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Press Release

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[NYC Transit](#)

IMMEDIATE

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

Subway Speed Limits Have Been Increased at More Than 50 Locations; More Than 100 Speed-Regulating Signals Have Also Been Recalibrated as Part of Save Safe Seconds Campaign

Speed Increases Follow Recently Announced Dramatic Improvement in Service, Showing Subway Action Plan is Working

Major Incidents are Down by 50 Percent and On-Time Performance is Up 32 Percent Systemwide

MTA New York City Transit today announced new 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 late summer of 2018, as part of the Save Safe Seconds Campaign, a safety committee has approved increases to speed limits at more than 100 locations, and the agency has implemented more than 50 of them. These increases follow recently announced dramatic improvements in service showing that the Subway Action Plan is working, including a 50 percent reduction in major incidents and a 32 percent rise in on-time performance systemwide.

More than 20 new locations have received speed limit increases since the last update announcement on this program on January 21. When eventually implemented throughout the entirety of the system, these speed limit increases will manifest as tangible, noticeable improvements to 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 NYC Transit 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 more than 95 percent of some 2,000 such signals tested since the initiative began in summer 2018. Approximately 350 faulty timer signals have been discovered, and 105 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.

"Since I first arrived here, I have been relentless about identifying ways to improve our daily operations and bring better service to the millions who ride our trains each day," said NYC Transit President Andy Byford. "Today's news shows how the SPEED Unit is doing just that. By meticulously examining places where trains can go faster safely, we are bringing tangible daily benefits to our customers. As always, I commend all of our workers who are working so hard to improve the lives of 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 appears at the bottom of this release.

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 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.

Speed Limit Changes Since Jan. 21, 2019

LINE (daytime)	LOCATION	BOROUGH	DIRECTION	PREVIOUS SPEED	ADJUSTED SPEED
	Between 7th Av and 47-50th St	Manhattan	SB	18	25
	South of Broadway-Lafayette	Manhattan	SB	20	30
	Between 47th-50th Street and 7th Avenue	Manhattan	NB	20	25
	Departing Grand Central	Manhattan	NB	10	20
	Departing Grand Central	Manhattan	NB	10	15
	South of 18th Av Platform	Brooklyn	NB	15	25
	South end of 18th Av Platform	Brooklyn	SB	15	20
	South end of 57th St-7th Av Platform	Manhattan	SB	16	35
	North of 42nd St-Times Sq	Manhattan	NB	25	Limit Removed
	Departing 95th St	Brooklyn	NB	10	15
	Departing Atlantic Av-Barclays Center	Brooklyn	SB	15	25
	Departing Atlantic Av-Barclays Center	Brooklyn	NB	15	25
	North of W. 4th Street	Manhattan	SB	25	30
	South end of Jay St-Metrotech	Brooklyn	SB	20	27
	Between Kingston Ave and Utica Ave	Brooklyn	SB	25	45
	Approaching 125th St	Manhattan	NB	25	30
	Approaching 125th St	Manhattan	NB	25	30
	Leaving 125th St	Manhattan	SB	25	30
	Entering Borough Hall	Brooklyn	NB	19	Limit Removed
	Leaving Nevins St	Brooklyn	NB	10	20
	Between Grand Army Plaza and Brooklyn Museum	Brooklyn	SB	25	35

2 3	South end of Grand Army Plaza	Brooklyn	SB	20	30
1	North end of 59th St-Columbus Circle	Manhattan	SB	26	Limit Removed
1	Between 215th Street & 225th Street (x3)	Manhattan	NB/SB	20	30
2 3	Departing Franklin Av	Brooklyn	SB	15	20
3	Approaching Utica Avenue	Brooklyn	SB	20	30

Speed Limit Changes Before Jan. 21, 2019

LINE (daytime)	LOCATION	BOROUGH	DIRECTION	PREVIOUS SPEED	ADJUSTED SPEED
R	North End of 36th St Platform	Brooklyn	NB	15	30
R	North End of 59th St Platform	Brooklyn	NB	15	30
R	Between 53rd St and 59th St	Brooklyn	SB	15	20
R	Between 36th St and 45th St	Brooklyn	SB	15	20
J M Z	Between Essex St and Bowery	Manhattan	Manhattanbound	15	30
1	Between 215 and 207 (x2)	Manhattan	NB/SB	20	Limit Removed
J M Z	Between Hewes and Marcy	Brooklyn	Manhattanbound and Queensbound	10	20
Q	South of Prospect Park	Brooklyn	NB/SB	15	25
1	North of Penn Station	Manhattan	SB	18	Limit Removed
1	South of 42 St-Times Sq	Manhattan	NB	18	20
2 3	South end of Penn Station Platform	Manhattan	SB	23	30
R W	South of 42nd St-Times Sq	Manhattan	NB	15	35
N Q	Entering 34th St-Herald Square	Manhattan	NB	20	25
2 3	Between Bergen St and Grand Army Plaza	Brooklyn	SB	20	Limit Removed
2 3 4 5	South end of Atlantic Av-Barclays Center Platform (x2)	Brooklyn	SB	23/26	Limit Removed
2 3	South end of Nevins Platform	Brooklyn	SB	10	25
2 3	North End of Nevins Platform (x2)	Brooklyn	NB/SB	10	15
4 5	South of Franklin Av	Brooklyn	NB	20	Limit Removed
N Q R W	Switches South of Prince St (x2)	Manhattan	SB	10	15

<div><div>R</div><div>W</div></div>	South of City Hall	Manhattan	NB	6	15	