

The Bulletin



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The Bulletin

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LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD MAIN LINE DOUBLE-TRACK PROJECT UPDATE by Jeffrey Erlitz

In the past few weeks the first actual changes to the operation of Main Line trains has occurred as part of the Long Island Rail Road's Main Line Double Track project. Starting at just past midnight on Monday, April 30, the Main Track from 300 feet west of the west end of the Central Islip station to the east end of the passing siding, east of the Central Islip station, was taken out of service. All trains were routed through the passing siding which, under this project, will soon become Track 1. All passengers used the north platform only. The operation ran this way until the early morning hours of Saturday, May 5. Over the weekend of May 5-6 while there was no train service between Farmingdale and Ronkonkoma, final preparations were done to place in service a new interlocking (designated "CI") with two single crossovers about ¾-mile west of the Central Islip station, just west of the N. Peters Boule-

vard grade crossing.

Very early in the morning of Monday, May 7 this new interlocking was placed in service. At the same time, the old CI1 and CI2 Interlockings (at the west and east ends of the original passing siding, respectively) were removed from service and the switches and all signals were removed. With this operation, the very first piece of new Main Line second track was placed in service, from the new CI Interlocking to just west of the Central Islip station.

You will notice in the drawings that the two tracks take a jog to the northwest of the Central Islip station. This is because the new second track was laid to the south of the existing main track from that point west but it was laid to the north of the existing main track from the east end of the old siding all the way to Ronkonkoma.

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**In This Issue:
The Genesis of
Dashing Dan —
Enter the North
Side Division
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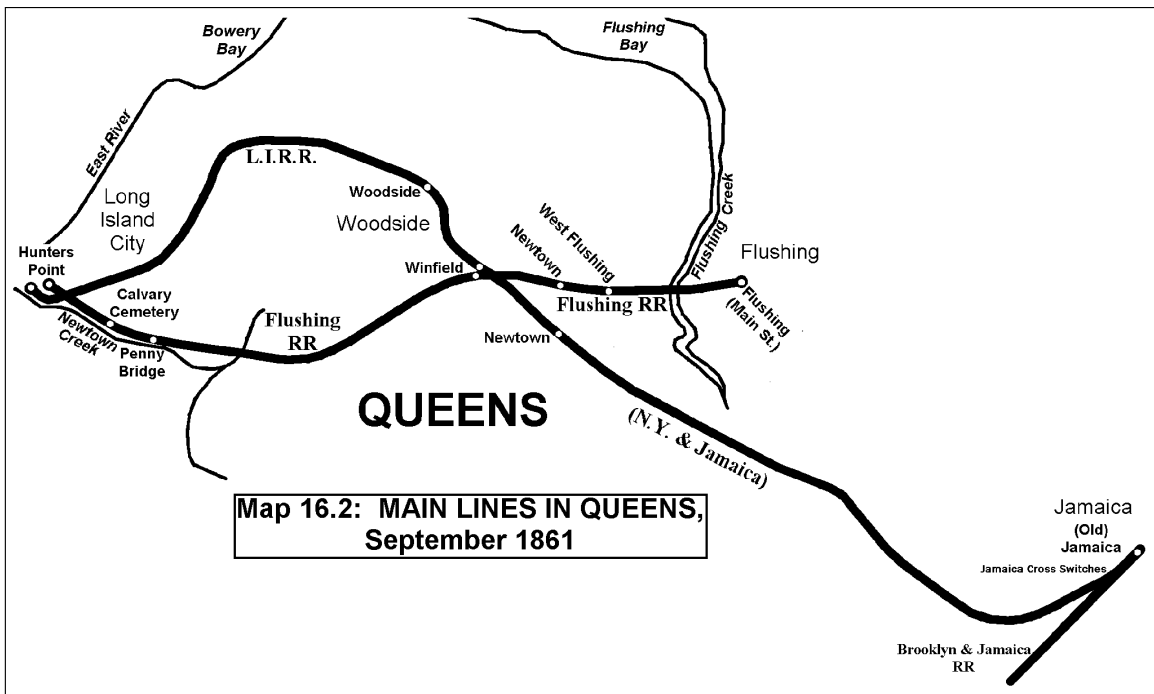
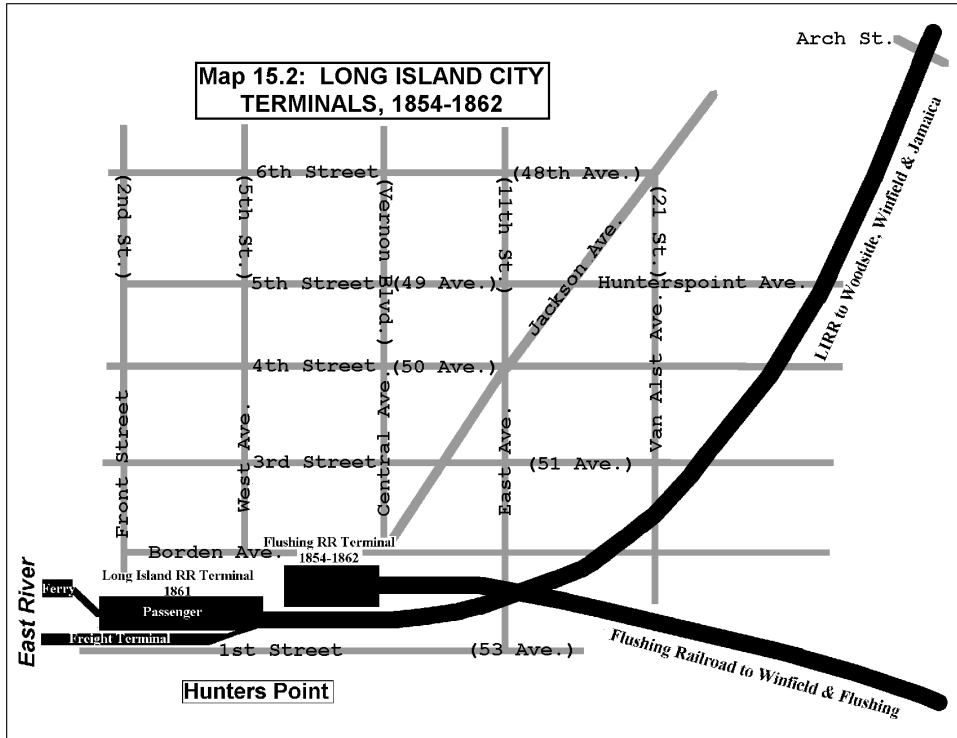
M-7 7282 (Bombardier Transportation, June, 2004) leads Train #2052 through the new CI Interlocking on May 21, 2018 at 2:42PM. It has just crossed over from the original single main track onto the first segment of new double track (here, Track 2) to be placed in service, which occurred on May 7.

Jeffrey Erlitz photograph

Part 3 of Subutay Musluoglu's article on the Grand Central subway station has been postponed to July.

