The Bulletin

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The Bulletin

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MAJOR CHANGES COMING TO THE GRAND CENTRAL SUBWAY STATION COMPLEX

by Subutay Musluoglu
(Photographs by the author)
(Continued from March, 2018 issue)

In the March, 2018 ***Bulletin***, I described the first round of capacity upgrades and associated improvements that have been completed at the Grand Central subway station complex. It had been my intention to continue by specifically focusing on the creation of new stairways and the reconstruction of the existing stairways between the mezzanine and the platforms of the Lexington Avenue Line. However, the situation in the station has been very fluid lately, with an unusually fast pace of work resulting in stairways opening and closing on short notice. Considering this, we will revisit this work next month, accompanied by graphics that will be essential in deciphering the myriad of changes.

Instead, this month we will examine the work taking place on the western side of the complex, including improved access to the 42nd Street Shuttle, the future extension of the Main Concourse level of Grand Central Terminal (GCT), and connections to the future Long Island Rail Road East Side Access (LIRR ESA) concourse. As with the improvements occurring over at the ❹❺❻ part of the station, this work is also funded by the developers of the 1 Vanderbilt Avenue office tower, which continues to rise directly across the street from GCT, occupying the full block bounded by E. 42nd Street, Madison Avenue, E. 43rd Street, and of course, Vanderbilt Avenue.

Prior to the start of the Vanderbilt Avenue project, this block was occupied by four commercial buildings, all of which dated to the era of GCT's construction in the early 1910s. Two of them provided access to the mezzanine level of the 42nd Street Shuttle. One was 317 Madison Avenue, which occupied the southeast corner of the block and actually had its main entrance on E. 42nd Street (this author worked in the building from 2004-5), and within its lobby there was a stairway down to the subway. Next door to the east was 51 E. 42nd Street, which featured an off-sidewalk entrance within its front façade. These two entrances were essentially one unit, since both stairways joined together on an intermediate landing prior to descending to the Shuttle mezzanine and opening at a point north of, and adjacent to, the main fare array, to the west of the entrance to GCT from the Shuttle mezzanine.

The construction of 1 Vanderbilt Avenue provides an opportunity to reconfigure this entire area. A new, much larger entrance located within the tower, located prominently on E. 42nd Street, will provide future access to the Shuttle (see Figure 1). A key feature of this entrance will be the ability to access both the Shuttle mezzanine and platform levels simultaneously (see Photo 1). This will be achieved by a single direct stairway from street level to the mezzanine level, which is at the same elevation as GCT's Main Concourse level (see Figure 2), in conjunction with a double escalator bank that will descend from the street further down to a large space that opens on to the Shuttle platform level, with an additional opening into the passageway that leads to the Lexington Avenue

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THE GENESIS OF DASHING DAN — ENTER THE NORTH SIDE DIVISION
by George Chiasson
(Continued from April, 2018 issue)

LEANING ON THE STEINWAY TUNNEL — THE IRT HELPS OUT

Even before the North Side Division lines had arrived at Penn Station in 1912-3, the hard numbers and obvious resultant stress that had taken shape in the brief time since its opening were eye-popping (recall the 1916 assertion that the LIRR alone was responsible for 73% of the terminal's annual patronage, then estimated at almost 30 million passengers). Suffice it to state that their introduction, as preordained and gradual as it was, only made an increasingly bad situation worse and was the genesis of what has remained a long, slow progression of train and human traffic (akin to a perpetual assembly line) into and out of its subterranean passages, especially in rush hours, through the present time. Consider as well that there remained no true ease of access to Penn Station for several years after its opening and the scale of interplay in its earliest era was simply beyond description. As such, it is understandable from the perspective of 100 years why the LIRR made the development of service alternatives to Penn Station a strategy almost from the time it was placed in service in 1910. The inbred customer and political dissatisfaction which was endemic to this situation (and that at the comparably congested Grand Central) also made external capacity solutions more attractive to some parties (though at a completely separate fare), and this ultimately played into the arena of New York's rapid transit development over and above that of its metropolitan railway system. One obvious manifestation of this desire for substitute options was a rather swift rejuvenation of a long-standing, semi-dormant proposal to adapt the moribund Steinway trolley tunnel for rapid transit use, and its conversion and extension was quickly begun once the legal, municipal and political arrangements for its disposition and operation (by the LIRR's former ally, the Interborough Rapid Transit Company) were finalized as part of the city's massive "Dual Contracts" subway expansion agreed upon and executed in 1913.

For its part, the Long Island Rail Road was more than willing to divert as much of its commuting traffic as was financially and operationally possible into the IRT's hands. Even as conversion work on the Steinway Tunnel was in its earliest stages, the railroad again re-examined its scheduling needs and grasped even more strongly on the concept of directing a portion of its service on most, if not all lines, away from Penn Station to alleviate overcrowding, both in terms of trains and patrons. For some branches of course, service to Flatbush Avenue was an easy alternative, especially for passengers seeking destinations in the Financial District and Lower Manhattan (as always), as well as the East Side sector of Midtown, though this was at the far end of an otherwise brief ride on the existing IRT Subway. Lower West Side and Midtown passengers in those days were forced into surface line or Manhattan elevated connections somewhere along the way (most likely from Penn Station by that time), but access to just about anywhere else in Manhattan or certainly the Bronx was open to individual interpretation. By any measure, the superiority of direct service to Manhattan, even though it could be a bit out of the way for some, was proving far more attractive to most Long Islanders than the long-standing slog through Long Island City to the E. 34th Street ferries (even though the latter may have in fact been more direct), and the railroad eagerly embraced the new "Steinway" rapid transit line, with its direct service to the Grand Central hub, as one means of relieving this burden of imbalance.

In the late spring of 1914, just over six months after the inauguration of through service between Port Washington and Penn Station, the Long Island Rail Road placed its full organizational faith in the IRT's future ability to help it manage the traffic situation by adding a full-length, high-platform station to the existing Hunters Point (49th) Avenue overpass. Barely complete, it was used by electric trains from several outward points beginning on July 1, which turned directly back from that location to their end destination instead of being dragged the rest of the way to Long Island City and back by steam switcher. This in turn permitted a general re-shuffling of scheduled service into Manhattan to more evenly distribute its available "slots" across the several electrified routes operated. It was at this point that a significant portion of the service on the Long Beach Branch was rerouted to Flatbush Avenue, while there may have also been some effect on non-electric routes that had through trains serving Penn Station. The latter is unknown for certain, but from that date forward most steam-powered trains definitely began making an additional stop at Hunters Point Avenue when passing between Woodside and Long Island City. By that same time, the construction of expanded facilities at the Steinway Tunnel's Queens end, and the usual setback of unavailable equipment (particularly wherein custom-specified rolling stock was required) had significantly delayed its opening, though rapid transit conversion of the existing trolley bore was itself accomplished rather quickly. Thus, as far as can be ascertained, terminating passengers were left to their own devices when making their way to and from the lonely, if not secluded new station at Hunters Point Avenue for almost a year, most likely being forced to endure a walk of seven blocks (though it was officially counted as four, and all outdoors) to reach the East River ferry slips. Alternatively, it

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The Genesis of Dashing Dan

(Continued from page 2)

was possible to take a streetcar north on Vernon Avenue (Boulevard) to reach the Queensborough Bridge and walk across that to Manhattan. Even so, until the IRT's extension to another subway station at Hunters Point and Van Alst Avenues could open, transferring LIRR passengers would still have a walk of at least a ¼-mile from the Hunters Point Avenue station just to reach the IRT's temporary terminal at Vernon-Jackson Avenues. At any rate, the short but important IRT tunnel was finally opened to great fanfare on June 22, 1915, creating a new gateway to Grand Central as it did. When the old trolley tunnel's jumble of associated additional construction was sufficiently complete, the IRT shuttle was then extended from Vernon-Jackson Avenues to the station at Hunters Point Avenue on February 5, 1916 and in time grew at both ends into the subway trunk serving points from Times Square (and most recently the new "Hudson Yards" terminal) to Flushing, and at that time, Astoria.

