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Press Release

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[NYC Transit](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA Marks Centennial Anniversary of Brooklyn's First Complete Subway Line

Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit Corporation's Fourth Avenue Line Turns 100

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today celebrated yet another milestone of New York City's iconic subway commemorating the 100th anniversary of the opening of the first subway of the now defunct Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit Corporation (BMT). Absorbed by the New York City Transit system three-quarters of a century ago, the BMT lives on in the memories of seniors and MTA New York City Transit's drive to improve the customer experience and increase capacity with the avid embrace of new technology.

On June 22, 1915, on a seasonally cool but fair Tuesday, The Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company, or BRT, (which would become the Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit Corporation, or BMT), opened its first subway with much pomp and circumstance with Manhattan to Coney Island service. Its first train crossed the East River to Downtown Brooklyn via the Manhattan Bridge and then headed out to Coney Island using the new Fourth Avenue Subway and Sea Beach Lines. The inaugural ride from Chambers Street to Coney Island took 48 minutes, according to the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. It was New York City's second subway company and, in its time, one of the most innovative transit networks in the world.

The BMT's centennial was relived today at the New York Transit Museum where MTA New York City Transit President Carmen Bianco took part in the festivities. In addition, nostalgia trains will be put into service as part of the centennial celebration this weekend on June 27 and 28, when customers can ride the vintage subway cars between noon and 4 p.m. with just the swipe of a MetroCard. The Brighton Beach 🚩 station will serve as the terminus for these nostalgia rides and as the site of other special centennial-related children's activities.

"The BMT was the standard setter in several areas including propulsion, braking, car coupling and door control. The IND system owes much to the BMT as does the rest of our current New York City subway operation," New York City Transit President Carmen Bianco said. "The BMT was an innovator in the design of its rolling stock with the introduction of several experimental subway trains that featured open gangways, articulation and stainless steel construction. Today, we celebrate the originality, innovation and creativity of the BMT. The company's illustrious past remains a vital part of New York City Transit."

"Today, few people could tell you what the BMT is, but they know they can ride the 🚇 train from growing Brooklyn neighborhoods to Manhattan tech jobs, and they know the 🚇 train is the backbone of the boom in Williamsburg, Bushwick, and beyond," said MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast. "But the BMT network has never been more important to the growth and life of New York. That's why we need to advocate for the funds to support our capital program with state and federal legislators, so that 100 years from now, New Yorkers will be here celebrating the BMT's 200th anniversary."

The work was not over in 1915. Additional lines were constructed, lines were connected and the BMT made more of Manhattan and Brooklyn and Queens reachable by subway. The BRT became the BMT in 1923, and in 1940 became a division in the unified transit system. Today, the BMT Division operates the former BMT lines as the **B** **J** **M** **Z** **L** and **N** **R** **Q** and Franklin Shuttle lines. BMT subway lines were an integral tool in the development of New York City and they remain an essential part of today's transportation network.

The Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) system was the City's first subway, but when service on the BMT opened, car dimensions were far more generous than the IRT's in both length and width. Where the IRT cars were 51 feet in length and nine feet wide, the BMT's "Standard" car was 67-feet long and a foot wider.

The Standards featured comfortable transverse seats, a large expanse of windows and six doors set into three doorways. The end vestibules of the IRT cars were eliminated on the Standards in favor of more seating. In the mid-1920s, the D-Types or Triplexes were placed into service. These units were of a three compartment design built over four wheel trucks. The articulated feature lowered the unit's weight increasing efficiency and lowering maintenance costs. The cars, which were considered state-of-the-art in 1925 operated into the mid-1960s.

The BMT brought several new ideas to subway car design and functionality. An innovator in the design of its rolling stock, the BMT ordered and operated several experimental lightweight trains.

The depression-era Green Hornet car took a bold, new approach to subway car design. This innovative aluminum-bodied train introduced dynamic braking and closing door chimes.

The Green Hornet was followed by the Little Zephyr. Built by the Budd Company, it was the first stainless steel subway train to operate in New York City. It was the forerunner to the R11 and the far more successful fleet of R32s that are still operating today.

Vintage BMT subway cars include:

- BRT/BMT Standards (1914-1969): Modeled after Boston Elevated Railway cars, the Standards measure 67 feet long and 10 feet wide and contain 78 seats with an additional 14 drop-down auxiliary seats. The standing capacity of 182 people helped address the chronic overcrowding of the early subway years. The Standards introduced destination roll signs, larger windows, and brighter lighting. They were designed more along the lines of a suburban railroad car, with a maximum of seating philosophy, and even included drop seats for off-peak use.
- BMT D-Type Triplex (1925-1965): A three-car articulated unit that allowed passengers to walk from one car to another through an enclosed passageway. Each Triplex is 137 feet long and seats 160 passengers, the equivalent of 2 Standard cars in size and capacity. At a time when many elevated lines operated with wooden cars, the Triplex represented the height of transit modernity with soundproofing, illuminated signs displaying route destinations and continued the design philosophy of maximum seating.
- IND R1-9s "City-Car" (1930-1977): These cars were ordered for the Independent Subway System (IND) and were known by their contract numbers. R1 through R9 cars feature rattan seats, paddle ceiling fans, incandescent light bulbs, and roll signs for passenger information – all pre-WWII subway staples. They set the standard for more, wider and faster opening doors and a reduction in seating capacity to better accommodate rush hour crowds. R1-9 cars were retired from service in 1977.
- R-11 Prototype "The Million Dollar Train" (1949-1976): One of 10 prototype cars delivered to the NY Board of Transportation in 1949, meant to run on the Second Avenue subway line. They were made from stainless steel and had round porthole windows; high-tech air purification systems that use ultraviolet lamps to kill germs; and illuminated route maps on the wall. At a cost of \$100,000 a car, a 10-car train (which was never ordered) would have cost \$1 million, giving the train its "Million Dollar" nickname. The R11 cars were put into regular service and spent the majority of their service life on former BMT lines.

For more information on the BMT centennial celebration, please visit <http://web.mta.info/nyct/100BMT/>.