



BULLETIN

Volume 67, Number 1 | January 2024

Congestion Pricing Takes Another Step Forward

The Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority Board, which is coterminous with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Board, voted to begin public review of a tolling structure for Central Business District Tolling, New York's congestion pricing program.

The public review, to be conducted in accordance with the New York State Administrative Procedure Act, will be similar to review processes regularly undertaken when MTA proposes fare and toll modifications. Following a 60-day public comment period where members of the public can offer comments electronically, or via voicemail or U.S. Mail, there will be a series of hybrid virtual and in-person public hearings that will be held on dates and times to be announced.

The subject of the review is the slate of toll proposals

that are found as Attachment A on pages 14-16 of the MTA Board's December 6 meeting agenda. The proposals are informed by and largely mirror, recommendations issued on November 30 by the Traffic Mobility Review Board.

Hearings are expected to be held in early 2024. After the conclusion of the public hearing process, the MTA Board will review the input received and then schedule a vote to authorize adoption, as is or with modifications. Toll collection is anticipated to commence in late spring.

While the public review process is underway, the vendor that is building out the toll system and infrastructure will continue installing the infrastructure that will be used for toll collection. By the beginning of December, 60 percent of the sites had been completed.

[MTA PRESS RELEASE](#), December 6



Electric Railroaders Association

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The *Bulletin* is published monthly and sent free to all ERA members.

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Trip Notices

April 18-21, 2024: Motor Bus Society Spring 2024 Convention in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

May 10-25, 2024: International tour to Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Visit <https://erausa.org/international-tours/2024/> for all the details.

September 6-10, 2024: ERA convention in Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Save the dates!

Cover Photo

The New York Transit Museum’s Holiday Train, led by R-7A 1575 (Pullman, 1938), is seen at its southern terminal, Houston St.-2nd Ave., on the last day of service for this season, Saturday, December 30. Jeff Erlitz photo

Donations

The ERA Board of Directors express their deepest appreciation for these member donations in November 2023.

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Monthly Zoom Meeting

Friday, January 19, 2024 at 7:30 PM.

Presenting This Month: Jack May and Harvey Laner

Jack May will begin the program. There has been a great deal of electric traction activity in Scandinavia over the past few years as the light rail revolution spread into a few more cities in the region along with additional lines in others. New systems include Lund, Sweden (2020); Odense, Denmark (2022); and Aarhus, Denmark (2017) and also new lines/extensions in Bergen, Norway (2010, 2022). When Jack received a notice that a German organization of tram enthusiasts, the VDVA, was holding its annual convention in the region he decided to overlay his travel plans with those of the VDVA to help take an inside look of some rail transit operations that usually can only be done when arranged by organizations like ours.

In addition to the modern LRVs in those cities, he was able to see/ride and photograph vintage trams in a number of additional places, including Trondheim, Oslo and Bergen in Norway; Gothenburg in Sweden; and a visit to Denmark’s National Tramway Museum on its member’s day. The program *Continued on page 3*



Worldwide Suburban Electric Railway, Metro and Tramway Openings in December 2023

Date	Country	City	Segment	Distance (miles)	Rail/Metro/Tram
12/1	China	Wuhan	Line 5: Hubei Univ. of Chinese Medicine to Hongxia	1.6	M
"	Ecuador	Quito	Line 1: El Labrador to Quitumbe	14.0	M
12/8	China	Macao	Oceano to Barra	2.1	M
12/10	Germany	Hannover	Line 13: Wallensteinstraße to Hemmingen	0.8	T
"	Switzerland	Geneva	Line 15: Palettes to ZIPL0	1.6	T
"	France	Paris	T12: Evry to Massy-Palaiseau	12.4	T
12/16	South Korea	Seoul	Line 1: Soyosan to Yeoncheon	11.1	R
"	China	Guiyang	Line 3: Luowan to Tongmuling	26.7	M
12/17	Germany	Mannheim	Line 16: Bensheimer Straße to Sullivan	1.0	T
12/20	China	Zhengzhou	Line 12: Lianghu to Longzihu Dong	10.3	M
12/21	Peru	Lima	Line 2: Evitamiento to Mercado Santa Anita	3.1	M
12/22	Russia	Yekaterinburg	Line 1: Volgogradskaya to Akademika Parina	2.6	T
"	Poland	Katowice	Line 25: Dab Huta Baildon – Katowice Dabrowski	0.4	T
12/26	China	Harbin	Line 3: Chinese-baroque Block to Beima Road	0.5	M
"	"	Hefei	Line 2: Sanshibu to Cuozen Line 3: Xingfuba to Sheng Ertong Yiyuan Xinqu	9.0 5.9	M
"	Brazil	Salvador	Line 1: Campinas to Águas Claras	1.9	M
12/27	China	Shenzhen	Line 8: Yantian Road to Xiaomeisha	5.0	M
"	"	Nantong	Line 2: Xingfu to Xianfeng	13.0	M
12/28	"	Tianjin	Line 11: Dongjiangdao to Donglilijinglu	8.5	M
"	"	Nanjing	Line 7: Yingtiandajie to Xishanqiao	6.6	M
"	"	Zhengzhou	Zhengxu Line: Chang'an Lu Bei to Xuchangdong	41.7	R
"	"	Guangzhou	Line 5: Wenchong to Huangpu New Port Line 7: Higher Education Mega Center South to Yanshan	6.1 12.4	M
"	"	Chongqing	Line 18: Fuhualu to Tiaodengnan	18.0	M
12/30	"	Beijing	Line 11: Jin'anqiao to Moshikou Line 16: Yushuzhuang to Wanpingcheng Line 17: Workers' Stadium to Future Science City North	0.5 2.0 15.5	M
"	"	Wuhan	Line 19: West Square of Wuhan Railway Station to Xinyuexi Park	14.5	M
"	Poland	Olsztyn	Lines 4 & 5: Skwer Wakara to Pieczewo	3.7	T

URBAN RAIL NEWS, DECEMBER 31

will consist of digital scans of his slides from this visit plus a sprinkling of earlier views from travel in the region during the last ten years, which will include Stockholm and Malmo, Sweden. If time permits, there will be views of electric traction in Doha, Qatar, from Jack's abbreviated visit a year ago.

For the second part, we will see Harvey's video of the famous Vicinaux rural tramway system. In November of 1990 and again in June of 1991, Harvey visited southern Belgium in search of the last remnants of the once expansive Vicinaux, the legendary rural tramway system. The fully narrated program covers the sole remaining portion of the former Vicinaux line 90 that was still operating on track and alignment that had not been replaced with pre-metro infrastructure.

Both speakers will take questions at the end of their

presentations. Harvey's Vicinaux video is being presented as a prelude for ERA riding the last portion of the Vicinaux network on its May 2024 trip to the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. So, register for our Benelux Tour by January 31, 2024 if you'd like to join this outstanding tour in May 2024!

How to Join Our Zoom Meeting

The Zoom registration link for this meeting is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZ0qdO2qqzkqGNe-Jvtm4daJnTZa-OXTeQMEr>. You can sign in at 7:15 PM. The show begins at 7:30 PM. If you have any problems, email Bob Newhouser at bnnyc1955@aol.com, or on the night of the meeting, text or call Bob at 917-482-4235.

Rail News in Review

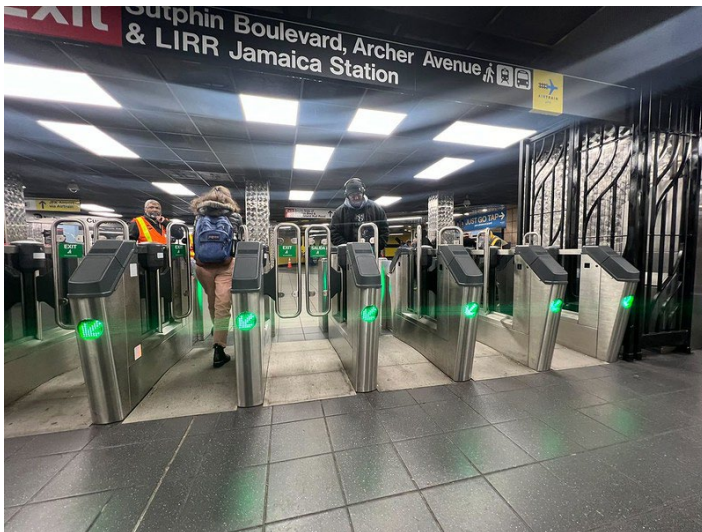
New York Metropolitan Area

NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT (NYCT)

First New Fare Gate Array in Service

The first-ever low turnstile fare array replacement with new wide-aisle fare gates was placed into service at Sutphin Blvd–Archer Av–JFK Airport Station **E J Z** on December 4. The new faregates replace the emergency exit gate at that end of the station, which was a major contributor to subway fare evasion. The wide-aisle design of the new faregates allows riders with strollers, wheelchairs and luggage to smoothly enter the system. This will allow the MTA to examine the feasibility of placing new fare gates at other stations in the future.

This is the first full deployment of new fare gates in the subway system following a pilot of the wide-aisle gates at Atlantic Av–Barclays Ctr Station **2 3 4 5** in March 2023. In addition to wide-aisle gate installation, four traditional turnstiles were installed at the north end of the mezzanine to enhance passenger flow. All new fare gates are equipped with OMNY, the new tap-and-go fare collection system.



View of the new fare gate array at Sutphin Blvd–Archer Av–JFK Airport Station **E J Z**.

Ray Raimundi / MTA photo

A new customer service center opened on the same day, making this station the 14th center in the subway system. Customer service centers provide services historically limited to 3 Stone Street located in Lower Manhattan, but now enable the Authority to meet passengers where they are directly in stations in their home boroughs. Centers comprise repurposed booths, new retail outlets and feature enhanced accessibility, OMNY technology and a dedicated, more welcoming visual presentation for passengers. This

includes new lighting, branded wrapping and canopies with enhanced customer service functions such as station agents on hand to assist in converting riders to OMNY, signing up for Reduced-Fare and helping troubleshoot general concerns.

NYCT plans to open another center before the end of 2023. [MTA PRESS RELEASE](#), December 4

Installation of Wireless Service in Tunnels Starting

There was no service on the **S** 42nd Street Shuttle from 12:01 AM Tuesday, December 26 to 5:00 AM Saturday, December 30. This complete shutdown enabled Transit Wireless, under contract R-50778, to install radiating and fiber optic cable, equipment boxes and other equipment for the upcoming wireless service in tunnels.

This project is known as the Universal Subway Wireless Connectivity Plan, which will provide mobile coverage along all 418 track miles of subway tunnel. Riders will be able to utilize the service as each section is completed with the entire system expected to be finished in the next ten years.

[MTA PRESS RELEASE](#), December 13

Queensboro Plaza Station **7 N** Work

All four weekends in January, 6 to 8, 13 to 15, 20 to 22 and 27 to 29, saw or will see no subway service between Queensboro Plaza and Manhattan to enable the continuing ADA work to proceed. These outages will begin at 12:01 AM Saturday until 5:00 AM on Monday.

During those shutdowns, the following work activities will be performed:

- Installation of new elevator (mezzanine to platform levels) equipment, cab and glass;
- Installation of new roofing at upper platform level around the new elevator (mezzanine to platform levels);
- Installation of main steel framing for new concrete landings around the new elevator shaft on the upper and lower platform levels;
- At the upper platform level, lower platform level and mezzanine level:
 - Rehabilitation of all stairs;
 - Installation of OutFront Media Screens;
 - Installation of fire alarm system;
 - Installation of CCTV system;
 - Installation of PA/CIS system.

Service changes are planned as follows for each weekend:

Queens & Manhattan

- **E** and **R** trains will operate every eight minutes instead of every 12 minutes between 7:00 AM and 8:00 PM;
- Overnight **E** trains will be rerouted via the **R** from Queens Plaza to 34 St–Herald Sq;
- **F** trains will be rerouted via the **E** line in both directions between 47–50 Sts–Rockefeller Ctr and Jackson

Hts–Roosevelt Av as per the ongoing direct fixation work (see below-right);

- **7** trains will operate between Flushing–Main St and 74 St–Broadway every eight minutes during weekend peaks;
- **S** 42 St shuttle trains will operate all night between Times Square–42 St and Grand Central–42 St;
- **N** trains will be rerouted to operate between 96 St/2 Av and Coney Island, every 12 minutes during the day;
- **N** shuttle trains will operate between Astoria–Ditmars Blvd and 39 Av every 12 minutes during the day.
- **O** shuttle trains will operate between 96 St and 34 St–Herald Sq between 3:00 AM and 5:00 AM Sunday mornings while **N** trains transition back to their normal route.

Brooklyn

- **O** trains operate between Prospect Park and Coney Island only due to track replacement north of Prospect Park.

Free shuttle buses will operate between:

- 74 St–Broadway and Queens Plaza;
- Queens Plaza and Vernon Blvd–Jackson Av;
- 39 Av and Queens Plaza (There will also be a free walking transfer between the two stations);
- 34 St–Hudson Yards and Times Sq–42 St (Overnights only);
- Atlantic Av–Barclays Ctr and Prospect Park to replace the **C**;
- Q94 and Q95 bus service between Roosevelt Island or 21 St and Queens Plaza will operate as normal except Jan. 6 to 8.

[MTA PRESS RELEASE](#), December 21

174th Street Yard Track Change

We neglected to mention in last month’s *Bulletin* that Track A5 in the 174th Street Yard of the IND Eighth Avenue Line was permanently removed from service on November 2.

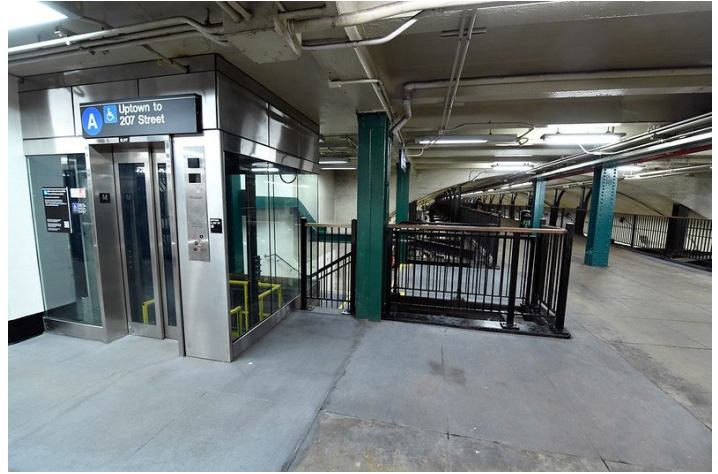
This track was extremely short, only a little more than 200 feet between the dwarf signal protecting the switch onto Track A6 and the bumping block. This accommodated a maximum of three 60-foot cars so it was always of extremely limited use.

181 St Station **A** Now Accessible

The elevator project at the 181 St Station **A** in Washington Heights has been completed, making the station fully accessible. The project included the installation of two new elevators taking passengers from the lower mezzanine to the platform and a new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant ramp making the station entrance at Overlook Terrace accessible.

The installed elevators include a new fire alarm system, smoke and heat detectors and cameras inside the elevator cabs. Each elevator is also equipped with an emergency two-way communication system which gives riders the ability to communicate with dispatchers in the event of an emergency via standard voice communications or visually by answering on-screen questions, which greatly improves communication for riders with hearing or speech disabilities.

The ADA upgrades were fully funded by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration. This project is part of an ADA-improvement package of eight subway stations, which



View looking south at the new elevator from the mezzanine to the northbound platform. The three elevators at the north end of the station, at 184th Street and Overlook Terrace, were part of the original IND construction and date to the opening of the line in September, 1932.
Marc A Hermann/MTA photo

is MTA Construction & Development’s second such package being delivered better, faster and cheaper through innovative contracting tools such as design-build and project bundling.

Overall, 181 St is the ninth elevator project completed this year, including eight MTA projects and an additional public-private partnership that was completed over the summer in Brooklyn. In addition to the elevator installations, crews constructed two new staircases and rehabilitation of existing staircases, along with reconstructed platform edges along with a new ADA boarding area.

Commissioned by MTA Arts & Design, new mosaic artworks by artist Carmen Lizardo titled *Great Waves of Immigration* are located near the newly installed elevators and above the two staircases that lead to the northbound and southbound platforms.

[MTA PRESS RELEASE](#), December 7

63rd Street Track Rehabilitation Work Continues

Over the weekend of January 6–8, there was no service on the IND 63rd Street Line as crews worked to transition the track work from northbound Track T2 to southbound Track T1.

Track T2 had been out of service since August 28, last summer. Unexpectedly, there were some construction issues that cropped up that caused that first phase’s completion date to be pushed back. It was to have been completed on November 24 but was extended to December 16, then to December 31 and finally to January 6.

Over this weekend, shuttle buses replaced **F** shuttle trains between Lexington Av/63 St and 21 St–Queensbridge, between Roosevelt Island and Queens Plaza and the Q94 and Q95 bus shuttles.



[MTA PRESS RELEASE](#), December 21

Station Re-NEW-Vation Progress

During December, the following stations were completed in



this station renovation program, wrapping up the program for calendar year 2023:

Station	Weekend
Howard Beach 	December 16-17
Court St 	December 30-31

MTA PRESS RELEASES, [December 22, January 3](#)

LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD (LIRR)

January Schedule Changes

New schedules will go into effect Monday, January 22, with targeted changes to rush hour schedules. These changes respond to requests for additional through-trains from Brooklyn in the afternoon and align service to match data on when people are riding. There are no changes to midday, evening, or weekend schedules.

Major changes are outlined below:

Babylon Branch

- The 5:49 AM train from Babylon to Grand Central will run 3 minutes earlier;
- The 7:41 AM train from Penn Station to Massapequa will no longer run;
- The 9:06 AM train from Wantagh to Grand Central will no longer run due to low ridership. The 8:42 AM train from Babylon to Penn Station will make the stops of both trains east of Jamaica and accept off-peak tickets;
- The 7:02 PM train from Penn Station to Wantagh will no longer run due to low ridership. The 6:57 PM train from Penn Station will make all stops between Rockville Centre and Babylon.

Far Rockaway Branch

- The 4:49 PM train from Penn Station to Far Rockaway will depart from Atlantic Terminal at 4:46 PM. This train will not stop at Nostrand Ave. or East New York.

Hempstead Branch

- The 3:35 PM train from Grand Central to Hempstead will depart from Atlantic Terminal at 3:31 PM;
- The 6:39 PM train from Penn Station to Hempstead will depart from Atlantic Terminal at 6:38 PM.
- Note: These two trains will arrive and leave from Tracks 11 or 12 in Jamaica.

Port Jefferson Branch

- The 6:57 AM train from Huntington to Grand Central will be split into two trains. The train from Huntington will run non-stop to Jamaica then proceed to Woodside and Grand Central Madison. A new train will start at Hicksville for local service to Grand Central.

West Hempstead Branch

- The 6:11 PM train from Penn Station to West Hempstead

will depart from Atlantic Terminal at 6:09 PM;

- The 6:39 PM train from Atlantic Terminal to West Hempstead will depart from Penn Station at 6:40 PM.

Oyster Bay Branch

- The 4:42 PM train from Oyster Bay to Jamaica will run 7 minutes earlier.

[MTA PRESS RELEASE](#), December 15

METRO-NORTH RAILROAD (MNR)

January Schedule Changes

Metro-North Railroad announced an upcoming schedule update, taking effect Tuesday, January 16. The updated schedule reflects adjustments to accommodate track work near Grand Central Terminal. MNR crews will be replacing several key sections of track and switches, which will limit track usage during certain periods of the day.

Riders are encouraged to check TrainTime for possible changes that may affect their departure times. Riders departing Grand Central should check the departure board or TrainTime before going to the platform, as some trains will leave off different tracks than they currently do.