As for the North Side Division, it subscribed to several subsequent changes that involved the welfare of the larger railroad, overall expansion of the city's rapid transit system, and the continuing evolution of the Pennsylvania Terminal, all as the LIRR grew into its role as part of a comprehensive metropolitan transit network. Most of these major modifications took place over a two-year period between 1913 and 1915, during which the LIRR constructed its "Woodside-Winfield cutoff" to replace the original (joint) main line surveys between Sunnyside Yard and Winfield Junction. Early in this project a temporary station called "Woodside" was opened for both main lines in place of the original at the present location of "Woodside Plaza" (Woodside Avenue between 59th and 60th Streets), which itself was replaced in late 1915 by a permanent installation at Roosevelt Avenue and 61st Street that was built into the new alignment. This new railroad station was then joined by yet another extension of the IRT's Steinway rapid transit line in 1917 that was shared in time by both the Second Avenue Elevated of the Manhattan system and BRT rapid transit trains. As part of the same Woodside-Winfield undertaking a newer station was also established serving Winfield, this rendition located several hundred feet east of the older (second) stop at 72nd Street, and therefore only on the North Side alignment, with that on the original LIRR Main Line (which was probably receiving minimal service in any case) being eliminated as a consequence. Otherwise, LIRR Whitestone and Port Washington trains passed to and from Penn Station without interruption through these years, joined as one for the inward part of their journey. In June of 1916 the "cut and add" location was changed from the middle of the Flushing meadow by "JC" Tower (Whitestone Junction) to the Corona station to let passengers switch between sections. This rendezvous point was again reversed even later in time before the Whitestone Branch disappeared completely, but whenever and wherever in effect it was reputed to be legendary for imposing passing miseries on its passengers, including mosquito swarms during the warm weather seasons and icy winds during the cold. Seen through the perspective of MTA Long Island Rail Road's serviceable, if not incomparable, Port Washington Branch in 2018, it boggles the contemporary mind that there was once so much railroad history bottled into this unexpected quarter, now one of Queens' and Nassau's most auto-dependent and inherently urbanized areas.

(Continued next issue)

SUBDIVISION "A" CAR ASSIGNMENTS

CARS REQUIRED MARCH 26, 2018

LINE	AM RUSH	PM RUSH	LINE	AM RUSH	PM RUSH
1	10 R-62, 300 R-62A	10 R-62, 300 R-62A	5	350 R-142	360 R-142
2	360 R-142	350 R-142	6	350 R-62A, 10 R-142A	350 R-62A, 10 R-142A
3	260 R-62	260 R-62	7	33 R-62A, 363 R-188	22 R-62A, 352 R-188
4	180 R-142, 170 R-142A	170 R-142, 160 R-142A	S (42nd Street)	10 R-62A	10 R-62A

Around New York's Transit System

(Continued from page 16)

Cortlandt Street Station to Reopen

17 years after being almost totally destroyed during the 9-11 attack, the $158 million reconstruction of the Cortlandt Street station on the 1 is now scheduled to be completed sometime in October, which will permit the station to reopen. The rebuilt station will contain artwork from artist Ann Hamilton featuring words from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the American Declaration of Independence.

A NORTHERN CALIFORNIA EXCURSION
by Alexander Ivanoff

San Francisco has a long history of streetcar, trolley-bus and cable car operation that dates back well over a century. The current Municipal Railway (MUNI) system dates back to the 1940s when the city-owned system took over the Market Street Railway (whose is the namesake for the non-profit organization that advocates for continuing the tradition that started with the trolley festivals beginning in 1983.

Originally conceived as an excuse for ERA First-Vice President John Pappas and me to take a cross-country train trip, it evolved into a dry run for the ERA North American Convention that is to take place in the Bay Area over Labor Day weekend this year. Our objectives were pretty simple: to reach out to representatives from both MUNI and BART for group tours and to see how everything would come into place.

Upon arrival into Emeryville, the three of us (including ERA Treasurer Michael Glikin) did not have to wait long for the Amtrak shuttle bus to the Transbay Terminal, and Amtrak properly accommodated the early arrival of the *Zephyr*. Crossing the Bay Bridge into San Francisco was a big deal for me, for as a child I had a fascination with bridges. An Uber took us to the historic (and beautifully restored) Beck's Motor Lodge in the heart of the Castro District, well-regarded for being the unofficial capital city of the American LGBTQ movement. Before our dinner plans we rode on the two San Francisco historic streetcar lines.

The two MUNI historic streetcar lines have different operating requirements. The F Line (Market & Wharves) can use single ended PCCs, while the E Line (Embarcadero) requires double-ended equipment. "Torpedo" 1008, which for years was used as a tow car, rescuing disabled LRVs and performing other work tasks, would be my first PCC in San Francisco.

My second was the biggest catch of them all (and my personal favorite), the baby of all North American-built PCCs, 1040. 1040 was the very last new PCC built for a North American transit system, and has been in near-continuous service with MUNI since 1952, outside of a lengthy wait for restoration. 1040 maintains many of its unique features (some having been restored), including the Conductor's seat, which was a requirement for its early years before the advent of one-person crews. While in San Francisco, we had the opportunity to ride ex-SEPTA PCC 1051, dedicated to LGBTQ rights activist (and slain Board Supervisor) Harvey Milk.

Wednesday was our combined trip around town and to Santa Rosa. We met up with Matt Lee (an old acquaintance of John's from his days at MUNI) and received a tour of the Siemens cars in revenue service. The Siemens cars are comfortable, efficient, and well-liked among the crowd. We made a near round-trip on the L Line before getting a bus to the Golden Gate Bridge, where we would transfer to a Golden Gate Transit bus to San Rafael. Our bus was an Orion V with two doors, but suburban-style seating. The highlight of the trip to San Rafael was crossing the legendary Golden Gate Bridge, opened in 1937. Despite being a vehicle-only bridge, there were plans in the 1960s to have BART operate on the lower level of the bridge. Those plans never came to fruition.

Having a half-hour to waste in San Rafael, we took photos of bus operations at the terminal. The transit center and train station are almost integrated, and after about twenty minutes we made our way over to the train. SMART (Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit) is a comfortable and quite modern operation, with features rarely found on commuter trains in the United States but more common for intercity rail — tray tables, reclining seats, power outlets, wi-fi, and a snack car! Despite the absence of a direct ride into San Francisco, the service was well-patronized and I used the time to write in my journal, look out the window, and zone out. On that one round-trip on SMART, I found myself enamored with the service, and the large windows, scenic views and comfortable interiors make SMART a destination in itself and along with the Zephyr and riding PCC 1040, a highlight of the trip.

After aborted dinner plans in Sausalito due to a lack of open restaurants, we opted to dine at Mel's Drive-In and enjoyed a classic dining option while watching trolley buses go by. Because of San Francisco's hilly terrain and need for tunnels to go through hills, the light rail and trolley buses have reigned superior due to better acceleration and ability to handle grades and have in part helped San Francisco avoid being a tractionless city. Seattle is another example of a city taking advantage these benefits of electrification.

On Thursday we made our way south and spent the day covering much of the ground that the ERA covered during the 2004 Convention. Valley Transit Authority (VTA) has made progress in improving operations, and John, who has from time to time been disappointed in VTA's practices, was pleasantly surprised and very happy to see an on-time operation with close headways.

