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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

L Line's Canarsie Tunnel to Close in 2019 for 18 Months to Undergo Massive Reconstruction; Tunnel Damage Among Worst from Superstorm Sandy

Decision to Completely Close the Tunnel Follows Months of Community Meetings, Stakeholder and Public Input on Reconstruction Options; MTA Will Develop and Announce Service Plans as 2019 Project Approaches

MTA New York City Transit (NYCT) today announced that the massive reconstruction work needed to the Canarsie Tunnel, which carries the L train under the East River between Brooklyn and Manhattan, will require a full closure of the tunnel for 18 months starting no sooner than 2019.

The decision to do the work under a full 18-month tunnel closure instead of a one-track, three-year closure, was made based on a detailed operational review, and only after significant community engagement in order to consider all adverse impacts. Serious consideration was also given to consequences of unplanned outages that would occur if one track was closed for three years.

"While the MTA always looks to avoid service disruptions, there is no question that repairs to the Canarsie Tunnel are critical and cannot be avoided or delayed. Throughout this process we have committed to engaging the community and listening to all concerns so that we can address them as we prepare for this necessary work," MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast said. "We are committed to working with the community just as closely as we develop ways to add service to help minimize the impacts of the closure."

Since May, the MTA has held four large-scale, interactive community meetings in communities affected by the upcoming closure including Williamsburg, Bushwick, Canarsie and in Manhattan along the 14th Street corridor; hundreds of riders attended. The meetings were led by MTA Chairman Prendergast, NYCT President Veronique 'Ronnie' Hakim, Chief of Operations Planning Peter Cafiero and Senior Vice President for Capital Program Management John O'Grady.

MTA officials also visited all 11 Community Boards along the L Line, which were overwhelmingly in favor of the full, shorter-duration closure. Of the comments MTA received directly through email, social media and at meetings 77 percent were in favor of the full, shorter closure.

"Approximately 80 percent of riders will have the same disruptions with either option. Throughout our extensive outreach process and review, it became clear that the 18-month closure was the best construction option and offered the least amount of pain to customers for the shortest period of time," President Hakim said. "The 18-month option is also the most efficient way to allow MTA to do the required work. It gives us more control over the work site and allows us to offer contractor incentives to finish the work as fast as possible."

"We think it is better to have a shorter duration of pain than a longer more unstable process – and risk unplanned closures – by leaving one track open during construction," Hakim added.

The Canarsie Tunnel was one of nine underwater tunnels that flooded during Superstorm Sandy, all of which required major rehabilitation and repair. Some of that work was accomplished during night and weekend closures, while the R line's Montague Tunnel under the East River was closed for 13 months and the G line tunnel under Newtown Creek was closed for two months, both for complete renovations.

The Canarsie Tunnel suffered extensive damage to tracks, signals, switches, power cables, signal cables, communication cables, lighting, cable ducts and bench walls throughout a seven-mile long flooded section of both tubes. Bench walls throughout those sections must be replaced to protect the structural integrity of the two tubes that carry trains through the tunnel.

During this rehabilitation process, the MTA will also make significant improvements to stations and tunnel segments closest to the under-river section. New stairs and elevators will be installed at the Bedford Av station in Brooklyn and the 1 Av station in Manhattan, and three new electric substations will be installed, providing more power to operate additional trains during rush hours.

Procurement of design and construction services for the project must begin to move forward this year in order to ensure that hundreds of millions of federal dollars are not lost.

MTA is now starting the process of fully developing alternative service plans and will continue to work with the community, City and State agencies, and all stakeholders to minimize impacts of the closure with added service including additional capacity on the M, J, and G trains. MTA plans to work closely with the City and State to develop routes and determine service levels needed to accommodate projected ridership.

MTA New York City Transit continues to closely inspect the Canarsie Tunnel and takes steps daily to ensure that it remains reliable until permanent repairs can be performed. Specifically, the agency has stepped up its inspection of the tunnel walls and has installed redundant power cables to ensure the pumping system will operate without interruption, but these are temporary measures and the tunnel must undergo extensive repairs.

Prior to the closure of the Canarsie Tunnel, the agency is preparing to rebuild two crucial sections of the M line in Brooklyn and Queens in order to ensure that two decades-old deteriorating overpasses remain safe for travel.