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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

NYC Transit Announces Plans to Address 7 Train Delays

Short- and Long-Term Work to Ensure Reliability on the Flushing Line Will Require Customers' Patience

MTA New York City Transit today announced plans to address a recent increase in signal-related delays along the No. 7 Flushing Line even as work continues on a long-term project to modernize the line's signaling system. Officials asked for patience from customers – this vital work will cause weekend disruptions but is the only way to provide the level of reliability our customers expect and deserve.

In accordance with this effort, during the upcoming weekend of May 20-23, there will be no 7 subway service between Times Square and Queensboro Plaza. Customers are encouraged to take the E, N, R or F service for travel between Queens and Manhattan. Free shuttle buses will be available between the Queensboro Plaza (N, 7) and Vernon Boulevard-Jackson Avenue (7) stations, making stops at Queens Plaza (E, R), 45th Road-Court House Square (E, 7) and Hunters Point Avenue (7). In addition, the Grand Central (S) shuttle will continue operating through the overnight hours.

The delays that have compromised the line's reliability over the past several months have been caused largely by an aging signal system and water-related issues in the "Steinway" tunnels under the East River between the Vernon-Jackson station in Long Island City and the Grand Central station in Manhattan. In March, maintenance forces performed emergency repairs that required a weekend service suspension between Times Square and Queensboro Plaza. Aside from the upcoming weekend, two additional weekend service suspensions between Times Square and Queensboro Plaza have been scheduled to address this issue -- June 24-27, and July 29-August 1.

The scheduled work includes signal circuit repair, removal of silt and muck from the roadbed, power system improvements in the area and repairs to the Steinway tunnels, including grouting of tunnel walls to address water intrusion. Tight tunnel clearances in the Steinway under river tunnels make this section of the line one of the most challenging areas in the system in which to work, often requiring a service suspension in order to perform work. With only two tracks and no clearance for workers along the tunnel walls, it is not possible to perform certain jobs while trains are running through the area.

The completion of this work will eliminate a key cause of the recent delays, providing some near-term relief. However, it is important to note that a longer-term project to install a state-of-the-art signaling system is also underway and this project will require further suspensions in service.

The signals controlling train traffic on this portion of the No. 7 Flushing line are anywhere from 50 to 90 years old and in need of replacement. The contract for the installation of a modern, Communications Based Train Control (CBTC) system was awarded in June of 2010 with a substantial completion date of late 2016.

"The recent deterioration in service illustrates clearly why this work is so vital and why we must perform it at this time, and I have to be frank, performing this vital work will require major planned service disruptions for some time to come," explained NYC Transit President Thomas F. Prendergast. "We are committed to improving service along the Flushing Line and we will keep everyone informed of service changes and how the work is progressing."

Riders on the line has been severely impacted by a recent increase in delays, which have doubled during the first four months of 2011 compared to the same period a year ago. It has been difficult to schedule capital construction and maintenance work, because there is very little downtime on the No. 7. Ridership remains high even during off peak hours and the two sports stadiums near its eastern end are huge traffic generators during certain parts of the year.

The Flushing Line is one of the most heavily traveled in the subway system with more than 425,000 weekday customers. More than a half million riders also utilize the No. 7 on weekends. During rush periods, 26 trains per hour pass through the Steinway tunnels in the peak direction.

The \$587 million CBTC project will improve reliability, reduce maintenance and operations cost, increase line capacity and operational flexibility, enhance system safety and provide central control from the Rail Control Center. The ideal method of performing this job would be a closure of the line in order to complete the installation as quickly and efficiently as possible.

"Of course, fully suspending service during this entire project is not an option for us," said Carmen Bianco, the Senior Vice President of the Department of Subways. "What we will put in place is an intelligent and strategic work schedule that will allow us to reach our goals as quickly as possible while minimizing the impact on customers as much as possible. Unfortunately, there will be times when alternate travel paths will be necessary."

This work is being performed at the same time as construction on the line's extension to Manhattan's far west side, continued track and infrastructure improvements and the addition of ADA accessibility features at 45th Road-Court Square.