During lunch at La Pizzeria in Campbell, I made the mistake of leaving my camera (with some very good photographs) at the restaurant. The server found my camera and we went back to reclaim it, having only lost a few minutes. Luckily I remembered and was able to retrieve it and thus only an hour of the afternoon was lost. From there we took VTA to Milpitas, where we boarded an AC Transit bus to take us to Fremont to board BART.

My first ride on BART was heartbreaking, and it was very visible that the ultra-modern facilities of the 1970s have not aged all that well, Between lengthy headways, dimly lit stations, and cars that are not only worn out but smell of cannabis, a BART makeover is overdue and there are signs that progress is being made in that area.

(Continued on page 5)

A Northern California Excursion

(Continued from page 4)

A train of new Bombardier-built cars departed the Fremont station as we got to the platform. Of the two "space-age" rapid transit systems of the 1970s, I have a bias towards Metrorail (WMATA in the D.C. metro area) but was impressed with the speed of the BART cars. That said, the system leaves a lot to be desired.

The Courtyard by Marriott in San Francisco is a comfortable and modern facility with good wi-fi, a fitness center, a Starbucks, and a bar on-site. Despite the convenient location to transportation and offices, breakfast options are few and outside of a McDonald's a few blocks away and two Starbucks closer by (including the hotel's), conventiongoers are advised to leave extra time in the mornings to grab breakfast. Options for dinner are more plentiful, however.

Friday was primarily devoted to riding the MUNI trolleybus system, and I was delighted to hear from John that the system was continuously expanded in places well into the 1980s. MUNI's commitment to both the environment and its trolleybus network is exhibited with the purchase of a new fleet of trolley buses from New Flyer Industries (the XT60s and by the fall, the XT40s). Because of time constraints, we did not get around to riding or photographing the cable cars, although the crowds can do enough to dissuade a person from wanting to ride them. However, their popularity as a San Francisco landmark is definitely with merit.

It is without a doubt that San Francisco is an electric traction buff's paradise. With a subway, light rail, streetcars, and trolley buses, MUNI (and to a lesser degree, BART) continues to excel at its role in providing San Franciscans with a world-class transportation heritage. The ERA has a fantastic program set up for San Francisco set up for Labor Day weekend and I look forward to joining everyone!

PCC 1040 speeding down Market Street. This car was the last of the nearly 4,600 built over a sixteen-year run. After a period of disuse, the car was restored by Brookville in 2010-11.

The interior of one of the SMART (Sonoma–Marin Area Rail Transit) cars.

Siemens S200 SF 2008B at Forest Hill station.

A new New Flyer XT60 on Muni's Route 5 (Fulton Street, Transbay Terminal-bound).

Major Changes Coming to the Grand Central Subway Complex

(Continued from page 1)

Line mezzanine (see Figure 3 and Photo 2). This direct access will be an invaluable amenity, serving the tenants of 1 Vanderbilt, Metro-North Railroad commuters, future LIRR commuters, and other users of GCT and the subway coming and going from west of Madison Avenue. A key objective of this project is to separate these crowds, numbering easily in the tens of thousands during the peak hours, who would otherwise add to the already congested concourses of GCT.

Overall circulation will be vastly improved by an extension of the GCT Main Concourse to the west, under Vanderbilt Avenue into the below-grade space of the 1 Vanderbilt Avenue tower (see Figure 4). This will provide additional paths to the Shuttle, egress to the street, and the ESA concourse. The precise location of this extension has not been finalized yet but will involve going through current retail spaces. From the extended Main Concourse, the connection down to the ESA concourse will be a double escalator bank, flanked by a stairway, descending to a large space deep under the northeast corner of the 1 Vanderbilt Avenue tower (see Figure 5 and Photo 3). A knockout wall has been built on the ESA concourse that will become the future point of entry (see Photo 4).

In addition to all these below grade improvements, a signature street entrance called the "Transit Hall" will be built within the northeast corner of the 1 Vanderbilt Avenue tower, providing access from the intersection of Vanderbilt Avenue and E. 43rd Street (see Figure 6). This atrium-like space will be approximately three stories high and completely enclosed in glass, and will contain an elevator and a double-wide stairway that will descend to the GCT Main Concourse extension (see Figure 7). The prominence of this entrance will be enhanced further by the permanent closing to vehicular traffic of Vanderbilt Avenue between E. 42nd and E. 43rd Streets and its conversion to a pedestrian plaza (see Figure 8).

Collectively, these improvements will dramatically transform the passenger and pedestrian experience throughout the western end of GCT and on that side of the subway complex. As part of its zoning bonus agreement with the city, 1 Vanderbilt's developers are mandated to have these improvements in place and functional before a Certificate of Occupancy can be issued for the office tower. If the current schedule holds, we will see this transformation by late 2020.

We will return to the Lexington Avenue Line side of the complex in the next installment, when we will also describe other potential new developments elsewhere in East Midtown, and the subway stations that will be affected.

Figure 1: New street level off-sidewalk entrance to the 42nd Street Shuttle mezzanine and platform.
Kohn Pederson Fox drawing

Figure 2: Shuttle mezzanine/GCT Main Concourse level.
Kohn Pederson Fox drawing

(Continued on page 7)

Major Changes Coming to the Grand Central Subway Complex

(Continued from page 6)

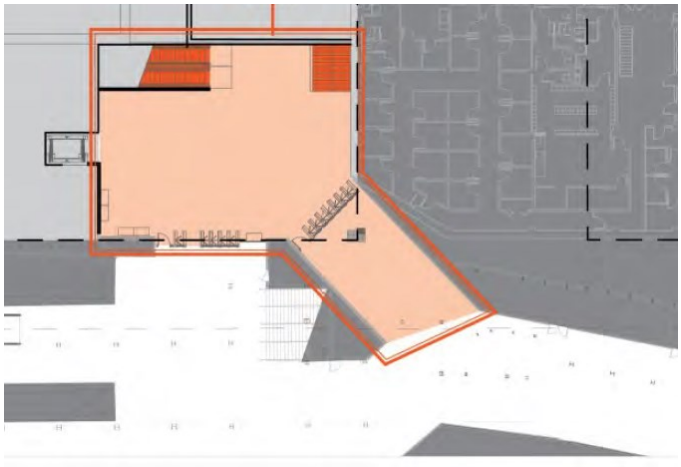

Figure 3: Shuttle platform/Lexington Avenue Line passageway level.
Kohn Pederson Fox drawing