NEXT TRIP: DANBURY RAILWAY MUSEUM/WAREHOUSE POINT, SATURDAY, JUNE 23

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



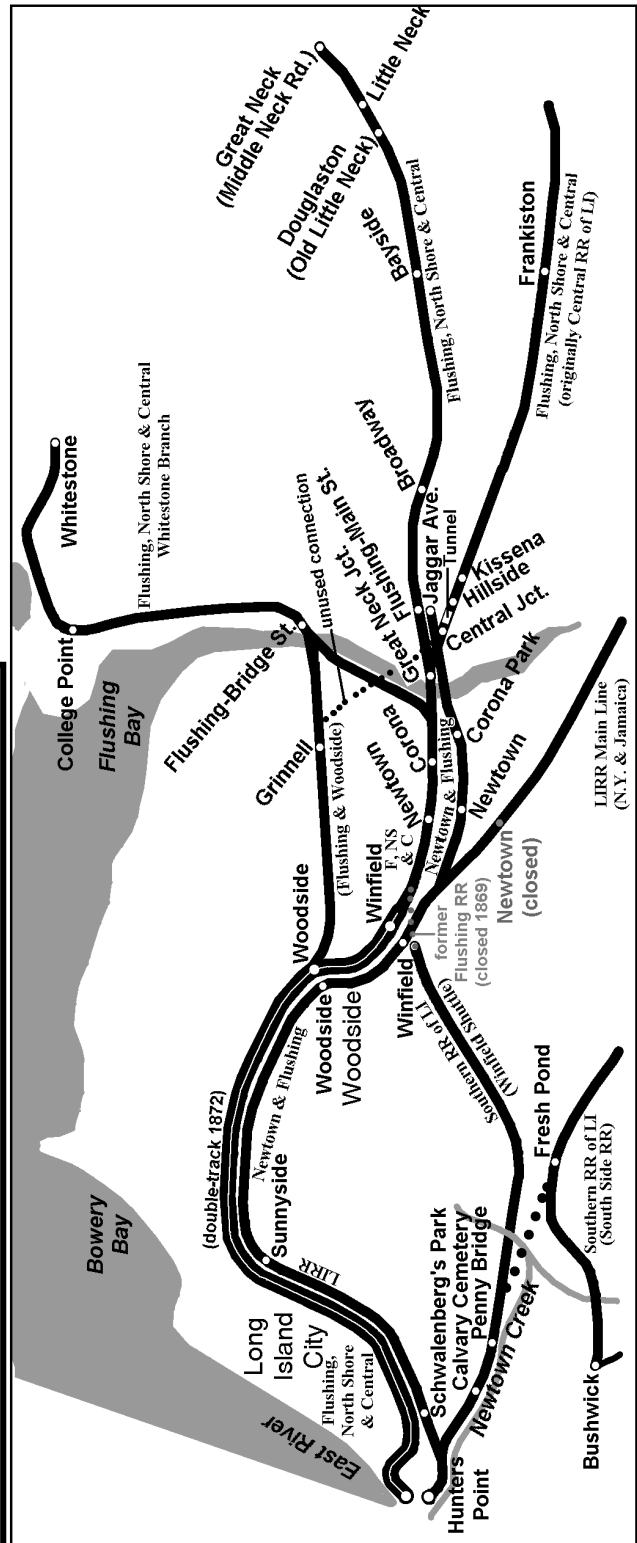
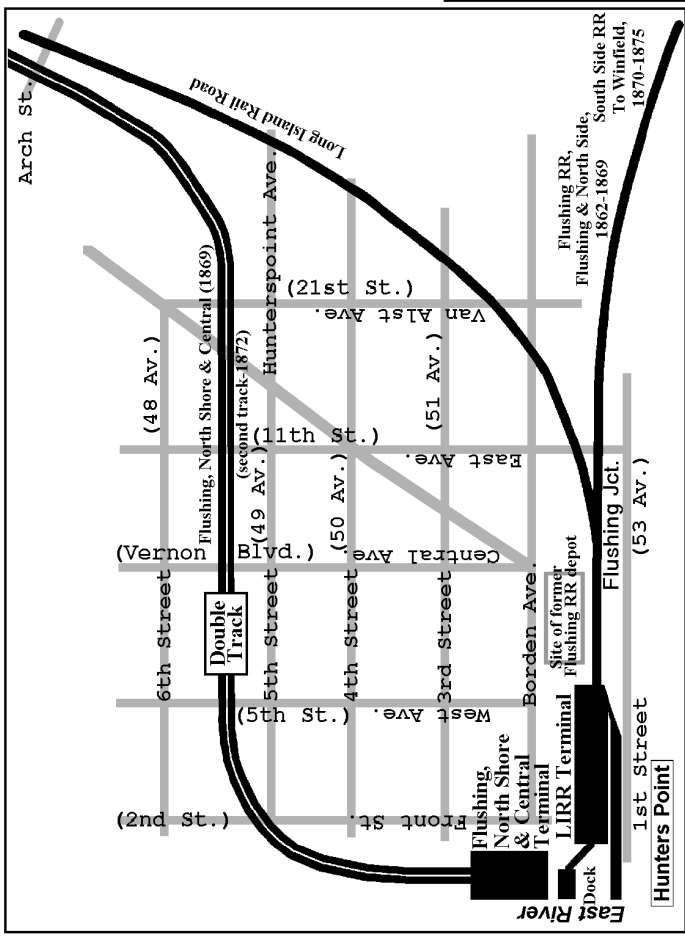
(Continued on page 3)

The Genesis of Dashing Dan

(Continued from page 2)

**Map 17.2: LONG ISLAND CITY
TERMINALS, 1862-1875**

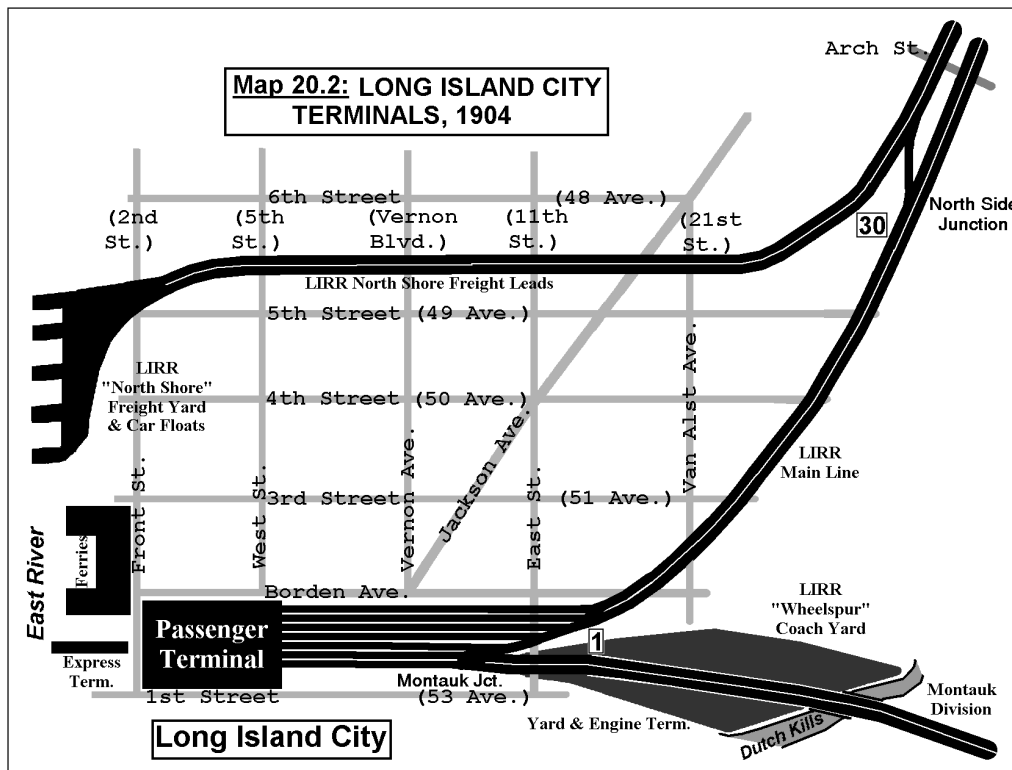
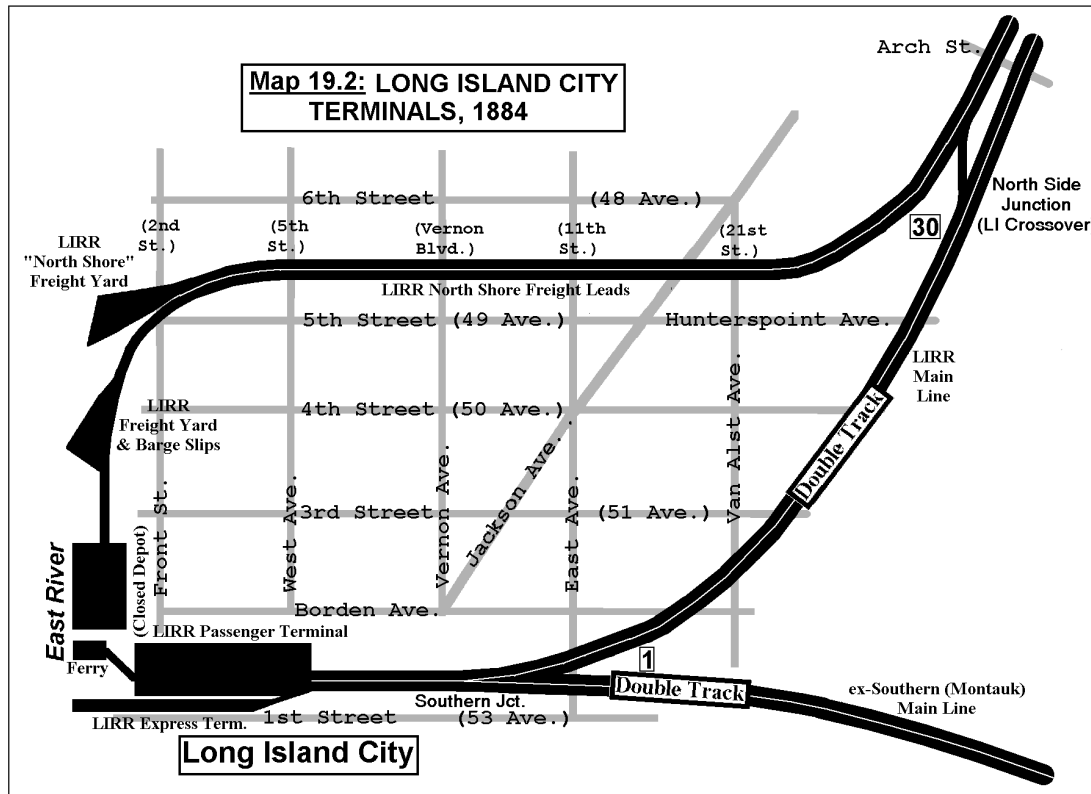
**Map 18.2: MAIN LINES
IN QUEENS,
November 1875**



