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Press Release

September 26, 2011

[Metro-North](#)

IMMEDIATE

Port Jervis Line Flood Damage Assessment is Complete; Rail Service to Resume by End of the Year

Massive repairs on the Port Jervis Line, at an estimated cost of \$50 million, will allow train service to resume by the end of the year, according to a damage assessment presented Monday at the MTA Metro-North Railroad committee meeting.

Within two days of the August 28 storm, Metro-North had an alternate bus service in place. On September 19, train service was restored between Port Jervis and Harriman, with bus service provided from Harriman to Ramsey/Route 17. This temporary service plan will remain in effect during the track reconstruction. In all, busing is expected to cost about \$10 million over two years.

Metro-North is working with the MTA to identify the necessary funds, including maximum reimbursement from FEMA and insurance.

After the track is reopened in December and train service is resumed, occasional busing will continue in select off-peak periods to allow completion of flood mitigation measures and river bank stabilization that are necessary to protect the railroad's significant investment in the line. The full pre-storm train schedule will be restored when the second track between Harriman and Suffern is finished in fall 2012.

"We are committed to restoring the Port Jervis Line as quickly as possible. It is an important part of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's regional network," said Metro-North Railroad President Howard Permut. "In the meantime, Metro-North has marshaled the resources of MTA Bus to provide alternative service during reconstruction and Metro-North forces are building access roads to the tracks to literally lay the groundwork for the outside contractor. "NJTRANSIT, Leprechaun Lines and MTA Bus have all been very helpful and cooperative in this crisis," Permut said.

Metro-North will seek a contractor to rebuild the line, which was ravaged by floods during Tropical Storm Irene last month. An expedited bidding process is planned with a reconstruction contract to be awarded by October 15. Meanwhile, Metro-North forces already have begun to replace stone washed away by the raging Ramapo River, which parallels the track in some locations and crosses under it in others.

An engineering assessment by AECOM has determined that it will take about 150,000 tons of stone - roughly 5,000 tractor-trailer-sized dump trucks - to stabilize the track bed and shore up the river bank for the long term.

Engineers estimate that 90% of the repair work will be replacement of stone washed away by flooding in a 14-mile stretch between Suffern and Harriman.

In all, there are 50 washouts that add up to 2 miles of right-of-way that no longer exists. Fast-moving water overtopped the tracks and scoured away ballast, sub-base and earth to depths of 7 feet. Large sections of track hang in mid-air; some track was grossly twisted out of alignment by the force of the water.

To achieve the goal of restoring train service as quickly as possible, MNR directed AECOM to create a phased rebuilding plan.

The first priority is to restore train service on one track for the four miles between Suffern and Sloatsburg, which was double tracked, and on the 10 miles between Sloatsburg and Harriman, which is a single track. This includes rebuilding the track bed sub-grade, replacing stone in the washout areas, compacting the loose stone and surfacing the right-of-way. Also critical is repair work on the bridges that carry tracks over streams and roads and rebuilding the slopes adjacent to the river.

The initial work will be performed jointly by a contractor working 24 hours a day/7 days a week and by Metro-North Maintenance of Way forces. The contract will be structured with financial incentives for early completion before the end of the year and penalties for delays in completion.

With the slopes shored up, reconstruction of the second track between Suffern and Sloatsburg, repair of the signal system and long-term bridge repairs can be undertaken. Some of this work will have to wait until spring because it can't be done when temperatures are below freezing.

MTA Real Estate has been working with private property owners to secure easements to allow staging areas for deliveries of stone as close as possible to the points they are needed along the right of way.

"The Village of Sloatsburg has graciously agreed to give Metro-North temporary use of a ball field to gain access to one of the most heavily damaged areas of track. Without this access repairs would take much longer," Permut said.

Among the findings of the emergency condition assessment:

Surprisingly, the rail, wooden ties and the fasteners that hold them together (screw spikes and spring clip fasteners) were found to be in good condition. Over the past decade, Metro-North's Track Department had completely replaced the old "stick" rail with 1,500-foot-long sections of continuous welded rail. As a result, the track that has been undermined by washouts resembles bridges dangling in mid-air, but can be restored to proper alignment without replacement.

The signal system fared slightly worse. Water infiltration and erosion of the right-of-way have undermined circuit houses, signal cases and associated battery wells. In many areas, signal and fiber optic cables have been exposed and must be reburied and tested.

Inspections also were performed on 16 bridges, both above and below water. Undermining of abutments and piers was discovered at five bridges and an old stone arch bridge has settled. Damage to bridges was not as extensive as was originally feared.

Debris, including uprooted trees and boulders, covers sections of the track and buried utilities are exposed. Private utility companies have been notified and will be required to inspect the condition of utility and to temporarily reroute lines, if needed, to expedite track reconstruction.

About 2,800 people a day rely on the Port Jervis Line, an extension of NJ TRANSIT's Main/Bergen Line that is operated under a service agreement with NJ TRANSIT. Infrastructure in the 58.7 miles within New York State is Metro-North's sole responsibility.

The line is a single track except for the first four miles from the New York-New Jersey state line at Suffern up to Sloatsburg. There was minimal damage in the 45 miles between Harriman and Port Jervis and those repairs were made in time to restore some train service between those stations on Monday, September 19 with 17 trains operated daily, representing 65% of regular weekday train service.

The schedule, which is working well, provides some peak period train service only. Buses continue to provide service for the remaining trains and on weekends. Trains connect at Harriman with express bus service to Ramsey/Route 17 for trains to Hoboken, Secaucus and Penn Station. Additional buses also have been scheduled to operate from Harriman; in the A.M. peak, buses at Harriman leave every 10-20 minutes. This basic schedule will be in effect until train service on the entire line is restored.

Details of the service plan as well as the engineering assessment and a power point presentation on the restoration effort are available at [mta.info](https://www.mta.info)