On Tuesday May 20, 2008, at approximately 12:13 p.m., westbound Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) train #203 struck an automobile at the Cox Lane grade crossing located in the town of Cutchogue, NY at mile post 86 on the LIRR Main Line. The automobile was traveling southbound on Cox Lane during inclement weather when the driver lost control of the vehicle while attempting to stop for the descending crossing gate. The driver stated that the car slid under the lowered crossing gate and into the grade crossing right of way, partially fouling the track. The driver, who was the only occupant of the vehicle, attempted to reverse his automobile out of the way but was unable to do so before being struck by the train and shoved against the northbound crossing gate stanchion. 

Cox Lane runs north/south and has one traffic lane in each direction protected by a single mast highway crossing gate with flashing lights. The train operator estimated his speed at about of 40 MPH as he approached the grade crossing when he saw the front end of the automobile fouling the tracks. He placed the train’s brakes into emergency stop and continually sounded the train’s horn; coming to a stop approximately 500 feet past the point of contact. The driver was taken to the Eastern Long Island Hospital by Cutchogue FD Paramedics with non-life threatening injuries and was later released. Two passengers on board the train at the time of the accident were evacuated by MTA Police Emergency Service Unit personnel and escorted approximately 200 feet to an awaiting bus which transported them to Ronkonkoma. The evacuation was completed without incident. There were no reported injuries to passengers or crew.

Damage to the train’s head car was minor and consisted of a damaged speed sensor, scratched cowling and broken knuckle relief valve. The total cost of the repairs to the head car was approximately $8,000. Post accident testing of the grade crossing warning devices and the download of the grade crossing event recorder conducted by Long Island Rail Road Signal Department personnel on the day of the accident revealed that all warning devices were operating as intended at the time of the accident. The weather conditions at the time of the accident were cloudy and rainy, with a temperature of about 50 degrees. PTSB believes the inclement wet weather was a contributing cause to this accident.
The Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the probable cause of this accident was the failure of the automobile driver to maintain control of his automobile on wet pavement as he approached a lowered crossing gate at the Cox Lane highway-grade crossing. Based upon the reported facts, the Public Transportation Safety Board staff takes no recommendations regarding this accident.

11. DID THE PROPERTY CONTRIBUTE TO THIS ACCIDENT?   NO

12. ARE THERE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE MADE?   NO

INVESTIGATOR: Robert Maraldo      DATE: June 9, 2008

SUBMITTAL

The above case has been thoroughly investigated and meets all the conditions identified in PTSB Resolution #1220 and does not require a written full board report.

_________________________________  Date __________________

Jerry Shook, Director
Rail Safety Bureau