

International Center for Enterprise Preparedness (InterCEP)

Imminent Amtrak Penn Station Repairs / Disruptions

Web Forum

The **Metropolitan Resilience Network (MRN)** held a web forum in partnership with the **Contingency Planning Exchange (CPE)** on June 21, 2017, to address the impacts that disruptions associated with the Amtrak Penn Station Infrastructure Renewal this summer will have on the Metropolitan area, and to identify strategies and measures organizations can adopt to mitigate potential impacts. Below is a summary of the web forum¹.

William Raisch, Director of InterCEP, introduced the web forum by highlighting the need to conduct infrastructure maintenance in the New York City Metropolitan Area, which faces the challenges posed by aging infrastructure and years of deferred investments in upgrades and repairs.

In its 2017 Infrastructure Report Card, the *American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)* notes that the passenger rail infrastructure in the Northeast Corridor is beyond its useful life. Aging infrastructure typically results in increased maintenance costs and reduced system reliability. This makes the planned infrastructure repair work that Amtrak is conducting this summer at Penn Station critical.

The goal of the web forum was to discuss disruptions that will result from the repair work at this critical transportation link and to share information about how transportation agencies are addressing customer concerns and how the private sector is planning to minimize impacts.

The participating panelists were:

James Metzger, Amtrak

Andrew McMahan, MTA

Paul Wyckoff, NJ Transit

Jerry McCarty, PANYNJ OEM

Maybelle Jadotte, PANYNJ OEM

Kevin Lejda, PANYNJ PATH

David Garland, CME Group

Patrick Alesi, Nomura

¹ This web forum summary was prepared by InterCEP staff based on notes and presentation materials. It has not been independently verified by all the speakers involved.

Amtrak

Amtrak's goal is to provide the safest and most reliable infrastructure renewal as possible. As mentioned, this repair work is taking place in the context of aging infrastructure that needs this type of renewal.

Amtrak has communicated with elected officials and customers about reductions in service so they can work around these changes.

The repair work will impact Amtrak service between July 10 and September 1. Acela train service will not be affected, but other services will be affected as follows:

- Northeast Regional Service: Three round trip trains (six total trains) between New York and Washington cancelled.
- Keystone Service: Three round trip trains (six total trains) will start and end in Philadelphia, and one round trip train (two total trains) will start/end at Newark.
- Long-Distance Service: The Crescent — operating between New York and New Orleans — will originate and terminate in Washington daily during work period. Connections will be provided on other Northeast Corridor trains.
- Empire Service line will go to Grand Central Station.

Amtrak has implemented a communications campaign that includes a web page (Penn Station Infrastructure Renewal) with videos and various informational materials. See:

<https://www.amtrak.com/NYPRenewal>

A number of apps and social media venues are also being used to communicate with customers and the public about the repair work and service changes.

Amtrak and transportation partners will stand a command post to understand any issues that arise and to achieve its goals.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)

Between July 10 and September 1, various LIRR trains that normally go to Penn Station will be canceled or diverted (see: <http://www.lirrschedule.com/#scheduling-changes>). Customers will have three options to continue their travel into Manhattan:

- Subway. Some trains will terminate at NYC subway stations. Customers will be able to transfer to the subway system free of charge. Capacity is not expected to be an issue for these customers and subway trains will come in minutes after LIRR trains arrive.
- Bus. There is a new bus service that will be free to LIRR ticket holders (Park & Ride Bus Service) – 200 buses from throughout LI, with large parking lots to accommodate this travel mode. See: <http://www.lirrschedule.com/bus-service/>

- Ferry. Three new ferry services will be added between 6-10 am and 3-7 pm. These include Long Island City – 34th Street (via shuttle bus from Hunterspoint LIRR station); Glen Cove to 34th Street; and Glen Cove to Wall Street/Pier 11. See:
http://nymta.civicconnect.com/sites/default/files/Penn_ferry_map_June21a_hiresprint_outline_s22.pdf

As part of its communications efforts, MTA is sending letters to employers, airing TV commercials, distributing flyers on LIRR seats, using social media, and encouraging customers to get up to date alerts on <https://mymtaalerts.com/LoginC.aspx>

MTA will also have employees at LIRR and MTA stations to answer questions and direct customers to the transportation routes that suit their travel needs.

