The Bulletin

Electric Railroaders' Association, Incorporated

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The Bulletin

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This Month's Cover Photo:
M-9 9009 (Kawasaki Rail Car, 2019) is leading Train #1641 from Huntington to Penn Station and is about to arrive at the Cold Spring Harbor station, which is actually in the hamlet of West Hills, on June 22, 2020.
Jeff Erlitz photograph

In This Issue: Paris Métro's MP14 Class Begins to Enter Service…Page 3

MTA OUTLINES PROPOSED 2021 BUDGET AND FOUR-YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN

On November 18, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) released its proposed 2021 budget and four-year financial plan amidst the worst financial crisis in agency history. The plan includes devastating service cuts, a drastic reduction in the agency's workforce and a continued pause on the historic $51.5 billion Capital Plan in the absence of $12 billion in federal aid. The MTA continues to face an unprecedented financial crisis – eclipsing the Great Depression's impact on transit revenue and ridership.

The MTA presented a worst-case 2021 spending plan at its November Board meeting that assumes no additional federal emergency relief. At the same time, the agency is continuing its aggressive effort to secure $12 billion in federal funding. Should desperately needed federal relief arrive, the MTA will make any necessary budget adjustments during 2021.

The November Plan includes favorable re-estimates from the July Plan as fare and toll revenues are projected to surpass the previous forecast by $319 million and non-labor expenses are projected to be lower by $295 million in 2020. Savings from vacancies — attributable to an MTA-wide hiring freeze — are expected to total $66 million. Debt service expense is forecast to be $31 million favorable in 2020, with savings through the remainder of the period covered by the four-year financial plan, while subsidies are slightly unfavorable through 2022, followed by improvements in 2023 and 2024. This brings the MTA's projected deficits to $15.9 billion through 2024.

The MTA has taken aggressive measures to cut costs internally, focusing on three key areas: reducing overtime, consulting contracts and other non-personnel expenses. Agencies have already begun implementing these savings, which are now projected to reduce expenses by $259 million in 2020, $601 million in 2021, $498 million in 2022, $466 million in 2023 and $461 million in 2024.

In order to close the 2020 deficit caused by federal inaction, the MTA will have to use its authority to borrow the maximum of $2.9 billion from the Federal Reserve's Municipal Lending Facility (MLF) before the window closes at the end of 2020. The MTA is taking additional actions to address the 2020 deficit by releasing the current 2020 General Reserve of $170 million, applying the $337 million in the OPEB Trust Fund to current OPEB payments, and retaining Committed to Capital transfers in the operating budget at $187 million for 2020, $181 million for 2021, $120 million for 2022 and $114 million for 2023.

The MTA Board will be asked to vote to enact a new budget in December.

New McKinsey Analysis and Updated COVID Impacts

The MTA has again engaged McKinsey to review the economic realities facing the Authority. McKinsey is updating its projections and developing two new ridership scenarios. In the "best case" scenario, the virus is contained through a combination of an effective vaccine and resistance to the virus due to previous exposure, eventually reaching a "new normal" ridership level (90% of pre-pandemic ridership) in 2024. The "worst case" scenario assumes a resurgence of the virus in the New York City area, resulting in restrictions similar to those experienced earlier this year. From that resurgence, recovery will be slower and will take longer before reaching the "new normal" ridership level; by

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THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS EXPRESSES ITS DEEPEST APPRECIATION FOR 45 MEMBER DONATIONS IN OCTOBER, 2020

AMOUNT	DONOR(S)			
$1,000	Jon Graham			
	Lewis Hitch			
$250	Robert Fried			
$100 to $249	Hon. Patrick Curran	Jeffrey Mora	Sanders Saltzman	Norman Terkelson
	Lawrence De Toma	Juergen Nanders	David Sears	
	Carl Margolies	John Pesuit	Barbara & Juergen Senst	
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ERA is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation. Your donations are fully tax deductible and can be made either with your 2021 renewal, or by using our donation form on our website: www.erausa.org/donate. In 2020, the federal coronavirus relief bill allows you to make tax deductible contributions of up to $300 even for those of you who take the standard deduction (no itemized deductions needed)! Your donation helps to maintain ERA's 86-year-long tradition of traction education and entertainment!

PARIS MÉTRO'S MP14 CLASS BEGINS TO ENTER SERVICE
by Subutay Musluoglu

On October 12, the first MP14 train was placed into service on Line 14 of the Paris Métro, setting off a cascade of changes to the fleet composition of four of the five lines that are equipped for operation by rubber-tired trains (Lines 1, 4, 6, 11 and 14).

Financed by Île-de-France Mobilités, the regional transportation authority for the Greater Paris region, and operated by RATP, the introduction of the new car class comes in advance of the planned December 17 opening of Line 14's northern extension from Saint-Lazare to Mairie de Saint-Ouen. The MP14 comes in two versions - CA for Conduite Automatique (fully driverless operation) and CC for Conduite Conducteur (cab equipped, staffed with driver). The CC trains will operate in Automatic Train Operation (ATO) mode during peak periods with a driver onboard the trains, and manually driven during other times to ensure the drivers maintain their operating skills.

The MP14 is manufactured by Alstom, which was awarded a contract in March, 2015 to supply up to 217 trainsets, with a base order for 35 eight-car MP14CA sets for Line 14. An option for 20 six-car sets for Line 4 was exercised in December, 2016, followed in February, 2018 by an option for 20 five-car MP14CC sets for Line 11. Future options will be exercised to increase Line 14's fleet for the southern extension to Orly Airport, currently under construction and anticipated to open in 2024. The total value of the contract could exceed over €2 billion.

The consists will be comprised of a mix of driving trailers (DT) and intermediate non-driving motors (M) and will be arranged as follows: five car sets will be DT-M-M-M-DT, while six car sets will have an additional intermediate motor. Eight car sets will include an intermediate non-driving trailer (T), arranged as DT-M-M-T-M-M-M-DT. Capacity of a full eight-car consist will be 1,200 total passengers, including 184 seated.

Note that the MP14 class designation has no relation to the trains' assignment to Line 14. Paris Métro rolling stock classes are designated with the prefix MF for "Matériel Fer" which signifies steel-wheeled stock, or MP for "Matériel Pneumatique" for rubber-tired stock. The number designation represents the year when the class is budgeted/ordered, which in this case was 2014. The MP14 on Line 14 is merely a coincidence.

First opened in 1998, Line 14 is the newest line in the Paris Métro and its inauguration introduced several technical advances, most notably for being the world's first subway line to be fully automated without an operator on board the trains. Peak period headways can be as low as 85 seconds! Another significant change was that Line 14's platforms are 120 meters (394 feet) in length, longer than the typical Métro platform and with the arrival of the MP14, eight-car sets will be in use on the Métro for the first time ever. Line 14 is currently 5.3 miles in length with nine stations, and the northern extension opening this month will add 3.6 miles and four stations. Line 14 is one of the Métro's busier lines, with an average ridership of over 500,000 on a typical weekday. This is certain to grow when the extension opens, with the added benefit of relieving overcrowding on Line 13.

The success of automated, driverless operation on Line 14 led to studying the feasibility of installing a similar system on a legacy line, and to that end, work began on the conversion of Line 1, originally opened in 1900, to be the second driverless line in Paris. The project was completed in 2012 and has operated successfully since. Work is now underway on a similar conversion of Line 4, to be completed in 2022.

As more MP14 trains arrive and enter service, they will displace Line 14's current fleet of MP89CA and MP05 trains, cascading them to Line 4. Along with the arrival of dedicated MP14s, Line 4 will end up with a mixed fleet of three classes, unique for the Métro in the current age, where typically each line has a dedicated fleet of a single car class. This will in turn trigger a cascade of the current fleet of MP89CC six-car sets (which had previously served on Line 1) to Line 6, resulting in the retirement of the MP73 class. Note that the MP89CC sets will be shortened by one intermediate motor car for service on Line 6; presumably some of them will be saved as spares.

Like the other non-driverless lines in Paris, Line 6 is equipped with ATO and trains are staffed with an onboard operator. Though there are no plans to convert Line 6 to driverless operation at this time, it should be noted that the MP89CC's programmable acceleration and braking characteristics will be modified to replicate the performance of the MP73 class, which has been favorable for minimal stress on the structural elements on the mostly elevated Line 6, a significant length of which has been in service for 114 years.