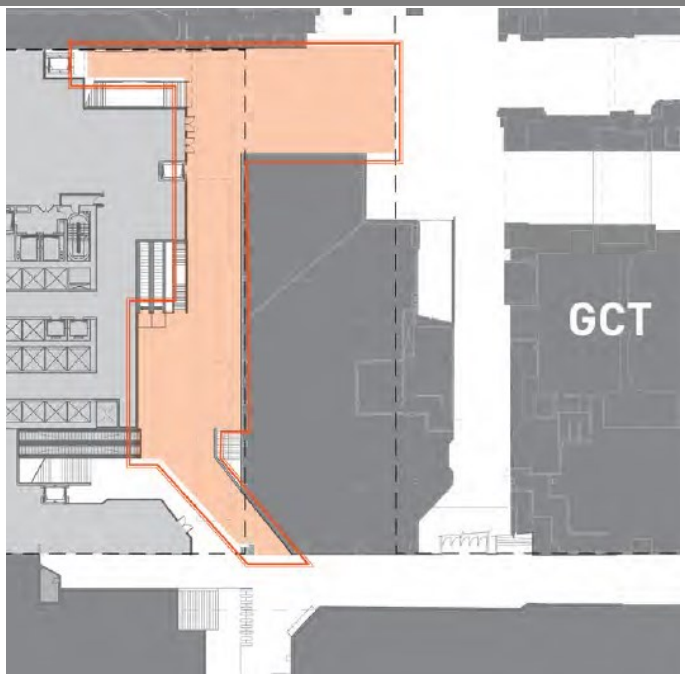

Figure 4: Extension of GCT Main Concourse level.
Kohn Pederson Fox drawing

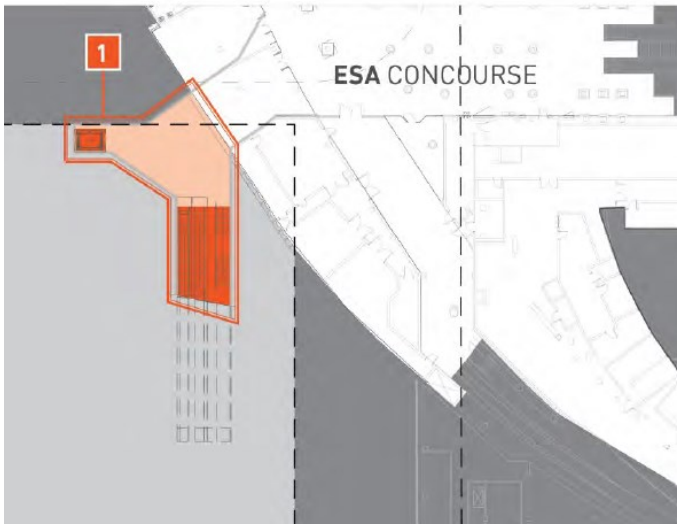

Figure 5: Vertical access to the LIRR ESA concourse level.
Kohn Pederson Fox drawing

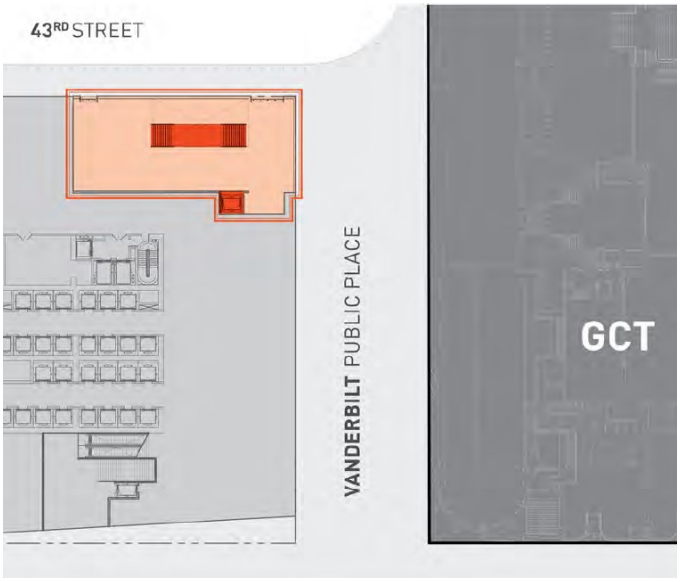

Figure 6: Transit Hall street level plan and Vanderbilt Avenue pedestrian plaza.
Kohn Pederson Fox drawing

(Continued on page 8)

SUBDIVISION "B" CAR ASSIGNMENTS

CARS REQUIRED APRIL 30, 2018

The following are different from the assignment that appeared in the February, 2018 ***Bulletin***:

LINE	AM RUSH	PM RUSH	LINE	AM RUSH	PM RUSH
J/Z	64 R-32, 24 R-42, 40 R-160, 32 R-179	64 R-32, 24 R-42, 40 R-160, 32 R-179	M*	184 R-160	176 R-160

*Service between Forest Hills/71st Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue restored April 30, 2018

Major Changes Coming to the Grand Central Subway Complex

(Continued from page 7)

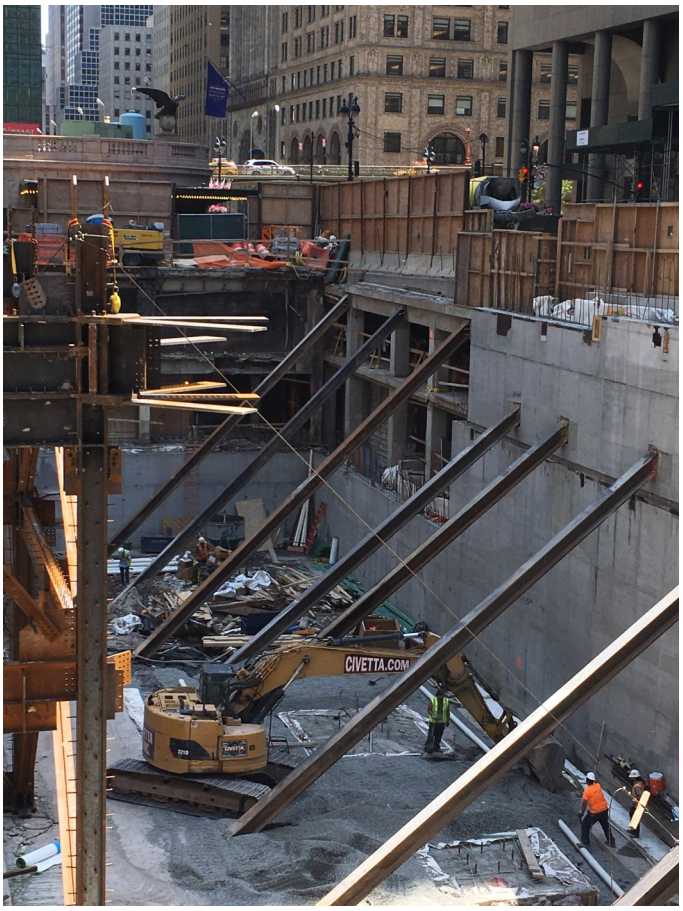

Photo 1 - View looking into the southeast corner of the 1 Vanderbilt Avenue tower site, showing the openings into the 42nd Street Shuttle mezzanine and platform levels, July 21, 2017.

Photo 2 - 42nd Street Shuttle platform level, July 27, 2017 – the future openings from the 1 Vanderbilt Avenue tower are behind the blue construction barrier.

Photo 3 - View looking north across the Vanderbilt Avenue tower site on July 27, 2017. The future LIRR East Side Access concourse point of entry is in the far corner, and the future Transit Hall will rise above this location. The point of entry for the future extension of the GCT Main Concourse is just on the right.

Photo 4 - The knockout wall on the LIRR East Side Access concourse, which will be the future point of entry into the below-grade level of 1 Vanderbilt Avenue tower, March 12, 2018.

