



## MTA Press Releases

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Press Release

June 6, 2018

LIRR

IMMEDIATE

### MTA Partners With Waze For Railroad Crossing Safety Initiative

**LIRR and Metro-North Join Connected Citizens Program and Begin Rollout of New Technology to Alert Motorists of Upcoming Train Tracks**

*Safety Initiative Will Debut on 2018's International Level Crossing Awareness Day*

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced that it was partnering with Waze to improve safety at railroad crossings of the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad.

"Safety is a core value at the MTA and its commuter railroads," said MTA Chairman Joseph Lhota, "for our customers and our employees -- as well as for those in the communities we serve. We are delighted to continue to go above and beyond railroad crossing safety requirements, to announce a new safety initiative, in partnership with Waze, to alert motorists using the app that they are approaching a grade crossing."

Both railroads in their histories have implemented mandated grade crossing warning systems, by ensuring each public crossing has the required gates, red flashing lights and warning bells -- in addition to train horns blowing as they approach. This is the first feature of its kind to debut on the app and is tied to LIRR's ongoing collaboration with Waze as part of the Connected Citizens Program -- a free, two-way data share of publicly available traffic information. Metro-North is also working closely with Waze, in efforts to develop a similar partnership.

This Thursday, on the 10th International Level Crossing Awareness Day, Waze will integrate a railroad crossing warning to alert users at a set of ten pilot locations across Long Island. The rollout will continue until all 296 LIRR grade crossing locations are live on the app.

The Ten LIRR/Waze Pilot Locations:

- Bay Shore - 3rd Avenue
- Deer Park - Commack Road
- Deer Park - Executive Drive
- Farmingdale - Main Street
- Hampton Bays - Ponoquogue
- Hewlett - West Broadway
- Holbrook - Holbrook Road
- Oyster Bay - Willis Avenue
- Sayville - Snedcor Avenue
- Wyandanch - 18th Street

"As a community-based app, our navigation technology and features are constantly evolving and we are enthusiastic about our work with LIRR to implement a new tool that will help promote driver safety near Long Island railroad crossings," said Thais Blumenthal, Global Connected Citizens Program Lead. "Our Connected Citizens Program is all about leveraging data and insights to inform and improve city infrastructure. As a new partner, LIRR is harnessing information that is relevant to its community and improving their experience, which we are happy to help make a reality."

The partnership comes after an aggressive review of potential railroad crossing safety enhancements by the MTA and the LIRR has recently taken additional steps to improve grade crossing safety. Last month, President Eng announced an accelerated plan to install flexible, four-foot high reflective delineators as well as extended roadway markings and additional reflective devices to better alert drivers, who may become confused by GPS directions while driving in darkness or inclement weather, that they should not make a turn onto the tracks

#### Uptick in Grade Crossing Incidents

The safety issue at grade crossings continues to be a growing problem as distracted or confused motorists, some using GPS devices, inadvertently turn onto tracks instead of parallel roadways.

The LIRR in 2017 recorded 29 reports of cars on tracks, in addition to 17 grade crossing accidents involving the LIRR and motor vehicles. Year to date, through May 22, there have been 2 grade crossing accidents and 21 reports of cars on tracks.



MTA LIRR, in a first-ever feature integrated into Waze, is improving railroad crossing safety by warning motorists using the GPS app of upcoming train tracks. Seen here at the Main Street crossing in Farmingdale, drivers are notified that they are approaching train tracks and are cautioned not to turn onto them.

"We take safety seriously at the LIRR, and are pleased to be on the forefront of grade crossing safety as we embark on this new partnership with Waze and use innovative ways to continuously make the operations of our trains and infrastructure as safe as possible," LIRR President Phil Eng said. "We look forward to innovating new ways we can use technology, as well as other methods, like our flexible delineators and pavement markings, to continue this trend toward being the safest railroad possible."

Metro-North also grapples with this issue. In 2017, there were 26 incidents reported of vehicles on tracks; this year, through May 29, there have been 7. In 2017, Metro-North recorded two grade crossing accidents; through May 29 this year, two grade crossing accidents have been reported.

