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Press Release

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Metro-North

IMMEDIATE

# Metro-North Marks Second Year of Accomplishments in Way Ahead Plan to Transform Railroad

*Railroad Undertaking Most Historic Disinfecting Regimen to Protect Customers and Employees*

*Completed Major PTC Milestones*

[See Full List of Accomplishments](#)

MTA Metro-North Railroad President Catherine Rinaldi today announced a series of key accomplishments since implementing its *Way Ahead* plan two years ago as a proactive response to growing ridership, changing demographics and the evolving needs of customers.

The *Way Ahead* plan has taken a special significance this year with the COVID-19 pandemic, with the railroad undertaking the most aggressive safety and disinfecting measures in its history. In addition to the COVID-19 precautions, Metro-North has realized key aspects of its vision.

Metro-North is continuing to pursue its *Way Ahead* plan despite the worst financial crisis in the agency's history, with the COVID-19 pandemic eclipsing the Great Depression's impact on revenue and ridership.

"This year has been a trying one, but it has not stopped us from moving forward," said **Catherine Rinaldi, President of Metro-North Railroad**. "I could not be prouder of each and every Metro-North employee who helped us accomplish goals we set at the inception of Way Ahead, while dealing with the unforeseen challenge of a pandemic."

### Highlights of Way Ahead Accomplishments:

#### Safety

##### COVID-19 Response Measures for Customers

- Implemented unprecedented 24/7 cleaning and disinfecting across train cars and at stations. All train cars are disinfected at least once a day and all station touch points continue to be disinfected at least twice daily.
- Installed hand sanitizer stations at all New York State and Connecticut passenger stations.
- Distributed masks to customers through the TRACKS (Together Railroads And Communities Keeping Safe) Program, Metro-North employees, and the widely recognized safety ambassador/ robotic superhero Metro-Man.
- Rolled out 22 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) vending machines throughout its New York territory, where customers can purchase masks, bottled hand sanitizer and gloves, and expect to have machines at Grand Central Terminal by the end of November.
- Advancing pilot of the Merak 3 Stage Air Filtration System for rolling stock to filter and purify air inside rail cars to generate a wave of ionized particles that destroy airborne viruses, bacteria and particulate matter, including COVID-19. Metro-North is the first transit agency in North America to install and integrate this technology into its onboard ventilation systems

##### COVID-19 Response Measures for Employees

- Provided COVID-19 and Antibody testing opportunities for employees at select Metro-North facilities and through the MTA's partnership with Northwell Health's 52 Go Health Urgent Care locations.
- Deployed a Temperature Brigade to screen employees at key work locations.
- Issued personal thermometers to all employees to monitor their temperature prior to coming to work in order to reduce the potential for employee exposure to COVID-19.
- Researched, procured and distributed a variety of facial coverings and masks for all employees to suit different types of working environments.

#### Positive Train Control (PTC) Advances

- Remain on target to implement PTC across territory by December 31, 2020.
- All trains for Hudson, Harlem, and New Haven Lines are operating with full PTC functionality except M8 fleet.
- Over 132,000 revenue trains ran in full PTC mode between August 2019 – September 2020 (Over 39,000 during the 3rd quarter 2020).
- Waterbury Branch is currently operating under PTC Main Line Track Exclusion Addendum.

- Wayside boundaries at New Rochelle, Poughkeepsie and Spuyten Duyvil with Amtrak are commissioned, New Haven Boundary is expected in Nov 2020.

#### **Additional Safety and Security Actions & Enhancements**

- Completed the Rapid Deploy Video Surveillance Enhancement (PODS) initiative under budget and four months faster than anticipated at 12 passenger stations by installing cloud-based Security Camera Pods and Help Point Kiosks.
- Completed Enhanced Grade Crossing upgrades by replacing six grade crossings pads and installing delineators at 30 crossings.
- Grand Central Terminal (GCT) Fire Brigade was awarded the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) 2020 Rail Safety Certificate of Merit for Commuter/Intercity Passenger Rail.

#### **Improving Our Customers' Day-to-Day Experience**

- Increased on-time performance for East of Hudson service to 97.9% from October 2019 to October 2020 - a 3.6% improvement year-to-date.
- Launched an in-house real-time capacity tracking feature to TrainTime™ app. TrainTime™ also added Chinese, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Yiddish to its list of available languages.
- Accelerated work on the Enhanced Station Initiative at White Plains station including demolition of the side platform and completion of tactile replacement work at four rail car lengths of the boarding edge on the south end of the island platform.
- Crestwood Station – Completed installation of the ADA ramp and side platform of the shelter. Installation of overpass dashboard, USB lean bars, benches, overpass counters, cameras Wi-Fi and new canopy is ongoing. This station has reached substantial completion in January 2020.
- Launched a new Accessibility Task Force that will provide a forum for the exchange of information about Metro-North services and facility accessibility as they relate to persons with disabilities and their transportation needs.

#### **Improving Customer Communications**

- Completed installation of the Grand Central Terminal Big Board and 96 Gate and Departure Boards in June with increased messaging capabilities and reliability.
- Advanced Metro-North's multi-year Customer Service Initiatives (CSI) Project to upgrade customer communications in Grand Central Terminal and at outlying passenger stations.

#### **Investing in Infrastructure**

- Continued expansion of SMARTRACK Program in which crews are undertaking critical infrastructure work by strategically shutting down continuous segments of track, giving multiple work groups uninterrupted access to maintain and improve the system.
- Completed Grand Central Terminal track rehabilitation work, including replacing and laying new rail, bracket ties, and block ties at Track 13, 15 and 16.
- Reduced Safety (FRA) and Maintenance exceptions between the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020. Reduced Switch Failure Incidents by 10% (monthly average) from the prior year.
- Accelerated the Tree Trimming Program along right-of-way to trim or remove trees that can fall on tracks to mitigate against extreme weather events, such as the August 4th Tropical Storm Isaias - the worst storm in the region since Superstorm Sandy back in 2012.
- Installed 27 miles of communications and signal cable for the Waterbury Cab Signal Project.
- Completed the reconstruction of the 6th Avenue Bridge in downtown Mount Vernon, a month ahead of schedule.

#### **What's Next in the Way Ahead Plan**

- Rollout of significantly enhanced inspection methods and equipment in 2021 including introduction of mobile technology utilizing handheld devices for track and signal inspections and deploying new Track Geometry Inspection Car.
- Complete delivery of M8 rail cars on the New Haven Line in 2021.
- Procure Dual Mode Locomotives to replace the existing aging fleet.
- Install initial onboard digital screens on M7 rail cars by the end of 2020 and throughout 2021.
- Receive initial delivery and then deploy OMNY and Cubic Vending Machines at Metro-North passenger stations.
- Expand marketing of MTA eTix® to increase the number of customers using contactless fares electronically through the app.