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The Genesis of Dashing Dan

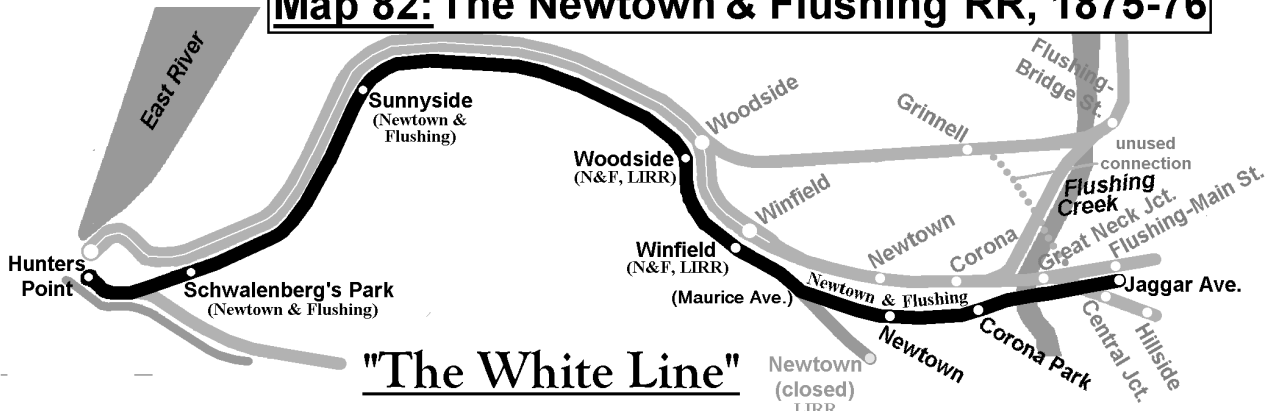
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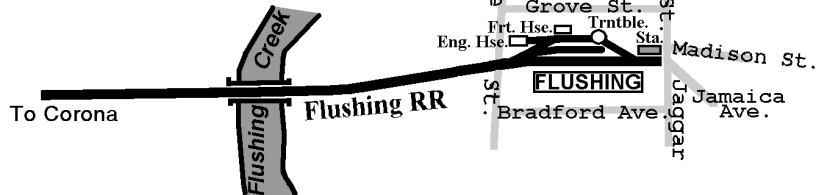
The Genesis of Dashing Dan
(Continued from page 4)

Map 82: The Newtown & Flushing RR, 1875-76

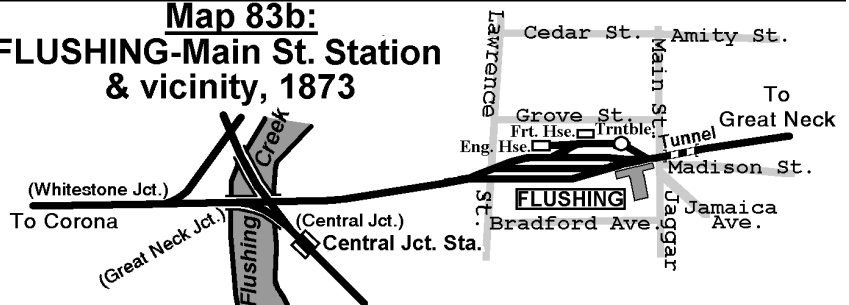


**The
Evolution
of
FLUSHING-
Main Street**

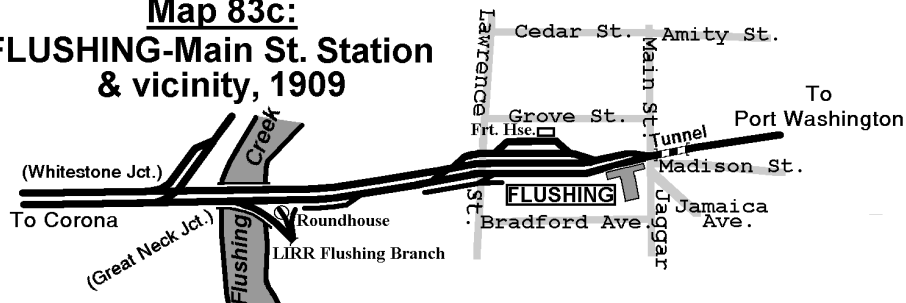
**Map 83a:
FLUSHING-Main St. Terminal
& vicinity, 1854-1866**



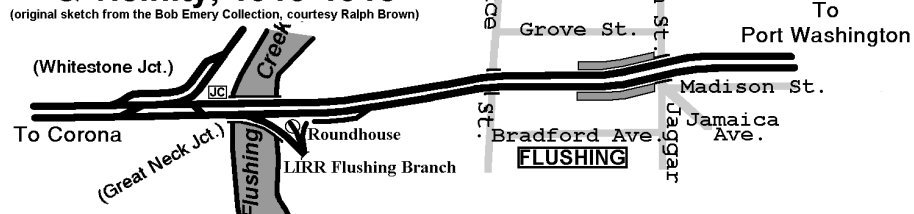
**Map 83b:
FLUSHING-Main St. Station
& vicinity, 1873**



**Map 83c:
FLUSHING-Main St. Station
& vicinity, 1909**



**Map 83d:
FLUSHING-Main St. Station
& vicinity, 1913-1915**



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ELECTRIC TRACTION IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

by Alexander Ivanoff

My dad's side of the family has had a permanent presence in the Pacific Northwest since the 1990s when his cousin Walter took a job as an Electrical Engineer with Boeing working on the company's aircraft lineup. During the summers of 2005 and 2008 I made trips to Seattle (in 2005 with my grandmother and younger brother and in 2008 with just my brother) to visit and enjoy the company of family. During my 2008 trip I saw the last of the construction (from a car window) of the Central Link light rail line that would open the following year. Unlike many cities, transit usage in Seattle has exceeded expectations.