Meanwhile, Line 11's MP14 trains will be longer by one car over the current four-car MP59 sets, which are currently the oldest serving cars on the Paris Métro and will be retired. Line 11 is currently being extended from its current terminal at Mairie de Lilas east to Rosny-sous-Bois, which is scheduled to open in 2023.

Line 1 will not see any changes to its fleet of MP05 trains. The next new cars to arrive in Paris will be the MF19 class for several of the Métro's steel rail lines.

Sources: **Railway Gazette International** *October 13 web post, Alstom October 12 press release, and Île-de-France Mobilités and RATP websites, with additional research conducted by Subutay Musluoglu and confirmed with Julian Pepinster, RATP.*

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Paris Métro's MP14 Class Begins to Enter Service

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The head end of an MP14 car at Alstom's primary assembly plant in Valenciennes, which is located in northern France near the border with Belgium.
Alstom promotional photograph, February 18, 2020

The MP14 car interior, as seen at Alstom's Valenciennes plant. Note the open gangway design.
Alstom promotional photograph, February 18, 2020

A good view of the platform edge screen doors as it interfaces with an MP14 train, as seen at the Saint Lazare station on Line 14. The use of platform edge screen doors goes hand in hand with the line's automated, driverless system. Line 1 was retrofitted with such doors when it was converted in 2012, and Line 4 stations are currently receiving these as work proceeds with its conversion to automatic operation, scheduled to be completed by 2022.
Julian Pepinster photograph, October 12, 2020

Select stations on Line 13 have also been equipped with platform edge doors in recent years as a safety measure to cope with platform crowding and to help keep the line's operations to schedule. Line 13 is a traditional steel-railed line which first opened in 1911, and is notable for having two northern branches. It is currently the fifth-busiest line in Paris, with an average ridership over 610,000 on a typical weekday. The line has been resignaled with Communications Based Train Control, and operates in ATO mode with a driver onboard the trains, similar to how the 14 Street-Canarsie L and Flushing 7 Lines operate in NYC. The northern extension to Line 14 which opens this coming December should hopefully relieve some of Line 13's crowding.

A view of the MP14 train at the Saint-Lazare station on Line 14, as it shunts into the tail tracks beyond the station to relay for its next southbound run. A 3.6 mile, four station extension from here north to a new terminal at Mairie de Saint-Ouen is scheduled to open on December 17.
Julian Pepinster photograph, October 12, 2020

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Paris Métro's MP14 Class Begins to Enter Service

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A mix of passengers, RATP employees and RATP security staff are getting set for the inaugural in-service run of the first MP14 train, as seen at the Olympiades station, Line 14's southern terminal. An extension beyond here south to Orly Airport is currently under construction and is anticipated to open in mid-2024.
Julian Pepinster photograph, October 12, 2020

The MP14 in first-day service, with a decent size passenger loading considering the ongoing global pandemic. Note the 100% mask compliance rate, at least as seen in this view.
Julian Pepinster photograph, October 12, 2020

Exactly one month later, a southbound MP14 arriving at the Châtelet station. Note the overhead digital information display which indicates the arriving train as being 8 cars in length, while the following train is short, a 6-car train comprised of either MP89CA or MP05 cars.
Julian Pepinster photograph, November 12, 2020

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Paris Métro's MP14 Class Begins to Enter Service

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A prominent, highly beneficial feature onboard the MP14 cars are overhead digital display screens which indicate the location of the car within the overall consist in relation to the upcoming station stop, providing key locational information on stairs, elevators, and escalators; exits (sortie), and transfers to other railway lines. In this instance, the next station is the Gare de Lyon railway station, with transfers to Métro Line 1 and RER Lines A and D as well as mainline and suburban services. A display very similar to this is coming soon to the NYC subway, as it will be installed on the new R211 class for Subdivision "B."
Julian Pepinster/RATP photograph, November 12, 2020

An MP14 set on night trials on Line 6, just departed from Saint-Jacques and heading east to Glacière.
Lucas Hatier photograph, June 27, 2019

MTA Outlines Proposed 2021 Budget and Four-Year Financial Plan

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the end of the Plan period, McKinsey projects aggregate MTA ridership will only reach 80% of the pre-pandemic level under this scenario.

Service Reductions Aligned with Lower Ridership to Save $1.3 Billion Annually

Without emergency aid, the MTA is proposing service reductions of 40% for the New York City subways and buses, and 50% for the Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North Railroad, for a combined annualized savings of nearly $1.3 billion. Service reductions are estimated to have a workplace impact of nearly 9,400 positions. The proposed service reductions focus on achieving significant cost reductions, mitigating negative customer impacts and rightsizing service in response to current and projected ridership.

MTA New York City Transit — Subway

Subway service reductions of up to 40% may result in reduced train frequency, suspension of service on some lines at certain times of day, and/or major weekend changes. The reduction in service may allow for a 35% subway fleet reduction, generating savings in maintenance, cleaning and inspection costs.

The service reduction would result in the elimination of nearly 2,400 positions.

MTA New York City Transit — Department of Buses and MTA Bus Company

The MTA proposes to reduce bus service by up to 40% through elimination or consolidation of bus routes and reductions in frequency by up to 33% on the routes that remain. Changes to routes would ensure that service is available within a half-mile of existing stops.

The bus service reductions would result in the elimination of nearly 5,900 positions in total across MTA New York City Transit and the MTA Bus Company.

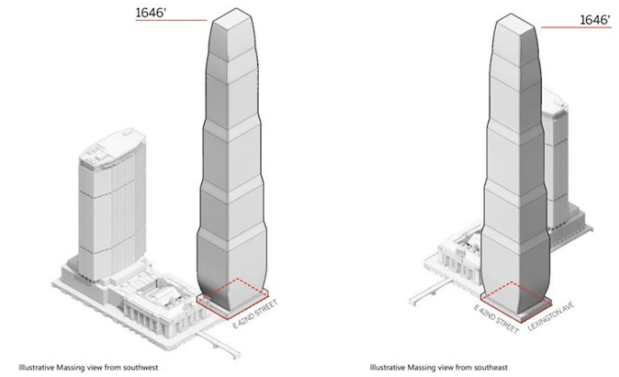
MTA Long Island Rail Road and MTA Metro-North Railroad

The MTA proposes to reduce commuter railroad service by 50%, which may result in peak period train frequencies of every 20 to 30 minutes along busier line segments, or hourly at less busy line segments. Proposed reductions under consideration take into account the existence of nearby alternate service and maintaining adequate service for essential workers. Off-peak and weekend service may be hourly, reflecting current ridership levels while maintaining sufficient service to prevent crowding.

The railroads' service reductions would result in the elimination of a total of more than 900 positions. (MTA press release, November 18)

TRANSIT, COMMUTER RAIL & PASSENGER RAILROAD NEWS
by Jeff Erlitz and Ron Yee

NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA
MTA NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT



Project Commodore looking northeast and northwest.
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill rendering

An Environmental Assessment Statement for 109 E. 42nd Street in Midtown East reveals details for the proposed Project Commodore, a 1,646-foot-tall skyscraper on the site currently occupied by Grand Hyatt New York. Developed under the Commodore Owner LLC by RXR Realty and TF Cornerstone, the mixed-use supertall is designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Components include 2,108,820 square feet of office space, a smaller 500-room Grand Hyatt hotel, approximately 10,000 square feet open-air publicly accessible space and 43,370 square feet of retail including some controlled by the MTA on the cellar, ground and second floors.

Sitting directly east of Grand Central Terminal in the center of the Midtown East rezoning initiative, the 89-story building would yield a total of 2,976,740 square feet.

The ground floor would contain the hotel lobby and office lobby, a reconstructed Lexington Passage with MTA retail, 6,350 square feet of transit hall space and approximately 2,400 square feet of additional area for subway entries off E. 42nd Street and Lexington Avenue. The hotel lobby would have frontage on Lexington Avenue, with the office lobby accessed from E. 42nd Street. An office lobby and open-air publicly accessible space would occupy the second floor with frontage on Lexington Avenue. Office space is planned to be located on floors 7-63, and the hotel on floors 65-83.

The project would also bring improvements to Grand Central Terminal and the Grand Central-42nd Street subway station, including a redesigned and expanded subway entrance at E. 42nd Street with natural light. Turnstiles would be relocated to street level and a new staircase would be added to redistribute traffic through the mezzanine level. A new transit hall containing retail, information screens and booths, as well as connections to the Terminal would be constructed at the ground floor level on the western side of the development site. The eastern side of the transit hall would consist of retail stores and overall the transit hall would work with the existing 42nd Street Passage to increase pedestrian throughput.

