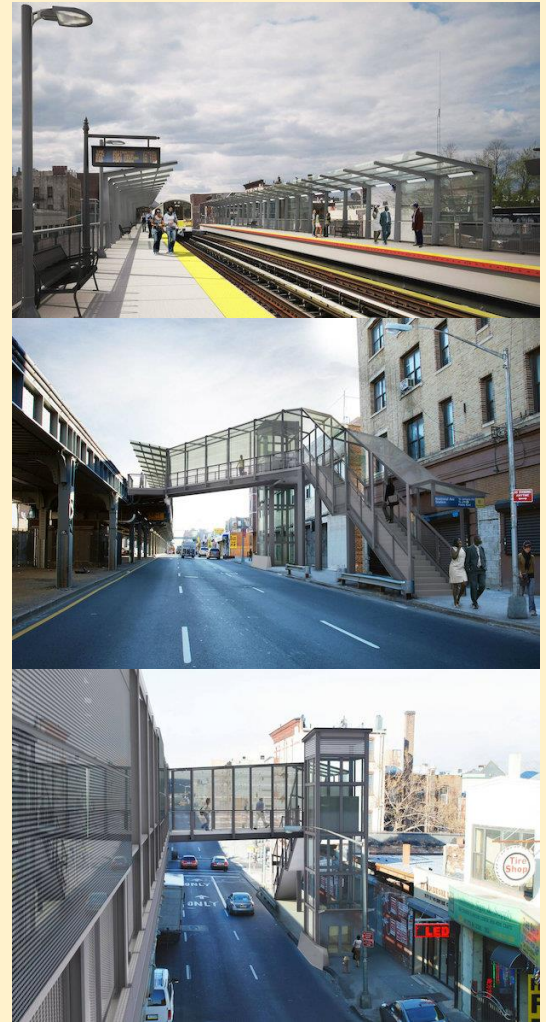
This news comes the same week that reports have indicated that Kleet Lumber, one of the last remaining NY&AR freight customer on the Port Jefferson Branch, will soon stop receiving cars at their siding on-site, but will instead have their shipments delivered to the Brookhaven Rail Terminal and then trucked to their location in Huntington. Kleet and one other customer, Velvetop Products, are the final customers on the Port Jefferson Branch, and presumably NY&AR was no longer interested in making a trip up the branch for just for Kleet, and attempted to pass the higher costs along to them. It’s unclear whether Velvetop is planning to shift to the BRT as well. A similar thing happened less than one year ago when Pulver Gas, the last remaining freight customer along the Montauk Branch, [stopped receiving cars in Bridgehampton](#). This currently leaves the NY&AR with customers only on the LIRR’s Main Line and Central Branch in Nassau and Suffolk Counties (in addition to their customers on the freight-only premises), and possibly Velvetop on the Port Jefferson Branch. As the NY&AR continues to ‘concentrate’ its operations along the Main Line, and particularly at the BRT, it becomes even more important that the Town of Brookhaven and the BRT find a way to play nice, because with so many customers deciding not to receive cars at their local sidings and instead get them at the Brookhaven Rail Terminal, if the town goes to deal a decisive blow (either operationally or financially) to the terminal and the terminal has to suspend or cease operations, it would cause significant damage to freight on Long Island for some time to come.

RENDERINGS FOR RENOVATED NOSTRAND AVENUE REVEALED

DNAinfo [reports](#) that LIRR officials revealed rehabilitation plans for the LIRR's Nostrand Avenue station at a community meeting last Tuesday. The MTA's 2015-2019 Capital Program provides funding for the rehabilitation of Nostrand Avenue, Hunterspoint Avenue, and Babylon, in addition to planned rehabilitations to Wantagh and Hicksville and the ongoing renovation of Massapequa as funded in the previous capital program. The improvements for Nostrand Avenue include new platforms, staircases, glass canopies, improved LED lighting fixtures, security cameras, and pedestrian overpasses "composed of stainless steel to prevent rusting." The plans also include two new elevators for the eastbound and westbound platforms to make the station ADA Accessible. There is no word on when the project will start, but officials said that the project is "shovel ready" and could take up to two years once it began.

The LIRR is currently rehabilitating the Massapequa station on the Montauk Branch. Work on that project began in May 2013 and the first phase of that project (the western six cars of the platform) opened to the public at the end of August. Work is currently underway on Phase 2 of the project, and is scheduled to be completed by this summer.