Post-2008 I have made several friends in the Seattle area, including members of the All Aboard Washington rail advocacy organization. With friends and family pressuring me to make the trip, I decided to make the trek to the Pacific Northwest before the summer season hit. My itinerary wasn't too flashy: fly into Portland, an overnight there (including a ride on the MAX light rail network and the Portland Streetcar), a ride on Amtrak's *Cascades* route, and a few days in Seattle to enjoy the company of friends and family. Both Portland and Seattle have been electric traction success stories, and to Portland's credit it had a full-fledged network before Seattle even turned a shovel despite being a smaller metropolitan area.

I left Brooklyn on May 10 on an early morning Delta flight, and, after some hassle, made it to Kennedy Airport barely an hour and fifteen minutes before my flight took off. In fact, my flight was well-boarded by the time I got to the gate. I was held up by security at JFK Airport due to having overpacked my backpack. As it turns out, my policy of bringing everything but the kitchen sink is starting to backfire. While I made the flight with minutes to spare, I will definitely be changing my packing habits in the future as a result. Despite some minor gripes and turbulence (literal), it was a relatively pleasant flight.

Arriving into Portland was spectacular, and I was reminded why years ago I fell in love with the Pacific Northwest. From the flora to the vibe that the greater Portland area is known for, there is a lot to love about the region. Upon arrival into Portland I grabbed my bag and headed straight for the MAX Red Line, where a train of older equipment was waiting. To pay for my ride I simply used my phone. TriMet has an agreement with the major cellular developers (Apple, Google, and Samsung) to use their payment apps to cover fares. After two rides, your third turns into a day pass. My first MAX ride was on a 1983-4-vintage Bombardier Type 1 car (car classes are broken into types in Portland) and was delighted as to the experience, even if the cars are truly showing their age. Upon arriving in downtown Portland I met up with longtime rail advocate (and buff) Charlie Hamilton, who came down from Seattle earlier in the day. After lunch and dropping bags at our hotel, I made a stop at TriMet's downtown office to get a Hop card.

The Hop (officially the Hop Fastpass) is the new AFC technology that TriMet is rolling out along with its regional partners. We continued along the Orange Line, crossing the Willamette River on the Tilikum Crossing bridge. Built from 2011-5, the bridge is the first major bridge in the United States to be auto-free, demonstrating the commitment the Portland region has towards public transportation and livability. Unfortunately, the limited time in Portland meant I could not do as much transit-fanning as I would have liked, but I plan to return to the Rose City in the future. Portland was an early adopter of light rail as a transit mode, opening the first line in 1986 with a network that is the third longest by track mileage. I had an opportunity to ride all three main groups of vehicles: the 1980s-built Bombardier cars (the Type 1), the 1990s Siemens SD660 class vehicles (types 2 and 3) and the most recent vehicles in the fleet: the Siemens S70s (classes 4 and 5). The S70s run in pairs, with Operator's cabs on one end only, meaning the S70s cannot be used as singles. Portland's ridership can justify this.

After breakfast, Charlie and I made our way to Portland's historic Union Station to ride the *Cascades* to Seattle. It was my first time on the Talgo equipment and definitely not my last. From the scenery to the bistro car to the tilt system, my ride was simply pleasant. The only disappointment was a limitation with regards to salad and sandwich selections, but considering the recent salmonella outbreak with romaine lettuce, I can appreciate the commitment to food safety. It is worth noting the original fleet of Talgos, after two decades of service, are showing their age on the inside, with worn seats and carpeting. That said, the cars themselves are comfortable and relatively clean. Seeing as I would probably never be able to ride via the Point Defiance route ever again, this opportunity was not wasted on me. Upon arriving in Seattle, we jumped on the Central Link to head uptown.

On Saturday, I joined members of the All Aboard Washington advocacy group at their meeting in Tukwilla at Basil's Kitchen, a local restaurant chain. To get down there (with a stop for breakfast), we took a bus to the Capitol Hill Central Link station, and walked a block to the First Hill Line Streetcar. Opened in 2016, it is the newer of Seattle's two streetcar lines. The project to link it with the SLUT (South Lake Union Trolley, officially the South Lake Union Streetcar) has been stalled due to cost overruns. Both lines have had healthy ridership and operate partially off-wire, due to (what I assume is) the conflicting trolleybus overhead. For breakfast Charlie and I joined Hendrik de Kock, a fellow rail advocate (and New York native) for dim sum in Seattle's Chinatown. From there it was a short walk to the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, which was light rail-only due to weekend construction. Upon the extension of Central

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Electric Traction in the Pacific Northwest

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Link, buses will no longer use the tunnel.

Sunday and Monday were less transit-heavy due to prior commitments on both of those days. However, I took the bus to Woodinville (on a commuter style seating-equipped New Flyer D60LFR) and had two trolleybus rides on Monday. Much like Dayton, Seattle does not run trolleybus service on weekends, using that time to do any necessary maintenance on the trolley overhead. The fact that I did not get around to certain things during my trip to Seattle is not disappointing; it gives me more reason to head back as soon as the opportunity arises. I did not have the opportunity to ride either the Portland Streetcar or Tacoma Link Streetcar while visiting due to time constraints.

Getting back to New York turned out to be an adventure. Originally my flight back to New York was scheduled for 7:40 AM Seattle time, but delays pushed that back to about 8:30. After thinking we would be into New York only a little behind, my hopes were dashed when we diverted to Baltimore due to what ended up being

some extreme weather in New York. Our crew “timed out” (could no longer legally work due to FAA and DOT rules) right as we arrived into New York. Tuesday night would prove costly as I ended up taking a cab to Brooklyn, not crawling into bed until 2:30 AM New York time. How I managed to make it to work on Wednesday is something I still am struggling to comprehend.

The Pacific Northwest is an electric traction buff’s paradise, and along with Vancouver’s successful trolley bus network, there is no shortage of places to visit and photograph. If the ERA were to return to the region for a visit, I would wait until further work is done in Seattle to extend lines. With the Sound Transit 3 projects under way, the Puget Sound region will have no shortage of new rail line openings.

My deep appreciation goes out to Charlie Hamilton, Hendrik de Kock, Harvey Bowen, Walter Charczenko, and many others for helping to make this trip possible. I dedicate this trip report to the late James Hamre and Zach Willhoite, both fans of electric traction and transit, who tragically passed away in December of 2017 in the derailment of Cascades Train #501. I know both gentlemen would have enjoyed reading this trip report.



The front of TriMet MAX Light Rail Siemens S70 car 411. The S70s used by TriMet are single-ended and run in somewhat married pairs.



Sound Transit's Kinkisharyo LRV fleet is being supplemented by 152 Siemens S70s, scheduled to be delivered starting in 2019 for further expansion. Central Link uses 1,500-volt d.c. vs. the 700/750 volts more commonly found to avoid the need for numerous substations.



Two of King County Metro's New Flyer Xcelsior trolley buses. The Seattle bus system has a strong trolleybus tradition going back to 1940.



A nighttime view of the First Hill Streetcar on Broadway.