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Commuter and Transit Notes

No. 352

by Ronald Yee and Alexander Ivanoff

MTA Long Island Rail Road

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Chair Joseph J. Lhota and MTA Managing Director Veronique "Ronnie" Hakim announced the appointment of Philip Eng as the next president of the Long Island Rail Road on April 12. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Eng had been Acting President of MTA New York City Transit and had joined the MTA in March, 2017 as its Chief Operating Officer, where he was responsible for leading major initiatives across the entire MTA system focusing on new technology and innovations to improve safety and reliability. His efforts included new fare payment systems, mobile ticketing apps, and the purchase of new subway and commuter rail rolling stock and buses for the system. He also played an integral role in finalizing the MTA's 2015-9 $29.5 billion Capital Program. Prior to coming to the MTA, Mr. Eng had worked at the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) since 1983, starting as a Junior Engineer, working his way up to Construction Supervisor, Director of Operations, Regional Director, and Chief Engineer of the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT)'s New York City office, and finally Executive Deputy Commissioner. He oversaw the engineering, operations, and capital planning aspects of NYSDOT's $2.5 billion annual construction program, including projects such as the Kosciuszko Bridge replacement, the new Rochester rail and intermodal station, and the LIRR Main Line expansion, where his prior experience will come in handy as one of his main challenges will be the execution of the construction of the third track from Floral Park to Hicksville. He attended Cooper Union and lives in Smithtown. In addition to the LIRR third track project that is just getting underway, he will oversee the completion of the double-tracking of the eastern portion of the Main Line between Farmingdale and Ronkonkoma as well as the East Side Access project and the implementation of the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), unveiled last month, aimed at improving service reliability, seasonal preparedness, and customer communications, all recent sore points the LIRR has had with its riders. (MTA press release, April 12)

While claiming that the LIRR East Side Access project is still on schedule for completion by the end of 2022, the total cost of the project has risen another billion dollars to $11.2 billion, 2.5 times the original projected cost back in the 1990s. The MTA is attributing $635 million of the added costs to Amtrak and its delays in staging the reconfiguration of Harold Interlocking and construction of the necessary ramps connecting the interlocking with the tunnels under the East River. (***AM New York***, April 15)

MTA Metro-North Railroad

MTA Metro-North Railroad commenced a full-scale renewal project that will bring state-of-the-art improvements to the White Plains station and provide riders with a facility that is safer, more accessible to all, easier to navigate, and technologically up-to-date. Included within the scope of this improvement project are: a new elevator within the main entrance for customers to reach the new side platform and two ADA-compliant stairs that will be equipped with radiant heat flooring for snow and ice control as well as improved ADA-compliant features at the station such as railings, platform guardrails, signage, and a new public address system. The entrances at Main Street, Hamilton Avenue, and Mott Street will also be upgraded and the entire station will be equipped with security cameras and speakers, new platform canopies with wood ceilings, new benches, glass-enclosed waiting areas with new wall panels and ceilings, LED lighting, rebuilt ticket office and toilet facilities, improved food vendor space, and a heated stairway leading from the side platform. During the reconstruction project, portions of each platform will be closed and riders will need to allow some extra time to reach the open sections and not miss their trains. The Harlem Line infrastructure improvement project (of which White Plains station is a part) required the changing of train stopping patterns with the March 18 timetables and a subsequent adjustment of select train schedules to accommodate the work. The following trains are scheduled to run later as follows: Train #992 will operate 8 minutes later from Wassaic through Patterson, Train #692 will operate 5 minutes later from Southeast through Grand Central Terminal, Train #592 will operate 3 minutes later from North White Plains through Grand Central Terminal, and Train #987 will depart Southeast 5 minutes later and operate up to 15 minutes later from Patterson through Wassaic. These four changes will be reflected on the next printing of the Harlem Line schedules. (Metro-North press release, April 8)

Connecticut Department of Transportation

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT) announced that the new Hartford Line rail service will commence with a commemorative/inaugural event on Friday, June 15. Following the event, free weekend train service will operate on Saturday and Sunday, June 16 and 17 with full, expanded weekday service beginning Monday June 18. Trains are scheduled to operate approximately every 45 minutes during the morning and evening peak periods with a total of 17 daily trains between New Haven and Hartford and 12 trains operating daily between Hartford and Springfield, Massachusetts. The line will provide direct or connecting service to New York City, Boston, and Vermont. Prior to the grand opening, new train stations and parking facilities were constructed in Wallingford, Meriden, and Berlin. The tracks and signals were rebuilt to permit

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Commuter and Transit Notes

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train speeds up to 110 mph for the 81-minute travel time between Springfield and New Haven. It is hoped that this line will spur economic development along its corridor, attracting new commercial and residential development. Information about the new train schedules and fares can be found at www.hartfordline.com. *(Editor's Note by Ronald Yee: Original plans had called for the diesel locomotive-propelled Shore Line East trains plying the rails between New Haven and Old Saybrook to be reassigned to the CTrail Hartford Line and replaced by M-8 electric multiple unit (EMU) cars from Metro-North Railroad. That plan was been postponed due to a lack of available M-8s caused by ridership increases on Metro-North's New Haven Line. The equipment shortfall is severe enough to warrant the inclusion of at least one 8-car set of older "spare" M-2 equipment as part of the railroad's weekday equipment cycles. An additional 60 M-8s have been ordered from Kawasaki by CDOT/MTA to provide sufficient EMUs to address the ridership increases as well as a service expansion over a new line though Co-Op City, the east Bronx, and over the Hell Gate Bridge to Penn Station, New York commencing around the end of 2022 when LIRR East Side Access opens for service. Instead, CDOT has contracted with Boston's MBTA for a number of commuter coaches (possibly some of the 1987-vintage MBB push-pull cars (1500-series cab cars and 500-series single-level coaches) and a small number of locomotives (rendered spare by MBTA as it takes delivery of new multi-level push-pull cars and remanufactured locomotives replacing the oldest F-40s) for use on the CTrail line until the new M-8s permit the reassignment of the current diesel-powered SLE fleet to the Hartford Line.)* (CDOT press release, April 17)

NJ Transit

New timetables were issued effective April 7 for the three NJ Transit light rail lines, Newark, Hudson-Bergen and River Line. (NJ Transit press release, April 7)

NJ Transit finalized the details to lease 10 single-level rail cars (built in the early 1990s by Nippon-Sharyo) from the Maryland Transit Administration's MARC commuter rail service. NJ Transit generally requires 848 rail cars to operate its weekday services. As part of the deal, NJ Transit will sell to MARC a surplus locomotive that had been slated for retirement. (***Washington Post***, April 10)

The Elizabeth train station on the Northeast Corridor line will undergo a $71 million rehabilitation that will bring a new station building, longer platforms to accommodate 12-car trains, climate-controlled platform shelters, improved ADA accessibility, improved customer communications systems, and added security features. The project is expected to be completed by Summer, 2022. (NJ Transit press release, April 9)

Amtrak

Amtrak announced on April 19 that beginning in June, the *Capitol Limited* and *Lake Shore Limited* will offer "contemporary and fresh dining choices" for sleeping car customers, instead of traditional dining car service. Sleeping car customers can choose to have their meals delivered to their Bedrooms or Roomettes, or be consumed in a private café or lounge car. The new meal choices will include for lunch and dinner chilled beef tenderloin, vegan wrap, chicken Caesar salad, or turkey club sandwich and for breakfast, assorted breakfast breads with butter, cream cheese, and strawberry jam; Greek yogurt; and sliced seasonal fresh fruit plate. Passengers will also be offered unlimited soft beverages, a complimentary serving of beer, wine or a mixed-drink and an amenity kit. Kosher meals will continue to be available with advance notice. These "new" meals will continue to be included in the sleeping car fare and will be delivered to the trains just prior to departure from their originating station at Chicago, Washington, D.C., and New York City. On-board food preparation will be completely eliminated. *(Editor's Note by Alexander Ivanoff: Numerous passenger rail advocates are decrying the measure, noting that earlier efforts to downgrade on-board services have met with immediate backlash from the traveling public.)* (Amtrak press release, April 19)

Amtrak plans to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) from railcar and locomotive manufacturers with intent to award a contract by the end of 2018 to replace its current fleet of 1990s-vintage General Electric P-42DC diesel locomotives and 1970s-vintage Amfleet coaches. This was revealed in a statement by President and Chief Executive Officer Richard Anderson at an employee town hall meeting. He also expressed a preference toward the acquisition of integrated trainsets to replace the current fleet of cars and locomotives seeking more modern, lightweight, environmentally sensitive, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant equipment that will allow the railroad to meet the needs of the 21st Century. He cited the examples of DMU consists that have been placed into service in Fort Worth, Texas and SMART's Santa Rosa-San Rafael, California line and compared them with what he referred to as modern unitized trainsets seen in Europe and Asia. As of press time for this ***Bulletin***, he did not elaborate on too many more details. (Al Holtz, April 22)

Other Transit Systems

Saratoga, New York

The ***Glens Falls Post-Star*** reported that Iowa Pacific owner Ed Ellis, whose company operates the Saratoga & North Creek Railroad, would cease Saratoga operations after an April 7 train.