"At Metro-North, we are dedicated to ensuring the safety of our customers, nothing is more important," Metro-North President Catherine Rinaldi said. "Metro-North's plans to partner with Waze is one component of the railroad's on-going effort to enhance safety. In addition to finding new ways to employ state-of-the-art safety technology, events like International Level Crossing Awareness Day give us a personal, boots-on-the-ground approach to educating our customers about rail safety. TRACKS, a free community outreach rail safety education program for students, pedestrians, drivers and train riders throughout Metro-North – has reached more than 191,000 people since 2016."

MTA Police aims to continue its aggressive campaign to combat these potentially life-threatening incidents by patrolling near railroad rights-of-way. In April 2018, MTA Police issued 147 summonses for grade crossing violations at LIRR rights-of-way, with a year-to-date total of 462 summonses, which includes driving behaviors that could contribute to a potential event.

The LIRR recently took additional steps to improve grade crossing safety. Last month, President Eng announced an accelerated plan to install flexible, four-foot high reflective delineators as well as extended roadway markings and additional reflective devices to better alert drivers, who may become confused by GPS directions while driving in darkness or inclement weather, that they should not make a turn onto the tracks. This effort is scheduled to be complete at all 296 grade crossings throughout the LIRR system by the end of this year.

### International Level Crossing Awareness Day

Each year, LIRR and Metro-North participates in the International Level Crossing Awareness Day (ILCAD), and joins Operation Lifesaver along with MTA Police and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), New York State Department of Transportation Public Transportation Safety Board to remind motorists of the importance of adhering to traffic laws everywhere – and especially around railroad grade crossings.

This year's ILCAD, on June 7, 2018, from 6:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., staff from the aforementioned agencies will be on site at five grade crossing locations across Long Island and the Hudson Valley/Connecticut to provide safety information to motorists, pedestrians and our customers of important safety habits:

#### LIRR/Long Island

- Bethpage – Stewart Avenue
- Farmingdale – Secatogue Avenue
- Island Park – Long Beach Road East
- New Hyde Park – 12<sup>th</sup> Street and New Hyde Park Road
- Syosset – Jackson Avenue

#### Metro-North/NY and CT

- Nanuet, NY - New Clarkstown Road
- Katonah, NY - Jay Street
- Brewster, NY - Brewster Highway
- Patterson, NY - Patterson/RT311
- Redding, CT - Topstone Road
- New Canaan, CT - Talmadge Hill
- Norwalk, CT - Science Road

The MTA offers a series of free safety education programs for schools and community groups in in the regions served by the LIRR and Metro-North, and is open to people of all ages (Pre-K to adults). Those interested in more information about the programs should email [tracks@lirr.org](mailto:tracks@lirr.org) for the Long Island Rail Road's program or [MNRTTracks@mnr.org](mailto:MNRTTracks@mnr.org) for Metro-North's, or call 511.

The LIRR involves local school districts in grade crossing safety awareness each year by inviting students to participate in an Annual LIRR Safety Contest. One winner is chosen from the elementary, middle school and high school levels.

This year's winners are:

#### High School Essay

Wyandanch High School in Wyandanch

James Gustave, 10th Grade

[Video Public Service Announcement](#)

Middle School Individual Slogan

St. Aidan School in Williston Park

Janine Saraceno, 8th Grade

“Don’t Be Safety Blinded, Be Safety Minded”

Elementary Class Slogan

Bayview Elementary School in West Islip

Mrs. Spinella’s 1st Grade Class

“Look Left and Right, it Might Save Your Life”

For more information on grade crossing safety, visit [www.ilcad.org](http://www.ilcad.org).

Key railroad safety reminders:

- Everyone, including pedestrians, **must** stop when a train approaches a grade crossing.
- Crossing under a lowered gate or if other warning signs are active – such as audible signals, or red flashing lights -- while walking or in a motor vehicle, is **illegal**, and is subject to \$100 fine or up to 30 days imprisonment.
- Driving through, around, or under any crossing gate or barrier at a railroad crossing while such gate or barrier is closed, or being opened or closed, is also **illegal**. If convicted of such an action, fines range from \$250-\$450, and could include up to 30 days in prison.
- Pay attention to the roadway and its surroundings at all times, while driving. Stay alert for warning bells, red flashing lights, train horns and lowering crossing gates.
- Never stop in the middle of a railroad crossing. Always finish crossing to the other side.