To increase sidewalk widths, stairs to the mezzanine level of the subway station located near the northwest corner of Lexington Avenue and E. 42nd Street would be relocated further north. Also, part of this reconstruction is a subway entrance with an ADA elevator, designed to introduce light and air to the mezzanine level. The Lexington Passage entrance would be redesigned with higher ceiling heights to improve the pedestrian experience and the passage would include retail on both sides of the corridor as well as access to the Grand Central Market. Also noteworthy is a new Short Loop connection that would provide direct access from Metro-North's lower platform level to the Lexington Avenue 4 5 6 subway mezzanine level. A similar connection with stairs and an ADA elevator would be built from the southernmost portion of the new East Side Access/Long Island Rail Road concourse level into the Lexington Avenue 4 5 6 subway mezzanine level.

The next step for the project is a public scoping meeting, which will be held on Monday, December 21, 2020. If the development is ultimately approved, timeline details include 18 months of demolition and 47 months of construction. The expected completion date for Project Commodore is 2030. (***New York YIMBY***, November 21)

MTA NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) announced early completion of elevator replacements at the 191st Street 1 station. The project was expected to be completed late in November, two months ahead of its originally projected February, 2021 completion. The elevators were initially closed on February 1, 2020 and on track to reopen ahead of schedule following safety, fire and operation testing.

Due to the early completion of the 191st Street elevators, the Authority has announced the acceleration of the 181st Street 1 elevator replacement project timeline. The 181st Street project was slated to begin in March, 2021 but is now scheduled to begin on December 5, 2020 and be completed by December, 2021.

The work at 181st Street will include:

- Full replacement of four elevators and machine room equipment
- New LiftNet system to improve incident response time
- Battery back-up system that would allow customers to exit an elevator even during a power outage
- Installation of CCTV and fire alarms (two cameras per elevator)
- Adding direct access to the northbound platform

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Transit, Commuter Rail & Passenger Railroad News

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from the new elevators

The 181st Street station opened in 1906 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Elevators in the station reach a depth of 122 feet below ground.

The elevator replacement work is part of broader elevator replacement work at five separate "deep" stations in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan — 168th Street, 181st Street and 191st Street on the 1 line; 181st Street and 190th Street on the A line. For many customers there, the elevators are utilized both for accessing the subway as well as more easily traversing the neighborhood's unique, steep topography.

The MTA announced the early completion of the 168th Street elevator replacement in December, 2019. On the A line, the 181st Street elevator replacement was completed on schedule and reopened on August 2. The final A line station, 190th Street, is in progress and scheduled to reopen in September, 2021. (MTA press release, November 5)

The second phase of work to replace and install over 6,300 feet of track and over 9,800 feet of third rail at or near two stations at the end of the E line in Queens will be completed ahead of schedule and on budget. The project, originally expected to finish in mid-December, will now wrap up on November 30.

The existing track had reached the end of its useful life and required complete replacement, which will lead to improved reliability and better service throughout the line in Queens and Manhattan. Since 2016, there have been 46 incidents between Jamaica-Van Wyck and Jamaica Center on the E line because of track conditions, resulting in 713 delayed trains.

Phase 1 of the project was completed ahead of schedule in October, which allowed for an acceleration of Phase 2 work and limited train service at Sutphin Blvd/Archer Av-JFK and Jamaica Center-Parsons/Archer on November 2.

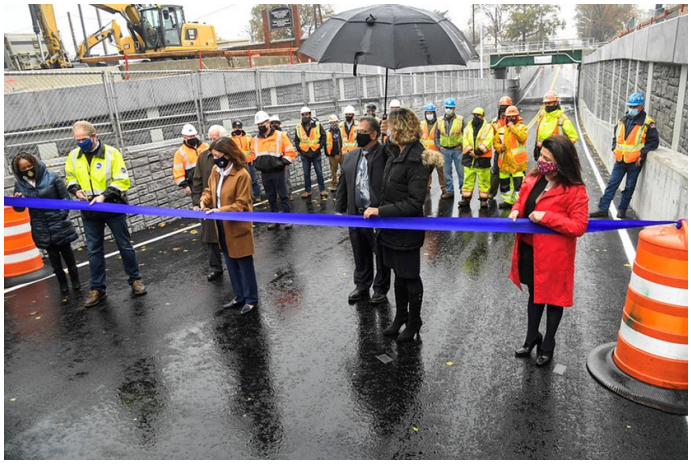
The MTA accelerated this project's timeline from later in the 2020-24 Capital Program to take advantage of low airport travel and low general subway ridership due to the COVID-19 pandemic, minimizing the disruption of the work and impacting fewer riders. (MTA Press Release, November 23)

On November 8, Track 3 on the 42nd Street Shuttle S was permanently removed from service, reducing the shuttle to a two-track operation. This is part of the whole reconfiguration of the shuttle under contracts A-35302 and A-37116, with rebuilt stations at both ends, Times Square and Grand Central. MLJ Contracting is the prime contractor for this project with Five Star Electric Corporation as the electrical/signal sub-contractor. All of the signal equipment was removed between November 9 and 20.

MTA Long Island Rail Road

On Friday, November 13, School Street (on the border of the villages of Westbury and New Cassel, about a quarter mile east of the Westbury station) was reopened to vehicular traffic. This was only five weeks after the new bridge carrying the Main Line over it was rolled into place. Unfortunately, the ceremony took place in the rain.

Among those in attendance were Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, MTA Construction & Development President Janno Lieber, Long Island Rail Road President Phil Eng, Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, Senator Anna M. Kaplan, Assemblymember Charles Lavine, North Hempstead Town Supervisor Judi Bosworth, Mayor of Westbury Peter Cavallaro and North Hempstead Councilmember Viviana Russell. (MTA press release, November 13)



Dignitaries cutting the ribbon to reopen the School Street underpass on November 13.
Marc A. Hermann/MTA New York City Transit photograph

View north of the new School Street underpass on November 18.
Jeff Erlitz photograph

On Monday, November 30, the Willis Avenue grade crossings in Mineola were permanently closed to vehicular and pedestrian traffic. These were the sixth and seventh grade crossings closed as part of the Main Line Third Track project. Willis Avenue crosses both the Main Line and Oyster Bay Branch. As was done elsewhere, a new roadway and sidewalk will be excavated out under-

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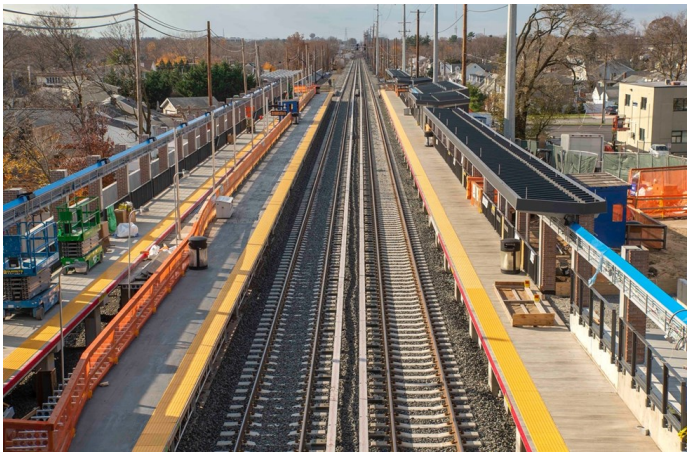
Looking north on Willis Avenue in Mineola on November 7, 2018, before any construction work had started. The crossing in the foreground is the Main Line and the one in the background is the Oyster Bay Branch.
Jeff Erlitz photograph

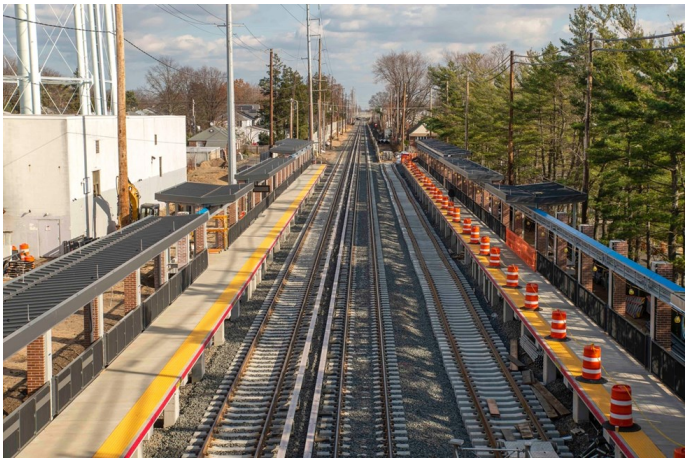
C-3 5012 (Kawasaki Rail Car, 8/1999) is leading Train #6507 from Oyster Bay to Jamaica in this view looking north on Willis Avenue on August 30 of this year. Preliminary utility construction work had just started.
Jeff Erlitz photograph

Looking southeast across the Main Line on November 28, 2020, two days before the crossing was permanently closed to traffic. Willis Avenue had already been reduced to a single lane, northbound only, several weeks before this.
Jeff Erlitz photograph

neath the rights-of-way. This work is scheduled for completion in December, 2021.



