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Press Release

May 14, 2020

LIRR

IMMEDIATE

MTA to Begin Major Construction in Westbury and New Cassel to Eliminate Street-Level Railroad Crossing

New Underpass for Vehicles and Pedestrians Will Improve Safety and Railroad Reliability

Project Will Alleviate Train Congestion and Improve Vehicular Traffic

School Street to Reopen in the Fall with a New Two-Lane Roadway and Pedestrian Sidewalk Underneath Tracks

Vehicular Detour Starts Monday, May 18

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced that School Street in the Village of Westbury and Hamlet of New Cassel will temporarily close beginning Monday, May 18, between Railroad Avenue and Union Avenue, as part of MTA Construction & Development's Long Island Rail Road Expansion Project.

"Eliminating the railroad grade crossing at School Street will make the area safer for everyone - especially the drivers, train customers and pedestrians that currently share the road," said **Janno Lieber, President of MTA Construction & Development**. "We are working hard to continue to advance important projects like the LIRR Third Track during the Covid-19 crisis and thanks to our employees, contractors and labor we are maintaining safety and getting construction completed for when our customers return."

"As we continue to run Essential Service for frontline heroes, it's more evident than ever how vital the Long Island Rail Road and its workforce are to serving this region - both in good times and in crisis," said **LIRR President Phil Eng**. "This project, along with all ongoing and planned maintenance and capital work, is taking on renewed significance as we ensure that the railroad is robust and reliable in the both the short-term and the long run. We look forward to welcoming back all our customers in due time to a fortified, safe system that's on track for the future."

A new bridge to span this crossing is scheduled to be moved into place on Sept. 12-13, and the newly built roadway below the bridge is expected to reopen in November. This fast pace of work and the use of unique engineering methods limit the detours to just six months. Funding for LIRR Expansion Project comes from the MTA's 2015-19 Capital Program and 2020-24 Capital Program.

This railroad crossing is the fourth of eight grade-crossing elimination projects being completed under the LIRR Expansion Project, also known as "Third Track," set for completion in 2022. The grade crossing eliminations will enhance safety, reduce noise and air pollution and reduce traffic back-ups, as vehicles will no longer need to wait at crossings as trains pass, which can be as much as 35% of the time during rush hours. Stations along the Main Line between Floral Park and Hicksville are being rebuilt to accommodate a new third track.

In consultation with municipal, county and state government partners, the MTA C&D is rebuilding the railroad crossing at School Street as a two-lane grade separated underpass with a sidewalk on the east side. The roadway project began with utility relocation in September of 2019, followed by LIRR signal modification in April 2020.

Once the grade crossing is eliminated, trains will no longer need to blast their horns, and bells from crossing gates will become unnecessary, significantly reducing noise pollution in the surrounding area. Currently, crossing gates during rush hours are in the down position more than half of the time at some crossings, creating traffic backups and increasing exhaust from vehicles.

As part of an unprecedentedly robust community outreach program, MTA, LIRR, and the designer-builder have held hundreds of meetings in advance of the closure. Most recently, the project team has hosted multiple public information sessions in addition to targeted stakeholder meetings with residents, school districts, chambers of commerce, civic associations, and more. Although the COVID-19 crisis has necessitated the cancellation of in-person meetings, the outreach team has been keeping the community informed through electronic means and virtual meetings.

For more information about the School Street underpass construction, please visit this page:

<https://www.amodernli.com/project/school-street-grade-crossing-elimination/>

Detour routes have been established in cooperation with the Village of Westbury and the Town of North Hempstead. Detour routes will be clearly marked by signage. For more information, including detour details and maps, visit: <https://www.amodernli.com/school-street-closes-for-grade-crossing-elimin...>

MTA Construction & Development's LIRR Expansion Project is part of a multibillion-dollar modernization of the Long Island Rail Road, the largest investment the railroad has received in decades. Once the work is complete, the LIRR will have increased its capacity by roughly 50%. Together, the upgrades will help transform transportation across the region and provide a reliable, state-of-the-art rail system for Long Islanders. For more information on the 100+ projects set to transform the LIRR, visit [aModernLI.com](https://www.amodernli.com).