Comprehensive MTA service change information is available at: <http://nymta.civicconnect.com/LIRR-PennStation>

NJ Transit

NJ Transit has been working very hard with Amtrak, MTA and the Port Authority to devise a service plan that maintains regular service for its customers, which represent 90,000 commuters in the morning and same at night.

The main goal of the service plan is to safely and reliably meet the constraints of rail track limitations, diverting trains on the Morris and Essex lines to Hoboken after 7 am. In the early morning (between 5 am and 7 am there will be some service to Penn Station on these lines (see: <http://www.njtransit.com/AdminTemp/morrisweekday71017.pdf>).

Hoboken has the capacity to address commuter needs because of its proximity to ferry and bus services, as well as to a PATH station. NJ Transit will cross-honor fees for these other modes of transit so that commuters can reach their destination in Manhattan. Service will be discounted for NJ Transit by 50% for affected rail lines. The repairs will not affect customers on weekends.

NY Waterways will provide additional ferry service between Hoboken and Midtown Manhattan in order to provide adequate service and meet demand. Given current capacity and additional service, ferries should provide sufficient capacity for commuters that seek this option.

There will also be additional NJ Transit bus service between New Jersey and the Port Authority bus terminal on 42nd Street.

While the Penn Station repairs take place, customers will not have a normal summer commute, but NJ Transit will make it as normal as possible.

Comprehensive information about NJ Transit service changes associated with the Penn Station repairs is available at: <http://njtransit-theupdate.com/>

Additional information dissemination will take place on traditional media, new media, digital advertisements, etc.

Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ)

The Port Authority is in a supporting role, and the agency's goal is to ensure that passengers that have been inconvenienced by transit service changes get to their desired destinations in the easiest possible way.

The Port Authority will be continuously monitoring its systems during peak hours, including PATH, tunnels and bridges, and activating its EOC in order to ensure transportation needs are met throughout this period of Penn Station repairs.

The agency will share information as necessary with other agencies and in the event that a significant disruption, the EOC would be activated 24/7. For the PANYNJ it is essential to communicate with employees and customers. Social media, the Agency Operations Center (AOC) and other relevant channels of communication will be used.

As part of its business continuity efforts, the PA will kick off its first remote access day to ensure telework is an option where possible. This effort will also reinvigorate alternate facilities planning to address the needs of employees affected by service changes. The agency will also encourage affected employees to use ferry services.

PATH will play a significant supporting role in transporting commuters between Manhattan and New Jersey. A number of internal planning meetings, as well as conversations with partner agencies such as Amtrak and NJ Transit have resulted in a number of strategies to address commuter needs. The strategy adopted by PATH is delineated in a press release issued last week. It is available here:

http://www.panynj.gov/press-room/press-item.cfm?headLine_id=2731

To address an increasing demand for PATH train service from NJ Transit commuters whose service will end at Hoboken, PATH will be operating additional trains between Hoboken and 33rd street during the morning commute hours (6-10 am) and the evening commute hours (4-8 pm). This will add capacity for 9,000 trips and this is above the 7,000 additional trips expected to result from the Penn Station repairs.

The Port Authority will also deploy additional service staff at WTC, Hoboken and 33rd Street stations to support the cross honoring of fares from NJ Transit and to provide information to customers.

In the aftermath of the train derailments that took place earlier this year, the Port Authority found that some commuters that typically go to Penn Station decide to take the PATH to the WTC station. This is good because it spreads people out, and there is capacity there.

The Port Authority is conducting additional maintenance to ensure things are working well during this period. The Port Authority Police Department (PAPD) has also been part of the planning process and is prepared for any potential disruptions at Hoboken.

The Port Authority has gone to great lengths to ensure that its collective customers are well informed. More than ever before, the various transit systems are working and coordinating well together. If there is a problem, the agency can respond a lot faster than ever before. This is a textbook example of cooperation among transit systems.

Additional information regarding PATH services during the period of Amtrak's Penn Station's repairs is available here: <http://www.panynj.gov/path/theupdate.html>

Private Sector

Most private companies rely on telecommuting in a situation like this. It is the first line of defense. Employees who are unable to commute to Manhattan should talk to their managers and assess whether this is a feasible option.

