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Press Release

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[LIRR](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA Reaches Major Milestone with Replacement of Harold Interlocking Signal System

New System Provides Immediate Benefits for LIRR Customers

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced that the work to upgrade the signal system in Harold Interlocking in Sunnyside, Queens, has been completed, providing an immediate benefit to Long Island Rail Road customers and clearing the way for the start of the final East Side Access construction contract to begin work later this year.

After extensive planning and testing, the new microprocessor-based signal system that controls train movements through Harold Interlocking is in use, providing LIRR and Amtrak riders with a more dependable and better trip through the interlocking. In addition to the new technology, the entirely new signal system has been designed to improve on reliability and ensure that trains can continue to run, even if problems arise.

Previously, the routing of trains over all the switches and tracks in the area was operated out of a single location. Failures or problems within that single location had the potential to affect the entire system. The new signal system has been broken into separate locations spread throughout the interlocking. If a failure in one occurs, it is limited to that location and the smaller area it controls as opposed to the entire interlocking.

As part of the two weekends of work in June and July to put the new signal system into service, the LIRR Main Line 4 was also placed in its final position, providing a better and more direct train route, following several years of it following a temporary route that was required to allow for various construction operations.

According to MTA Chief Development Officer, Janno Lieber: "East Side Access is to Long Island what the Gateway Tunnel is to New Jersey – a second route for rail passengers, in case of emergency. When East Side Access goes into service, there will be for the first time an alternate route into and out of Manhattan for commuters, allowing Amtrak to fix the existing East River Tunnels that were badly damaged during Superstorm Sandy. Fortunately, this project is much closer to the finish line than Gateway, and will become operational in 2022."

As part of the East Side Access (ESA) project, over \$1.5 billion is being invested in Harold Interlocking, the busiest passenger interlocking in North America. The ESA program is replacing a significant amount of the existing railroad infrastructure for Amtrak and LIRR, some of which dates back over a hundred years to the Pennsylvania Railroad. This work will not only improve the reliability of the system but also expand capacity of the interlocking, which serves four different operating railroads at the nexus of the Northeast Corridor.

Other recent improvements provided customer benefits as soon as the work was completed. LIRR and Amtrak customers have been traveling over new train bridges, new primary train tracks and faster switches. Trains utilize new third rails and cables carried on new catenary poles, all designed to meet higher standards for safety and resiliency during extreme weather events.

The completion of this work will allow the next phase of track and infrastructure replacement and relocation to be begin this summer. This will allow construction crews to bring the last of four previously bored tunnels from Grand Central to surface. Bids for this highly complex and challenging final contract are due in July, with plans to award it in late summer.