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Press Release

January 21, 2019


NYC Transit

IMMEDIATE

MTA New York City Transit Announces Progress in Campaign to Safely Speed up Trains

Subway Speed Limits Have Been Increased at 24 Locations; Dozens of Speed-Regulating Signals Have Also Been Recalibrated

MTA New York City Transit today announced progress in the organization's continued efforts to safely increase subway speed limits and move customers more quickly throughout the system. In total since the summer of 2018, a safety committee has approved increases to speed limits at 68 locations, and the agency has implemented 24 of them. NYC Transit has also now identified approximately 320 inaccurate timer signals, and has recalibrated 59 of them.

Last week, workers bolted into a place a new speed sign at the City Hall station on the  line, more than doubling the speed limit there from a system-wide low of 6 miles per hour to 15 miles per hour.

Increases like the one that went into effect last week at City Hall are part of NYC Transit's ongoing Save Safe Seconds campaign, which aims to efficiently and safely reduce travel time for subway customers, by way of improving operating matters such as platform management and speed limits. This progress builds on similar improvements [announced last month](#). Once implemented more widely throughout the system, speed limit increases could shave minutes off of commute times for many subway users.

In order to identify areas in the system through which trains can safely pass at higher speeds, a special team known as the "SPEED Unit" – which stands for Subway Performance Evaluation, Education and Development—was assembled in 2018. That group, made up of NYCT employees with various specialties and established in tandem with union officials, has traversed almost every mile of track over the last several months. The team conducts various tests to determine whether or not certain segments of track might be able to support higher speeds than currently permitted, without compromising existing standards for safety and passenger comfort.

In addition to testing for raising speed limits, the SPEED Unit is also tasked with testing the accuracy of speed regulating signals called "grade time signals" or "timer signals," with 95 percent of some 2,000 such signals tested since the initiative began in summer 2018. Approximately 320 faulty timer signals have been discovered, and 59 of them have been recalibrated so far in what amounts to very labor-intensive work to inspect, diagnose and repair or replace numerous possible pieces of equipment during times of exclusive track access for workers such as weekends or nights.

"I have directed my team to identify and resolve every root cause of delay; in doing so, we can then implement the right fix, often for little or no cost," said NYC Transit President Andy Byford. "The SPEED Unit continues to examine hundreds of miles of track to find areas where we can safely increase speeds. Their work is absolutely essential and demonstrates that New York City Transit employees are fully committed to making tangible changes that will improve service for our customers. I look forward to announcing additional improvements soon and commend all of our workers who are doing their part each and every day to 'Save Safe Seconds' for our customers."

The safety committee reviewing speed limit increases includes members of NYC Transit's Office of System Safety, as well as other personnel who work on operations planning, service delivery, and track and signal maintenance and repair.

An updated list of locations that have or will be seeing speed limit increases is attached.

HISTORY OF SPEED LIMITS AND TIMER SIGNALS

The NYC subway system was built more than 100 years ago and early on in its existence, in order to provide for safe operations, various measures were put in place to ensure that trains were not going faster than the conditions they could handle. These measures ensure sufficient stopping distance for the braking capacity to a train ahead. They also provide for safe operation at switching points, on curves and grades, and when approaching a train stopped in a station.

One simple measure was placing "civil speed restrictions" – essentially just speed limits and signs, just like the ones drivers see on highways and roads – at various locations that that require reduced speeds throughout the system. The speed limits were designed to consider the operating characteristics of the trains that were in service at the time as well as track geometry.

Another measure involved the use of “grade time signals” or “timer signals” – signals connected to timing devices set to trip a train’s emergency brakes if the train passes at a higher speed than allowed. This fail-safe system ensures safety by stopping a train if it goes too fast at a fixed point.















Over the decades, car design and track geometry have improved, allowing cars to maintain stability and safe operation at higher speeds, but the speed limits were not always changed to reflect these advancements in safety and comfort. Meanwhile, timer signals continued to be installed throughout the subway system, with an uptick after two fatal crashes in the 1990s – one at Union Square and one on the Williamsburg Bridge. Eventually, the number of timer signals grew to approximately 2,000 system-wide.

Over time, a number of these signals came to become overly restrictive due to a number of reasons, including wear and tear and the fact that rail replacements that did not restore timer equipment with complete precision could cause the equipment to become overly restrictive. This can cause trains to operate at slower speeds than they were actually intended and allowed to safely go. Over time, both safety measures – which have been extremely effective at their intended goal of preventing accidents – had the unintended consequence of slowing some trips and causing delays by forcing trains to go slower than safely able or allowed.

The SPEED Unit, led by Train Service Supervisor Philip Dominguez, was formed in summer 2018 to address these issues, as part of the Save Safe Seconds campaign launched by NYC Transit President Andy Byford and led by Senior Vice President for Subways Sally Librera.