CME, for example, has prepared for telecommuting by participating in a yearly telecommuting exercise carried out by Chicago First. As a result of this exercise the company was able to learn that in a scenario where 30% of employees worked from home, 96% reported they could do everything they needed to do.

The private sector relies on transportation agencies for up to date information on service changes, and directs employees and customers to social media. It is great that the transportation agencies have strong communications efforts in place.

It would be useful to understand as construction gets underway, what the capacities are on alternate modes of transportation. For example, if ferries are underutilized then people should be encouraged to use that mode. There could be a scorecard of how various alternate modes of transportation are performing in terms of capacity and added commute times.

Q&A

The Penn Station repairs will clearly create additional crowds at several locations. Will the agencies address increased security concerns? Should customers be told to expect additional security?

Amtrak will have additional officers throughout Penn Station, as well as additional Amtrak ambassadors with special information, and additional staff to address any escalator safety issues. Amtrak has developed several processes for communication that includes radios and call-ins for officers and ambassadors.

Law enforcement officials at transportation hubs that include MTA and various transit agency services work together on a day to day basis and work well together. They will supplement each of the agencies, as well as their ambassadors directing people, etc.

NJ Transit expects more crowds at certain hub points and police are well aware of the challenges. The agency has trained staff on behavioral recognition to stay alert. NJ Transit staff are ready for these changes.

At the Port Authority, chiefs of police communicate on a regular basis. Conditions at different transportation hubs present different challenges, including overcrowding. The Port Authority is able to rapidly move police officers from one facility to another to address any issues that arise. The EOC allows the agency to respond to minor situations before they become major situations.

Have you received feedback to judge the effectiveness of current communications efforts?

NJ Transit has received very positive feedback. But experience suggests that you can never have enough communications. NJ Transit will conduct surveys at various points between now and the end of the Penn Station repairs period to assess whether there are information needs. Customers are likely to have nuanced questions and ambassadors will be there to answer questions. The feedback on the NJ Transit apps has also been very positive.

Will Amtrak service be affected from upstate?

Empire service will continue but will terminate at Grand Central instead of Penn Station.

Will there be an impact to commuters at Newark Penn Station?

Newark Penn Station will not be impacted in a major way. NJ Transit has a couple of very minor adjustments from trains on coastline that will end service at Newark Penn Station instead of going to Hoboken. This will be done to make way for trains that will be diverted to Hoboken. But few people use the coastline trains.

How will the Port Authority address increased private vehicle traffic resulting from the Penn Station repairs?

The agency will be monitoring traffic across bridges and tunnels very closely, and if there are significant spike in traffic, a transportation plan will be implemented.

What is the added amount of time of commute people can expect?

A person that typically uses Midtown Direct service on NJ Transit and that switches to now going to the PATH at Hoboken will likely see a 20 minute increase in their commute. But there are many options and possible configurations, so changes in commute time could be higher depending on origin and destination.

Is Midtown Direct changing for evening?

There will not be any NJ Transit Midtown Direct service except for before 7 am.

Can we anticipate further schedule changes?

The NJ Transit schedule for the period of the Penn Station repairs is not expected to change. But this is a dynamic world, and NJ Transit will monitor conditions closely and react to what is happening. If changes are necessary they will be made.

Is the repair work likely to go beyond August?

Amtrak is not anticipating any issues with the August end date. Some of this work has already been started. If there are major events such as storms and hurricanes, then that's something Amtrak would have to manage. Other than those very special circumstance, the engineering timeline is pretty solid.

Information Resources:

The following web pages include the latest information about transit service changes resulting from the Penn Station repairs and alternative commute options:

- Amtrak: <https://www.amtrak.com/NYPRenewal>
- NJ Transit: <http://njtransit-theupdate.com/>
- MTA/LIRR: <http://nymta.civicconnect.com/LIRR-PennStation>
- Port Authority – PATH: http://www.panynj.gov/press-room/press-item.cfm?headLine_id=2731
- Port Authority – PATH: <http://www.panynj.gov/path/theupdate.html>
- New York Waterway Ferry Service: <http://www.nywaterway.com/>