The following changes are expected to last until early spring:

Hudson Line

- The 7:03 AM train from Poughkeepsie to Grand Central will not run. Affected riders should take either the 6:48 or 7:11 AM trains instead;
- The 7:35 AM train from Irvington to Grand Central will not run;
- The 7:31 AM train from Croton-Harmon to Grand Central will leave nine minutes earlier and make the stops of both trains;
- The 6:11 PM train from Grand Central to Poughkeepsie will not run. Affected riders should take the 6:15 PM train instead;
- The 6:22 PM train from Grand Central to Croton-Harmon will not run. Affected riders should take the 6:25 PM train instead.

Harlem Line

- The 7:32 AM train from Southeast to Grand Central will not run. The 7:20 AM train from Southeast to Grand Central will leave two minutes earlier and make the stops of both trains;
- The 4:48 PM train from Grand Central to Crestwood will not run. The 4:44 PM train from Grand Central to North White Plains will leave at 4:45 PM and make the stops of both trains;
- The 5:27 PM train from Grand Central to Southeast will not run;
- The 5:29 PM train from Grand Central to Brewster will leave at 5:27 and continue to Southeast;
- The 5:17 PM train from Grand Central to Wassaic will add stops at Goldens Bridge, Purdys and Croton Falls;
- The 6:10 PM train from Grand Central to Southeast will not run. The 6:04 PM train from Grand Central to Southeast will leave two minutes earlier and make the stops of both trains.

New Haven Line

The 6:07 PM train from Grand Central to New Haven will not run. The 6:12 PM train from Grand Central to Bridgeport will be extended to New Haven and make the stops of both trains.

[MTA PRESS RELEASE](#), January 3

NJ TRANSIT (NJT)**Morris & Essex Service Disrupted**

NJT's Morris & Essex Line faced modified operations for an extended period as a result of extensive catenary damage near Mount Tabor. Photos on social media showed catenary support structures had been knocked down by apparatus from a work train.

From December 5, three eastbound trains and four westbound trains were canceled each day; 15 trains were rerouted to operate via the Montclair-Boonton line between Denville and Newark Broad Street; six trains operated between Summit and Hoboken only; and seven trains made additional stops.

Train service on the Morristown Line originated and terminated at Morristown. Riders traveling to or from Morris Plains and Mount Tabor needed to use the Morristown or Denville stations on the Montclair-Boonton Line. There was no direct service to Hoboken from Morristown, Convent, Madison, or Chatham; transfers were necessary at Summit or Newark Broad Street.

NJ.com reported that photos on social media showed catenary support structures had been knocked down by apparatus from a work train, but an NJT representative said the cause of the incident remains under investigation. Service was partially restored on December 13 and full service resumed two days later.

[TRAINS NEWS WIRE](#), December 5

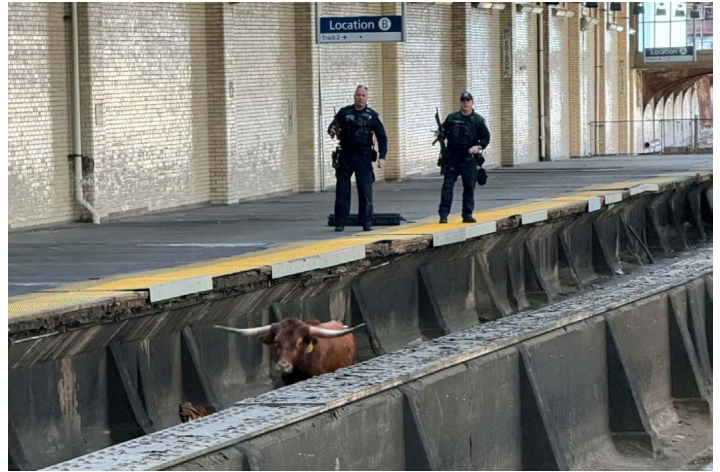
Northeast Corridor Service Disrupted by Bull

That NJT service was delayed was not all that unusual. The reason on December 14, however, was something out of the wild, wild West. There was a bull — one with long horns, no less — on the tracks.

During the waning hours of the morning commute at Newark Penn Station, trains were stopped by the brown bull charging by the passenger platform.

By noon, NJT said the bull was off the tracks and that service had resumed after a 45-minute delay. As the service delay dragged on, more police officers tried to contain the animal as it became increasingly aggressive, running back and forth. The Newark Police said that no injuries had been reported during the episode and that the bull had been contained within a fenced lot on Victoria Street, near a meat wholesaler, before being taken to a sanctuary. According to the sanctuary's Facebook page, the bovine's name is Ricardo and he is resting.

In separate news, NJT started selling a plush toy in the likeness of this wandering steer. The Ricardo the Bull stuffed



Delay due to...bull, no kidding! Javier Perez photo via New York Times

animal was available for \$20, which included free shipping, but it sold out rather quickly. Portions of the proceeds went directly to Skylands Animal Sanctuary & Rescue in Sussex County. Skylands rescues, rehabilitates and cares for farm animals that have escaped slaughter. It provides 232 acres of pastures for over 400 farmed animals while advocating for animal welfare issues.

[NEW YORK TIMES](#), December 14

[NJ TRANSIT PRESS RELEASE](#), December 19

PORT AUTHORITY**Tap-and-Go Fare Collection System for PATH**

PATH began a real-world test of five turnstiles equipped with its new tap-and-go fare payment system beginning December 5, with expansions planned to occur in phases based on experience with the pilot turnstiles. The agency also announced the new modern contactless system will be named TAPP, which stands for Total Access PATH Payment.



PATH's new contactless turnstile. Port Authority photo

The five pilot TAPP turnstiles will be available to PATH riders at two PATH terminal stations, Journal Square in Jersey City and 33rd Street in Manhattan. Turnstiles that are part of the TAPP pilot at the 33rd Street Station will be located at the terminal's 30th Street entrance. The five turnstiles that are part of the TAPP pilot will feature colorful wraps to help passengers identify them from a distance. TAPP is an open-loop contactless payment system, which allows passengers to use any contactless credit/debit card or the digital wallets in their own devices at the turnstiles, instead of specific PATH-issued SmartLink cards or pay-per-ride MetroCards.

Cubic Transportation Systems Inc. was awarded the agency's contract to design and install the new TAPP system in November 2021 by the Port Authority Board of Commissioners. The contract also included software development and installation, the purchase and installation of required equipment and upgrades and the implementation of all backroom processing capabilities necessary to support the new system.

Subject to the experience with the test turnstiles, the new equipment will be phased in over a 12- to 18-month period. During phase-in and for a substantial period thereafter, equipment supporting SmartLink and MetroCard will remain operational as riders become familiar with the new system. New TAPP turnstiles will be installed gradually throughout the system.

[PORT AUTHORITY PRESS RELEASE](#), December 4

AirTrain Newark Upgrade

The Port Authority announced that it has selected Doppelmayr, a market leader in cable-propelled transport systems, in the first phase of a multi-phase procurement process to replace the existing AirTrain system at Newark Airport. The AirTrain Newark Replacement Program will replace the current outmoded system with a modern, reliable 2.5-mile automated people mover train system.

Doppelmayr will play a key role in developing the new AirTrain Newark system. The contract includes \$570 million for design and construction, with an estimated \$385 million over 20 years, net present value, for operation and maintenance of the automated people mover system and its vehicles. The new AirTrain system is expected to open in 2029.



AirTrain Newark rendering. Doppelmayr

In addition to the design, construction, operation and maintenance of the system and its vehicles, the first procurement phase also includes the furnishing, delivery, installation, testing and commissioning of the system technology components. Those components include train control, electrical power, communications, propulsion and Maintenance and Control Facility equipment. Future project procurement phases will include contracts related to the system's guideway and stations, maintenance and control facility, pedestrian connections and demolition of the existing system, among others.

Doppelmayr was selected after a review process, following a Request for Qualifications issued in December 2022 and a Request for Proposals issued in March 2023.

[PORT AUTHORITY PRESS RELEASE](#), December 14

PATH Grove Street Rehab Begins

Starting the weekend of January 6, PATH will begin an extensive station rehabilitation effort over 20 weekends that will require adjustments for some passengers traveling to or from the Grove St Station in order to complete this project without any disruption to weekday service. Passengers in the impacted direction should plan for additional travel time if their trip begins or ends at Grove St.

Trains will bypass Grove St in one direction or the other over 20 weekends as listed below. For the first half of the project, Journal Square- and Newark-Penn Station-bound trains will bypass the station. For the second half of the project, World Trade Center-bound and Hoboken/33 St-bound trains will bypass it. These bypasses will occur from 6 AM Saturdays until 11:59 PM Sundays.

The project will be undertaken in two phases:

- Phase 1: From the first weekend in January through approximately the end of March, Journal Square-bound and Newark-Penn Station-bound trains will bypass Grove St.
 - For service to Journal Square, Harrison or Newark stations from Grove St.: Passengers can take a World Trade Center-bound train to Exchange Pl and transfer to a Newark-Penn Station-bound train. Alternatively, passengers can take a Hoboken/33 St-bound train to Newport and transfer to a Journal Square-bound train;
 - For service to Grove St from Exchange Pl or World Trade Center: Passengers can take a Newark-Penn Station-bound train to Journal Square, then transfer to a World Trade Center-bound or Hoboken/33 St-bound train to ride back to Grove St;
 - For service to Grove St from Newport, Hoboken, Christopher St, 9 St, 14 St, 23 St, or 33 St stations: Passengers can take a Journal Square-bound train to Journal Square, then transfer to a World Trade Center-bound or Hoboken/33 St-bound train to ride back to Grove St.
- Phase 2: On weekends from approximately early April through June, World Trade Center-bound and Hoboken/33 St-bound trains will bypass Grove St.
 - For World Trade Center-bound or Hoboken/33 St-bound

service from Grove St: Passengers can take a Journal Square-bound or Newark-Penn Station-bound train to Journal Square and transfer to a World Trade Center-bound or 33 St-bound train. Alternatively, passengers can begin their trip at nearby Exchange Place or Newport Stations;

- For service from Newark-Penn Station, Harrison, or Journal Square to Grove St: From Newark-Penn Station and Harrison, passengers can take a World Trade Center-bound train to Exchange Pl and transfer to a Newark-Penn Station-bound train to ride back to Grove St. From Journal Square, passengers can either take a Hoboken/33 St-bound train to Newport and transfer to a Journal-Square-bound train to ride back to Grove St, or take a World Trade Center-bound train to Exchange Pl and transfer to a Newark-Penn Station-bound train to ride back to Grove St.

At Grove St, barricades will be installed and removed each weekend to close off half the platform and protect the public from ongoing construction.

The project includes replacing floor tiles, patching and repainting throughout the station, refinishing platform columns and installing LED lighting along with 4.7 miles of electrical wiring in the station. This work is part of the Port Authority's overall efforts to renew and modernize the 115-year-old PATH system.

[PORT AUTHORITY PRESS RELEASE](#), December 15

Other U.S. Systems

ATLANTA

Five Points Station Transformation Project

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) reported advancing its Five Points Station Transformation Project to the public review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The transit agency and its City of Atlanta partners are pursuing station upgrades, including deconstructing the existing concrete canopy and replacing it with a new canopy that allows for more light and ventilation; reconnecting Broad Street to pedestrian traffic; and incorporating community activities, public art, agriculture, gathering places and other customer amenities.

The \$206 million is funded through the More MARTA Atlanta half-penny sales tax, with \$13.8 million from the state of Georgia and a \$25 million Federal RAISE Grant.

Five Points Station not only is the largest and busiest rail station in the MARTA system, but also the connecting point for all four rail lines, the North/South (Red and Gold) and East/West Lines (Green and Blue) and nine bus routes.

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) determined in April that the station is of significant historical importance since it is part of the largest public works project in Atlanta history, the construction of the MARTA system. As a



Five Points Station Rendering. MARTA

result, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) determined the NEPA class of action to be an Environmental Assessment and MARTA conducted multiple studies over the next several months centered around the project's impact on the built environment, specifically the concrete canopy.

MARTA said its design team worked to refine the project concept to address some of the City of Atlanta's concerns about project cost, which received City concurrence in July.

Because the SHPO determined that the project would have an adverse effect on the historic resource, Five Points Station, the proposed mitigation measures include architectural documentation (in the form of HABS Level 2 photography, written historical descriptive data and digital reproductions of existing drawings) and interpretive panels memorializing the concourse and plaza levels, according to MARTA.

The project will now undergo a month-long public review of the Environmental Assessment before the FTA will go through the final approval steps, which are expected to be a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) under NEPA. Upon that final determination, MARTA will begin preparing Five Points Station for construction work.

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill will lead the design of the canopy deconstruction and removal and Skanska Building USA is the Construction Management at Risk contractor that will oversee the project. While construction will likely not be complete for the World Cup in 2026, MARTA has stated that it will ensure the rail station is ready to host soccer fans from around the world.

[RAILWAY AGE TRANSIT BRIEFS](#), December 6

Rail Cars into the Ocean

MARTA and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources recently partnered to deploy two decommissioned railcars into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Savannah where, over time, they will develop into reef habitats for marine wildlife.

Earlier this year, the dismantled older model railcars were stripped of hazardous materials and contaminants and inspected and approved by the U.S. Coast Guard for deployment as artificial reef material. On Thursday, December 21, the railcars were transported by barge to Artificial Reef L, an established reef about two square miles in size, located approximately 23 nautical miles east of Ossabaw Island and



Retired MARTA railcars are placed at Artificial Reef L about 23 nautical miles east of Ossabaw Island on December 21. MARTA photo



LRVs 5020+5032 (ABB, 1991) on North Howard Street nearing West Mulberry Street on February 18, 2017.

Elvert Barnes photo via Wikimedia Commons

deployed in about 55 to 65 feet of water.

Over time, MARTA says the railcars will provide essential marine habitat for sea creatures, including popular sport fish and endangered sea turtles. While the substrate for the reef is manmade, the organisms that will grow on it are entirely natural and beneficial for the environment. Fish and other marine life, such as sea turtles, are likely to investigate the new habitat almost immediately. Corals, sponges and other encrusting organisms will begin to take hold on the railcars in about one year and will continue to grow and improve the longer they are in the ocean. SCUBA divers and anglers can begin using the reef immediately.

MARTA's railcars join previously deployed materials, including U.S. Army M-60 battle tanks, barges, tugboats, New York City subway cars and other manmade structures. Artificial Reef L was first created in 1976 as part of a network of 32 offshore reefs that the Coastal Resources Division has been building and improving for more than 40 years.

[RAILWAY AGE TRANSIT BRIEFS](#), December 26

BALTIMORE

Light Rail Shut Down Temporarily

Effective 12:01 AM on December 8, the Maryland Department of Transportation–Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) temporarily suspended light rail service at all stops to perform emergency inspections of every vehicle in the fleet.

According to multiple news reports, there were two mechanical issues that were causes of concern.

During an inspection following an October 21, 2023 fire, MTA discovered the potential for a punctured conduit on its light rail vehicles. Out of an abundance of caution and in conjunction with its vehicle overhaul contractor, it initiated an accelerated inspection and correction plan.

According to a safety risk assessment conducted on behalf of MTA and Alstom, which was contracted in 2013 to do an overhaul on the MTA light rail vehicle fleet, that problem

was identified a medium risk, which meant that it required mitigation but was deemed safe enough for operation.

53 light rail cars were impacted, ranging in age from 21 to 34 years old. It was intended to restore limited service once at least eight railcars became available, with full service returning once all repairs were complete.

A second issue was related to the piece of machinery that connects the two sections of the cars called the inter-car connector cable, which had caused six smoke events between November 2021 and November 2023.

Additional inspections revealed that the problems were much more systemic than officials originally believed, although it was unclear how the problems became so widespread. The repairs and inspections were covered under the \$130 million light-rail overhaul that is currently under way with Alstom.

Shuttle bus service was implemented at all light rail stops, but because of limited resources they had to pull drivers and buses from existing routes. Buses were considerably slower than the normal light rail — it takes about two hours to get from end to end on a bus — but they tried to stay true to the original schedule.

The light rail has a daily ridership of about 10,000 people. The shutdown made a considerable hit to a service already struggling to recover from pre-pandemic ridership — 55 percent of what it was before Covid.

On December 14, MTA launched a new webpage to keep riders updated on the repairs and progress made on the light rail system. The agency took advantage of the railcar outage to complete necessary track work.

Light rail service resumed on Saturday, December 23.

MTA inspected every light rail vehicle for electrical conduit damage. Any damaged cables were repaired or replaced and intercar connectors were also replaced on all vehicles. A “repair” status indicated damage was found in one or more conduits and the cables needed to be repaired or replaced. A “completed” status indicated that repairs were made and the train received a safety assurance certification with concurrence from the SSOA

(State Safety Oversight Agency). The table found here (<https://www.mta.maryland.gov/light-rail-service-restoration>) has the latest information on each vehicle.

With light rail service resuming on the 23rd, shuttle buses that operated between light rail stations no longer were in operation. As a courtesy to riders, light rail service was free until January 2, 2024.

MTA has applied for \$225 million in federal grant opportunities to support further investment in the light rail system. The Rail Vehicle Replacement grant program would directly support the procurement of an entirely new fleet of modern light rail vehicles.

[RAILWAY AGE TRANSIT BRIEFS](#), December 27

DETROIT

Takeover of Streetcar Line?

The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) of Southeast Michigan is weighing a takeover of the QLINE.

The move, should it be approved, would mean a transfer of the 3.3-mile Detroit streetcar system from the nonprofit M-1 Rail to a public 10-member board, with appointed representatives from Macomb, Oakland, Wayne and Washtenaw counties, as well as the city of Detroit and the state of Michigan, although the governor's representative does not vote.



Liberty 288 (Brookville, 2016) at Congress Street station, along Woodward Avenue in Downtown Detroit on February 8, 2023.
42-BRT photo via Wikimedia Commons

The RTA Board Chair said in a news release on December 14 that this transition will help ensure the QLINE remains as a transit option for the community and the city of Detroit long into the future. He also noted that the RTA's role is to ensure the ongoing viability of regional transit services.

The president of M-1 Rail said in a separate release that the rail line is an asset that was always envisioned as one piece of a larger, connected regional transit system and that now is the time to make this transition. Performance has never been better. Ridership is approaching one million for the year and the system's finances are sustainable over the long-term.

The two entities, according to one release, have initiated a collaborative due diligence process focused on all financial and operational elements of the transfer. Through this process, the RTA intends to validate M-1 RAIL's budget and confirm that a transfer to the organization will come with a balanced budget which will impose no additional burden on the region's taxpayers.

A decision is expected early in 2024, although it's not clear how quickly the transfer could happen. The release said that the transition has been planned since the QLINE's inception, noting that legislation was amended in 2014 to allow the transfer in 2024.

[RAILWAY AGE TRANSIT BRIEFS](#), December 18

Scarborough RT Cars Coming?

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) is in the final stages of a deal to sell its Scarborough RT trains to Detroit. Detroit Transportation Corporation General Manager Robert Cramer said the corporation's board approved up to \$1 million for the deal at its December 12 meeting.

The Line 3 Scarborough RT trains would be used as part of the Detroit public transit service called the Detroit People Mover, a 2.94-mile elevated, automated downtown rail system. The company would pay for shipping as well.

The Detroit People Mover is essentially the same setup as the Scarborough RT, which was shut down for good in the fall after the derailment of a train in July.



ICTS Mark I No. 3013 (UTDC, 1984) is the second unit of this train leaving the McCowan terminal at the Scarborough end of the line on July 25, 2015. The lead unit was still in its original paint scheme.

Rob Hutchinson photo via Urban Electric Transit

According to the TTC the train cars are still in good condition and the deal involves about five entire train sets. The TTC will keep two full trains for a museum outside the city for archives in Toronto.

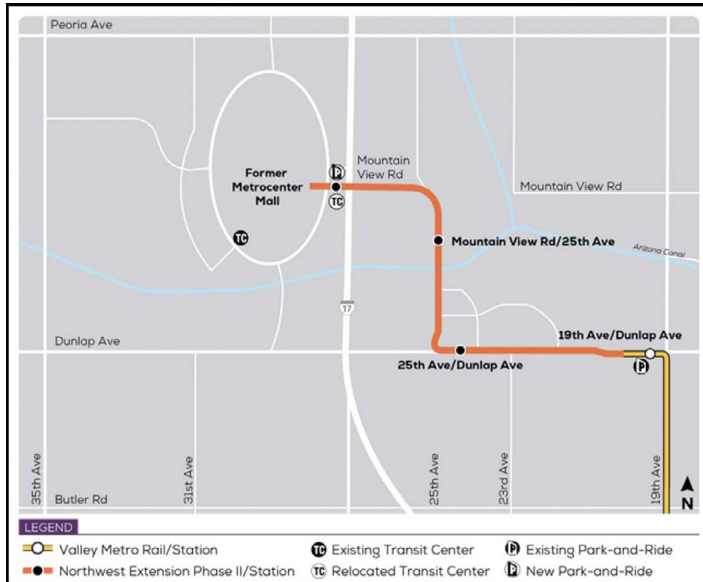
Line 3 was a 6.4-kilometer (3.9-mile) rapid transit line with six stations that opened in 1985. The TTC announced on August 24 that the line would close permanently.

[RAILWAY AGE TRANSIT BRIEFS](#), December 20

PHOENIX

Northwest Extension Phase II

With service expected to launch on January 27, Phoenix Valley Metro's Northwest Extension Phase II project is now in the testing phase, using pallets of water to simulate loaded light rail trains. Testing also includes operator training and simulated service to test the operating schedule.



Northwest Extension Phase II Project Map. Phoenix Valley Metro

The 1.6-mile extension will help connect the West Valley to destinations in Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa. The line will extend west on Dunlap Avenue from 19th Avenue, then north on 25th Avenue and across I-17 at Mountain View Road, ending on the west side of the freeway near the former Metrocenter Mall (see map above). It adds three new stations, including the system's first elevated station across I-17.

In 2004, the Phoenix City Council approved the Northwest Extension and in 2007, the route was divided into two phases. The 3.2-mile Phase I on 19th Avenue from Montebello to Dunlap Avenue opened March 19, 2016.

[RAILWAY AGE TRANSIT BRIEFS](#), December 6

SACRAMENTO, CALIF.

Light Rail Modernization Project

Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT) reported that its \$500 million Light Rail Modernization Project is slated to hit high gear in 2024, as it adds service frequency, introduces a new fleet of Siemens Mobility S700s and continues platform modifications along the 43-mile, 53-station system.

Starting in January 2024, SacRT will be extending station closure times for Gold Line platform modifications to speed the construction timeline. Also, during the first six months of the year, it will work to add a passing track section near

the Glenn/Robert G. Holderness Station in Folsom. This will provide Gold Line riders 15-minute service to four stations from Hazel to Historic Folsom. Currently, trains operate every 30 minutes to Folsom area stations. By mid-year 2024, SacRT will begin introducing a new fleet of low-floor light rail trains. The new trains will be placed into service over the course of the next few years, starting on the Gold Line, followed by the Blue and Green lines.

To accommodate the new low-floor fleet, SacRT said it is currently reconstructing the passenger platforms at Gold Line stations, raising the platform to meet the ramp requirements of the new trains so that passengers can roll or walk directly onto and off them.

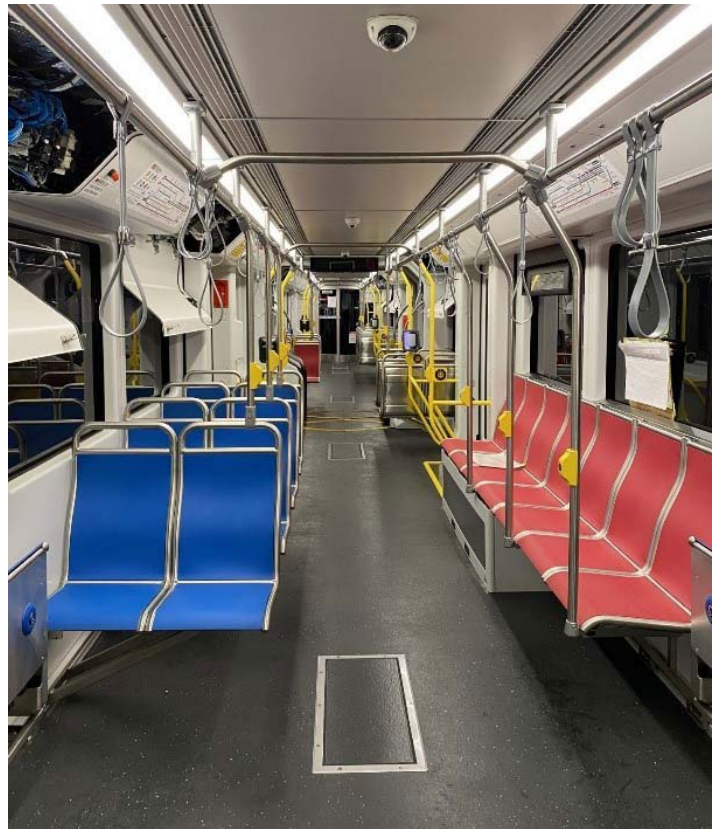
[RAILWAY AGE TRANSIT BRIEFS](#), December 1

SAN FRANCISCO

New Seating in LRV4s

San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) has begun rolling out its new LRV4 cars with seats facing the front or rear.

In early September, the agency introduced the addition of side-by-side transverse seats. Car #2120 was the first of a hundred LRV4 cars to feature a revamped interior. This seating arrangement lets passengers choose whether they want to face forward or backwards.



New seating arrangement in LRV4 vehicles with seats facing the front or rear. SFMTA photo

The original interiors in Muni's LRV4 fleet featured a bench arrangement that ran along the outer walls of the cars, with seats that face inward towards the center aisle of the car and lacked the bucket seats passengers were accustomed to seeing. This layout allowed more people to ride on each car, but some passengers found the seating uncomfortable and wanted more places to sit. Following rider input, SFMTA says it is doing away with those older interiors and replacing them with updated seating featuring the return of the bucket seat for a more comfortable ride.

While all vehicles are being updated to include transverse seats, only SMFTA's newer LRV4 vehicles have been equipped with double-transverse seating options, as this change required structural reinforcement to support the extra weight of two passengers.

The LRV4s with the double-transverse seats will be the final phase of LRV4 vehicles joining the Muni fleet before a preventative brake rebuild. This \$20 million overhaul and upgrade, according to SFMTA, will improve reliability and extend the manufacturer's warranty on the agency's new vehicles.

[RAILWAY AGE TRANSIT BRIEFS](#), December 20

International

EUROPE

New Electrics Ordered

European Locomotive Leasing Group (ELL) has signed a framework agreement with Siemens Mobility for the order of up to 200 additional Vectron locomotives. These new vehicles will be equipped with various power systems and will be designed for both freight and passenger operations. The initial agreement includes an order of 60 locomotives, which will be delivered from the start of 2025.



One of ELL's current Vectron locomotives. Siemens Mobility photo

This is the fourth framework agreement between ELL and Siemens Mobility. By 2027, ELL will have at least 301 Siemens Vectron locomotives in service, making it Europe's largest

Vectron fleet. Under this framework agreement, ELL will secure a wide range of multi-system locomotives, including the Vectron Dual Mode model.

This flexibility will equip the locomotives to meet specific requirements and applications on various railways across Europe. In addition to supplying the vehicles, Siemens Mobility will also actively support ELL with vehicle operation, maintenance and servicing.

[RAILWAY-NEWS](#), December 4

GERMANY

New ICE Trains

On December 15, Deutsche Bahn (DB) launched the tender for a new generation of high-speed trains.

This includes the development, construction and approval of a new train fleet, which is to be deployed at the beginning of the 2030s. The future generation of ICE trains will set new standards for the traveling experience with new interior concepts and other innovations. As many stepless, level entrances as possible will facilitate access for passengers with reduced mobility. DB also expects to set new records in terms of energy efficiency and technical reliability.

A framework agreement is to be concluded for up to 95 vehicles. In a first part, DB intends to order 33 of the single-decker trains with a maximum length of 400 meters, a minimum speed of 300km/h and around 940 seats. Before the new generation of trains goes into operation, a prototype will be tested in advance. With the ICE of the future, DB will replace older trains such as the ICE 1 and ICE 3 and expand the ICE fleet in order to meet the rapidly growing number of passengers.

DB is breaking new ground in the procurement of the future train generation. Following an initial tender, Alstom Transport Deutschland and Siemens Mobility, together with Deutsche Bahn, have each developed an independent vehicle concept.

[RAILWAY-NEWS](#), December 18

LEIPZIG, GERMANY

S-Bahn Trains Ordered

Siemens Mobility has won an order for 75 Mireo trains for the "Central German S-Bahn Network 2025+" (MDSB 2025+) project.

This order is worth around €500 million. Specifically, 41 three-car Mireo trains were ordered by Die Länderbahn, while 18 four-car Mireo trains and 16 two-car battery Mireo Plus B trains were ordered by DB Regio AG.

Joint commissioning bodies for the overall MDSB 2025+ network are the Zweckverband für den Nahverkehrsraum Leipzig in co-operation with the special-purpose Saxon transportation associations Verkehrsverbund Mittelsachsen and Verkehrsverbund Vogtland as well as the Thuringian Ministry of Infrastructure and Agriculture and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Digital Affairs of the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt.



Rendering of Mireo Plus B for MDSB 2025+. Siemens Mobility

This is Siemens Mobility’s largest Mireo order to date. The trains are to cover 10.6 million kilometers per year on the MDSB network and operate in and around Leipzig from 2026.

The two-car version will have 100 seats, the three-car version 150 seats and the four-car version 200 seats. The first-class sections will feature leather seats.

Passengers will benefit from free Wi-Fi, barrier-free access and power sockets and USB ports for recharging devices on the go. The trains will also feature high-frequency window panes developed by Siemens Mobility to substantially improve mobile phone reception in the cars.

To date, Siemens Mobility has sold 22 Mireo fleets, totaling more than 400 trains.

[RAILWAY-NEWS](#), December 18

LILLE, FRANCE

New Trams Ordered

Alstom has announced it has been chosen to provide a new set of trams for two lines of the Lille tramway network.



Rendering of possible design of the future Lille trams, which will run on the historic Mongy line. Alstom Advanced & Creative Design

Supplying vehicles for both Line R and T, the initial order consists of 24 Citadis trams, with an option to add an additional six further down the line.

The first set of trams is set to be delivered in early 2026,

with operation on the “Mongy” line, which links the cities of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, beginning around mid-2026.

With a length of 32.4 meters in length, the trams tout a width of 2.40 meters and 4 double doors on each side. They are eco-designed and 95% recyclable, have a capacity of 196 passengers in total, wider seats and areas reserved for wheelchair users as well as pushchairs.

[RAILWAY-NEWS](#), December 21

MOROCCO

New Train Sets to be Ordered

Morocco’s national railway operator (ONCF) has launched a tender for the acquisition of 168 new trains. This is part of ONCF’s ongoing development plan to strengthen the rail network and promote it as the preferred choice for sustainable and inclusive mobility. It will also better prepare Morocco to co-host the 2030 FIFA World Cup.

The call for competition covers the supply of 150 trains for Intercity, Rapid Shuttle and Mass Transit services, as well as 18 high-speed trains. These trains will partly replace ONCF’s aging rolling stock fleet. In addition, they will be used to extend Mass Rapid services to Casablanca and Rabat.



Al-Boraq high speed train at Casablanca Voyageurs railway station. David Jones photo

Meanwhile, the new high-speed trains will operate on the upcoming extension of the first Moroccan and African high-speed line, Al Boraq, which commenced service five years ago between Casablanca and Tangier and will now be extended to Marrakesh. This investment in new rolling stock is valued at around €4 billion.

ONCF initially launched an international Expression of Interest in September 2022 for this acquisition. It received 10 expressions of interest from rolling stock manufacturers. It is now further advancing the process by launching the call for competition.

This call is based on three components:

- The purchase of trains, with the delivery schedule spread

between 2027 and 2030;

- A partnership for maintenance;
- Industrial development through the construction of a manufacturing unit and the development of a railway ecosystem of suppliers.

[RAILWAY-NEWS](#), December 1

NETHERLANDS

EURO9000 Approved for the Netherlands and Belgium

Stadler's EURO9000 locomotive has received approval to operate in the Netherlands and Belgium. This 6-axle hybrid locomotive has been designed for use on international routes in Europe, adapting to specific requirements in each nation.

It has been previously authorized for use in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and is also expected to gain an operating license for Italy in 2024.

This latest achievement confirms that the locomotive meets the technical specifications for interoperability (TSI) in the Netherlands and Belgium. For operation, it will be equipped with various country packages including conventional automatic train protection systems and European Train Control System (ETCS) to ensure smooth cross-border operations.



The EURO9000 locomotive. Stadler photo

With a power output of 9 MW, the EURO9000 is currently the most powerful locomotive on the European market. This allows it to operate on electrified routes with both alternating current (AC) and direct current (DC).

Its modular design enables up to three different drive systems (electric, diesel and/or battery drive) to be installed together, allowing the vehicle to run on electrified and non-electrified sections of track. The diesel motors also provide additional power when it is traveling under a 3 kV DC overhead contact line.

The EURO9000 can travel at high speeds on primary European corridors with mixed traffic. Its high power also allows longer, heavier trains to be pulled by a single locomotive.

Leasing company European Loc Pool (ELP) was the first customer to place an order for Stadler's EURO9000 locomotives. To date, it has ordered 30 locomotives, seven of which have already been delivered and are in operation. Alpha Trains also recently ordered 12 EURO9000 locomotives for delivery in 2025.

These orders follow the successful testing of two prototype locomotives in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium over the past two years.

[RAILWAY-NEWS](#), December 22

OTTAWA, CANADA

Trillium Line Delays Continue

Delays continue for the north-south Trillium Line. The city of Ottawa is now expected to take control of it in June 2024. Back in the fall it had been stated that the hand-over would take place in April 2024.

The Trillium Line comprises Line 2 from Bayview to Limebank stations and Line 4 from South Keys to the Ottawa airport. It will run Alstom and Stadler diesel trains, which have already begun testing runs on the track. Additionally, the first four classes of operators finished training and the second class will start soon.

The completion date for the Confederation Line's eastward extension to Trim Road has slipped another 60 days. The first test trains are expected to roll on the eastward line around the end of January 2024, with full revenue service on track for late spring 2025. The westward extension to Algonquin College and Moodie Drive isn't expected to be complete until late 2026.

[RAILWAY AGE TRANSIT BRIEFS](#), December 15

PARIS

First Metro Train Deployed on Grand Paris Express Line 15 South

The train made its first turn of the wheel on November 28 in Champigny-sur-Marne, Val-de-Marne. This milestone paves the way for dynamic testing to officially commence in summer 2024, before the line comes into service at the end of 2025.

During dynamic testing, the performance of the new metro trains will be assessed in varied traffic conditions. This will include the testing of braking, acceleration, safety and comfort. Once this testing is complete, Line 15 will then gradually commence service with a phased approach.

The southern section connecting Pont de Sèvres to Noisy Champ will open at the end of 2025, while the eastern section between Champigny Center and Saint-Denis Pleyel and the western section from Pont de Sèvres to Saint-Denis, are scheduled to open in 2030.

This line will form a 75-kilometer ring around Paris, connected to the rest of the network at 95 percent of stations. It will thus significantly reduce daily transport times in the inner and outer suburbs of the city.



One of the new metro trains for Line 15. Île-de-France Mobilités photo



The first electric Škoda 16Ev units of the Latvian national carrier Vienā vilcienā (VIVI) have gone into service with passengers in Riga. Škoda photo

[RAILWAY-NEWS](#), December 5

PHILIPPINES

New EMUs Ordered

Mitsubishi Corporation has outsourced the design and supply of seven Electric Multiple Units to CAF as part of its contract with the Department of Transportation of the Government of the Philippines. Under this outsourcing agreement, CAF will manufacture seven express trains for service in the Philippines. Each vehicle will consist of eight cars, for which CAF will also supply the spare parts.

This contract is part of the Philippines' North-South Commuter Railway Project, which will connect Clark International Airport, north of Manila, with the southern province of Laguna. This new line is part of the national initiative to improve transportation surrounding the Philippine capital city.

The latest agreement builds on CAF's close relationship with Mitsubishi Corporation. The companies have previously collaborated on several successful railway projects, including the supply of rolling stock for Line 1 of the Manila Light Rail Transit System.

[RAILWAY-NEWS](#), December 5

RIGA, LATVIA

New Škoda Electric Trains Enter Service

The first Škoda 16Ev electric trains have commenced regular service in Latvia, operated by Vienā vilcienā (VIVI) on behalf of Pasažieru vilciens.

In total, Škoda Group is supplying 32 electric trains on a 1,520 mm gauge in Latvia. The first of these units was deployed from Riga Central Station at 10:58 AM on December 15. The complete order is expected to be delivered by mid-2024.

The new trains are based on the RegioPanter model in the Czech Republic and have been adapted for the specific requirements of Latvia. In addition to the wide gauge, they

have a larger width to accommodate more passengers.

Each vehicle has 436 seats across four coaches and is 109 meters in length. They feature single-level boarding to enhance accessibility and reduce transfer times at stops. Meanwhile, wider train doors also facilitate quicker boarding and alighting.

The new electric trains have full air-conditioning, ergonomic seating and modern amenities. They are also equipped with video and audio information systems and Wi-Fi connectivity. The design speed of the units is set at 160 km/h, an increase from the current 120 km/h, with the potential for further acceleration on sections where railway infrastructure permits.

Thanks to the introduction of the new electric trains, VIVI can now implement improved timetables on all routes, allowing trains to run every 15 to 20 minutes during peak weekday mornings and evenings.

[RAILWAY-NEWS](#), December 20

VANCOUVER, CANADA

SkyTrain Extension Progress

The Surrey Langley SkyTrain extension is one step closer with the announcement of the official names of eight stations.

The new station names are as follows:

- Green Timbers Station (140 St and Fraser Highway);
- 152 St Station (152 St and Fraser Highway);
- Fleetwood Station (160 St and Fraser Highway);
- Bakerview-166 St Station (166 St and Fraser Highway);
- Hillcrest-184 St Station (184 St and Fraser Highway);
- Clayton Station (190 St and Fraser Highway);
- Willowbrook Station (196 St and Fraser Highway);
- Langley City Centre Station (203 St and Fraser Highway).

The Surrey Langley SkyTrain project is a 16-kilometer (3.7-mile) extension of the Expo Line that will run from King George Station to Langley City Center, the first rapid transit expansion south of the Fraser River in 30 years. Once complete, commuters will be able to travel on transit from Langley city to downtown Vancouver in just over an hour.



Map of the SkyTrain extension to Surrey.
Government of British Columbia

The station name development process included mapping exercises, stakeholder consultation, community and neighborhood plan reviews and a study of land-use policies to better understand future development in areas surrounding the stations. The areas adjacent to new stations are key locations where the Province of British Columbia will support transit-oriented developments to create efficient, vibrant communities where people can rely on public transit to connect them to their work and social lives.

The project is being delivered through three separate contracts: the guideway; the stations; and the systems and trackwork. Earlier this year, the Province announced the firms that were selected to respond to the requests for proposals. It's anticipated that contracts will be awarded in early 2024.

Advance work has been under way since 2020, including the now-complete widening of Fraser Highway between 140 and 148 Streets, as well as utility relocations.

Construction on the Surrey Langley SkyTrain is expected to begin in 2024.

[RAILWAY AGE TRANSIT BRIEFS](#), December 5

VIENNA

Two-Line S-Bahn Ring Envisioned

In the second Vienna rail infrastructure package presented in 2019 and adopted in 2022, Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) and the City of Vienna agreed to carry out a feasibility study for a possible S-Bahn ring in Vienna.

The study was carried out by ÖBB in co-operation with independent transport planning experts over the past year and a half. The results were presented on December 19.

The most important result of the study is that a two-line S-Bahn ring consisting of routes S45 and S80 is possible and makes sense in terms of transport. The concept envisages that the extended S45 and S80 will create a ring with four trains per hour and direction with transfers in Hütteldorf and Praterkai.

This requires an expansion of the infrastructure between Handelskai and Praterkai, which will enable the extension



Map showing the two lines that would make up Vienna's Ring. ÖBB Infra

of the S45 to Praterkai, as well as the completion of other ongoing and planned railway construction projects in and around Vienna, such as making the connecting railway more attractive and double-tracking from Hütteldorf to Penzing, including the conversion of Hütteldorf and the new Baumgarten stop. The estimated timeframe for delivering this project is completion by 2032.

The possibility of a continuous ring without changing trains, which was examined in various variants, proved to be disadvantageous for the S-Bahn system and public transport use as a whole. A key factor in favor of this would be that the Hütteldorf transport hub could no longer be served. In addition, such a concept would result in massively increased operating costs and a large number of additional infrastructure investments.



Class 4024 Talent 130 (Bombardier Transportation, 2007), operating on the S45, is approaching the Handelskai terminal on September 17, 2022. Jeff Erlitz photo

The extension of the S45 between Handelskai and Praterkai, including new stops at Reichsbrücke and Donaumarina, is currently being analyzed as one of several modules in the Vienna area for possible inclusion in the 2040 target network. The 2040 target network is due to be published at the beginning of 2024. The second rail infrastructure project is currently being implemented. Subsequently, there will be talks with the City of Vienna regarding a third Vienna rail infrastructure package, which will also include the measures for the S-Bahn ring.

[RAILWAY-NEWS](#), December 19

“Half-Back” Retired Electric Railway Equipment

By Paul Grether (Photographs by the author on January 1, 2024)

The City of Asheville, North Carolina is not famous for its transit system, but rather for Biltmore Estate, the largest private home ever constructed in the United States. There is an electric railroad connection, since the New York Central System was a key part of the portfolio that allowed George Washington Vanderbilt II to finance construction of the Biltmore Estate and the New York Central System which later built and operated multiple railway electrifications. But that is not the topic of this article...

In the 21st century Asheville has become known for “half-backs.” These are retirees that settle in Asheville. Specifically, those from the Northeast or Midwest who leave to work in the sunbelt (Atlanta, Florida, etc.) and then retire “halfway back” in Asheville. There is also a small group of “half-back” retired electric railway equipment in Asheville.

The Craggy Mountain Line is a small privately owned tourist line created in 2001 to take over part of a small ex-Southern Railway branch line. This branch, formerly an electric railway called the Asheville & Craggy Mountain Railway (A&CM), acted as a bridge between the Southern and the Asheville Street Railway system and served local industries. The tough terrain and resultant grades led to the electrification of the line and the A&CM even purchased an electric locomotive from Brill in 1901. The history of the line and the electric street railways of Asheville are covered in *Trolleys in the Land of the Sky: Street Railways of Asheville, N. C. and Vicinity* by David C. Bailey, Joseph M. Canfield and Harold E. Cox, published by Cox in 2000. [www.libib.com/u/grether?solo=89860384]

Even though the electrification is long gone, the Craggy Mountain Line soon began collecting electric railway equipment familiar to many of the “half-back” populations in Asheville:

- The first to arrive were two Carolina Power and Light (Asheville) single truck streetcars. No. 119 (Brill, 1927) is partially restored and No. 1942 (Brill, 1914) is a body used for parts.
- In 2013 the museum acquired New York City Transit Authority R-6-3 No. 983 (American Car & Foundry, 1935), which came from Florida where it was part of a disco club that failed in 1982. No. 983 was missing its trucks but has since been placed on more modern NYCT trucks by Craggy and cosmetically restored.
- In 2019 Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) 482-483 arrived. These are ex-Chicago Transit Authority 6089-6090 “El” cars (St. Louis Car, 1950) used by SEPTA on the Norristown High-Speed Line starting in 1986 during an equipment shortage. These cars were built from new-PCC components rather than the later cars which used components cannibalized from Chicago streetcars then being retired. The cars are displayed as they operated in Philadelphia.



(Above and below) Ex-SEPTA 482-483, nee-CTA 6089-6090 (St. Louis Car, 1950)



Finally in 2023 New York City Transit R-32 3432-3433 (Budd, 1964) arrived at Craggy. These cars are complete and still have the “MTA Asset Recovery Unit — DO NOT SCRAP DO NOT REMOVE PARTS” notice in the window.

What the plans are for the collection of “half-back” retired electric railway equipment is unknown, other than the cars likely provide many Asheville residents with fond memories



R-6-3 983 (American Car & Foundry, 1935)



R-32 3432-3433 (Budd, 1964)

of home. All of the cars are on display and visits to the Craggy Mountain Line can be planned via <https://craggymountain-line.com/>

Book Review

By William Mosteller

Lost Subways of North America: A Cartographic Guide to the Past, Present and What Might Have Been

by Jake Berman, published November 2023 by University of Chicago Press, hardcover, 272 pages, color and black & white. ISBN 978-0226829791.

In reading this book, I thought it would be about abandoned subways, like the part of the Tremont Street subway south of Boylston in Boston (Green Line), disused since the surface lines that connected to it closed. Instead, it's much more challenging, a thorough and thoughtful study of transit in twenty-three North American cities. Berman presents case studies for each that demonstrate that transit technology chosen is of little importance in predicting the success of a system. Economic, political and land use issues matter and racism and regionalism count for a lot, as he explains. His book inspired me to much thinking and research in the topic.

General - Each of the twenty-three chapters focuses on a North American city and begins with a map of that area. These maps are my first concern with the book. The service areas for the various eras of transit for the city are identified with dotted rectangles. The map for Boston (which I'm most familiar with) exemplifies my issue with these maps. The modern period can be broken into two major eras, MTA and MBTA. The MTA (1947-1964) served 14 cities and towns, the MBTA serves 78 and neither service area is square, they're rounder. Worse yet, the MBTA area extends beyond the limits of the map in the book. The map doesn't capture the expansion of scope between the MTA and the MBTA.

The bibliography doesn't include *Downtown - Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*, by Robert Fogelson. He tells us that

Downtown is a uniquely American place everyone travels to for employment, fine retail stores, entertainment venues and sporting arenas. He argues that Downtown is part of the past, that those attractions are moving to other places in urban areas. I've seen this myself. Decades ago I was interviewing for a job in Northern Virginia. I was taken to lunch at the Evans Farm Inn, formerly a suburban restaurant. My host remarked that we were having to travel toward Washington to get there. More telling, in my native Boston Route 128, the circumferential highway, was begun in the 1950s. Beyond providing a way around the city for long distance travelers, it also became the location for all the things we used to look for Downtown.

Reviewing the system maps in Berman's book, I note that virtually all the systems appear designed to take riders Downtown. In most systems Downtown is easily identified as the major crossing of transit lines, the only exceptions being Los Angeles, Montreal and New York City. Generals are often accused of planning for the last war, are transit planners building for an urban environment that isn't relevant? While most cities in America have circumferential highways, the only circumferential transit line I'm aware of is the Washington area Purple Line that Maryland is striving to build, paralleling part of the Beltway. Fogelson and Berman document long struggles to get transit systems built. While some of that is natural due to the huge cost and impact of such projects, could dissonance between their designs and the actual need also be an issue? When the Washington Metro opened in 1976, there was consensus for an extension to Dulles Airport. Sure enough, in 2022 the Silver Line

reached there — progress can be slow.

Boston - Berman also doesn't focus on the switch from the MTA to the MBTA. Memory tells me that a horrific auto accident and subsequent gridlock inspired the transition, but it may have been that the Federal Government changed funding rules so that more money was available for regional transit agencies.

Chicago - In the discussions of Chicago's downtown elevated Loop, the author fails to mention that it replaced a surface level, San Francisco style cable car loop in the same location. More important, the book teaches me that today the Loop is a bottleneck to the system that's probably not fixable. This revelation put a recent Chicago project in perspective. A four-track elevated main line runs from the Loop north to Howard Street at the city limits. But in between, the Ravenswood (Brown) line branches off. Formerly, it branched off at grade, meaning that northbound Ravenswood trains would block the two southbound tracks while they crossed onto their branch. Recently Chicago opened the Red-Purple Bypass, a 2.1-billion-dollar flyover that gets those trains out of the way of southbound traffic. Apparently, the thinking here was that if you can't solve the capacity problems of the Loop, maybe you can improve capacity elsewhere.

Los Angeles - The book lays to rest an urban legend often promoted by railfans: automotive interests killed the Pacific Electric. Apparently, the real problem was that the railroad was funded by real estate development and when that stopped, there was no money for the railroad.

San Francisco - Despite an otherwise extensive bibliography, the book doesn't mention Great Planning Disasters (Volume 1) by Peter Geoffrey Hall. Hall argues that San

Francisco's BART system is a planning disaster. As against this, Vukan Vuchic (TR News 156, September-October 1991, pp.15-16) makes the point that the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989 closed the San Francisco-Oakland bridge, leaving BART as the only way for many people to go to work. Had BART not been available, the productivity cost would have exceeded the cost of building BART.

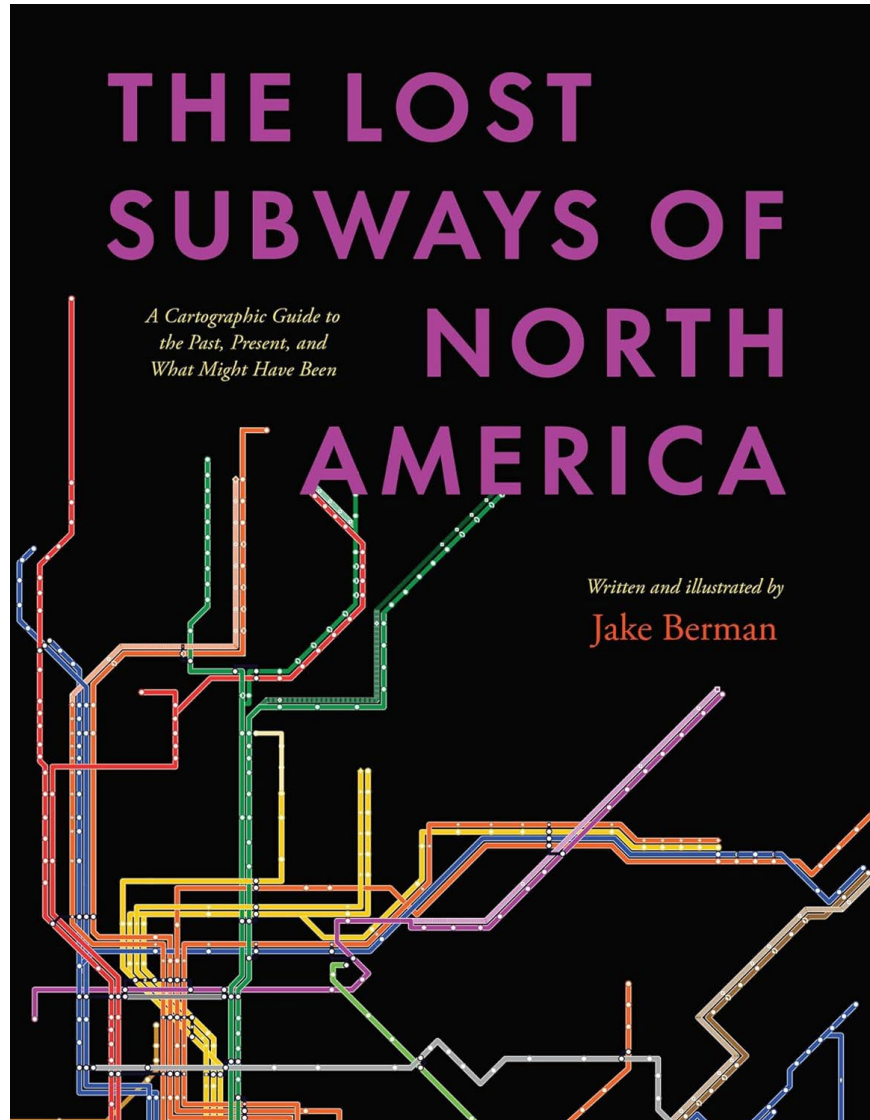
Seattle - The story of Seattle's monorail fiasco gives

me a very dim view of citizen initiatives. They appear to allow two undesirable results. First, "wouldn't it be nice if" initiatives; specifically, wouldn't it be nice if we could have monorails like the one downtown all over the area? The measure received voter support despite that absence of any existing transit system in North America using technology anything like that. The few implementations then were at amusement parks. Vancouver's flyer into untested technology succeeded, Seattle wasn't as fortunate. Second, immaculate conception; when the monorail didn't work out, no public official was in trouble. The tragedy is that a lot of public money went for nothing and between 1997 and 2005 struggles

with the monorail meant nothing useful was done on public transit.

Toronto - The book gave me perspective on what I consider the odd layout of the Toronto rapid transit map. Two lines, Sheppard and Scarborough, terminate at subway stations but require a seat change for the rider to proceed on to the city. Apparently, disputes between Toronto center city and the suburbs make extensions offering a single seat ride difficult.

My thanks to Professor Zachary Schrag of George Mason University for his thoughts on this article. Mistakes, however, are all mine.





North American Transit Project Openings Scheduled for 2024

By Randy Glucksman

Nine projects are proposed for completion this year including two holdovers from previous years. Opening dates are based on the latest information that is available.

Date	Agency	City	Type	Line	Details	Notes
January 27	Valley Metro Rail	Phoenix, Arizona	LR	Northwest Extension Phase II	19th Ave & Dunlop to Metrocenter 1.6 miles, 3 stations	
Spring	Sound Transit	Seattle, Washington	LR	2: East Link LRT	Redmond Technology to Downtown Redmond 3.4 miles, 2 stations	
First Half	Toronto Transportation Commission	Toronto, Ontario	LR	6: Finch West	Humber College to Finch West 6.83 miles, 18 stops	From 2023
Late Summer	PATCO	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	HR	PATCO	Franklin Square re-opens (Fifth time)	Previously open: 1936-1939, 1943-1946, 1952-1953 and 1976-1979
September	Toronto Transportation Commission	Toronto, Ontario	LR	5: Eglinton Crosstown Phase I	Kennedy - Mt. Dennis 11.8 miles, 25 stations	From 2022
Fall	CalTrain	San Francisco, California	CR	Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project	4th & King St. to Tamien (San Jose) 27 stations, 51.6 miles	
December	Reseau Electrique Metropolitan	Montreal, Quebec	LR	REM - Light Rail (2nd Phase)	Central Station to Deux Montagnes & Anse-a-L'Orme 31.7 miles, 14 stations	
Late	Metrolinx	Brampton/Mississauga, Ontario	LR	Hazel McCallion (Huronario) LRT	Mississauga to Brampton 11.18 miles, 19 stations	
?	Valley Metro Rail	Phoenix, Arizona	LR	South Central Extension	Central Avenue to Baseline Road 5.5 miles, 8 stations	

Legend	
CR	Commuter Rail
HR	Heavy Rail
LR	Light Rail

Travels with Jack May

Britain and the Baltics — Part XXIII

By Jack May (Photographs by the author)

(Martin Heyneck, now deceased and other readers corrected me about my portrayal of Herbrand, builder of Liepaja's work car, as a Polish tram manufacturer. It was a German company, which was founded during the 19th century in the Cologne area. In 1917 it was absorbed by Linke-Hofmann of Breslau, now named Wroclaw).

Thursday, August 24 continued

Part XXII left off near the northern terminal of Liepaja's single tram line. I began riding the 4.3-mile long route and stopped off at various points in the city center and along its southern end for photos. With an eight-minute headway, there were ample opportunities to record the features of the line and even if a truck, automobile or pedestrian got in the way of a photo, as they occasionally did, it was just a matter of waiting a few minutes for the next car. Unfortunately all but two of the KT4s were wrapped in advertising, but much of the designs were not terribly distasteful.

The city center is anchored by Rose Square (Rožu laukums), a lovely park alongside the tram line on Liela iela. To the north is the city's main house of worship, the Lutheran Holy Trinity Cathedral. The "Trading Canal" separates the northern part of the city, where the carhouse and railroad station are located, from the main commercial area of the city. This was my first stop for photos.

Working my way southward along side-of-the-road reservation, I stopped off at the Livas laukums station in the midst of a picturesque old residential neighborhood containing quaint wooden houses.

Further south the line enters a mile-long extension built in 2013 through a newly-built neighborhood of detached homes that could easily be mistaken for a residential street in a suburb of an American city — except for the trolley tracks in the middle of the street.

I then walked a few blocks further outbound to Mizras Kempes iela, where the line turns eastward onto a well-manicured center-of-the-street reservation in an arterial that runs to Lake Liepaja. After a trip to the end of the line at Kempes iela, where cars circle a loop, I headed back to Rose Square for some more photos and soon ran into Karl-Heinz and John, who indicated that they had successful days as well. After a few more photos Julien also came by and we decided to have dinner, as our bus wasn't scheduled to leave from this point until 6:30 PM, which was almost two hours later.

We had a very nice dinner in the restaurant of a nearby hotel and saw that other members of the group had the same idea. Before we knew it, it was time to board our bus and it was a quick three-hour trip back to our hotel in Riga. We had an excellent afternoon in a very pleasant city.

To be continued in Part XXIV.



(Above and below) The Holy Trinity Cathedral dominates the center of Liepaja. At this time Tatra KT4s supplied all the service on Liepaja's tram line. Almost all of the track is on private right-of-way, as shown very distinctively in the upper view, where room alongside the main street was made for a bicycle and pedestrian walkway.





Arnolda iela is a couple of blocks up from the Livas laukums stop. This is the “old” Liepaja with tiny wooden houses that provide their residents excellent access to transit and presumably are occupied by traditional working families. The roadway along Krisjana Valdemara iela is quite narrow and it is unlikely that automobile users would be comfortable driving on the tramway right-of-way. This neighborhood is quite a contrast to the those in the newer sections of town that are shown below.



Another of my “favorite” sections of Liepaja’s tramway. I don’t know if the neighborhood has a name, but I was impressed how modern and prosperous it looked, despite those ugly poles lining Ventas iela and the catenary above it. You may think I’m nit-picking, but it is much more likely that I’m being satirical.



(Above and below): After seeing the line's two cars that were unadulterated with advertising many times during my travels, I finally got to photograph them. At top, Mizras Kempes iela takes the lower end of the tram line to its terminal loop, a short distance from the southern end of Lake Liepaja, which is connected to the Baltic Sea by the "Trading Canal." New apartment houses have been built along this thoroughfare, in contrast to the single-family homes shown in the two photos on the previous page and the one below. Google's satellite view shows the shore of this part of the lake to be mostly undeveloped with natural vegetation and even some bulrushes. At bottom a view of the other pristine tram.

