



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) | ▼

Press Release

October 25, 2012

[NYC Transit](#)

IMMEDIATE

At 108, New York City's Subway System Is Better Than Ever

October 27th marks the 108th anniversary of the opening of New York City's subway, and since the first Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) train rolled uptown, the subway has become the essence of a growing city, nourishing skyscrapers, developing residential neighborhoods and just shortening the time it takes to get around.

The first line connected City Hall with Harlem, running under Park Avenue South to Grand Central, across 42nd Street to Times Square and then rocketing up Broadway to 145th Street. The four-track subway reduced significantly the time it took to make the same trip by elevated train or trolley car, and New Yorkers noticed.

"Soon after the opening, the subway infrastructure branched out into Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens, and through the decades, the subway system has expanded to accommodate the City's growing population," New York City Transit President Thomas F. Prendergast said. "No, in fact, the subway has spurred that growth by enabling commuters to cover long distances relatively quickly at reasonable cost."

Over the two decades after its opening, the original IRT was joined by Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit (BMT, but formerly known as the Brooklyn Rapid Transit, BRT) and finally, in September, 1932, the municipally-owned and operated Independent Subway (IND). In 1940, with the financial fortunes of the two private operators flagging, the IRT and BMT joined the IND under City ownership finally forming the unified system we know today.

Of course, the New York City Subway has always been a work in progress and that has never been more evident than today with three massive subway construction projects currently underway; the Second Avenue Subway on the East Side of Manhattan, the 7 Line extension on the West Side and the construction of the Fulton Center in Lower Manhattan. When completed, the Second Avenue Line will ease overcrowding on the Lexington Avenue Line and the 7 Line extension will offer subway service west of Eighth Avenue for the first time in the City's history. Both projects will fuel further development and drive economic growth, particularly on Manhattan's far West Side. The Fulton Center complex will be an essential transportation and retail hub that will also untangle the twisted warren of passageways that have confused transferring customers for decades.

Two other high profile jobs have recently been completed to customer praise. The new Barclays Center Arena entrance opened earlier this month, just days after the September ribbon-cutting of the long awaited link between the Sixth Avenue Line at Broadway-Lafayette and the uptown 6 platform at Bleecker Street. In fact, the introduction of this free transfer is the fourth free, in-system transfer New York City Transit has been able to open for customers in the last four years. It joins the new connections at Whitehall Street-South Ferry 1 R in Lower Manhattan, Jay Street-MetroTech A C R F in Brooklyn, and Court Square 7 E G M in Queens.

These major construction projects have been designed to ease overcrowding, improve efficiency and add even greater value to one of the best values in mass transit anywhere.

Aside from the mega-construction jobs, improvements are also being made to subway amenities and the way maintenance is performed. Public Address Customer Information Screens (PA/CIS), or countdown clocks as they are more commonly known are on numbered line subway platforms except the 7, and they're headed there too. Work is also underway to deliver similar information to the lettered lines. Currently, customers at more than 200 stations have access to some mode of train arrival information.

Next-generation subway cars are in service along several lines throughout the system, boasting both improved customer amenities and an extremely high level of service reliability. Three-hundred more cars have recently been ordered and preparations are underway for their manufacture at Bombardier's facility in Plattsburgh, New York.

Improvements to maintenance methods have not been ignored with *FASTRACK* being the most dramatic effort. *FASTRACK* collapses a month's worth of maintenance and repair work into four nights, allowing for improvements to be made to tracks, stations, and electrical and communications components without workers' efforts being interfered by train traffic.

At 108, it is very possible that the New York City subway system still has its best years ahead of it. Now, how many centenarians can say that?



Station Entrance, Undated



City officials inspect City Hall Station and tracks prior to completion, January 1, 1904.

Photos courtesy New York Transit Museum.