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IMMEDIATE

MTA Takes Home Three Inaugural APTA Rail Safety & Security Awards

NYC Transit Takes Two Awards; LIRR Another for Exemplary Achievement

Two MTA agencies, MTA New York City Transit and MTA Long Island Rail Road, walked away last week with three prestigious awards from the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). NYC transit was cited for its innovative, new *FASTRACK* maintenance program as well as for the work of its EAGLE TEAM to prevent subway cars falling victim to graffiti vandals. The employees of the Maintenance of Equipment Department of MTA Long Island Rail Road were also awarded the first Rail Safety & Security Excellence Award by APTA at the group's annual convention in Philadelphia.

The two APTA awards earned by NYC Transit, accepted by Acting NYC Transit President Carmen Bianco and Acting Head of Subways Joseph Leader, represent efforts in maintenance and security resulting in measurable improvements in both areas as a result of these innovative programs.

NYC Transit received APTA's GOLD Award for Safety for *FASTRACK*, which consists of nightly shutdowns of segments of subway lines within New York City. The successful objective was to provide "traffic-free" line segments to enhance worker safety and increase maintenance productivity

The major maintenance challenge for New York City's vast subway network has historically been how best to perform maintenance jobs in a city where a 24-hour subway system is a hallmark. *FASTRACK* called for suspending service along a corridor for four weeknights providing maintenance employees seven hours of uninterrupted time to work on tracks, stations, and adjacent areas. *FASTRACK* has virtually changed the way the Department of Subways does business.

Prior to its introduction in January 2012, maintenance employees worked under traffic and were forced to "clear up" whenever a train approached the work area. This was a waste of precious time and decreased the level of safety.

"Aside from safety improvements, we have enjoyed a tremendous increase in productivity during our *FASTRACK* operations. Customers can get off their trains in the evening and not recognize that very same station the next morning as a result of work during overnight hours," said Carmen Bianco, Acting President of New York City Transit. "Riders notice that ceilings have been scraped and painted, the tiles and trackbed cleaned, and lighting and platform edge strips have been replaced -- work that would have been difficult or even impossible to perform while service was operating.

"What customers tend not to notice is the level of repair and maintenance to the right of way -- repairs to tracks, signals, switches and other key infrastructure. This is the vital work that is necessary to maintain a safe, reliable system," Bianco added.

The benefits of *FASTRACK* are both tangible and rewarding. Lost-time accidents are down 8.5 percent in 2012 compared to 2011. Maintenance of Way incidents are down 5.7% from January to October 2011 vs. 2012 and delays have been reduced 4.4 percent during the same period. Most notably, however, track fires are down 47 percent 2011 vs. 2012—an astounding improvement.

By shutting down a section of a subway line, workers can perform duties more efficiently and at less cost, in many cases taking days to complete tasks that would normally take weeks. *FASTRACK* has proven to be efficient with savings in excess of \$16 million in 2012.

NYC Transit also received APTA's Gold Award for Security awarded to its Department of Security's EAGLE TEAM program. The implementation of the EAGLE Team anti-graffiti program has reduced graffiti vandalism and criminal mischief. Over the past three years (2010-2012), major incidents which took trains out of service for cleaning were down 28.8%. While graffiti vandalism has not gone entirely away, the EAGLE TEAM's efforts make it look that way.

"Led by Vincent DeMarino, Vice President, Department of Security, the EAGLE TEAM patrols our subway yards and underground storage locations using a combination of street -- no, make that rail smarts, high technology and a strong bond of cooperation with the NYPD," said Bianco.

"They began their effort five years ago by walking every foot of NYC Transit's storage locations, identifying and addressing vulnerabilities. Also, they are a rapid response group, capable of quick deployment to any location where vandals "think" they may have a soft touch."

The development of these two programs solved longstanding problems at NYC Transit—problems that were addressed with creativity, situational awareness and keen knowledge of a unique and complex transit system that is more than 100 years old.

Not to be outdone, the Maintenance of Equipment Department of MTA Long Island Rail Road was awarded the first APTA GOLD Award for Safety in the commuter rail category for developing an aggressive approach to safety that has reaped great benefits in helping to set new performance records and improving the overall safety performance record for the railroad. The award was presented to LIRR President Helena E. Williams and other LIRR officials.

A first for APTA's Rail Conference, the Rail Safety & Security Awards recognize exemplary achievement in safety management that can serve as a model and incentive for other rail agencies to continue developing their programs. The LIRR's Maintenance of Equipment Department, known simply in rail parlance as "M of E" was crowned king in the commuter rail division.

Williams praised the efforts of more than 1,800 M of E employees, noting the award shines light on men and women who work day and night and, for the most part, out of the public eye, yet play a critical role in the safe and effective operation of one of the world's great commuter railroads.

"I am proud to accept this award of their behalf," said Williams. "Their comprehensive approach to safety at all levels of the M of E Department has reaped great benefits in safety performance, employee availability, productivity, equipment reliability, and customer satisfaction."

APTA called rail safety and security a core industry value, noting that safety drives programs for riders, employees, and the public.

The criteria for the award included effectiveness supported by safety data, innovation leading to tangible benefits, transferability, meaning strategies that can be used by other agencies, and finally, evidence of financial and non-financial benefits achieved. The achievement comes in a department that has also distinguished itself by making tremendous strides in system reliability over the last decade in which the Mean Distance Between Failure (MDBF) of the LIRR rolling stock has improved by 400% over the last decade. With an improvement of 14.7% in 2012, the LIRR's combined fleet is now traveling nearly 200,000 miles between failures.

"The work of the M of E Department at the LIRR helps transport more than 300,000 customers each workday on 735 trains, M of E employees ensure the safety, comfort and reliability of a fleet of 1,006 electric cars, 134 diesel cars, 45 passenger locomotives, and 30 work locomotives through their daily and periodic inspections, light and heavy repairs, reliability centered maintenance and cleaning," Williams said. "In addition, the department is responsible for maintenance of the shop equipment that services the rolling stock."

Williams added: "Many M of E shops and yards work 24/7 and employees often work outdoors in all weather and lighting conditions. Yard employees endure cold temperatures, snow and ice in the winter and extreme heat in the summer," she added. "In addition to the potential hazards from the elements, M of E employees often must perform complex and technical tasks in proximity to high voltage electricity and moving equipment."

APTA's 2013 conference encompasses all facets of the rail industry including: safety and security, commuter, high-speed and intercity rail, planning, sustainability and finance, capital projects, operations and technical forums. Rail professionals from throughout the industry share best practices, lessons learned, and effective and timely solutions. The four day convention, this year co-sponsored by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) is North America largest and most comprehensive conference for the rail industry.