There was no mention of how long the new platforms would be—currently, the platforms at Nostrand Avenue are six cars long, and the Atlantic Branch sees trains up to 10 cars long travel along it. Proposed renderings of the rehabilitation from the MTA are shown at the right. (Renderings credit DNAinfo/Metropolitan Transportation Authority)



POSSIBLE TRACK CONDITION CAUSES DEFINITE DELAYS

2015 has been off to a rocky start for the LIRR, and not necessarily due to weather. A couple days of trouble with the Wreck Lead moveable bridge on the Long Beach Branch, a freight derailment on the Port Jefferson Branch east of Huntington, the West End Concourse fire, a number of broken rails in inconvenient places and inconvenient times, and several days of consist compliance issues that left hundreds of LIRR commuters without seats, have resulted in a rough couple of rush hours for LIRR commuters. Another wrench was thrown into the mix last Thursday when a "possible track condition" was discovered in Line 3 of the East River Tunnels around 5:15pm. A train crew passing through the tunnel spotted something which was said by the LIRR after the fact to have been "something hanging from the bench wall" in one of the tunnels. As a result, the tunnel had to be taken out of service so the condition could be investigated, leaving the LIRR in a bad position in the height of the evening rush.

There was a fair amount of chaos in New York Penn, as people continued to stream into the station when little to no trains were flowing out, and, conditions became so bad in the station that MTA Police were forced to restrict access to the LIRR section of New



(Photo credit: [@eemccarthy](#))



Overcrowded conditions in the LIRR Concourse in New York Penn (Photo credit: [@mandeeeb](#))

York Penn for the first time in a long time (it's been at least two years since there's been a disruption that forced such conditions in New York Penn).

After the fact, the LIRR readily placed the blame for the disruption onto Amtrak, as they own and operate the East River Tunnels. While they are ultimately responsible for the operation of the East River Tunnels and the station itself, I often liken the arrangement between the LIRR and Amtrak to the one you would have with your car mechanic—while the mechanic is ultimately supposed to be doing all of the necessary work, you are responsible to make sure that the mechanic is doing all of the work, and he is being paid a sufficient amount of money to do that work without cutting corners. If your car breaks down on the side of the highway on your way to work, you're the one ultimately responsible for the car's trouble, not the mechanic.

And while the LIRR might have been at the hands of Amtrak for the disruption itself, the LIRR's communication and handling of the disruption, which last time I checked, was not Amtrak's responsibility, had some definite room for improvement. Over the course of the night, there were five different trains (454, 1258, 1064, 166, and 355) that were cancelled and no alert was issued to passengers regarding the cancelled train or alternative options, and there were seventeen other trains that were notably late, but did not have alerts sent out to passengers informing them of the delay. Over the course of Thursday there were twenty four trains that had loads that exceeded service standards: five are normally above service standards on the regular day (419, 819, 1631, 2058, and 1744), four trains were short of cars and were over service standards as a result (717, 2819, 562, and 1742), and the remainder had loads that exceeded service standards either due to the disruption, or due to a prior train with equipment problems (668). There was even one train, the combined 6:14pm train to Port Washington, that if the train had the full load of passengers from both the Port Washington and Great Neck trains, would have had twice as many passengers on the train than there were seats (a 209.72% load).

In the longest string of words the railroad has put out regarding the disruption, MTA Spokesman Salvatore Area said the following in a statement to [Gothamist](#) on Friday:

“In all seriousness, the report of possible debris in the tunnel is of course a potential safety hazard that must be addressed immediately. As all four East River Tunnels belong to Amtrak, Amtrak is responsible for maintenance and immediately dispatched a work crew to investigate. For obvious reasons, a normal LIRR PM commute is accomplished by devoting three tunnels to eastbound traffic and one tunnel to westbound trains heading to Penn Station. The loss of one of eastbound tunnel makes it impossible for the LIRR to get trains out of Penn Station on schedule. Trains have to be cancelled and those commuters put trains that are making it through. So people leaving Penn are delayed and standing on crowded trains.