The ***Post-Star*** reported that Ellis told Warren County, New York officials in late March that mounting loses would mean the Saratoga's closure unless Iowa Pacific could sell a different branch line in Warren County.

The news from Ellis came weeks after officials declared the rail operator in breach of a contract because, officials said, Iowa Pacific has been late with lease payments. Warren County owns the Saratoga rail line with the Town of Corinth, N.Y.

The railroad operator has lost money as a result of a local and state campaign to get freight car companies to remove tank cars from the Saratoga & North Creek,

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which lies in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains. Ellis has said storage payments on the tank cars helped fund operations and maintenance on the line. (***Post-Star*** via ***Trains Magazine*** via Al Holtz, April 2)

Buffalo, New York

The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) will receive $9 million dedicated to improvements to its Metro Rail system, as part of the newly approved state budget.

Assemblymember Sean M. Ryan of Buffalo has called for funding to address the capital needs of Metro Rail's aging infrastructure. The NFTA is the only upstate transportation system that runs trains in addition to buses and an airport. The Assemblymember credited other local delegation members with helping bring home the Metro Rail funds. The $9 million is in addition to other, traditional sources of funding the NFTA will also receive in the state budget to maintain normal operations.

Ryan has called for a five-year, $100 million capital plan to address Metro Rail's needs, such as a broken escalator at the Delavan Street station, and is optimistic that the $9 million represents only the start of state funding dedicated to Metro Rail improvements. (***The Buffalo News***, April 2)

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

CRRC, at its Tangshan, China facility, reported that its prototype multi-level commuter car stainless steel body shell has passed its static strength tests (the FRA/AAR 800,000-pound end buffing test) and the first production car should be expected for delivery in October. SEPTA contracted with CRRC Tangshan in May, 2017 for 45 coaches (11 cab control cars and 34 non-cab cars) at a cost of $137.5 million for use on its Regional Rail services on the Northeast Corridor. CRRC submitted a bid of $137.5 million for the base order. There is an option for 10 additional cars priced at $23.5 million. While the prototype cars are being manufactured in China, most of the order will be assembled at the new CRRC manufacturing plant in Springfield, Massachusetts. Deliveries are scheduled to start in October, 2019. (***International Railway Journal***, April 11)

Memphis, Tennessee

Almost four years after two Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) vintage trolleys caught fire within the span of six months in late 2013, causing a suspension of service after the second fire, MATA officials announced that three restored trolley cars would return to passenger service on April 30. Fire investigators quickly discovered that MATA had little to no maintenance, training, and record keeping, prompting city officials to order a cessation of service on all three lines (Main, Riverfront, and Madison) after the second 2013 fire. A MATA review also indicated that the vintage trolleys that had been restored in the early 1990s for the line's debut had reached the end of their service lives. Over the past four years, $10 million was spent to get the line back into service, $6 million to rebuild the trolley cars, some around 100 years old, to give them another 25 years of service, while $4 million was spent on engineering and development to bring the infrastructure of the Main Street Line up to current standards. The MATA trolley service was patronized by 1.5 million riders per year back in 2014 (with half of the ridership comprised of visitors to the city) and in the past four years, the neighborhoods the line serves, especially around Central Station, have undergone a building boom and are now bustling with new businesses and apartments. MATA will operate three cars initially, on a half-hour schedule Sunday through Thursday and a 20-minute schedule Friday and Saturday. From April 30-May 14, no fares will be charged. Starting May 15, a $1 fare will be charged per ride. When three more trolley cars join the fleet, service to the Riverfront Loop and on Madison Avenue will be restored in 2019 and 2020, respectively. (***Memphis Daily News***, April 18)

Miami, Florida

Editor Ronald Yee has been following the progress of the new Breda-Hitachi MetroRail cars being placed into service. As of April 11, cars 305-314 were seen in service on MetroRail's interactive system map. (Ronald Yee, April 23)

Brightline began operating test trains into and out of the Miami terminal with anticipation of commencing passenger service sometime in May, linking downtown Miami with Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach with 11 round trips daily on weekends with later service on weekends. Final testing of signal-system upgrades between south of downtown Fort Lauderdale and 71st Street and Northeast Miami Court in Miami, include variable grade crossing circuit timings to accommodate a wide range of speeds the trains can be expected to operate through the area. Miami Mayor Francis X. Suarez stated that Brightline will be a "game changer" in making Miami much more attractive to large corporations seeking to establish business centers in the city. Brightline was conceptualized to serve transit-oriented development that is now being built around its Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach stations with Brightline building three office and residential towers at the new MiamiCentral train station, two of them above the terminal and one just to its west. Introductory fares over the entire line will continue for about a month after the Miami station opens followed by a "more dynamic pricing model" with fares reflective of demand and time of day for each train. Safety concerns along the new line have been paramount, with Brightline trains being involved in six fatal accidents involving pedestrians on the tracks. Two were ruled suicides, while the other four point to the need for even more focus on community education efforts to keep people from being on the tracks and getting hit. Video surveillance has shown numerous cases of pedestrians as well as motor vehicle drivers trying the beat the up to 80 mph trains across the tracks. (***Miami Herald***, April 11)

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The first of five Liberty LRVs for Milwaukee's The Hop

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Streetcar arrived in the city on March 26 after completing its road journey from Brookville Equipment Corporation's plant in western Pennsylvania.

Each 67-foot bidirectional vehicle will accommodate 150 passengers including 32 seated. The low-floor design is ADA compliant, with level boarding for wheelchairs, bicycles, and pushchairs.

Delivery of the four remaining vehicles is due to be completed in the middle of the year, with revenue service set to begin on the first phase of the 2.5-mile network in November. (***Railway Age***, March 27)

South Bend, Indiana

AECOM, a consulting firm hired by the South Bend Common Council, presented five proposals for a new South Shore Line commuter station in South Bend on April 19 with estimated costs ranging from $23.9 million to $102 million for a new facility that could help reduce travel times to Chicago by up to 30 minutes. Currently, South Shore commuter trains must make a slow 10-minute, two-mile-long circuitous route to reach their terminal at the South Bend airport.

