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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

Governor Cuomo Announces First of Eight LIRR Grade Crossings Eliminated

Urban Avenue in New Cassel Reopened to Traffic on Time after Just Six Months; Part of LIRR Expansion Project that Includes Third Track Construction to Reduce Congestion and Delays

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that Urban Avenue in New Cassel reopened to traffic on time this morning. The roadway is the first of eight Long Island Rail Road grade crossings to be completely eliminated through the LIRR Expansion Project. Most of the crossings are being transformed into underpasses, which enhance railroad safety, improve traffic flow in communities of Nassau County, and reduce localized nuisances from horns and bells.

"The LIRR is the backbone of the region's economy and we are modernizing it to create a more reliable service for passengers - with their convenience and safety as top priorities," Governor Cuomo said. "The grade crossing that was eliminated and replaced with this newly opened roadway is part of a plan to eliminate all dangerous crossings and proceed with our nation-leading investments to give New Yorkers a 21st century transportation infrastructure."

The Urban Avenue crossing had been closed to traffic on March 8. The new bridge was put into place during the weekend of July 20-21 using an approach called "box-jacking" that reduces the length of time the tracks must be taken out of service to just one weekend.

Under this approach, workers built a 140-ton concrete structure onsite that includes the rail bridge, the 40 feet of roadway beneath the bridge, and the side walls connecting roadway below with rail bridge above. They then used powerful hydraulic jacks to inch the structure into place over the course of one weekend.

MTA Chief Development Officer Janno Lieber said, "It's a pleasure to reopen this roadway according to the expedited timeframe we've set for this project. This approach to grade crossing eliminations exemplifies our approach to the entire LIRR Expansion Project. We're doing it smarter, faster, within budget, and with unprecedented community outreach and input."

LIRR President Phil Eng said, "This project will lead to a safer and more reliable operation for the LIRR. It reinforces everything we are doing through the LIRR Forward plan to improve safety, reduce risk, improve train operations, and reduce the potential for events beyond our control that cause train delays or cancellations."

Senator Anna M. Kaplan said, "This project has been a win-win-win, simultaneously increasing capacity for the Long Island Rail Road, improving public safety, and reducing local traffic. Most importantly, by completing this project on time, on budget, with limited disruption, and with significant community outreach, it shows that the MTA is committed to finding new, innovative solutions to yesterday's problems. I applaud the hard working men and women who worked tirelessly on this great achievement, and I thank Governor Cuomo for setting an ambition agenda to improve the MTA and modernize the Long Island Rail Road."

Assembly Member Michael A. Montesano said, "I was pleased to attend the ribbon cutting event for the completion of the overpass bridge at Urban Avenue in New Cassel. This project was completed on time and will be a terrific enhancement to a well-deserved community in delivering a more dependable operation by the LIRR as well as improve commuter safety, train delays and noise."

Assembly Member Charles D. Lavine said, "The opening of the new roadway underpass at Urban Avenue in New Cassel is a prime example of the Long Island Rail Road's commitment to safety and reliability. Not only does the new underpass contribute to the improvement of train operations, but it also reduces the risks of track crossing related incidents. I commend Phil Eng and the entire team at the Long Island Rail Road for their dedication to ensuring an improved experience for my constituents."

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran said, "The reopening of Urban Avenue in New Cassel marks the completion of the first of five LIRR grade crossings to be upgraded to an underpass, improving pedestrian safety while bettering the flow of traffic. I look forward to its completion, which will truly improve transportation, infrastructure and safety in Nassau County."

North Hempstead Town Supervisor Judi Bosworth said: "Street level grade crossings should be a thing of the past in a busy suburban area like Nassau County, especially in light of the many tragedies that have occurred at such crossings. This new grade crossing will be life changing for the entire community as it increases safety and traffic flow. I am very pleased that the MTA was able to finish this complex project in a timely manner and minimize the inconvenience for both commuters and residents in the area."

City Council Member Viviana Russell, who is a resident of New Cassel that lives in close proximity to Urban Avenue and has been closely involved with this project from the onset, said, "Residents here in the New Cassel community have been very patient and are pleased to see this project completed in a relatively short period of time considering the amount of work that was done. Although we have had many bumps in the road because of the very nature of this design-build project and the fact that Urban Avenue was the first grade elimination to be completed, it will greatly improve the quality of life

for all those that are impacted by the railroad. Thank you to the Town of North Hempstead Department of Public Works Engineer Victor Thomas, all of the North Hempstead staff and all of the many women and men of the LIRR/MTA/3TC and laborers that make up the teams that got this project done."

County Legislator Siela A. Bynoe said, "This significant investment in New Cassel's infrastructure will make our roads safer, improve traffic flow along Urban Avenue by decreasing delays, and eliminate the air and noise pollution created by a grade crossing. Moreover with the Third Track and improved mass transit service on the horizon, I commend the MTA for their ongoing commitment to the communities they serve and am glad that Urban Avenue is once again open for motorists."

Workers at Urban Avenue excavated 2,700 cubic yards of material to dig the underpass to a depth of 22 feet.

Eliminating railroad crossings improves safety. In the decade prior to the start of the LIRR Expansion Project in 2017, six fatal accidents took place at the crossings along the busy Main Line between Floral Park and Hicksville.

This location will now enjoy reduced noise emanating from horns that are required to sound in the approach to a crossing, and the bells that sound as crossing gates come down to block roadway traffic. Along the busy LIRR Main Line, crossing gates during rush hour are in the down position up to 35 percent of the time during, creating traffic backups and increasing exhaust from vehicles.

The other railroad crossings that are being replaced by underpasses as part of the LIRR Expansion Project are at Covert Avenue in New Hyde Park, which closed in April and is slated to reopen this fall, New Hyde Park Road in New Hyde Park, School Street in New Cassel and two at Willis Avenue in Mineola.

The LIRR Expansion Project is a concerted investment in the LIRR's Main Line between Floral Park and Hicksville that will include laying a new third track along the 9.8 mile corridor, eliminating eight grade crossings, replacing seven bridges and seven electrical substations, improving five stations, building 7.5 miles of retaining walls, and expanding parking capacity.

The construction of a third track from Floral Park to Hicksville will reduce train congestion and delays and enable true bi-directional service during peak hours with a more reliable rail network.

The projects form a significant share of the 100 projects being undertaken systemwide as part of Governor Cuomo's \$6 billion investment to modernize and transform the LIRR.

The LIRR Expansion Project is a \$2.6 billion design-build project due for completion in 2022, and being completed with unprecedented levels of community outreach and input.