“Since getting folks home remains the priority, the LIRR shut down westbound service at Jamaica (directing Manhattan bound customers to the subway where NYC Transit was cross honoring our tickets) and used that tunnel to send more trains east. Amtrak was able to diagnose the problem, fix it and clear the tunnel, but not until about 7 PM. These days, of course, customers are kept informed and updated via a range of media platforms, but understandably the facts do necessarily lessen the inconvenience and the frustration. The LIRR did all it could under the circumstances to get people to their destination as fast as possible. Our customers were inconvenienced and we are sorry about that.”

There's a couple of things troubling about Mr. Arena's statement to *Gothamist*. First, I'm not aware of any circumstances where three of the four tunnels are devoted to eastbound trains during the PM rush, nor the reverse during the AM rush. Under normal circumstances Lines 1 and 3 are used for eastbound movements to Queens, and lines 2 and 4 are used for westbound movements to New York. There's a time during the rush hours where the *Main Line* from HAROLD to JAY operate with three tracks in the peak direction and one in the reverse, but they all

converge to or diverge from just the two tunnels during the rush hour. The two sets of tunnels can only reach certain station tracks, so using three of them in the peak direction would result in them only being able to turn trains in the station on only some of the station tracks, which is not the case during the rush hour. There are circumstances outside of the rush hour where trains may run in the opposite direction in one of the tunnels if another one is taken out of service for trackwork on weekends or overnight, but there's no such times under normal circumstances during the regular rush hour where that happens.

Secondly, the LIRR suspended westbound service between Jamaica, Woodside and New York during the disruption so passengers on westbound trains wouldn't be subject to significant delays west of Jamaica, but Mr. Arena's reasoning for that is because "getting folks home remain[s] the priority." Of course, nobody could possibly work on Long Island and live in the city and be a reverse-commuter on the LIRR (despite the LIRR's best efforts to ignore and squish this market, there are some that commute out to Long Island in the morning and back in the evening). One also wonders if it would have served commuters better had those trains that were partially cancelled at Jamaica been sent to Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn where they have could have bounced back to stations on Long Island (as train service into and out of Brooklyn was operating without many delays) instead of getting delayed upwards of half an hour going west from Jamaica. There was no announcement of cross-honoring for passengers looking to avoid Penn Station and go to either Brooklyn or Hunterspoint Avenue, so passengers were left to sit around and wait at New York Penn. Providing additional trains out of Atlantic Terminal and encouraging passengers to take advantage of that alternative could have gotten many commuters home faster and under better conditions, but the LIRR didn't seem to want to be too flexible during the disruption, making me wonder if the LIRR really "did all it could under the circumstances to get people to their destinations as fast as possible."



(Photo credit: [@jamie_pillet](#))

Lastly, the first train to operate through Line 3 of the East River Tunnels was train 176, the 8:08pm train from New York to Babylon, which contradicts the statement saying that the tunnels were returned to service at about 7pm. So either saying that the tunnels were open at 7pm was an error, a lie to make it sound like returning the tunnels to service took less time than it actually did, or the tunnels were returned to service and then just not used for an hour and ten minutes as the LIRR continued to navigate the end of the messy rush hour.

The disruption and the follow-up from it is just another example of how the information given to LIRR commuters during disruptions can be either delayed, inaccurate, or conflicting. Additionally the railroad's persistent use of the term "possible track condition" throughout the disruption was confusing a number of commuters online. ("How can it be a possible track condition, it's either a track condition or its not"). The LIRR's cut-and-paste response to those who asked about the term on Twitter was: "if a train crew reports a track condition, nothing can pass until crews investigate, hence the use of 'possible'". That's explanatory enough, but I asked why it was a "possible" track condition for over two hours (the LIRR used the term "possible track condition" in all alerts sent from 5:27pm through 7:32pm on Thursday)... did nobody investigate the "possible" track condition for two hours? I, like roughly 83% of those who asked the LIRR a question on Twitter on Thursday, did not receive a response to my question. There were also few updates on the status of the track condition and the efforts to remedy it and restore the tunnel to service beyond the formulaic alerts and drop-down box of approved excuses. It's worth looking into seeing whether passengers would be more receptive to more specific information about delays, beyond the current handful of excuses we normally see in alerts.

All told, the LIRR's OTP for the evening rush on Thursday was a hair below 60% (we will have to wait until this coming Thursday to find out the real specifics), but considering communication was often limited or delayed, and there were a significant number of trains that operated with a significant number of standees, the disruption was likely a lot more unpleasant for commuters than the numbers may let on.