Subway Speed Limit Changes

1. 2018

LINE (daytime)	LOCATION	BOROUGH	DIRECTION	PREVIOUS SPEED	ADJUSTED SPEED	CHANGED?
	North End of 36th St Platform	Brooklyn	N/B	15	30	Y
	North End of 59th St Platform	Brooklyn	N/B	15	30	Y
	Between 53rd St and 59th St (just north of 59th St platform)	Brooklyn	S/B	15	20	Y
	Between Essex St and Bowery (just past Essex platform)	Manhattan	MN-BOUND	15	30	Y
	Between Hewes and Marcy (just before Marcy)	Brooklyn	QNS-BOUND & MN-BOUND	10	20	Y
	South of Prospect Park	Brooklyn	N/B & S/B	15	25	Y
	Between 36th St and 45th St	Brooklyn	S/B	15	20	Y
	Between 215 and 207 (x2)	Manhattan	N/B & S/B	20	Limit Removed	Y
	North of Penn Station	Manhattan	S/B	18	Limit Removed	Y
	South of 42nd St Time Sq	Manhattan	N/B	18	20	Y
	South end of Penn Station Platform	Manhattan	S/B	20	30	Y
	south of Times Sq	Manhattan	N/B	15	Limit Removed	Y
	South of Herald Sq	Manhattan	N/B	20	25	Y
	Switches South of Prince St (x2)	Manhattan	S/B	10	15	Y
	South of 18th Av Platform	Brooklyn	N/B	15	25	
	Between 7th Av and 47-50th St	Manhattan	S/B	18	25	
	Between Bergen St and Grand Army Plaza	Brooklyn	S/B	20	Limit Removed	Y
	South end of Atlantic Ave Platform (x2)	Brooklyn	S/B	23/26	Limit Removed	Y

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2 3	South end of Nevins Platform	Brooklyn	S/B	10	25	Y
2 3	North End of Nevins Platform (x2)	Brooklyn	N/B & S/B	10	15	Y
4 5	South of Franklin Av	Brooklyn	N/B	20	Limit Removed	Y
R W	South of City Hall	Manhattan	N/B	6	15	Y
A	Just North of W. 4th Street	Manhattan	S/B	25	30	
4 5	North of Canal St	Manhattan	N/B	23	30	
F	South end of 18th Av Platform	Brooklyn	S/B	15	20	
M R	Between 36th St and Steinway St	Queens	S/B	20	30	
6	South of 116th St	Manhattan	N/B	15	25	
2 5	Between President St and Franklin Ave (x2)	Brooklyn	N/B	20/15	Limit Removed/25	
R W	South end of 57th St-7th Av Platform	Manhattan	S/B	16	35	[
B D	South of Broadway-Lafayette	Manhattan	S/B	20	30	

1. 2019

N W	30 th Avenue to Astoria Blvd.	Queens	N/B	20	40	
1	Chambers St. to Franklin St.	Brooklyn	N/B	20	30	
M	Approaching Broadway – Lafayette	Manhattan	N/B	15	19	
C	Between Kingston Ave and Utica Ave	Brooklyn	S/B	25	45	
6	Approaching Astor Place	Manhattan	N/B	15	28	
M R	Steinway Street and 46 th Street	Queens	N/B	23	30	
N W	Approaching & Departing Ditmars Blvd.	Queens	N/B & S/B	10	20	
2 3	Departing Franklin Avenue	Brooklyn	S/B	15	20	
4	Approaching & Departing Woodlawn	Bronx	N/B & S/B	10	15	
4 5	Departing 125 th Street	Manhattan	S/B	10	19	
1	Between 215 th Street & 225 th Street (x3)	Manhattan	N/B & S/B	20	25/30	
R	Departing 95 th Street	Brooklyn	N/B	10	15	
R	Departing Atlantic Avenue	Brooklyn	S/B	15	25	
4 5	Departing Grand Central	Manhattan	N/B	10	15	
6	Departing Grand Central	Manhattan	N/B	10	20	
J	Approaching Essex Street	Manhattan	QNS-BOUND	15	30	

	Between Roosevelt Avenue & 71 st -Continental Ave (x3)	Queens	N/B	35/36	45/50
	Approaching Utica Avenue	Brooklyn	S/B	20	30
	Between 47 th -50 th Street and 7 th Avenue	Manhattan	N/B	20	25
	Departing Union Square	Manhattan	N/B	20	25
	Between Union Square and Bleeker St	Manhattan	S/B	20	39
	North of Broadway Junction	Brooklyn	S/B	15	20
	North end of Grand Av-Newtown	Queens	N/B	36	45
	Borough Hall	Brooklyn	N/B	19	20
	Nevins St	Brooklyn	N/B	10	20
	Between Grand Army Plaza and Brooklyn Museum	Brooklyn	S/B	25	35
	North of 42nd St-Times Sq	Manhattan	N/B	25	Limit Removed
	South end of Grand Army Plaza	Brooklyn	S/B	20	30
	South end of Jay St Metrotech	Brooklyn	S/B	20	27
	North end of 59th St-Columbus Circle	Manhattan	S/B	26	Limit Removed