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WORK BEGINS ON ELECTRIFICATION OF CALTRAIN'S SAN FRANCISCO-SAN JOSE COMMUTER LINE

by Bruce J. Russell

After years of studies and political infighting, work has finally started on the electrification of the 51-mile, double-track, San Francisco-San Jose, California Caltrain commuter line, which is presently operated by diesel-powered, double-deck, push-pull trains. Known officially as the Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project, and costing more than \$2 billion dollars, this scheme will result in greatly improved service for the 70,000 passengers now riding the trains. As of now, Caltrain will commit \$1.25 billion towards the project, while about \$600 million will come from the federal government and other sources. It took a long time for the government to release these funds, but it finally did. When the electrification is completed, hopefully by 2021, ridership will increase to 90,000 per weekday, mainly in response to faster, more frequent schedules. These improvements will be primarily because slow-moving diesel trains will be replaced by a fleet of bi-level, electric multiple unit vehicles. Ridership on the former Southern Pacific San Francisco-San Jose commuter line has been steadily increasing during the past 25 years, from a low point of 16,000 weekday riders in 1972. In subsequent years, Southern Pacific attempted, without success, to eliminate the entire operation, which then relied upon a fleet of 1920s-vintage "Harriman"-style coaches plus a few bi-levels, pulled by a group of iconic 1952-vintage Fairbanks-Morse "Trainmaster" diesel locomotives, later supplanted by modified freight diesels. The railroad's effort to eliminate the service ultimately failed, and within a fifteen-year span, management would sell it to the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (PCJPB). In a 1971 issue of *Trains* Magazine, the railroad's complaint of enormous financial losses on the peninsula commuter services is described, as well as its efforts to discourage ridership. Under Caltrain's assumption of ownership, the arrival of new rolling stock, most built by Sumitomo of Japan, modern F-40-PH locomotives, and lower fares resulted in steadily increasing patronage at such stations as Burlingame, Redwood City, San Carlos, and Palo Alto, home of Stanford University. Ridership would have increased further had the railroad, about 1970, demolished its classic station close to downtown in favor of a smaller facility at Fourth and King Streets, a greater distance from the central business district, and less convenient. By 1971, with the coming of Amtrak, long-distance passenger service over the line ceased. In days of yore this route witnessed the arrival of the long *Daylight* trains running to and from Los Angeles and intermediate points. They were a beautiful sight to behold, and often ran up to sixteen cars. To ride today's Amtrak trains, one must go to Oakland. Additional, Caltrain extended a few runs further south from San Jose to Gilroy, and additional 32 miles. *(Editor's Note by Alexander Ivanoff: The San Jose-Gilroy segment is not included in*

the electrification scheme, at least for now, due to joint operation with Union Pacific and a lack of frequency, so not all the diesel equipment is going away as far as I am aware.)

A \$1.3 billion contract to do the actual electrification of the 51 miles, which includes erection of upright poles or masts to support the catenary wires plus the system to bring power to the wires at various feeder points, was awarded by Caltrain to Balfour Beatty Infrastructure Incorporated, a firm having widespread experience in the electrification of railroads. This company will design the electrification as well as build it. The voltage will be 25,000 volts, which is the modern standard for railway electrification both in the United States and globally. It will also enable trains of the now-under-construction California High Speed Railway running between Los Angeles and San Francisco to operate for their final miles over Caltrain's tracks, where they will end their runs at a new terminal whose location has yet to be determined. This facility, which will feature an underground approach, will be jointly used by the Caltrain electrics and the high-speed trains coming from Los Angeles.

Passengers riding the electrified Caltrain route will travel in a fleet of six-to-eight-car, double-deck, multiple unit trains to be built by Stadler USA, the American division of a European railway equipment supplier. For a price of \$551 million, Stadler will furnish 96 vehicles with an option for 20 more. Caltrain wisely decided that multiple unit vehicles were preferable to push-pull trains using standard electric locomotives. This is the practice employed by New Jersey Transit with few exceptions, with the result that running times are slower than if it had used multiple unit equipment. Caltrain intends its fleet of 96 Stadler EMUs to accelerate faster and move more rapidly than any locomotive-hauled consist. An eight-car train of these bilevel EMUs will be able to handle the growing ridership on this important commuter artery. The contract specified that assembly of the new trains must happen in the United States, preferably somewhere in California, although many of the components can be imported from overseas. Artist's renderings of the new electric trains have appeared in various railway trade publications, and they are most attractive. During off-peak times there will be as many as six trains per hour. Although high-level platforms certainly speed loading and unloading, the artist's illustrations only depict low-level ones. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that these will be ultimately be incorporated into the project.

Local politicians have hailed the start of electrification of the Caltrain commuter line as a long overdue improvement within the Bay Area. According to a recent press release, "an electrified Caltrain system will improve regional air quality by up to 97%, reduce green-

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Work Begins on Electrification of Caltrain's San Francisco-San Jose Commuter Line

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house emissions by 176,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide and remove 630,000 daily vehicles off the region's highways by 2030. As Highways 101 and 280 have become more and more congested, Caltrain has become the preferred commute option between San Francisco and the Silicon Valley. As a result, peak hour service is well over 100% capacity, with ridership on some trains exceeding 125% of available seats."

The electrification of the Caltrain route will not be the first modern electrification of a commuter railway west of Chicago. In 2017, the Denver, Colorado RTD began electrified service over two (eventually four) lines emanating from Union Station, using multiple unit cars nearly identical to those purchased by SEPTA to partially reequip its Regional Rail system. Nevertheless, electrification of railroads in the United States, Canada and Mexico is rare. Instead, diesel propulsion has always been the preferred mode. The excellent book *When the Stream Railroads Electrified* by William D. Middleton (Kalmbach Publishing, 1974) gives an excellent overview of the electrifications that did take place in our nation. Only the Pennsylvania and Milwaukee Road Railroads possessed considerable electrified mainline mileage. Otherwise, with a few minor exceptions, all that existed were electrified commuter lines, specifically around New York City, Philadelphia, and on the Illinois Central out of Chicago. Their purpose was to eliminate smoke-belching steam locomotives from suburban and urban areas. Most of this work was done between 1905

and 1931, although minor retrenchments and additions have occurred since then. Following the Second World War and the retirement of steam locomotives, most of the commuter railroads switched to diesels rather than electrifying. Few, if any, spent money on new rolling stock. Hopefully, the decision of Denver and Caltrain to utilize electrified technology will be a harbinger of things to come. In fact, GO Transit in Toronto is now giving serious consideration to electrification of its most important routes.

On a historical note, the San Francisco Bay Area once possessed an electrified commuter operation using multiple unit cars. This was, of course, the Southern Pacific's electrified suburban operation out of Oakland, and in its final years over the Bay Bridge into San Francisco itself. Started by the Southern Pacific in 1912, it comprised of a mixture of private right-of-way and street trackage and served various towns in and around Oakland. Its rolling stock consisted of a fleet of red multiple unit cars. Drastic declines in patronage beginning in the 1920s resulted in abandonment in 1941, with some of its vehicles being sent south to Los Angeles, where they became known as "blimps" because of their round port-hole front windows. A few of the lines were taken over by the competing Key System. The book *Red Trains in the East Bay* by Robert S. Ford (Interurban Press, 1977) describes this network of lines. Even with a direct connection into the heart of San Francisco via the Bay Bridge, its ridership had so eroded that the system was "bustituted." Today's BART rapid transit system partially replaces it as well as the Key System. With Caltrain's electrification under way, railroading in the Golden State is coming full circle.

Electric Traction in the Pacific Northwest

(Continued from page 7)



The rear of New Flyer D40LF 2508 (an almost 20-year-old bus) and a Type 4 (Siemens S70 LRV) on SW 5th Avenue. The mix of transit and multimodalism has made Portland a remarkably good place to live car-free.



Opened in 1990, the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT) has encountered controversy through its existence, from construction issues that would result in expensive retrofitting to accommodate LRVs to the use of South African granite, banned due to apartheid sanctions in the 1980s. Despite this, the tunnel has been a resounding success. Seen here is the International District/Chinatown station, opened in 1990 for buses and now also used by Central Link.