1) 29.5 million to build a new station at the airport with a more direct route

2) $23.9 million using the former Honeywell site south of the airport on North Bendix Drive

3) $31 million to return the line to the South Bend Amtrak station, where the terminal was before the line was rerouted to the airport

4) $44 million to route the line to the former South Bend Chocolate Factory site on U.S. Route 20

5) $102 million to return the line to site of the former Union Station in downtown South Bend (ABC57.com, April 20)

San Francisco, California

A $22.5 million federal grant was issued to the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit line to extend the 43 mile line from San Rafael to the ferry terminal at Larkspur, providing direct access to ferry services to San Francisco and making the line much more attractive to both commuters and Bay Area tourists. The 2.1-mile extension that is already under construction now has sufficient funds to open by the end of 2019. (***Progressive Railroading***, April 10)

The $524 million, 10-mile-long eBART system featuring Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) trains is still on track to commence service linking Antioch with the Pittburg/Bay Point BART station in May. Travel times between the two stations is expected to be around 10 minutes and cost $2.00 with a Clipper Card or $2.50 with a paper ticket. Up to three DMUs can be coupled to carry up to 600 passengers. The Antioch station will have a 1,000-space park-and-ride lot that will likely immediately fill up as it is estimated that a combined total of 1,600 Antioch, Oakley, and Brentwood residents currently park at the Pittsburg/Bay Point and North Concord/Martinez stations. The city of Brentwood has a two-year strategic plan to build a transit intermodal center near the intersection of the multiuse Mokelumne Trail and State Highway 4 and link it to the Antioch eBART station. In the distant future, as ridership demand warrants it, eBART may be extended to the Brentwood intermodal center. *(Editor's Note by Ronald Yee: The ERA is scheduled to ride and inspect this new line during its 2018 Convention in San Francisco over the Labor Day weekend.)* (***The Press***, April 11)

Santa Ana, California

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) has awarded a $51.5 million contract to Siemens Industries for eight S70 low-floor light rail vehicles for the OC Streetcar project, construction of which is expected to begin later this year.

Six LRVs will be in operation, with two spare cars that can be rotated into the system as needed. The contract with Siemens, which also includes spare parts and tools, comes with the option to purchase up to 10 additional vehicles at a later date.

The OC Streetcar project is estimated to cost $299 million, with funding coming from Measure M, Orange County's half-cent sales tax for transportation improvements, and a mix of state and federal funding. OCTA has been working closely throughout planning and design with the Federal Transit Administration, which is considering a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) to pay for about half of the project's cost. Of that, $50 million was included in the President's 2017 budget.

The OC Streetcar will operate from the busy Santa Ana Regional Transportation Center, along Santa Ana Boulevard and Fourth Street and along the former Pacific Electric right-of-way, to Harbor Boulevard in Garden Grove. The route will serve Santa Ana's central business district, which includes county and local government offices and courthouses in the Civic Center. It will also connect with many OCTA bus routes and Metrolink regional/commuter rail. It is expected to carry more than 7,300 passengers per day within its first year of operation, projected as 2020.

This summer, the OCTA Board will review branding of the OC Streetcar, which is expected to be similar to the blue, orange, and white branding of the OC Bus system. (***Railway Age***, March 26)

Canada

VIA Rail Canada awarded a C$46 million contract to Cad Railway Industries to upgrade 25 1950s-vintage passenger rail cars intended for use on ***The Canadian*** at Cad's Montreal facility. The cars will be completely refurbished and transformed to 21st Century standards to better meet the present and future needs of riders. (***Markets Insider***, April 10)

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Ontario is adding new stations and performing upgrades across its GO Regional Express Rail (RER) network to prepare for additional all-day, two-way GO train service for commuters in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

Transportation Minister Kathryn McGarry announced March 26 that Ontario will move forward with the next

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phase of work to build the province's GO RER system.

Ontario has boosted GO train service by more than 70 percent so far, adding about 800 train trips each week throughout the GO network than were offered in 2013.

In the weeks ahead, the province plans to begin the design-build process for six new GO stations and six new city of Toronto SmartTrack stations.

Upgrades will also be made to more than 20 existing GO stations, officials said, including renovations to station buildings, new bus loops, digital signage, and other improvements.

The province will also take steps to begin the procurement of new maintenance facilities, trains, tracks, and additional infrastructure needed to increase service offerings.

Weekly trips across the entire GO rail network are predicted to rise from about 1,100 in 2013 to nearly 6,000 by 2025, officials said. More all-day, two-way, 15-minute electrified GO service is planned for commuters throughout the region. (***Railway Age***, March 28)

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

The first light rail vehicle for Edmonton's Valley Line has been completed at Bombardier Transportation's factory in Kingston. It is scheduled to arrive in Edmonton in mid-2018.

Bombardier is supplying 26 LRVs for the first phase of the Valley Line project as part of the TransEd Partners consortium, which also includes Fengate Capital Management, Bechtel, Ellis-Don, Transdev, Arup, and IBI Group. The consortium has a PPP contract to design, build, and finance the 13.1-kilometer line between 102nd Street and Mill Woods, and provide 30 years of operations and maintenance. Opening is scheduled in 2020. (***Metro Report International***, March 28)

London, England

Transport for London has awarded Bombardier Transportation a contract to supply a further five nine-car Class 345 Aventra electric multiple-units for use on the Elizabeth Line, taking its total order to 70 trainsets.

The order announced on March 27 includes an expansion of the existing train services agreement to cover the additional trainsets, which takes the total value of the contract signed on March 22 to £73 million.

The extra vehicles will follow from the 585 Aventra cars which Bombardier's Derby plant is already producing for the Elizabeth Line, and are scheduled to enter service by the end of 2019.

Bombardier Class 345 EMUs are currently in passenger service between London Liverpool Street and Shenfield, are being used for driver training on the Great Western Lines and are undergoing testing in the Crossrail project's central tunnel and on the Heathrow Branch. (***Metro Report International***, March 27)

Major Changes Coming to the Grand Central Subway Complex

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Figure 7: Rendering of the Transit Hall at the southeast corner of Vanderbilt Avenue and E. 43rd Street.
Kohn Pederson Fox rendering

Figure 8 – Rendering of the future view upon completion of 1 Vanderbilt Avenue, looking north up Vanderbilt Avenue from E. 42nd Street, showing the pedestrian plaza. The new in-building entrance down to the 42nd Street Shuttle is visible on the left.
Kohn Pederson Fox rendering

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SWITZERLAND IN THE LATE SUMMER
by Jack May
(Photographs by the author)
(Continued from April, 2018 issue)

We rode back on the 12:20, which had only a single section, and a rather sparsely-occupied one at that. There was quite a bit of camaraderie in the car, and we bonded with many of the folks aboard. They were mainly well-traveled British and Australian tourists who commented about other similar lines they had ridden, including the diesel-operated Manitou & Pikes Peak in Colorado. In bright sunlight we passed the next trains up at the midstation, and later the diesel locomotive at the final passing siding. It was an enjoyable, albeit rather expensive ride, as not only was the terrain steep, so was the fare. Fortunately our Swiss Rail Passes provided us with a 50 percent discount.

We arrived at the lakefront at 13:30, but did not take the Zentralbahn's 13:35 back to Interlaken, as we paused to look around and have a bite of lunch. We opted for the 14:02 instead, which brought us back to the Ost station at 14:26 (24), where I rushed to reclaim our luggage so we could catch the BOB's 14:35 train. I did not immediately realize that it ran only to Grindlewald, as opposed to the usual dual sections the railroad operates to Lauterbrunnen as well, as part of its famous circle tour to Kleine Scheidegg and the Jungfrau. These long multi-unit motor-trailer trains usually separate at Zweilutschinen, 11 minutes up, but we decided to detrain before that at Wilderswil (14:40), giving me the opportunity to photograph some of the Schynige Platte line's equipment, including its 14:45 departure over a route we planned to cover on Tuesday. As it turned out this was the last sunlight we saw on this day.

I should mention that today was an all-narrow gauge day, with rides on the 800-millimeter-gauge Brienz-Rothorn Bahn and the meter-gauge Zentralbahn (the resultant property of a merged SBB Brunig line with the private Luzern-Stans-Engleberg interurban) and Bernese Oberland Bahn, on which we were about to continue our journey from Wilderswil. We boarded at 15:10, making sure we did not climb aboard one of the Grindelwald-bound cars, and arrived at Lauterbrunnen 15 minutes later. We rolled our bags uphill to our hostel (regular hotels here were either expensive or sold out), where we were assigned a private room that was charmingly rustic, and quite large and airy as well. The bath and toilets were down the hall — fortunately (and not surprisingly) very clean. But whenever we entered the premises we had to remove our footwear and put on special sandals. It was obvious the owners did not want dirty hiking boots scuffing up their pristine wood floors.

