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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

Amtrak to Begin Track Replacement in East River Tunnels

Will Improve Reliability of LIRR Service Following Amtrak Derailment

The MTA Long Island Rail Road announced today, at a committee meeting of the MTA Board, that Amtrak is beginning the work on a multi-year project for the full replacement of track in all four of its East River tunnels starting the weekend of October 1-2. The MTA urged Amtrak – which owns Penn Station – to perform this critical work to improve the reliability of train service.

In May, an Amtrak train derailed in one of the East River tunnels due to a broken rail. The track damage resulted in a major disruption of LIRR service for almost a week as Amtrak crews worked around-the-clock to make repairs. Following this incident, inspections revealed significant water drainage issues inside the tunnels.

"I would like to thank Amtrak for their quick response and cooperation in taking on this critical work to improve the reliability of LIRR service for our customers," said LIRR President Helena E. Williams. "I would also like to recognize elected officials for urging Amtrak to make these necessary track and drainage improvements to the East River Tunnels."

"Amtrak looks forward to completing this vitally important infrastructure enhancement to the our East River Tunnel system, said Mike DeCataldo, Amtrak General Superintendent, Northeast Division. We thank our partners at Long Island Railroad/MTA for their continued support to provide our passengers with a reliable and efficient mode of rail travel."

The work – to be performed in 55-hour weekend outages in one or two of the four tunnels each weekend – will begin at 10 PM on Fridays and continue through 5 AM on Mondays. There will also be double tunnel outages during weekday overnight periods for the duration of the project.

Over the course of the project work, which is expected to be completed by mid-year 2015, the total track structure in each tunnel will be replaced. New ties, continuous-welded running rail, stone ballast (rock), insulated joints and impedance bonds will be installed for the length of each tunnel. Equally important, the drainage system throughout the tunnels will be re-established with newly re-designed drainage improvements.

The work is being performed on weekends, since fewer trains operate through the tunnels than on weekdays with the demands of the peak periods. While Amtrak performs this work, it is expected to have little or no impact on LIRR train service, as long as the tunnels are returned to service as planned prior to the start of the morning rush hour on Mondays. The LIRR will continue to run its full complement of weekend train service. However, the LIRR will have less operational flexibility on the routing of weekend trains into and out of Penn Station should an issue develop that would normally result in a train being routed to an alternate tunnel.

This necessary and critical tunnel work by Amtrak is expected to impact the construction work being performed on the MTA's East Side Access project. The impacts to the ESA schedule are under review and will be part of a re-baselining of the schedule.