Commuter and Transit Notes

No. 353

by Ronald Yee and Alexander Ivanoff

MTA LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD

LIRR riders in underserved areas of Brooklyn and Queens will see a fare cut to Atlantic Terminal, according to the MTA. A pilot program was approved just as the June *Bulletin* went to press.

The discount would be for commuters from stations in Queens Village, Hollis, St. Albans, Rosedale, Laurelton, Locust Manor, Jamaica, East New York, and Nostrand Avenue. Most of the stations targeted lack sufficient subway service.

A peak, one-way ticket will be slashed in half, costing \$5 instead of \$10.25, with a weekly ticket (including a *MetroCard*) costing just \$60, down from \$104.25.

The MTA is looking to gather data to determine if cutting fares will increase ridership, as the fare cut is meant to entice more people to use the LIRR. The program was green-lighted by the MTA Finance Committee and could begin in June. An MTA advisory group proposed the discounted fares more than a decade ago.

Once the pilot program wraps up on the Long Island Rail Road, advocates are hopeful it will be expanded to Metro-North. (WPIX-TV, May 22)

MTA METRO-NORTH RAILROAD

On May 15, Metro-North Railroad service was suspended at the height of rush hour due to storm damage from a freak weather system that was responsible for a category EF2 tornado in Putnam County and caused two fatalities in the Hudson Valley, which was hardest hit by the storm. As the June *Bulletin* went to press, thousands across the region were still without power. Despite the storm, service resumed after a period of time. However, commuters found themselves getting home far later than planned. Service on the MTA Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and NJ Transit was also seriously delayed by the storm. A photo of Grand Central Terminal at the height of the storm demonstrates the magnitude of the delays and damage done. Editor Alexander Ivanoff was flying back from Seattle (see page 6 for a trip report) and had his flight diverted to Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI). While he could have opted for a *Northeast Regional* train from the BWI Airport station, the added expense of a last-minute Amtrak ticket and concerns about signal issues from storm damage (despite no reports of any on Amtrak's portion of the NEC) made him stick to the plane, with the flight not arriving back in New York until the early hours of the 16th. The storm also affected commuter rail service in the D.C. metro area, with some passengers on a MARC Brunswick Line train stranded for hours, as flooding had caused significant track damage. Metro-North was mostly back to normal on May 16, with changes to service north of North White Plains and Croton-Harmon. MARC riders on the Brunswick Line were less fortunate, with commuters having to wait until the 17th. (WUSA9, May 16; WABC-TV, May

16)

AMTRAK

Former Amtrak Chief Executive Officer Joseph Boardman was asked by *Trains* Magazine questions regarding the current situation at Amtrak, specifically citing Amtrak's letter sent to elected officials explaining why it was declining to provide its match for the *Southwest Chief* TIGER grant recently awarded to Colfax County, New Mexico. Boardman also cited the concerns with PTC and safety (where he agreed in part with some of the moves that current Amtrak Chief Executive Officer Richard Anderson has been making in adopting an airline-style safety management system. Boardman had sent an email to numerous elected officials on May 8, making clear his concerns with the company from his stance as a former head of the railroad. (*Editor's note by Alexander Ivanoff: The email, which can be found in the Trains Magazine article, is close to sounding like it was written by a RPA (NARP) member. In the past, many rail advocates have been vocal about Boardman's slow cuts to aspects of Amtrak service and giving into former Florida Congressman John Mica's request to eliminate all food and beverage losses. At first, the email's validity had been questioned, but it appears as of the publication of this Bulletin that Boardman has legitimate concerns with Amtrak's current management. Even from a rail advocate's perspective, the Boardman administration at Amtrak was more adept at reaching out to stakeholders. From a quasi-business perspective, Amtrak also needs to be honest with its state partners who rely on the Northeast Corridor to run commuter trains.*) (*Trains* Magazine via Al Holtz, May 8)

OTHER TRANSIT SYSTEMS

MIAMI, FLORIDA

Brightline announced May 11 that its fast-travel rail service was finally coming to downtown, with a firm date. That date was May 19, announced the same day at the ribbon cutting for the downtown MiamiCentral station.

Brightline, a privately funded rail service owned by Florida East Coast Industries, hosted the mayors of Miami and Miami-Dade County along with South Florida U.S. Representatives Frederica Wilson, Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, and Carlos Curbelo at its newly risen station.

After the announcement, Brightline invited reporters, stakeholders, and politicians on an inaugural ride departing from MiamiCentral to Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach.

Introductory fares for a one-way Miami to West Palm ride begin at \$15 for "Smart" service and cost \$25 for the more luxurious "Select" option. Riding between Miami and Fort Lauderdale will run between \$10 and \$15. Both coaches have leather seats, but "Select" service includes complimentary food and beverage options,

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Commuter and Transit Notes*(Continued from page 10)*

access to a lounge and larger seats. wi-fi, and an assortment of electrical outlets are available at each station and aboard the trains themselves.

Brightline offered special \$3 and \$5 fares on May 19 and 20. The plan is to eventually link the rail service to Orlando in the coming years.

Discounts are available for children, those over 65 years old, and active or formerly military servicemen and women. Group pricing and packages are available for frequent riders. Brightline is pet-friendly, and each ticketed guest is allowed to bring along one dog or cat in a carrier he or she provides, depending on size.

During introductory service while construction continues along the FEC corridor, Brightline will operate eight northbound and eight southbound trips to and from MiamiCentral. Each station, which offers paid parking in dedicated garages, opens 30 minutes before the first train and closes 30 minutes after the last train departs. Brightline is offering complimentary parking during introductory service.

A full schedule can be found at gobrightline.com. (*Miami Herald*, May 11)

DALLAS, TEXAS

Texas Central, developers of the high-speed train between the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex and Houston, entered an agreement with Bechtel to work together on project management services.

Bechtel will support Texas Central in managing the Texas Bullet Train project as it moves from development to implementation. The firm has completed more than 300 major train and subway projects, including the Channel Tunnel High Speed 1, Crossrail in London, and Dulles Corridor Metrorail in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

Fluor Enterprises and The Lane Construction Corporation are performing pre-construction planning with engineering support from WSP. Texas Central, Fluor, Lane, and WSP are refining and updating construction planning and sequencing, scheduling and cost estimates, and other design and engineering activities. This work is being guided by the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) recent Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the project, which was released in December. The FRA will complete a final environmental review that will help determine the project's timeline and route before construction begins. (*RT&S*, May 2)

TACOMA, WASHINGTON

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) awarded a \$75 million grant to the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) for the Tacoma Link Extension Project, which will expand Link light rail to growing areas such as the Stadium and Hilltop District.

The 2.4-mile Tacoma Link Extension will add six new stations and five new light rail vehicles, doubling the length of the existing system. Construction is expected to begin in this fall, with revenue service targeted for 2022. The \$74.99 million project is being granted

through the FTA's Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program. (*Metro Magazine*, May 16)

PORTLAND, OREGON

Mobile ticketing was introduced to the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area on May 2 with the launch of an Android app.

The Virtual Hop Card uses Google Pay. Passengers can tap their smartphones on fare validators when they use bus, light rail, and commuter rail services operated by TriMet, C-TRAN, and Portland Streetcar.

The app was developed by Moovel and Init, which supplied its MOBILEvario back-office management tool. This calculates fares, validates transactions, and displays the fare validation result to the passenger. The app includes daily and monthly fare capping.

The Virtual Hop Card builds on the Hop Fastpass account-based smart card introduced to the region in July. (*Editor's note by Alexander Ivanoff: For those who might be arriving in Portland by air and might not have access to a Hop Fastpass card, the virtual card or Apple Pay/Android Pay/Samsung Pay comes in handy, as you will see from my trip report on the Pacific Northwest.*) (*Metro Report International*, May 8)

ALTAMONT, CALIFORNIA

The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC) awarded a contract to build four Charger diesel-electric locomotives for Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) service, with an option to purchase four additional units, to Siemens in early May.

Delivery of the locomotives will begin in December, 2019. Funding is being provided through the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program, and Low Carbon Transit Operations Program grants.

The new Chargers will be able to haul 10-car trains, a 43% increase from the current seven-car capacity locomotives. Using the EPA Tier 4-compliant, 4,400-horsepower Cummins QSK95 16-cylinder diesel engine, they will provide a 90% greenhouse gas emissions reduction and a 16% fuel efficiency improvement over existing SJRRRC locomotives. Buy America-compliant, these locomotives will also be "Made in California" at Siemens' Sacramento rail manufacturing plant.

Starting with just two daily round trips in 1998, ACE is now carrying 1.3 million passengers annually. ACE runs four daily round trips between San Jose and Stockton. The new ACE locomotives will be nearly identical to the ones currently servicing transportation agencies across the United States, including California (Caltrans), Illinois (IDOT), Washington (WSDOT), and Maryland (MTA). Additional states served by the locomotives are Oregon, Wisconsin, Missouri, Michigan, and Iowa. Charger locomotives are also powering new trainsets for Brightline, the higher-speed passenger rail service connecting South and Central Florida. (*Railway Age*, May 1)

CANADA

VIA Rail Canada carried 4.4 million passengers in 2017, representing a 10.5 percent increase over the

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Commuter and Transit Notes

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previous year, its greatest single-year growth in a decade.

Revenue was up 12.8 percent to \$365.7 million. Leading the growth was VIA's core Quebec City-Windsor, Ontario, corridor, which accounted for 4.1 million passengers, an 11.1 percent increase. It generated 14 percent more revenue.

VIA's long-distance flagship, the Toronto-Vancouver *Canadian*, carried 104,960 passengers, up 12.6 percent. Its revenues increased 16.8 percent. The primary eastern long-distance train, the *Ocean*, carried 78,763 passengers, up 1.5 percent, with a revenue increase of 5.2 percent. (*Trains Magazine* via Al Holtz, May 9)

ENGLAND

Leasing company Eversholt Rail has joined the Revolution VLR consortium of Transport Design International, Cummins, Prose, Transcal Engineering, RDM Group, and the University of Warwick, which has secured government funding to design and build a lightweight diesel-battery railcar demonstrator by early 2020.

The concept is intended for low-traffic and feeder routes where the high cost of conventional rolling stock is currently a barrier to providing passenger services.

The 18-meter-long bidirectional vehicle would be a more advanced development of a ULR Express railcar which was designed and built by TDI and Severn Lamb in 2015 for employee transport on an industrial line at Konya in Turkey.

It would have a capacity of 56 seated and 60 standing passengers, with a tare weight of less than 1 tonne per linear meter, enabling it to run on lightweight modular slab track. (*Railway Gazette*, May 11)

LONDON, ENGLAND

Numerous news outlets (including *The Guardian*) reported in mid-May that the East Coast Main Line rail service will be temporarily renationalized by the British government after operators Virgin and Stagecoach could no longer meet the promised payments in the £3.3 billion contract.

The London-Edinburgh-Inverness service will be taken back into public control on June 24, a little over three years since Virgin Trains East Coast (Vtec) started running. It will be rebranded as the London & North Eastern Railway.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling told the House of Commons that after a "finely balanced" assessment by civil servants, he had decided to appoint the "operator of last resort" — a group led by the firm Arup and under government control — to run the service, rather than allow Stagecoach and Virgin to continue under fresh terms.

The collapse of the franchise marks the third time in a decade that a private train operator has failed to see out its contract on the east coast mainline, which was renationalized between 2009 and 2015. Numerous groups have pushed for the government to make the nationalization a permanent move. (*The Guardian*, May 16)

Open access operator Hull Trains has revealed the appearance of its future fleet of five Hitachi AT300 dual-powered trainsets, following the completion of the engineering and design phase and the sign-off for production to begin.

The £60 million order for five five-car inter-city electro-diesel multiple-units was placed by leasing company Angel Trains in November, 2016, after Hull Trains secured a 10-year track access agreement for its East Yorkshire-to-London route. The trainsets are to be built at Hitachi's plant at Pistoia in Italy, with entry into service planned for December, 2019.

Hull Trains said it had had "significant input" into the design of the fleet, which will be similar to vehicles ordered by franchised operators TransPennine Express and Great Western Railway.

The new trainsets will offer more capacity than Hull Trains' current fleet of four Alstom Class 180 intercity DMUs, including more first class seating to meet a growth in demand for first class travel which the operator has seen since launching in 2000. (*Railway Gazette*, May 10)

The Heathrow Express premium airport service between London Paddington and Heathrow Airport is to continue running until at least 2028 under a new agreement announced on March 28.

The non-franchised service is currently operated in-house by Heathrow Airport Limited, which will continue to own the service and be responsible for managing the stations at the airport.

Under the agreement approved by the Department for Transport, FirstGroup's Great Western Railway, which holds the Great Western franchise, is to operate the service under a management contract running from August, 2018 until 2028; it is expected that the arrangement would transfer to any future holder of the Great Western franchise.

GWR will operate Heathrow Express services using its Bombardier Transportation Class 387 Electrostar EMUs. A dedicated pool of 12 of the EMUs will be modified by December, 2019 to provide first-class accommodation, high speed wi-fi, additional luggage racks, and on-board entertainment.

The agreement means there is no need to build a new depot to replace the current facility at Old Oak Common, which Heathrow Express must vacate by the end of 2019 as part of the High Speed 2 project.

New ticket readers will also be provided at Heathrow and Paddington to enable users of Heathrow Express and TfL's future Elizabeth Line service to the airport to use pay-as-you-go Oyster or contactless ticketing. (*Railway Gazette*, March 28)

HUNGARY

National Infrastructure Development Company has appointed Siemens to install ETCS Level 2 equipment on the 26-kilometer double-track Százhalombatta-Pusztaszabolcs route south of Budapest.

Under the contract announced on May 9, Siemens is to supply its Trainguard 200 technology, a radio block

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Long Island Rail Road Main Line Double-Track Project Update

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Train #2057 heading west through the future Danch Interlocking on May 21, 2018. The second track still lacks third rail and none of the four new signals have been installed yet.

Jeffrey Erlitz photograph



M-7 7383 (Bombardier Transportation, February, 2005) leads Train #2053 into the Central Islip station at 1:56 pm on February 21, 2018. In the distance, the remains of CI 2 Interlocking can be seen with home signals 1E and 2E now bagged, out of service. The switch at the east end of the former passing siding has already been removed.

Jeffrey Erlitz photograph



M-7 7224 (Bombardier Transportation, February, 2004) leads Train #2050 east into the Central Islip station at 1:42 PM on May 21, 2018.

This is where CI 1 Interlocking was located until the past few weeks. The rear of the train is on the new second main track (built to the south of the existing main) while the front is on the alignment of the original main track. Notice the jog in the right-of-way in the distance so the new Track 2 would line up with the original.

Jeffrey Erlitz photograph



M-3 9930 (Budd-General Electric, July, 1986) leads Train #2056 east out of the Farmingdale station at 4:06 PM on May 21, 2018, right about on time. Enjoy the traditional position light signals while you can. All of the interlockings from here to Ronkonkoma are getting six-aspect Reduced Aspect Signaling dwarf signals (made by Safetran actually). Farm 1 Interlocking here will be renamed simply Farm as Farm 2 is being renamed PW. PW is what Farm 2 (at the end of the original double track, east of the old Republic station) was called before the electrification in 1987-8.

