



## MTA Press Releases

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Press Release

December 29, 2011

[MTA Headquarters](#)

IMMEDIATE

### A Year of Achievement for the MTA

#### *Continued Focus on Reducing Costs and Improving Service*

In 2011, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) advanced its vision for creating a more efficient and effective transportation network for its 8.5 million daily customers. Despite the fragility of the MTA's financial situation, the agency was able to maintain its focus on reducing costs and improving service, implementing a series of customer improvements and advancing a four-year financial plan that includes no service cuts. The year was marked by improved customer communications, major construction milestones and, as always, heroic actions by our employees.

Some of the highlights from a busy 2011 are below:

#### Heroes

This year, MTA employees undertook extraordinary actions of courage, risking their lives to save the lives of others, prevent crimes and catch criminals. They saved a wheelchair-bound man lying on the trackbed at 125th Street, saved a disoriented man who fell onto the tracks at DeKalb Av., talked a distraught man on an overpass over the LIRR out of hanging himself, evacuated the most vulnerable during Hurricane Irene, fought back against robbers who set fire to a station booth, rushed to the aid of a 76-year-old man struck by a car on Long Island, rescued a two-year-old boy lost on the streets of Queens, and freed a child caught in an escalator. In the last week alone, MTA employees returned a purse containing \$2,300 and rescued a man from the subway tracks at Grand Central.

#### Customer Communications

The MTA continued its focus on improving customer communications and expanding access to real-time digital information.

- **The Weekender highlights web improvements:** On the web, the MTA re-launched its website, mta.info, streamlining access to key travel information and introducing a number of new features, including an improved Trip Planner. And every weekend, the website is now taken over by "The Weekender," which makes it easier for subway riders to visualize exactly how weekend work will affect subway service. Another expanded web-based feature is MetroCard eFix, which allows customers to use the Internet when addressing many MetroCard issues.
- **511 stands alone:** 117 separate public phone numbers were consolidated into a single easy-to-remember, three-digit number, 511, in order to deliver on a commitment to streamline and simplify customer service. New Yorkers can now call one number for help with any MTA-related issue or question.
- **Bus Time comes to the B63:** In February, the MTA launched a pilot of real-time information for bus customers on the B63 route in Brooklyn. Bus customers on the route can now receive the real-time location of upcoming buses by looking at map on a smartphone or desktop computer, or by requesting a text message by sending a text message or snapping a photograph of a QR code. The service will expand to all local and express bus routes in Staten Island in January 2012 before expanding to the rest of the city the following year.
- **Communications improvements underground:** Wireless voice and data communication capability was launched in six subway stations in September, allowing New York City subway riders to make and receive cell phone calls, send tweets and receive e-mail underground. The MTA expects to provide service to the remaining 271 underground stations within four years and has begun work on the next 30 stations on the west side of Manhattan, including Times Square, Herald Square and Columbus Circle.
  - Not only is it easier to receive information, but it is becoming easier to reach the MTA as well. New York City Transit this year introduced the **Help Point** station communications system. With a highly visible bright blue beacon light, the Help Points offer immediate access to assistance and information from subway staff with the touch of a button. For the first time, customers on subway platforms have immediate access to the station booth and personnel at the Rail Control Center.
  - The MTA launched **On the Go! travel stations**, a new interactive touch-screen that offers travel information and a whole lot more. The sleek, stainless steel enclosure supports a large screen with a colorful display, offering customers information about their entire trip, from planning with Trip Planner, real-time service status, escalator & elevator status and local neighborhood maps, news and weather. Taken together, the On the Go! terminals offer an unprecedented amount of information in one handy tool.
- **B & T adds real-time info:** New electronic message signs with travel time information to major regional destinations and connecting highways were put in place at the Robert F. Kennedy, Verrazano-Narrows, Henry Hudson and Throgs Neck Bridges. More signs are slated to be put up at these facilities as well as the Queens Midtown and Brooklyn-Battery Tunnels and Bronx-Whitestone Bridge in 2012.
- **Communications improvements on LIRR & Metro-North:** The LIRR and Metro-North expanded their efforts to provide information to riders on the go. Metro-North completed the consolidation of its Customer Communication Center, which will ensure that customers receive consistent, accurate and timely information no matter what platform is used -- telephone, internet or social media. Similarly, the LIRR improved customer communications with an expanded public information office in its operation center so that all communications with customers is now coordinated from one central office staffed around the clock.
  - LIRR Train Time – a digital service that provides real-time train arrival status to customers using mobile devices or desktop computers – was introduced as a pilot program on the LIRR's Port Washington Branch after debuting on Metro-North in 2010.

- In 2011, Metro-North partnered with **CooCoo** to offer train schedules on demand via text message, expanding on an initiative begun with the LIRR the previous year.
- Metro-North upgraded electronic station signs at outlying stations, enhanced the Train Time application for smartphone information retrieval, and installed NYC Transit monitors in Grand Central Terminal and other select stations to provide customers with real-time subway service information.

## Construction

The MTA completed important milestones on its megaprojects and began service to new and expanded stations.

- **Milestones for mega-projects:** MTA Capital Construction made enormous progress in 2011 on its four mega-projects.
  - Second Avenue Subway: Tunneling was completed, with a 485-ton, 450-foot-long, tunnel-boring machine named *Adi* mining 7,162 feet to create the southbound tunnel and 7,789 feet to create the northbound tunnel.
  - East Side Access: Excavation was completed for the caverns under Grand Central Terminal that will house a new concourse for LIRR trains. The new concourse is part of the East Side Access project, which will reduce commuting times by as much as 40 minutes a day for about 160,000 riders who currently travel to Penn Station.
  - 7 line extension: Work began on the last major contract needed to extend the 7 line to 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Eleventh Avenue: laying tracks and third rail, installing signals and building station components.
  - Fulton Street Transit Center: MTA Capital Construction opened a new entrance at 135 William Street to the future Fulton Street Transit Center in Lower Manhattan. The new entrance provides customers with improved access to eight subway lines and will ease congestion between the Fulton Street 2/3 and A/C stations.
- **Subway re-openings and connections:** The southbound platform of the Cortlandt St R station was re-opened, completing the reopening of a station badly damaged in the attacks of 9/11. The northbound platform was reopened in November 2009. A free in-system transfer was also completed at Court Square in Long Island City. With a new fully enclosed connecting structure that houses two new escalators, three elevators, and a stairway, approximately 20,000 customers each weekday will no longer need to leave the system to transfer between the 7 and the E, G and M lines. Similar in-system free transfers were built in the past two years when the MTA connected the R and 1 lines at South Ferry-Whitehall St in 2009, and the A, C, F and R lines at Jay St-Metrotech in 2010.
- **LIRR rehabs the Atlantic Ave. Viaduct:** The LIRR completed its rehabilitation of the Atlantic Avenue Viaduct between Jamaica and Atlantic Terminal, Brooklyn. The 8,500-foot-long structure, built in 1901, carries 25,000 passengers per weekday. The work means that the railroad will be able to continue providing service to Brooklyn for the next 100 years. It included the replacement of longitudinal and cross girders, all decking, walkways, ties and rail. Train service was maintained throughout the project by keeping one of the viaduct's two tracks in service.
- **A new station for Metro-North:** In December, Metro-North began train service to Fairfield Metro Station, the first new station on the New Haven Main Line to be built in more than 100 years. It is fully accessible, with elevators on each platform, and has two platforms with full-length canopies that can accommodate 12 rail cars each.
  - Metro-North also reopened two vehicular bridges that carry traffic over the tracks in Mt. Vernon, at Park Avenue and Sixth Avenue.
  - Metro-North became the first American railroad to win the coveted International Brunel Jury Award for Overall Excellence in Railroad Design and Engineering. Forty-three railways from 15 countries on three continents entered this year's competition.

## Efficiency

The MTA maintained its focus on reducing expenses, saving nearly \$700 million from the 2011 operating budget and generating recurring savings that will total more than \$4 billion by 2015.

- **Capital Program streamlined:** This year, the MTA put forward plans to generate a total of \$4 billion in savings for the current five-year Capital Program while maintaining the benefits of a program that protects the safety and reliability of trains and buses, expands the system and creates billions in economy activity across New York State. Actions are underway to reduce administrative costs, eliminate cumbersome processes, leverage new technologies and ensure that management of the program is as efficient and effective as possible.
- **Deriving value from real estate:** This year, the MTA took big steps forward on a number of aggressive plans to maximize the revenue it receives from real estate assets.
  - In Grand Central Terminal, the MTA is quadrupling the amount it receives for the East Balcony and related spaces by leasing to Apple. It has also signed new leases with Shake Shack and the Vanderbilt Tennis Club that significantly enhanced the rent received per square foot above earlier tenants.
  - The MTA announced plans to consolidate its office space and sell its three valuable headquarters buildings on Madison Avenue in midtown Manhattan. The Madison Avenue complex is expected to yield at least \$150 million to support MTA capital projects. The plan takes advantage of an opportunity created by the MTA's aggressive cost-cutting, which included a 20 percent reduction in its headquarters payroll and the elimination of 3,500 positions across the organization.
  - The MTA also announced plans to sell or lease nine parcels of MTA-controlled real estate in New York City, including MTA New York City Transit's former headquarters building at 370 Jay Street in Downtown Brooklyn, A triangular parcel at Houston Street and Broadway in Manhattan, a vacant parcel adjoining the Gun Hill Bus Depot, at Gun Hill Road and Interstate 95 in the Bronx.
- **LIRR labor agreement:** In a successful effort to keep some ticket windows open for the public that had been slated for closure and to retain the current level of cleaning services, the LIRR and the TCU agreed to temporary changes in contract rules, amending some contract provisions and providing sufficient savings and averted the planned layoff of 17 ticket clerks.
- **Opening doors and reducing costs:** The MTA's Small Business Mentoring Program awarded \$14 million in contracts to small businesses, with nine of the first thirteen contracts awarded to New York State-certified minority and women-owned businesses, exceeding its first-year targets set by the Legislature. The program, viewed as a national model and embraced by the U.S. General Services Administration and the U.S. Commerce Department, was lauded by the New York & New Jersey Minority Supplier Development Council.
  - The MTA took steps to encourage small minority-owned, women-owned and disadvantaged firms to consider becoming suppliers to the bus manufacturing industry as part of its growing effort to attract greater participation from minority-owned, women-owned and disadvantaged

businesses. The initiative is aimed at helping to create efficiencies and increased competition in the industry that in turn will generate savings to the MTA.

### Service Improvements

The MTA avoided service cuts in a constrained budget environment, and pursued ways to offer better service to customers.

- **Better bus service:** Building on the success of two existing Select Bus Service routes, the MTA launched Select Bus Service on the M34 crosstown route in Manhattan. The MTA, working with NYC DOT, also advanced plans to introduce Select Bus Service along Nostrand and Rogers Avenues in Brooklyn and Hylan Boulevard on Staten Island. We also made a number of improvements to traditional bus service.
- **Response and recovery:** After a harsh blizzard in December 2010, MTA agencies improved customer communication practices during storms, instituted new winter weather response procedures and upgraded storm-fighting equipment. The MTA has appointed an emergency coordinator to facilitate MTA-wide storm response coordination and information sharing and has improved procedures to deliver more detailed and reliable status information on the MTA's website. It has overseen the implementation of improved preparation and response procedures, details of which are provided in the attached press releases and summarized below.
  - This was also a year in which the region was struck by its first direct tropical storm in a quarter century. The MTA began a safe and orderly shutdown of the system in order to protect employees, customers and equipment, and enable service to be restored as soon as possible. As a result, the MTA was able to restore service quickly after the storm had passed, except on Metro-North Railroad's Port Jervis Line, which sustained catastrophic and unprecedented damage. Thanks to an MTA multiagency effort, Metro-North and the MTA's consolidated bus operations were able to establish bus service almost immediately after the storm to make up for the lost train service. And Metro-North was able to restore full train service on the line a month ahead of schedule and at roughly half of the initial cost estimates.
- **New cars on the New Haven Line:** Helping to make operations easier during potential storms, Metro-North is rolling out its new fleet of 405 new M-8 cars on the New Haven Line. The first set of new M-8 cars went into service in February, and there are now 60 accepted into service. The cars, which are delighting their riders, offer the latest in rail technology and comfort. They are replacing a fleet that is well beyond its useful life and has been plagued with weather-related component failures.
- **Easier fare and toll payment.** At the Henry Hudson Bridge, we removed toll gates in January in preparation to shift to all-electronic tolling this coming spring. The LIRR launched a pilot program in the summer to test hand-held wireless ticket issuing machines that allow customers to purchase tickets on board trains with all major credit cards and with a 'debit-as-credit' card, including Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express. During the pilot, which ended in the fall, conductors assigned to trains running between Ronkonkoma and Greenport and some select trains operating on the Montauk Branch carried specialized Apple iPhone 4's to process the transactions. The LIRR is also looking into near field communications (NFC) fare technology in a pilot program with Nokia to test "tap-in, tap-out" fare payment and validation.
  - We're also making it easier for all motorists to enjoy the benefits to E-ZPass. This year, we expanded E-ZPass On The Go, which allows customers to purchase a pre-paid E-ZPass tags at participating retailers and, in a pilot program, at cash lanes at the Henry Hudson Bridge. The Henry Hudson pilot program proved immensely popular, with 7,500 On The Go tags sold in four months, and will be expanded to all crossings by mid-2012.