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Press Release

May 30, 2013

NYC Transit

IMMEDIATE

### A Service Returns to the Rockaways Easing Commuting Concerns for 30,000 Customers

#### *The Rockaways and Broad Channel Connected Again*

After seven months of longer trips aboard shuttle trains and buses, the 30,000 subway customers in the Rockaways are getting their train service back. Beginning at noon today, they will be able to “Take the **A** Train” off the peninsula, through Broad Channel and on to Howard Beach for the first time since Superstorm Sandy left the area devastated.

Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) representatives and local elected officials reopened the line with a ceremonial ride from Howard Beach to the Rockaways onboard a vintage IND subway train. There, they greeted customers and welcomed them onto a newly rebuilt subway line.

“The Department of Transportation is investing more than \$10 billion throughout the tri-state region to repair damage caused by Hurricane Sandy and make the region’s transportation network stronger and more resilient than before,” said Peter Rogoff, Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration. “The residents of the Rockaways know first-hand what it means to be the victim of the single greatest transit disaster ever to hit our country and they know just as well as anyone the real cost of the storm. The investment that the FTA has made to restore A train service to the Rockaways will mean that some residents will no longer have to choose between spending twice as much time or twice as much money to get to work.”

“Restoring service to the Rockaways is a proud achievement for the MTA New York City Transit workers who did an incredible amount of work to rebuild a railroad from the ground up,” said MTA Interim Executive Director Thomas F. Prendergast. “The Rockaway Line has been in service since 1956, and the MTA is glad to once again provide a safe, reliable and efficient train trip for our customers. But the MTA’s post-Sandy work is far from over, and we still have plenty of work ahead of us.”

The MTA has performed more than \$75 million worth of work to restore subway service to the Rockaways, and has spent an additional \$9 million to operate replacement bus and subway shuttle service. Hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of additional infrastructure work remains to fully restore all elements of the Rockaway line to the condition it was in before Sandy struck. Funding was supplied by the Federal Transit Administration, which has allocated almost \$3.8 billion to date to help the MTA recover from Sandy.

The MTA served Rockaways customers during months of construction by trucking a small fleet of subway cars to the Rockaways, where they served as the free **S<sup>R</sup>** shuttle along a portion of the line. A free shuttle bus ran between the Far Rockaway and Howard Beach stations, and extra buses were assigned to other routes in the Rockaways. However, many customers experienced longer and far more crowded rides.

The 3.7-mile stretch of the **A** Line between the Howard Beach and Broad Channel stations is the most exposed area in the New York City subway network. For much of this distance, the line runs between Jamaica Bay and the Jamaica Wildlife Refuge. Both scenic and vulnerable, the low-lying line absorbed punishing blows from a combination of high tide and surging waters from the bay.

Sandy sent waters crashing over and under the tracks, twisting steel rails, destroying the electrical and signal infrastructure and washing out hundreds of feet of track support. Saltwater inundated everything that remained, leaving behind tons of wreckage and a monumental cleanup and repair job.

To rebuild from this catastrophic damage, construction contractors and transit employees worked virtually nonstop since early November, removing debris, filling in washouts, repairing track, and replacing signals and wiring in an effort to repair an historic level of damage.

The figures associated with the repair job are staggering, from the amount of material needed for the construction job to the tonnage of debris that had to be removed from the right-of-way:

- Mobilized more than 45 pieces of heavy equipment for cleanup and reconstruction efforts
- Located and delivered over 20,000 tons of new material including track ballast stone, Rip Rap stone and Jetty stone
- Removed more than 3,000 tons of debris from the site
- Installed 600 of steel sheeting at the major breach to restore the fresh water pond
- Installed over 20,000 linear feet of new fencing
- Delivered and poured more than 3,000 cubic yards of concrete to fill and repair the two major breaches, the largest of which was 270 feet across
- Performed extensive track work
- Built out shoulders on the east and west sides of the tracks
- Replaced damaged and missing third rail protection boards and insulators
- Tested signal, power, and communication cables and replaced damaged ones
- Serviced damaged stop and switch machines
- Repaired stations at Broad Channel and Beach 116th Street
- Took delivery of 162 truckloads of steel sheeting
- Installed approximately 5,300 linear feet of steel sheeting
- Excavated 3,500 linear feet for signal conduit installation
- Installed 2,800 linear feet of signal conduits
- Excavated 11 negative return conduit locations
- Installed two conduit runs for negative return electrical cable
- Installed six utility poles at Hamilton Beach
- Completed 5,400 linear feet of negative return rail on Broad Channel island
- Completed 11,400 linear feet of negative return rail on beach side
- Took delivery of 2,400 linear feet of cable tray

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The Rockaway branch of the  Line was originally built by the Pennsylvania Railroad as part of what is now the Long Island Rail Road. When the New York City Board of Transportation looked to expand its Independent Subway System (IND), it struck a deal with the Pennsylvania Railroad on September 5, 1952 to pay \$8.5 million for the Rockaway line as part of a major expansion into the underserved borough of Queens.

The job of extending the Eighth Avenue subway to the Rockaways was tough and complicated. The trestle and the two drawbridges between Howard Beach and the Rockaways needed to be totally rebuilt out of steel, and new steelwork for the elevated structure was erected to connect the old Lefferts Blvd. line to the LIRR Rockaway structure in Ozone Park.

The North Channel Bridge was converted into a fixed bridge, while the South Channel Bridge remained a swing bridge to allow marine traffic to pass through. All new tracks and signaling equipment were installed to match the IND's existing systems.

A unique facet of the first Rockaway reconstruction came from New York City Parks Commissioner and political mover and shaker Robert Moses, who stipulated that the Board of Transportation accommodate a bird sanctuary as part of the rehabilitation. This was accomplished by dredging Jamaica Bay, creating a manmade island from landfilled sections of the bay. Work was completed and service began June 28, 1956.

This is believed to be the only instance where the addition of a new subway line also helped to create a wildlife preserve. And of course, the  Line is the only subway line in North America that runs through a National Park—once again.