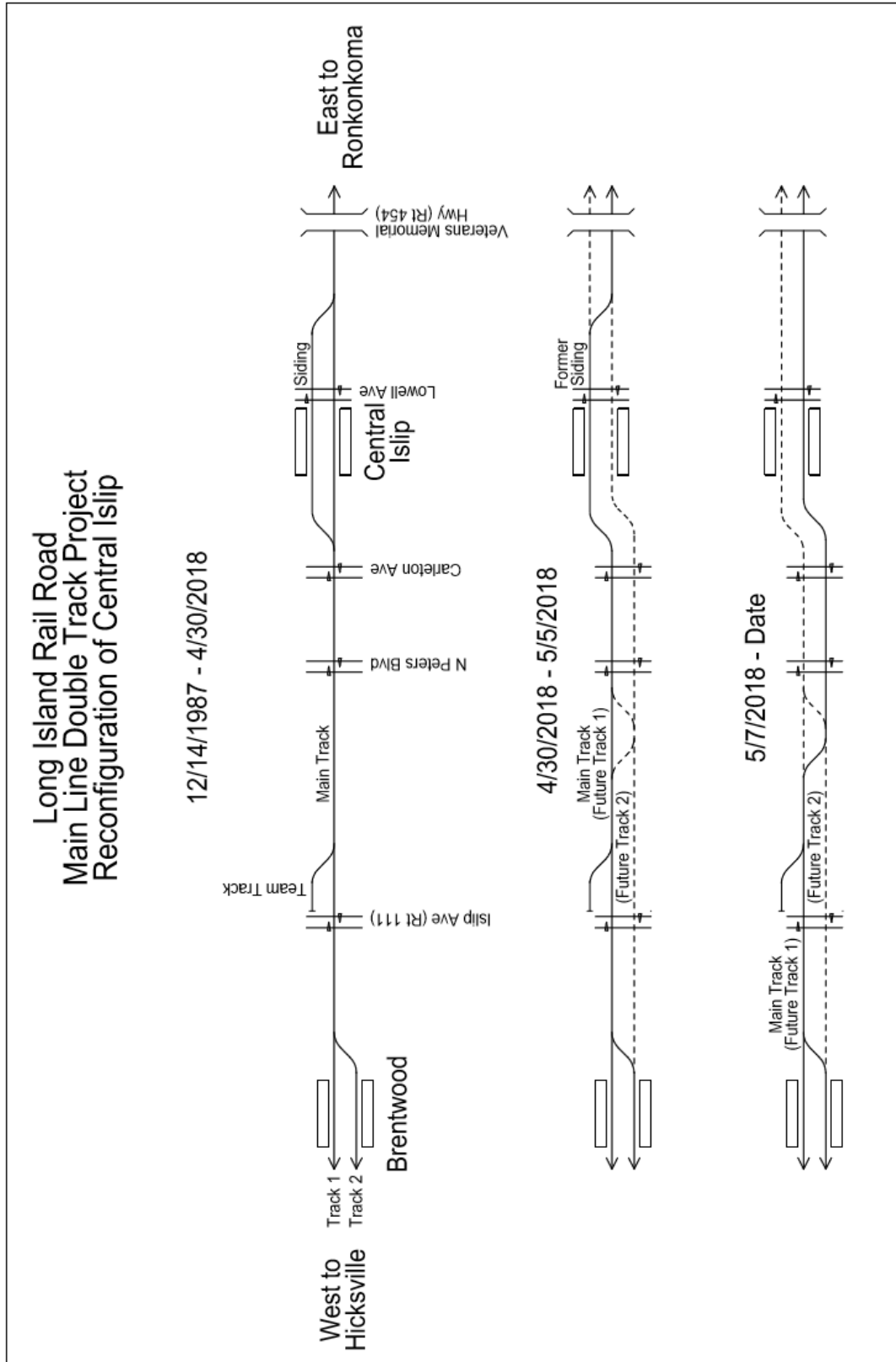
Jeffrey Erlitz photograph

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**Long Island Rail Road Main Line Double-Track
Project Update**

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SWITZERLAND IN THE LATE SUMMER

by Jack May

(Photographs by the author)

(Continued from May, 2018 issue)

Today was my second day for riding and photographing interurbans, exchanged with the previous Friday in Bern, because we did not get going until rather late. Thus I was up early, and was able to catch the 7:03 BOB train, while Clare would sleep in and do some sightseeing around Interlaken, including sailing aboard a lake steamer. It was still pouring when I left the hostel at 6:50, but by the time my BOB train departed the rain had stopped. The ground was wet all the way to Interlaken Ost, where I transferred to a standard-gauge BLS train to Spiez. I should mention that the Lauterbrunnen station also has two gauges, as the WAB (Wengernalp Bahn), which continues up the mountain to Kleine Scheidegg to connect with the railway to the top of the Jungfrau, runs on 800 millimeter track, while the BOB down the mountain to Interlaken has a gauge of 1,000 millimeters. There is no dual-gauge track in the station, however, as each company has its own separate rails. They also use different cog wheel systems, the Strub for the WAB and the Riggerbach for the BOB.

I saw my first patch of blue sky on the opposite side of the Thunersee as the local pulled into Leissingen. My four-minute connection to the SBB at Spiez was accomplished easily, and the Inter-City train passed the "Bombardier: The Climate is Right for Trains" billboard just prior to its 8:23 arrival at Bern. Indeed, it looked like the climate was changing — in a positive manner.

I connected to the 8:30 local MU train (officially Bern line S3) to Biel. It made 10 stops on its 21-mile journey before arriving at its terminal at 9:05, during which the sky turned partly cloudy. My aim was to ride and photograph the Biel-Tauffellen-Ins (BTI) interurban and I was able to board a waiting car at its underground terminal within the station complex for a 9:20 departure. The 13-mile-long meter-gauge line operates under 1,300-volt d.c. catenary. Its 17 stops, mostly flag, are spread over a flat landscape (unusual for Switzerland) and the running time from end to end is 34 minutes. Base service is operated every half-hour to Tauffellen, the site of the shops, and then hourly to Ins. During peak periods the headway is cut to every 15 minutes.

After emerging from the tunnel the line runs very briefly in the street before striking out onto its own right-of-way. It eventually catches up with the road to Ins, and runs at its side for some distance. Beyond the large shop complex at Tauffellen it wanders a bit, and then runs through the center of Ins before reaching the BLS railway station on the town's outskirts. Interestingly, the communities served along the route are very small, with the largest being its end point, Ins, with only 3,300 residents. With Biel's population being about 50,000, the BTI is certainly a small-town operation. On the other hand, the interurban I rode previously between Frauen-

feld and Wil may cover even a tinier population.

I got off at Tauffellen for some photos of the line's Stadler-built 70-percent low-floor interurbans. Like the cars I rode in the Montreux-Vevey area, these units are more or less the electric version of the River Line's DMUs, with a virtually identical short mid-section that has power equipment on both sides of a narrow center aisle. The treatment of the body is different, though, as their ends are very angular. While waiting for the next car to Ins during my half hour stay (9:36 to 10:06), a work train came through, which reminded me that this railway is now part of a larger interurban system, the Aare Seeland Mobil (ASm), which includes other (disconnected) lines, including the one from Niederbipp to Solothurn, which I would ride later in the day. While the livery of the BTI cars is grey with white and red stripes, the work train's motive power was an old Niederbipp passenger car, painted in traction orange and lettered Oberaargau-Solothurn, an intermediate name in the unification chronology.

Arrival in the forecourt of the Ins station was at 10:24, which gave me a chance to take photos before I boarded the next BLS (Bern-Lötschberg-Simplon) regional train at 10:38 for the short run to Neuchâtel. The MU was quite modern, consisting of spacious, partially low-floor cars equipped with toilet facilities and bike racks.

I arrived in Neuchâtel, a city of 34,000, at 10:57. It was too long a walk from the railway station to the originating point of the area's remaining tram line, at the city's edge adjacent to a park along the attractive Lac du Neuchâtel. Except for suburban Route 5 to Boudry, Neuchâtel's local streetcar system was replaced by trackless trolleys in 1976. