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Press Release

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IMMEDIATE

Sustainable Track Infrastructure Comes to Staten Island Railway

Earth Friendly Composite Track Ties Installed in St. George Terminal Renewal Project

As Earth Day approaches and as part of recommendations from a blue-ribbon commission tasked with reducing the impact of public transit on the environment, MTA New York City Transit has installed approximately 6,500 sustainable composite ties in a major Staten Island Railway (SIR) track renewal project to repair significant damage caused by Superstorm Sandy.

The St. George SIR terminal is undergoing a major track and switch reconstruction project as the railway continues to recover from Sandy-related damage. Prior to the storm in October 2012, a terminal rehabilitation project had been planned to repair and update signals, switches and track. Sandy made the project critical when storm surge flooded SIR tracks and the entire St. George yard complex with corrosive saltwater, highlighting areas where flood protection or protective infrastructure needed to be installed. The saltwater significantly damaged all 12 tracks, multiple switches, equipment and cables, as well as facilities and the train control tower.

"With careful planning and foresight, we took this opportunity to not only make critical Sandy-related repairs but to do it better using environmentally friendly materials," said Doug Connett, Vice President and Chief Officer for Staten Island Railway. "Switching out thousands of wooden rail ties to composite ties is a boon to the environment and our bottom line."

NYC Transit started the St. George renewal project in September 2014, with plans to integrate resiliency measures while replacing outdated or damaged equipment and making repairs. Those resiliency measures include raising signal equipment to 72 inches above the tracks, raising platforms for battery and generator enclosures and installing a new third rail system.

Repairs at St. George include the replacement of 12,000 linear feet of track and installation of a total of approximately 7,500 high-density plastic rail ties. The ties, which are made of 100 percent recycled materials, were manufactured by Axion International. Traditional railroad ties are made of wood and need to be replaced when they splinter, rot or disintegrate over time due to exposure to severe weather. Plastic composite ties, however, can withstand weather elements and insect or fungus infestation. In particular, composite ties such as the Axion ties being installed by NYC Transit will not absorb moisture or leach toxic chemicals into the environment during a major flooding event similar to Sandy's record storm surge.

The change in track tie materials from traditional wood to high-density plastic stems from a recommendation made by the MTA's Blue Ribbon Commission on Sustainability, which released a report in 2009 on ways to operate a greener transit system throughout the New York area. The commission's final report made nearly 100 recommendations to reduce the MTA's carbon footprint while generating savings and economic growth, one of which included a recommendation that the MTA expand procurement of sustainable railroad ties across all rail agencies.

The \$105 million St. George Terminal project is taking place with no service interruptions to customers and is 55% complete with composite tie installation to be completed by June 1. A video on the project is available on the MTA YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/6nAt1lgTU8s>.