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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

MTA & Long Island Rail Road Celebrate Jamaica Station's 100th Birthday

Facelift of LIRR HQ Includes Improvements to Customer Waiting Room & Ticket Office

MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast and MTA Long Island Rail Road President Helena E. Williams today marked the 100th anniversary of Jamaica Station, rededicating the historic transportation hub and transfer point for 10 of the LIRR's 11 branches that is used by 150,000 commuters every day.

The important role of Jamaica Station, memorialized in railroad lexicon by the catch phrase "Change at Jamaica" has made commuting between Long Island and New York City possible for generations of Long Island Rail Road customers. The station opened for business in 1913 as was part of newly elevated right-of-way in Jamaica that did away with street level grade crossings for the first time.

"We celebrate the 100th anniversary of Jamaica Station assured that it will continue to play a strategic role in the future of mass transit in our region," said MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast. "The MTA's commitment to downtown Jamaica has never wavered. A decade ago, we completed a major rehabilitation of Jamaica Station in conjunction with the construction of the Air Train Terminal by the Port Authority. As the Long Island Rail Road looks to the future, Jamaica Station will remain its nerve center and our Jamaica Capacity Improvements Project will mean more than \$300 million in infrastructure upgrades to keep the LIRR running smoothly."

LIRR President Helena Williams noted the LIRR's longtime partnership with the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation in ongoing efforts to maintain and improve downtown Jamaica's vibrant commercial center. The restoration of the LIRR's century old headquarters building, located at Archer Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard, is part of the Railroad's commitment to the local community.

"We are proud to be a part of Greater Jamaica," said Williams. "Our headquarters and Jamaica Station has been an anchor in this neighborhood for 100 years, bringing tens of thousands of travelers to Jamaica annually. We hope, with this restoration, to be here at least another 100 years."

Joining Williams at the ceremony were Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, MTA Board Members Mitchell H. Pally representing Suffolk County and John J. Molloy representing Nassau County, Mark Epstein, chair of LIRR Commuter Council, representatives of the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation, as well as local public officials and community leaders. The event included a performance by the Oyster Bay High School wind ensemble of "Change at Jamaica," a 10-minute instrumental piece by Pulitzer Prize winning composer Paul Moravec of Adelphi University.

"I congratulate all who were involved with Jamaica Station's first century, during which the LIRR's 'transit nerve center' demonstrated the overwhelming need for every day travelers to have adequate, modern transportation to and from Long Island, Queens, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the AirTrain to JFK Airport," said U.S. Representative Gregory W. Meeks. "As we celebrate Jamaica Station's first 100 years and to look forward to even bigger and better things during its second century, more than 350,000 daily commuters can look forward to enjoying the comforts and amenities of renovated facilities and headquarter, numerous track improvements, and the opening of the East Side Access to Grand Central Terminal in a few short years."

"For 100 years, Jamaica Station has been a key part of our area's transportation network," said Queens Borough President Helen Marshall. "It has an efficient design that makes it easy for the more than 200,000 passengers who use it each day to 'change at Jamaica' and get to their destinations quickly. And the multi-million dollar renovation project completed this year has made the station even more passenger-friendly and has helped restore it to its original glory. By helping to make mass transit a viable way to get around our region, Jamaica Station has contributed mightily to our economic growth and quality-of-life. Here's to another 100 years of excellent service!"

Also featured at the festivities were the MTA Police Honor and Color Guard, while the Lionel Train Corporation introduced its new "Jamaica" O-Gauge model train, designed especially for the centennial.

Experts on the history of the Long Island Rail Road were also present. Richard Gorddard, president of the Twin Forks Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, Stephen Quigley, president of the society's Long Island Sunrise Trail Chapter, and noted LIRR historian David D. Morrison, the author of the book, "Jamaica Station," presented a special commemorative plaque to the LIRR President Williams.

Carlisle Towery, president of the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation said: "The Long Island Rail Road and Jamaica Station have been key to all of our efforts to support and enable transit-oriented development to serve those who work, live in and visit Greater Jamaica. The LIRR and the MTA have been essential partners in those efforts, and we look forward to the next 100 years of progress."

Jamaica Station was designed by architect Kenneth M. Murchison and built by the Pennsylvania Railroad, then the parent company of the Long Island Rail Road. It opened for business in 1913. The entire Jamaica complex was constructed by LIRR employees under the direction of railroad's Chief Engineer John Savage. That same year, the LIRR moved into a new corporate office adjacent to the newly elevated station, platforms and tracks. The

five-story brick building including the station waiting area, also designed by Murchison, was situated at the corner of Archer Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard, a dirt road intersection in an area still dotted with farms.

Murchison designed the LIRR's ticket office and waiting area on Sutphin Boulevard as the public entrance to the building, gilding it with an ornate canopy that received special attention during the restoration. He placed the corporate entrance on Archer Avenue with "Long Island R.R. Co." in bronze letters across the top.

Among the best known landmarks in the borough of Queens, the building is home to the oldest railroad in the U.S. still operating under its original name. Each weekday, the LIRR operates 732 trains with approximately 300,000 customers traveling through Jamaica twice a day. AirTrain JFK service draws an additional 11,500 customers per day who arrive by train, subway, bus and taxi.

For much of the last year, LIRR headquarters was veiled in scaffolding and steel grey safety netting as the LIRR Engineering Department employees and a private contractor, Alps Mechanical Inc., labored on building elements that had seriously deteriorated over the years. The restoration effort was carried out in an effort to be consistent with the historic character of the building under the direction of the LIRR's Department of Program Management.

As part of the restoration, LIRR employees refurbished the Jamaica ticket office and customer waiting area, restored its original terrazzo floors, cleaned the ceiling, installed brighter lighting and gave interior walls a fresh coat of paint. There is also a new seating area for ticketed customers, new electronic train arrival/departure screens and a new rack for timetables. Ticket machines have been moved to a more visible and convenient location.

But the bulk of the restoration effort was devoted to the badly deteriorated building exterior where workers resurrected the appearance of the terracotta covering the first two floors by chemically stripping the paint, installing new terracotta where necessary and re-glazing every block. Above that, much of building's upper story brickwork was carefully repointed and the extensive deterioration found on the roof was addressed with a new watertight roofing system.

Refurbished as well were the building's distinctive metal cornice, soffit and fascia, its decorative cast-iron window surrounds and that familiar entry canopy. Badly tarnished bronze doors have stainless steel replacements and the bronze lettering that bears its Railroad's name once again gleams from its perch high above Archer Avenue. Finally, new energy efficient windows and louvers were installed. The repainting of varied surfaces was an opportunity for the Railroad to bring back the building's original color scheme, known as Pennsylvania Railroad Red and Blue. The total restoration effort of \$8.5 million was funded through the MTA's Capital Program.

In coming years, the MTA and LIRR are planning more than \$300 million in infrastructure improvements as part of the first phase of the Jamaica Capacity Improvements Project. Phase 1 encompasses design and construction in support of East Side Access, the new path to Manhattan that will bring LIRR customers to Grand Central Terminal and East Midtown for the first time. The work includes the construction of a new platform specifically dedicated to scoot service between Jamaica and Atlantic Terminal, Brooklyn, the removal and installation of switches, realignment of track, reconfiguration of the Johnson Avenue Train Yard, construction of a freight train bypass track and modification to the existing signal system.

The headquarters of the Long Island Rail Road as well as Jamaica Station is recognized as part of Historic Jamaica and a featured stop on the Historic Jamaica Walking Tour and Guide published by the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation.