



MTA Press Releases

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Press Release

November 13, 2020

LIRR

IMMEDIATE

ICYMI: Governor Cuomo Announces School Street Grade Crossing Eliminated and Road Reopened

Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, MTA Construction & Development President Janno Lieber and local elected officials announced the reopening of School Street in the Village of Westbury and Hamlet of New Cassel.

See [video](#) and [photos](#) from today's event. Governor Andrew Cuomo's announcement from earlier today appears below.

GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES SCHOOL STREET GRADE CROSSING ELIMINATED AND ROAD REOPENED

Fifth of Eight LIRR Grade Crossings Eliminated on Time and on Budget

Milestone in Broader LIRR Expansion Project That Includes Transformative Third Track That Will Reduce Congestion and Delays

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the reopening of School Street in the Village of Westbury and Hamlet of New Cassel. The street reopened as an underpass that separates it from the Long Island Rail Road Main Line, making it the fifth railroad crossing elimination completed in the past 14 months - on time and on budget - as part of the LIRR Expansion Project.

"New York continues to lead the nation in modernizing and strengthening our transportation infrastructure and the removal of the School Street grade crossing is just the latest example of these efforts," **Governor Cuomo said**. "Not only was this project completed on time and on budget, but this new underpass will improve safety and bring a higher quality of life to this community by reducing noise, air and traffic pollution."

In coordination with municipal, county and state government partners, MTA Construction & Development rebuilt 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.

"The removal of this grade crossing will improve traffic flow and increase safety on our roads," **Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul said**. "The opening of the new School Street underpass is the fifth rail grade crossing elimination in the last two years and part of our overall efforts to expand and improve the LIRR. We are committed to keeping New Yorkers safe and building back better on Long Island and across New York State.

To date, the School Street railroad crossing is the fifth of eight eliminated through the LIRR Expansion Project. Last year, crews transformed former crossings at Urban Avenue in New Cassel and Covert Avenue in New Hyde Park into safe grade-separated underpasses. This year, crews transformed the New Hyde Park Road crossing in New Hyde Park into an underpass that reopened on Aug. 24. Two months later crews closed the crossing at S. 12th Street in New Hyde Park. It is being rebuilt as a pedestrian underpass.

School Street was closed to traffic on May 18 to allow excavation to begin as crews assembled the new bridge at an adjacent parking lot. The bridge was put into place over the course of just a single weekend - Oct. 3 & 4. The three crossings that remain are in downtown Mineola. The MTA expects to close two crossings at Willis Avenue and a crossing at Main Street by the end of 2021.

The School Street railroad crossing was the site of a tragic collision on Feb. 26, 2019, in which the three occupants of an automobile lost their lives after driving around a downed crossing gate. 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 and will include amenities such as platform canopies; new platform furnishings including benches, shelters and signage; CCTV security cameras to improve safety; ADA-compliant mobility improvements including ramps and/or elevators; free public Wi-Fi; USB charging stations and digital information displays.

President of MTA Construction & Development Janno Lieber said, "Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, MTA Construction & Development continues to complete projects that will benefit Long Island faster and cheaper than before, under the leadership of Governor Cuomo. But

COVID has led to a financial crisis for the MTA, and we desperately need federal funding to continue projects that prioritize the safety and modernization of our transit system throughout the region."

President of Long Island Rail Road Phil Eng said, "With the School Street crossing permanently eliminated, we have made it safer for LIRR, motorists, pedestrians and the neighboring community. Each completed piece of the LIRR Expansion Project demonstrates our commitment towards improving quality of life on Long Island for generations to come."

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran said, "Another milestone has been reached for the LIRR Expansion Project with the completion of the School Street project in Westbury, which will allow for safer passageway for both vehicles and pedestrians by eliminating the hazardous grade crossing. This piece of the LIRR Expansion Project is especially important after the devastating accident that occurred here in 2019 and it creates a safer and more livable community for residents while also giving commuters the benefit of improved infrastructure and efficiency. Thank you Governor Cuomo and the New York State team for prioritizing this critical project, which will play a big role in supporting transit-oriented development throughout Nassau County, helping spur growth and development in our communities for generations to come."

Senator Anna M. Kaplan said, "Last year, our community was shaken by a terrible tragedy at the School Street grade crossing that took three lives and caused a significant disruption to the entire LIRR system. This incident was the final in a long history of tragedy at this location, which was considered one of the most dangerous in the entire region. Today begins a new chapter for our community, with the opening of this new underpass, that has dramatically improved public safety, while simultaneously reducing local traffic throughout the area. I applaud the hard-working men and women who worked tirelessly on this great achievement even through the pandemic, and I thank Governor Cuomo for setting an ambitious agenda to modernize the Long Island Railroad and improve infrastructure on Long Island."

Assemblymember Charles Lavine said, "The railroad bridge is going to be a tremendous benefit to our community. It will guarantee convenient transportation for our community in the long run. As well as the added safety benefits, building the overpass has eliminated the grade crossings, which will ensure safety for drivers and reduce traffic in the area. The railroad bridge is also going to aid our environment with fewer cars idling in traffic, the air quality in the surrounding area will improve. Overall this is a great step to ensuring our residents are safer and have adequate transportation."

North Hempstead Town Supervisor Judi Bosworth said, "I would like sincerely to thank Governor Cuomo and the Long Island Rail Road for their commitment to this infrastructure program that eliminated the grade crossing at School Street. The new underpass will alleviate train congestion and improve traffic safety."

Mayor of Westbury Peter Cavallaro said, "The Westbury community is very happy that the School Street grade crossing has been eliminated, as for decades that location had posed a grave danger to motorists and pedestrians. Nearly two years ago, there was a fatal accident at that location, and there had been others in the past as well. We're also very pleased to see the completion of an important infrastructure project that will enhance the road and rail systems servicing the community. As the third track project progresses, we see the great benefits that we had anticipated coming to fruition."

North Hempstead Councilmember Viviana Russell said, "As 8 of the Expansion Projects were taking place in my district we embarked on conversations with MTA/ Long Island Railroad and their contractor 3TC a few years ago. With the first two projects being completed at Urban Avenue and the Cherry Lane Bridge there were many 'growing pains'. At the end of it all, now that the School Street grade elimination is coming to a close and just a few more projects to be completed, we look forward to utilizing the community benefit funds in the areas that were most impacted by this project and I believe this project will be a safer, positive benefit to all of Long Island."

This fast pace of work and the use of unique engineering methods limited the associated traffic detour to just six months. Funding for LIRR Expansion Project comes from the MTA's 2015-19 Capital Program and 2020-24 Capital Program.

Within days of the COVID global pandemic hitting the New York region, MTA construction sites - which were allowed to stay operational as essential services - implemented a broad range of safety measures that kept the sites active and safe. MTA Construction & Development mobilized quickly to identify the necessary precautions, and collaborated with contractors to implement them consistently. On the LIRR Expansion Project the project management team also worked closely with the LIRR to make the most effective use of track outages and staff resources to keep work progressing throughout the pandemic.

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://modernli.com).