View west at the Carle Place station on November 28. Concrete ties were installed on both tracks only in the past month. The new permanent westbound platform is on the right. The section beyond the wooden barrier that fell down in strong winds is what is currently in service. On this platform, most of the new canopies are now in place. On the left is the temporary eastbound platform sitting on the location of the future third track. To the left of that is the permanent platform, not yet in service. Most of the railings are now in place on that platform but not the canopy.
Jeff Erlitz photograph



View east at the Carle Place station on November 28. The east end of the new permanent eastbound platform (on the right) is currently only being used as a walkway to get to the Carle Road access point at the far end of the platform. As was done at Merillon Avenue station back in October, a short stretch of third track has been laid down next to the new platform. Another temporary platform has just started to be constructed over this track. When completed, this east end will be placed in service and the temporary platform to the west will be removed, enabling installation of the third track in that location. The east end of the westbound platform (on the left) is not yet in service.

In other Main Line Third Track news, construction is moving along nicely at the Carle Place station, as seen in the photographs above. Both 12-car platforms are completed, and canopies, railings, lighting and signage are being installed. The new overpass is also nearing completion, with all windows now installed and finishing

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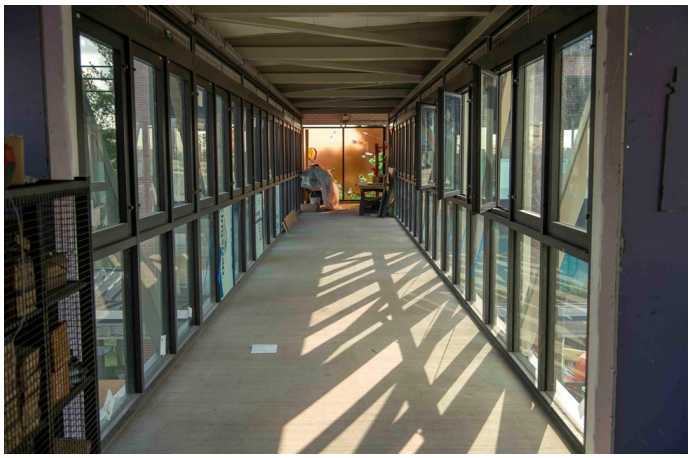
The westbound station building and overpass on November 28. Most of the windows are part of the artwork installation.
Jeff Erlitz photograph



Looking south across the new overpass on November 28. The glass panel at the far end is part of the artwork installation.
Jeff Erlitz photograph

The eastbound station building and overpass on November 28.
Jeff Erlitz photograph

touches being added. Both elevators have already been installed.

MTA Metro-North Railroad

Metro-North Railroad unveiled major new features to the Metro-North TrainTime app, including one that lets customers track in real time the amount of space available on each car of an approaching train. The feature is designed to help customers keep appropriate social distance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Riders can also easily track the location of trains before and after arriving at their origin station right within the app.

The enhancements to the app result from the talent and creativity of in-house staff members at Metro-North, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and the Long Island Rail Road. In July, Metro-North sponsored a hackathon attended by teams of tech experts who are continuing to work with the MTA and Metro-North to further refine and enhance the app.

"We are thrilled about the newly updated Metro-North TrainTime app. Making as much information available to riders as possible is crucial in making them feel safer

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Transit, Commuter Rail & Passenger Railroad News

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and more comfortable on the railroad — especially during the COVID-19 era," said Randy Glucksman, MTA Board member and Chair of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council. "Such ongoing and impressive updates provide commuters with the technology they need to improve their confidence in their trip and in the system. We're looking forward to the ongoing development and partnership with NJ Transit so that west-of-Hudson riders will similarly benefit."

Customers who already have the app installed will receive an automatic update with the new feature, and will be able to do so on a new, more detailed interface. An additional feature of the app provides customers with push notifications for track assignments at Grand Central Terminal allowing riders to spread out throughout the station complexes rather than standing in immediate proximity to departure boards.

The capacity tracking feature is being rolled out by car fleet. It is currently available for trains operating on the electric portions of the Harlem Line and Hudson Line. These trains are composed of M-7 railcars. The feature is in development for the M-8 car fleet that provides service on the New Haven Line, and for Metro-North's diesel fleet.

Updates such as the MTA eTix one-tap connection was added in September, streamlining ticket purchasing for customers who used the MTA eTix app to buy their mobile tickets in advance of travel. Forty percent of all tickets purchased by Metro-North customers are acquired via eTix. Tickets purchased using a mobile device cost the same as those purchased at a ticket machine. Customers can pay with Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express or use digital wallets like Apple Pay and Master Pass.

Since its inception in 2013, the free mobile app, which is available on Google Play and the Apple AppStore, has provided real-time status and schedule information to passengers via their smartphones, along with destination, track assignment and real-time position of the next 12 trains at a given station. Features also include service alerts, fare information, ADA accessibility, parking availability and connecting services. The app is also translated into six languages — English, Spanish, Chinese, Yiddish, Portuguese and Italian.

The hackathon was the first sponsored by the MTA in six years. Previous MTA-sponsored AppQuest challenges in 2012, 2013 and 2014 assisted in the development of other apps to help MTA customers navigate the system. (MTA press release, November 16)

AMTRAK

Amtrak's Moynihan Train Hall in the former Farley Post Office Building across from Penn Station in New York City is set to open in January, 2021, Amtrak President and Chief Executive Officer Bill Flynn said in late November.

The new hall will relieve crowding and offer enhanced facilities for travelers using Amtrak and MTA Long Island Rail Road trains, Flynn said during a November 23 media call regarding Amtrak's fiscal-year 2020 preliminary results.

Amtrak and New York Empire State Development Corporation have been renovating the Farley Post Office into the train hall over the past few years.

The new facility will feature a sky-lit atrium, dedicated rider waiting areas, a combined ticketing and baggage area, improved passenger security, accessibility for riders with disabilities, WiFi in customer spaces and a new metropolitan lounge, according to the project's website.

The $1.6 billion project is being funded by a combination of dollars from the state of New York, Amtrak, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey and joint venture developers.

The new facility will feature a sky-lit atrium, dedicated rider waiting areas, a combined ticketing and baggage area, improved passenger security, accessibility for riders with disabilities, WiFi in customer spaces and a new Metropolitan Lounge.
Empire State Development/Amtrak rendering

OTHER SYSTEMS

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

The cash-strapped Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) is proposing "temporary" service reductions and station/line abandonments to take effect beginning Summer, 2021. With severe ridership losses due to the pandemic, fare revenues have plummeted, making the continuation of current levels of service fiscally impossible without emergency federal relief funding. The cuts are estimated to save the MBTA $142 million by Summer, 2022. Commuter rail and ferry ridership is down 90%, subway ridership down 75% and local bus ridership down 60% although ridership decreases do vary on a line-by-line basis. Proposed service cutbacks include: ending subway light rail and bus service at midnight, an hour earlier than present; subway service reduced by about 20% (headways increased by one minute); Green Line's E line would terminate at Brigham Circle, not Heath Street; weekday Commuter Rail services would end at 9 PM and all weekend service would be eliminated; six lightly used commuter rail stations would be closed: Plymouth & Plimptonville stations in Walpole, Cedar Park station in Melrose, Prides Crossing in Beverly, Silver Hill & Hastings stations in Weston; all Commuter Ferry routes would be suspended indefi-

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VIENNA-BRATISLAVA-UKRAINE
by Jack May
(Photographs by the author, except where noted)

In 2014 Clare and I traveled to northern Africa with a group of mostly German traction enthusiasts to visit the tramways and sights of Tunisia and Algeria. It was under the leadership of Thomas Fischer of Berlin, and we enjoyed it very much. So when the opportunity to sign up for a similar tour, specifically to Ukraine, we jumped at the opportunity. With all the troubles Ukraine has had, specifically with Russia, we thought we would rather be part of a group than travel to some of the more remote areas on our own. I had been to some of the cities in the western part of Ukraine in 2008, traveling with Alan Fishel en route from Moscow to Romania, stopping at Konotop, Zhitomir, Vinnytsia and Lviv,* and Clare and I visited Kiev* in 1997, when we took in many of the museums and other places of interest, including the metro and large tramway network.

*Lviv, prior to the First World War, was part of Austria-Hungary, and since has been ruled by Poland, Russia, and Ukraine, all with different languages and even two different alphabets, so as a result, in the past 100 years has been known as Lemberg, Lwow, Lvov, and Lviv (respectively). Similarly Kiev (Russian spelling) is now the capital of Ukraine, whose government prefers to Romanize the Cyrillic spelling as Kyiv. So, all of that notwithstanding, I feel most comfortable using the Lviv and Kiev spellings for this report.

The 12-city, 14-day tour, to take place in June, 2017, would include the five cities I had already visited, all concentrated at its beginning, but then continue on to seven others, which all have substantial streetcar networks. And since I was happy to return to the ones I had previously toured, as each has unique highlights, I signed on.

Because there are no non-stop flights from here to Lviv, the first city on the tour, or Odessa, its final stop, and the air fares were very high to those relatively out-of-the-way places, we decided to try to use frequent flyer miles and also sandwich the tour between two other cities we wanted to visit again, Vienna and Paris. Without going into United Airlines' complex frequent flyer rules and regulations, the result was an expenditure of 75,000 miles* each for a three-week trip.

*30,000 miles North America-Europe each way, plus 15,000 more for the second of our two stopovers.

As it turned out it was a great trip while it lasted, but it was cut short in Kiev, as you will discover if you read through all the report's installments.

I quickly found convenient affordable hotels and accomplished the travel arrangements for all of our flights. Much of the work I usually have to do when planning such a trip was not necessary as Thomas Fischer's Intra-Express company took care of everything for the Ukraine portion of the journey.

Monday, June 12

Our daughter-in-law drove us to Newark Airport for the first leg of our overnight journey to Vienna, United Flight 134 to Zurich. We arrived at security at 17:00 and had no trouble passing through. Our Boeing 767 in a 2-3-2 coach configuration awaited us, and, despite what I would call organized chaotic boarding, was ready to depart on time. We were back in row 32, seats K and L on the starboard side of the jumbo jet that was about 80 percent full. We pushed off at 18:28 (25) and hit the Friendly Skies at 18:38. It was a good flight in that there were just a few instances of turbulence, all mild, the chicken I was served for dinner tasted very good and there were no crying babies aboard. It was a bit cold in the cabin, so we just kept our jackets on for the entire flight.

Tuesday, June 13

We touched down at Kloten Airport under cloudy skies at 7:44, arrived at the gate at 7:49 (8:30) and were happy we were early. Getting through immigration was easy, especially when compared to our last time in Zurich when there were very long lines. We made it to the gate for our connecting flight to Vienna before 9 and waited for the boarding announcement for our Austrian Airlines Airbus 320 that came soon afterward. We had seats 21B and C in the 3-and-3 narrow-body aircraft, which was about 85 percent full, but it was quite stuffy until the air conditioning was turned on — only a minute before we pushed away from the gate. While we waited we were entertained by the playing of a series of Strauss waltzes over the public address system, perfectly timed to end with the Blue Danube just before the beginning of the officiously-required safety announcements.

We pulled away from the gate at 10:00 (precisely) and lifted off at 10:14 for the 75-minute flight. Before we could finish our complimentary snacks and drinks we began our decent into Flughafen Wien. And as soon as we hit the tarmac at 11:09 we were serenaded again by the Blue Danube waltz. We reached the gate at 11:15, ten minutes early.

I had checked the internet for transportation from the airport into the city and saw that fastest rail service to the central area is provided by the privately-operated City Airport Train (CAT), which runs every half hour over OBB (federal railway) tracks and takes just 16 minutes to reach the Wien Mitte station. But there were three things against our use of it, its price (€12), its lack of fare integration into the Wiener Linien local transit tariff, and the fact that we were staying at the Azimut Hotel, a block away from Vienna's new Hauptbahnhof. I knew there was rail service that ran directly to the main railway station and so I bought 72-hour transit passes for the two of us at the tourist information booth. I was warned that we would have to pay small supplements, because the airport is just outside the city zone. But when I tried to buy them at a vending machine, I could not figure out which buttons to press, as everything was displayed in German. See http://www.urbanrail.net/eu/at/vienna/wien.htm for a map of Vienna's rail system.

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Vienna-Bratislava-Ukraine

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We went down to the inbound platform of the underground station and observed the 11:39 CAT train, followed by an S7 MU that was running to Floridsdorf via the Mitte station at 11:48, and finally our 12:03 train arrived. It was a through Railjet service crossing the entire country to Salzburg and Innsbruck from the Airport, via the main railway station, our destination. Fortunately our tickets were not examined on the 15-minute nonstop run, and we arrived at the beautiful new Hauptbahnhof on time at 12:18 under sunny skies. By 12:45 we were in our room. Clare decided to fight her jet-lag by resting, but I had to take advantage of the fine weather, and was back on the street by 13:30.

The following consists of a quick superficial view of Vienna, just some thoughts that come to my mind when I think of that glorious city. In no way should my description be considered comprehensive, as there is a great deal more that can be recorded — and indeed many have written books on the subject.

In addition to being a traction paradise, Vienna, or Wien in German, is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It was high on my list of places to visit on my first trip to Europe — in 1960. My next journey was in 1967, and I followed up with many more in the 50 years since. The city's beauty is both natural (lying below the Vienna woods and its charming vineyards and along the Danube River) and architectural. It was the seat of the Hapsburg empire until its demise in 1918, and thus was endowed with beautiful palaces, churches, theaters, concert halls, art museums, monuments, and parks — virtually all preserved and functioning today as tourist venues, with many serving the local populace in the manner originally intended. Many of these institutions are located on the Ring, a wide, tree-lined, circular boulevard that is also famous for its busy streetcar lines. The Ring surrounds the old city (Innere Stadt), the historic center of Austria's capital, which is anchored by St. Stephen's Cathedral. Trams were removed from the Innere Stadt as early as 1942 (Route 58), and even the radial tram routes whose terminals were on the inner side the Ring had their loops relocated to the outside by 1971 (the last was Route 71). Now you can get to the heart of the Innere Stadt by metro from four directions, with lines U1 and U3 crossing at the Stephensplatz station.

The city was extensively bombed by the allies during World War II, but the damage to its iconic buildings has been repaired. The motion picture, The Third Man, produced in 1949, takes place in immediate postwar Vienna, and provides a good look at the area from those desolate days, while also highlighting two of the city's iconic features: the huge Ferris wheel at the Prater amusement park and the zither, a stringed musical instrument to be ever associated with Austria. Another essence of the city that makes it such an inviting place is its food and wine — think Wiener Schnitzel and Sacher Torte (the Cafe Sacher is in the Innere Stadt).

Vienna, with a population of 1.8 million, has one of the largest tramway systems in the world, falling just barely behind Melbourne, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Koln, and Berlin (also the Upper Silesia interurban network) for that honor. In addition to its 100+ miles of tramway, the city-owned Wiener Linien operates a growing network of metro (U-bahn) lines (now 53 miles), while another city-owned subsidiary, Wiener Lokalbahn (WLB), operates a 20-mile long interurban route to the town of Baden. This is all supplemented by a suburban and cross-city S-bahn system operated by the Austrian Federal Railways (OBB).

The tramway network consists of 28 routes, mostly radiating from the Ring, but also circling along the Ring, and operating through the part of the city located on the "left bank" of the Danube, to the east. Of special interest is the remaining tram subway (a second was converted into a part of a Metro line) and the former operation of 42 American streetcars obtained from the Third Avenue Railway System in New York City. These "Z class" cars were limited to lines with wide clearances and operated in Vienna from 1949 to 1969. Fortunately, many were saved for historic tram establishments in Europe and others were shipped back to the USA, where they now operate at trolley museums in Maryland, Connecticut, and Maine.

On my first visit to the city the streetcar system was supplemented by the Stadtbahn, a grade separated rapid transit system using trains of ancient four-wheeled streetcar-like rolling stock. This system's infrastructure has been incorporated into the five-line U-bahn network. U-bahn lines 1, 2, 3, and 4 are typical high-platform metro lines, while the U6 retains some of its former Stadtbahn flavor with loading from low-level platforms. Many of the beautiful station buildings of the original Stadtbahn have been restored, and were renovated for use as entrances to the heavy rapid transit lines. The U-bahn network consists of 109 stations over its 53 route miles.

On my first visit the rolling stock on the tramway system consisted almost entirely of clunky four-wheelers (beautiful in a way that only railfans appreciate), but since has evolved through European Duewag-style articulated cars to a mix of 100-percent low-floor units and the newest of the system's remaining high-floor two-section articulated cars. The low-floor units, some 330, were constructed by Siemens, which took over Austrian carbuilder SGP, which also built part of the fleet of high-floor articulated cars. The other high-floor articulateds came from Lohner-Rotax, another Austrian carbuilder, which was absorbed by Bombardier and will soon be delivering some 119 cars (with options for 37 more) to replace all of the remaining high-floor units.

The Siemens ULF (Ultra Low Floor) cars come in two sizes, five-unit and seven-unit. Up until their delivery began (in 1998), the Vienna tramway was known for the bright red color of its rolling stock; as you will see in the photos below these cars are instead painted silver and have red trim. However the tramway's livery will revert

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back to red with the delivery of the new Flexities, although the color scheme will not be exactly the same as the E1 and E2 high-floor cars, which are painted white through the windows; instead the new Bombardier trams will be black above the belt rail.

With three full days in the area, I planned to spend one entire day on the Wiener Linien, another in Bratislava (an hour away), and the third with Clare visiting museums and other points of interest. The extra half-day ended up being very useful, as it allowed me to ride and photograph additional rail transit.

I first walked back to the Hauptbahnhof, now the city's focal point of long-distance and intercity rail. The Sudtirolerplatz station of metro line U1 is adjacent, along with two similarly named stops for trams, in a trolley subway and on the surface. The new Hbf, on the site of the old Sudbahnhof and Ostbhanhof, is both modern and attractive. The 12-track, 6-platform facility fully opened in 2015 and contains all the amenities needed for a transportation hub and entryway to a major world city (in other words, nothing like Amtrak's Penn Station).

Note the mention of a trolley subway. The Gurtel U Strab was opened in 1969; it contains six stations and has four portals, serving four local lines and the WLB (Badner Bahn) interurban. I started my afternoon activities at Sudtirolerplatz photographing trams at the surface station as well as rolling through the portal to the subway stop.

I then rode the U1 subway two stops to the Karlsplatz station on the Ring, which extends under the Oper (Opera) surface terminal of tram route 62 and the WLB. The U2 and U4 lines also have underground stations here, while streetcar routes 1, 2, 71, and D run along the iconic boulevard. A busy place indeed. The 1, 62, and WLB turn off to head for the tram subway and I grabbed some photos before boarding a WLB car.

The WLB was running every 15 minutes and I decided to ride out to Vosendorf-Siebenhirten, about halfway along the line to Baden and the end of the city zone in which my day pass was valid. This gave me the opportunity to ride through the tram subway and over some trackage unique to the interurban that will soon be surplus. The WLB and 62 basically run over the same tracks as far as an area called Meidling, but just after the subway portal split up onto different alignments for a short distance (four stops on the 62), as the WLB turns off to serve its carhouse. I took a stopover at that point for photos and had some excellent luck when I was able to photograph a heritage car. The WLB is building a new carhouse and shop at Inzersdorf, further out on the line, and when that is completed the existing facility at Wolfganggasse will be abandoned. Thus at that time the "detour" will no longer be needed and the WLB will run directly over route 62 track for the whole distance to Meidling. At Meidling (Philadelphiabrucke*) the WLB leaves the city tramway network, and follows its own right-of-way to Baden. The WLB's roster consists of 40 cars, 26 high-floor units built by SGP (now a part of Siemens) from 1979 to 1993 and 14 low-floor cars built by Bombardier starting in 2000. In general the two types are MUed together to create two-car accessible trains for the 62-minute run between Oper and Baden. The WLB has called for bids of 18 to 24 units to begin replacing the Duewag-like older cars.

*It is said that the bridge over the mainline railroad to Graz at that point was named after the city in which the railroad's first locomotive was built — at the Norris Locomotive Works plant in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1838 (see https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=de&u=https://www.wien.gv.at/wiki/index.php%3Ftitle%3DPhiladelphiabr%25C3%25BCcke&prev=search). The WLB and U6 Philadelphiabrucke stations were renamed Meidling in 2014.

It turned out that a railfan group from Wales had chartered the car for a tour of Vienna's tramway, and their trip serendipitously ended at the time and place that coincided with my visit. A few of them joined me as I continued my journey to Vosendorf, where I took some additional photos.

It was a relatively short walk from the WLB at that point to the U6 line at its Siebenhirten terminal, where the next chapter of my exploits on this first day in Europe will resume.

The golden rays of a setting sun shining on the island of Manhattan from our United Boeing 767 en route from Newark to Zurich. Especially noticeable is the United Nations building along the East River, the slanted, triangular roof of Citicorp Center, Worldwide Plaza between W. 49th and 50th Streets, and 8th and 9th Avenues, and of course, Central Park.

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Two views of the tramway at Sudtirolerplatz, showing Vienna's Siemens-built ULF, or Ultra Low Floor, cars, which began appearing on the property in 1993. Wiener Linien's roster has about 330 of these 100-percent low-floor units, which come in two sizes. The left view, of the Sudtirolerplatz stop, is of a five-section unit, about 16 feet long, while the right photo, taken virtually from the same spot, shows a seven-section car, 24 feet long. The next group of low-floor cars, which will be arriving soon, are Bombardier Flexities, all to be about 21 feet long. In the background of the left side photo, an E2 can be seen exiting the ramp from the underground level.

An outbound E2 motor pulling a matching C5 trailer on the 1 line has turned off the Ring and is shown entering Wiedner Hauptstrasse as it approaches its Resselgasse station. An inbound ULF has just left that stop and a WLB train is close behind. 4317 was built by Lohner, but clearly Duewag licensed its design to SGP as well, as both car-builders constructed almost identical-looking E2 rolling stock.

The yard outside the WLB's Wolfganggasse carhouse, showing mostly high-floor cars ready to go out on the road for the afternoon rush hour, which will cut the headway in half to every 7.5 minutes between Oper and Wiener Neudorf (37 minutes), along the innermost portion of the line. The two-section high-floor articulated cars usually run as single units . A newer low-floor car snuck into the scene at the far right.

The Wiener Lokalbahn is to receive 18 new low-floor interurbans from Bombardier in 2021. As you can see, they are to be very lightweight units.

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Old-timer 1 deadheads back to the Wiener Tramwaymuseum after having dropped a group of railfans at the WLB's Wolfganggasse carhouse. The four-wheeler is a KSW car built for Vienna in 1944 by Fuchs in Heidelberg. KSW stands for Krieg Strassebahn Wagen, with Krieg translating to war. These were very simple spartan cars whose construction used little materiel, and were manufactured to replace equipment destroyed by allied bombing. Their production lasted until 1950, with just under 600 motors and trailers built. Oddly enough, after the war, the design was adopted by Konstal, the Polish carbuilder, and some 1,700 units were constructed between 1956 and 1962 for use in that country; two Type N cars still operate in regular passenger service on Route 38 in Bytom, which is part of Poland's Upper Silesia interurban system.*
(From left to right: CEO of Wiener Lokalbahnen, Monika Unterholzner, Bombardier Austria CEO, Christian Diewald and Vienna City Councillor for Public Transport, Ulli Sima.)
Wiener Lokalbahnen photograph via ***Urban Transport*** website

A typical consist for WLB trains covering the entire route from Vienna to Baden, shown at the Vosendorf-Siebenhirten station, at the end of the city fare zone. The combination of the two different types of cars allows floor-height accessibility on all base service trains. 407 is one of 16 low-floor cars manufactured by Bombardier starting in 2000. In addition to being stepless, the 400-series are a little wider and longer than the older 100-series high-floor units.

*Upper Silesia's N-type cars have recently been replaced by modern units.

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STATUS OF NORTH AMERICAN TRANSIT PROJECT OPENINGS SCHEDULED FOR 2020
by Randy Glucksman

This is the most abbreviated list that I have ever had published. Six projects were scheduled for completion including two holdovers from previous years. Five have been moved to 2021: Moynihan Train Hall (connected to NY Penn Station), WMATA Silver Line Phase II, LA Metro Crenshaw/LAX, Edmonton Valley Phase I and Tri-Rail's extension to Miami Central Station. This list was originally prepared last December, which was ahead of the arrival of the COVID-19 Pandemic into the United States and could have contributed to some of the delays.

DATE	AGENCY	CITY	TYPE	LINE	DETAILS	NOTES
June 13	Bay Area Rapid Transit /Valley Transportation Authority	San Jose, California	HR	Berryessa (Silicon Valley) Extension Phase I	Warm Springs to Berryessa/ North San Jose 10 miles, 2 stations	From 2016
September 21	Denver RTD	Denver, Colorado	CR	N - North Metro Rail Phase I	Union Station to Eastlake-24th Avenue 13 miles, 7 stations	From 2018

Legend:
CR: Commuter Rail HR: Heavy Rail LD: Long Distance

BMT ASTORIA BOULEVARD (N)(W) STATION REHABILITATION AND ELEVATOR INSTALLATION COMPLETE

by Subutay Musluoglu

(Photographs by the author)

Despite the coronavirus pandemic, work has continued on NYCT capital projects, including several major station rehabilitations. One of these, the BMT Astoria Boulevard (N)(W) station, was recently completed following a two-year effort, which included the installation of four new elevators.

The rehabilitation of this station is the culmination of a nearly three-year-long program to renew the entire Astoria Line, which opened on February 1, 1917 during the peak of the Dual Contracts era. Originally operated as part of the IRT, then jointly with the BMT, the line was converted to sole BMT operation on October 17, 1949.

Under the renewal program, nearly 7,500 linear feet of track and 10 switches have been replaced. Four of the line's six stations — 39th Avenue-Dutch Kills, 36th Avenue, Broadway and 30th Avenue — were rehabilitated under the citywide Enhanced Stations Initiative, while Ditmars Boulevard and Astoria Boulevard were more comprehensive, stand-alone projects. Work at Astoria Boulevard began in September, 2018 and on March 17, 2019 the station was closed for nine months to allow some of the more challenging elements to be advanced safely without the presence of passengers as trains skipped the station.

The station reopened for service on December 18, 2019, with work continuing through this year. Substantial completion was achieved on July 27, with a ceremony that day celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as the four new elevators entered service. Punchlist items and art installation has continued through this autumn.

The scope of the project was comprehensive, including the following components:

- Replacement of four street-to-mezzanine stairways
- Replacement of four mezzanine-to-platform stairways
- Installation of two street-to-mezzanine elevators
- Installation of two mezzanine-to-platform elevators
- Demolition and rebuilding of the entire mezzanine, which included raising the underside of the mezzanine deck and concurrently lowering the street surface grade, which increased clearance to reduce the occurrence of oversize vehicle strikes on the station structure
- Reinforced street columns and foundations to support the additional loads incurred due to the elevators and new facilities
- Replacement of platforms roofs (previously wooden canopies) and the mezzanine level overpass walkway roofs
- Replacement of the precast concrete platform panels
- Miscellaneous steel and concrete repairs throughout
- Platform edging replacement
- Replacement of the stair refuge enclosures with glass enclosures at all four platform stairs
- Improved lighting, electrical systems, and communications systems throughout

This project is notable for several reasons. For starters, two elevators were installed between the street and mezzanine level. The justification for this is that the Astoria Boulevard station has a larger footprint than most typical NYC elevated stations, oriented north-south above 31st Street as it spans the six-lane Grand Central Parkway (in a cut below), five lanes of Hoyt Avenue South and seven lanes of Hoyt Avenue North/Astoria Boulevard North.

There are multiple conflicting movements here as traffic is entering and exiting the Grand Central Parkway just west of 31st Street, and there are turn lanes from all the roads in all directions. With the Robert F. Kennedy (Triborough) Bridge and LaGuardia Airport nearby, during peak traffic hours the area becomes quite congested. To spare customers in need of an elevator from having to negotiate these conditions, the decision was made to install a street-to-mezzanine elevator at both ends of the station.

Accommodating the north end street-to-mezzanine elevator necessitated the relocation of the street stair at the northwest corner of 31st Street and Hoyt Avenue North, adjacent to Hoyt Playground. Previously oriented to the north along 31st Street, the replacement stair is now oriented towards the west along Hoyt Avenue North. The south end street-to-mezzanine elevator was easier to place, landing in Columbus Triangle, east of 31st Street on the south side of Hoyt Avenue South.

The tight headroom within the mezzanine presented a challenge for the installation of the two mezzanine-to-platform elevators. To overcome this restriction while providing adequate space for the elevator pit and associated machinery, the elevator landing is raised around three feet above the level of the mezzanine floor, and a ramp structure "wraps around" the base of the elevator to meet the height of the elevator floor. Variations of this approach have been previously implemented at other elevated stations with similar headroom restrictions, such as at the Bay Parkway station on the BMT West End Line in Brooklyn.

A distinctive feature of the Astoria Boulevard station are the two "balconies" at the mezzanine level, running north-south along the east and west façades for almost the full length of the station. They are essentially overpass walkways outside the paid zone, unique among NYC elevated stations, and also happen to afford wide,

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BMT Astoria Boulevard ⓃⓌ Station Rehabilitation and Elevator Installation Complete

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sweeping views of the surrounding vicinity. The view from the west balcony is especially expansive and picturesque, as the Grand Central Parkway rises up from below the station and ascends to meet the Robert F. Kennedy (Triborough) Bridge, with its distinct towers dominating the horizon.

Prior to the project, portions of the balconies were partially enclosed by large advertising billboards which were attached to the outside of the station structure. The billboards were removed as part of the rehabilitation work, and segments of the walkways have been enclosed with multi-colored glass windows as an MTA Arts & Design installation. The same theme was utilized in the glazing of the stair enclosures at platform level.

A longstanding desire by the local community for elevators and improvements at the Astoria Boulevard station has now been fulfilled, and as such this project should rightly be seen as a great success. Regular users of the station will enjoy its conveniences and its aesthetics alike, and NYCT can be commended for its work. For non-regular users, a visit to view this unique station is highly recommended.

← A street-level view of one of the two new street-to-mezzanine elevators which serve the Astoria Boulevard station. This one is at the southeast end of the station, with the view looking west from within Columbus Triangle, on the south sidewalk of Hoyt Avenue South. 31st Street is directly behind the elevator. The other street-to-mezzanine elevator has been built at the northwest end of the station, adjacent to the northwest corner of 31st Street and Hoyt Avenue North. Photograph taken on August 8, 2020.

→ An east-looking view of the mezzanine level landing of the same elevator. Photo taken August 8, 2020.

In this view of the Astoria Boulevard station's west façade over Hoyt Avenue South at 31st Street, taken at dusk on New Year's Eve 2019, the colorful glass panels that have been installed as an MTA Arts & Design art installation are very attractive. Photo taken December 31, 2019.

View looking south down the length of the west "balcony" - which is a pedestrian overpass walkway at the mezzanine level which runs for almost the full length of the station's outer edge. An identical walkway is located on the east side of the station. The repaired and newly painted steel, new overhead canopy and the new concrete deck are clearly evident in this view, and the station looks as good as it did in 1917. These walkways are very unique features among elevated stations in the NYC subway. Photo taken August 8, 2020.

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BMT Astoria Boulevard (N)(W) Station Rehabilitation and Elevator Installation Complete

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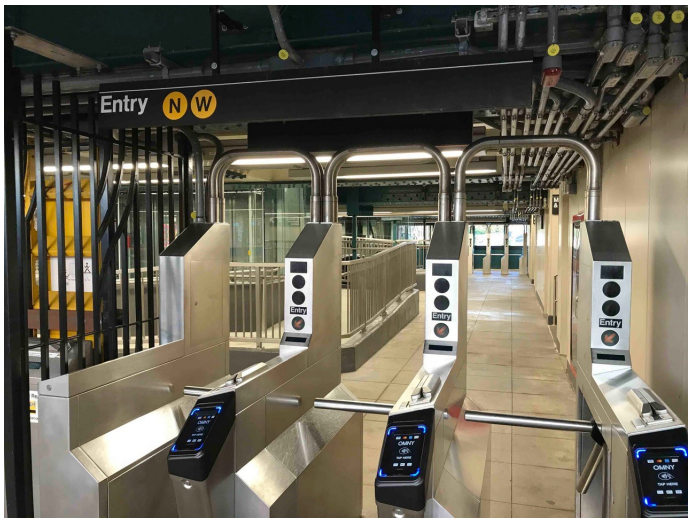

View taken from the west side fare array adjacent to the relocated fare booth, east across the reconfigured paid fare zone. This rearrangement of the center part of the mezzanine was necessary to accommodate the two elevator landings. Prior to the rehabilitation project there were two separate paid fare zones, along the north and south sides of the mezzanine's center, with the fare booth located in the center. This arrangement was somewhat constricted, with each zone allowing access to one pair of stairways, one to each platform. The new configuration provides for more flexibility as all four stairs to both platforms are equally accessible. Photo taken August 8, 2020.

A view of the mezzanine level landing of the elevator which serves the Manhattan/Brooklyn bound platform. The view is looking wet, with a glimpse of the relocated fare booth in the background. Note how the elevator landing is raised approximately three feet above the level of the mezzanine floor, and a ramp structure "wraps around" the base of the elevator to provide access to the landing. This was done to provide adequate space for the elevator pit and associated machinery within the tight envelope of the mezzanine. Accommodating the elevator pit below the mezzanine floor would have been impossible, and in fact the mezzanine's underside was rebuilt with shallower steel beams in order to obtain additional clearance to the street grade below to reduce the number of oversize vehicle strikes on the station structure. Photo taken August 8, 2020.

Transit, Commuter Rail & Passenger Railroad News

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nitely (possibly as soon as March, 2021). Interestingly, an analysis of local bus ridership patterns and volumes suggest to the MBTA that the most heavily patronized bus routes would only endure 5% reductions. However, lightly used bus routes could see deeper cuts, with route consolidations, re-routings and potentially 25 lightly patronized routes to the suburban areas abandoned. (***Boston Globe***, November 9)

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

SEPTA's November 15 schedule change represented a modified Spring Schedule with school service added for both parochial and public schools and service frequency modifications to reflect changing ridership levels.

Service on routes currently operating 15-15-5 (15 minutes or less, 15 hours a day, 5 days per week Monday-Friday) will be maintained within these guidelines.

Change Highlights:

- Broad Street Line Express Service will operate before 10 AM and after 2 PM
- Between 10 AM and 2 PM, Broad Street Line Local service will operate every 7 minutes offering a comparable level of frequency for midday and evening travel
- Owl Bus Service will resume operating 7 days a week on the Market-Frankford and Broad Street Lines between the hours of 12:30 AM and 5:30 AM

*** All Night Weekend Train Service will be suspended to allow for concentrated station and vehicle cleaning

*** This change reflects restrictions on late night and event activities across the City due to COVID-19 regulations and current ridership patterns

*** Owl Bus service on Friday and Saturday evening will serve designated Bus stops adjacent to all Market-Frankford and Broad Street Line Stations

*** Essential workers will continue to be served for weekend, late night travel by Owl Bus service (SEPTA website)

NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY CAR UPDATE

The 8-car Phase I R-32 train that was cited in the November ***Bulletin*** making its final passenger trips on the morning of October 8 as a Ⓩ, consisted of (N) 3714-3715+3924-3925+3706-3707+3889-3888 (S). That and one other, (N) 3586-3587+3774-3775+3658/3471+3574-3575 (S), were the two that had also made what were believed to be the last revenue service on September 30. Since that time, the balance of the surviving Phase I R-32s were not only transferred entirely out of East New York to 207th Street, but have also wandered at least to Coney Island, Canarsie and Pitkin Yards. Strangely, these included a handful of R-32s currently shown as "Pending Scrap" (3410-3411 and 3660-3661) which were witnessed under their own power during one such transfer, if not without a shower of electrical arcing on their shoe beam assemblies. Again, the 136 cars which were used on the Ⓙ and Ⓩ between July and September were all still considered "active" as of November 7 though no further action taking in their regard with the sole exception of 3670-3671, 3778-3779, 3896-3897 and 3912-3913, which have been hired out for a movie production (complete with actual signing for the Ⓔ).

No sooner had the previous ***Update*** been generated than two 8-car R-179s suddenly materialized on the Ⓒ starting October 14, including cars 3162-3165, 3218-3221 and 3226-3233. Added to these through November 15 (for a total of 80 to that date) were 3146-3149, 3154-3161, 3166-3205, 3214-3217, 3222-3225 and 3234-3237, while the remaining dozen awaited future restoration. With a sustained maximum train requirement of 18 there were still at least 13 trains of 75-foot equipment to be seen on the Ⓒ through the same date, where there were now a mix of 8-car 60-footers (480-foot) and 8-car 600-foot R-46 trains, a trait again unique to this one route. The balance of all 96 East New York-assigned R-179s (3054-3057, 3062-3065, 3074-3077, 3094-3097, 3122-3125 and 3130-3133) had been reactivated by October 30, though not all had yet been completely re-accepted through November 7. Just for information, the exceptionally eclectic line-up of the Ⓙ/Ⓩ on November 6 included one appropriated R-143, nine (now-Queens) CBTC trains of R-160A-1s as shared with the Ⓜ, one Canarsie Ⓛ CBTC-equipped R-160A-1 and, finally, nine 8-car trains of R-179s.

As for the Ⓐ, all but two five-car sets of the R-179s (3020-3049, 3258-3262, 3278-3282 and 3293-3327) had been returned to service by November 1, but for original pilot link 3010-3014 and the errant set 3288-3292, which had suffered the unexpected, notorious "pull-apart" on June 3 which began this concluding round of misfortune. For similar enlightenment purposes, the 40-train Ⓐ line-up of November 6 was constructed of all 12 available 10-car R-179 trains, 22 trains of the ubiquitous eight-car R-46s, one "special" R-68/68A that is diverted daily from its own Ⓑ duties otherwise and just five trains of Jamaica-assigned R-160s. In this vein the only additional R-160s witnessed on the Ⓐ from October 13 through November 13, were Alstom (KRC-built) R-160Bs 8813-8817; Siemens R-160B 8883-8887; Alstom (KRC-built) R-160Bs 9118-9122 and 9228-9232; and finally, Alstom-built R-160A-2s 9518-9522 and 9548-9552. Perhaps as this fleet variation may be playing out with broad-based revival of the five-car R-179 contingent, there were just two "borrowed" Jamaica R-160 trains on the full Ⓐ train requirement of Monday, November 16. Overall, some 885 of Jamaica's entire 1,200-car R-160 allocation had been inventoried on the Ⓐ since that phenomenon was begun on June 6, to chronicle one of the more pronounced operational oddities in recent subway history. Overall, the "COVID-19" era was three-quarters along its first year of existence as the month of November ended.

On August 27, R-127 refuse motors EP006-EP009, when no longer required for use on "Garbage" trains based from 38th Street Yard in Brooklyn, were transferred to 207th Street Shop for future reassignment. The move was piloted by three pairs of Phase I R-32s that came down from 207th Street to ferry them from Coney Island, with the completed consist from that point being: (N) 3689-3688+3427-3426+EP007+EP006+EP008+EP009+3473-3472 (S). These were gradually forwarded to 239th Street Yard during September, then finally were permanently shipped off to Corona Yard in Queens on October 15 as part of this train make-up: (S) 1901-1902-1903-1904-1905+EP009+EP008+EP006+EP007 (N). In turn, these four EPs freed up the very last standard R-62A single units (1906 and 1907) that had been maintained at Corona for various duties, principally refuse-collection operations, since 2018, with the former having been there since their interim retirement from 7 service that March 30. To accomplish this, five-car R-62A link 1881-1885 was sent ahead and positioned from 240th Street via 207th Street Shop, Sixth Avenue and the Manhattan Bridge, Atlantic Avenue-Barclays Center (née Pacific Street) on the Fourth Avenue Subway, then up the (BMT) Broadway Line through the 60th Street Tunnel to the Flushing Line's connection at the upper level of Queensboro Plaza. From there the train continued across the Flushing Line to Corona Yard. On or about during the overnight of November 12, the two "lost" single R-62As proceeded as (S) 1885-1884-1883-1882-1881+1907+1906 (N) back to Queensboro Plaza, thence in return to 207th Street on a reverse routing for a long-needed overhaul, from which they are expected to be restored to revenue service.