We then rode the 16:16 cable car to Grutschalp (arriving 16:19), where we transferred to one of my favorite lines, the Bergbahn Lauterbrunnen-Murren (BLM). I was surprised to see the hanging cable car, as the last time I was here a funicular provided the transportation up the face of the mountain. Apparently safety became a question due to some landslides and instead of rebuilding the funicular and its small counterbalanced cars, in 2006 it was replaced by the cable car, which has far greater capacity.

My first trip on this meter-gauge interurban was in 1967, during the period its 1913-built wooden cars were being replaced with the current equipment. I felt very lucky, as both an old car and a new car were running in regular service. With no road access to Murren, the funicular, and now the cableway, has to carry freight as well as passengers. The transfer of such material to the tramway is rather complex, with the machinery viewable at Grutschalp. In the case of the new trams in 1967, I was told they were brought up in sections and assembled at the funicular's summit. Another possibility however, is that with both the tramway and funicular being meter gauge, the new cars may have been simply attached to the cable and pulled up.

We rode the 16:22 tramcar, which hugs the shelf of the mountain for its entire 2.6-mile length to Murren. Arriving in its covered station at 16:36, we saw the BLM's third car on a side track, but there was no sign of No. 11, one of the 1913 units that I believe has been retained for historical purposes — including charters. I took a couple of photos and then we walked on the path along the track back to the Winteregg station at the line's midpoint. Unfortunately the "Big 3" mountain peaks (Eiger, Monch, and Jungfrau) were mostly clouded in so we did not get to see that aspect of the area's lovely scenery. Instead we encountered a few cows while on the path, apparently taking their daily exercise, their bells clanging away.

A few drops of precipitation speckled the tram's windows on our ride back, but by the time we reached the foot of the cable line we were in the midst of a heavy downpour. Fortunately it was only a short walk to our accommodations and we did not get too drenched. Later, when the rain let up a bit, we found a restaurant and had a good, if rather expensive, dinner in this resort community. All in all, despite the occasional problematic weather, we had a good day.

Because of the bad weather on the BLM we returned to that line a few days later, so photos of its operations will be included in a forthcoming chapter. Similarly, the photos at Wilderswill will be included on the report segment that describes our journey over that line to Schynige Platte.

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Switzerland in the Late Summer

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Two views at the passing loop halfway along the line. The left photo portrays our locomotive quenching its thirst, while the right shows No. 11, a diesel-hydraulic unit built by Steck in 1986.

The facade of the Brienz-Rothorn Bahn's gingerbread station building. The Zentralbahn's station and the Brienzersee are across the road.

This control (driving) trailer, which contains a first class section, will now become the rear of a long Bernese Oberland Bahn train to operate from Interlaken with sections for both Lauterbrunnen and Grindlewald. Originally built for the Bern-Solothurn interurban line in 1982, these Schindler units were later sold (2003) to the BOB after being made surplus by the RBS's introduction of partly low-floor railcars.

Two views of the Zentralbahn at Brienz. The left photo focuses on an Interlaken-bound MU train from Luzern about to take a sharp curve in order to enter the station along the Brienzersee. In the right photo note the right-hand operation of the line as the train of new Stadler "Adler" cars stops at the station. Built in 2009, the partly low-floor 7-unit trains are equipped for rack operation over the mountainous portion of the former "Brunig" line. Similar three-unit versions called "Finks" have also been built for local service along the line. Both are capable of speeds of up to 75 mph.

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Around New York's Transit System

Museum Trains Operate for Baseball Opening Days

New York City Transit operated the New York Transit Museum's Train of Many Colors (TOMC) on the 7 Flushing Line in commemoration of Opening Day for the New York Mets baseball team at Citi Field on Thursday, March 29. The consist was: N-9307/9587-6/9310/9011-0/9016-7/9206-7/6609-S. The train was deadheaded over from its home base at 207th Street Yard the previous day, March 28, so it could be staged at Corona Yard for its assigned duties. It operated light from Corona Yard at 10 AM to the pocket tracks just south of the 34th Street-Hudson Yards terminal and re-entered the station to enter passenger service, departing at 11:30 AM. It was scheduled to operate as a regular express train to Main Street-Flushing but due to track work, operated on Track M only after 74th Street-Broadway. Upon arrival at Main Street, the train discharged its passengers and immediately operated light back to 207th Street Yard. This was likely the final occasion that the TOMC, other Transit Museum trains, and any other non-CBTC-equipped train will operate in passenger service on the 7 as CBTC (Communication-Based Train Control) is being gradually "cut in" on the line, starting with the section 103rd Street to Main Street and expanding southward toward 34th Street-Hudson Yards during the rest of 2018. Word from reliable sources is that even the "Trash Collector" will no longer be permitted to operate on the 7 with its eclectic mix of R-62A and R-134 work motors as power, station trash collection to be handled by trucks from street level. *(Editor's Note by Ronald Yee: On the way home from the ERA meeting on April 20, I did observe the trash collector pass by my train near 33rd Street (Rawson Street) headed southbound. If the aforementioned banishment of the trash collector from the 7 does come to pass, I do wonder about the ramifications of employees hauling trash up or down station stairways between platform and street level, especially when only a handful of stations on the 7 are equipped with elevators. Two issues come to mind: employee injury liabilities from hauling heavy trash bags on stairways, and slip and fall injuries amongst passengers using these stairways which may become soiled, wet, and greasy from having often leaky trash bags transported over them, never mind the smells, especially during warmer weather.)* (See Ron's pictures of the train below.)

New York City Transit operated the New York Transit Museum's Lo-V consist from Grand Central to 161st Street-Yankee Stadium for the New York Yankees' home opener at Yankee Stadium on April 3, a day later than planned as the original Opening Day had been postponed due to an early spring snowfall. This train returned to the 4 on Sunday, April 15 carrying Transit Museum patrons who boarded the train at Grand Central Shuttle Track #1 and rode around the City Hall loop and north to Woodlawn to celebrate that station's centennial. While on the 4, the train was oriented with car 5292 as the north motor and car 5443 the south motor. The train changed its orientation twice as it operated around City Hall loop twice during its travels on the Lexington Avenue (former) IRT Line.

Regional Plan Association Details T-REX

The Regional Plan Association (RPA) released more details of its 2017 Trans-Regional Express (T-REX) proposal to combine the three commuter rail networks in the New York City area, Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North Railroad, and NJ Transit and form a unified system, much like the RER system in Paris. The currently estimated $71.4 billion merger would require a few decades to achieve. Phase one would construct a "Crosstown Line" to provide the ability to operate through-running service between New Jersey and Long Island, New York and include and expand upon Amtrak's Gateway plans for new trans-Hudson tunnels and an expansion of Penn Station. To support this expanded corridor, new tunnels would also be constructed under the East River. Phase two would build new rail tunnels from Union City, New Jersey, to 57th Street in Midtown Manhattan, offering additional trans-Hudson capacity, and phase three would see the construction of a north-south trunk line nicknamed "Manhattan Spine" that would run the length of Manhattan, linking the Bronx with Brooklyn.

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R-33 9307 leads the Train of Many Colors as it approaches the 40th Street-Lowery station on March 29, 2018.

Lo-V 5443 and consist pass Yankee Stadium on April 15, 2018.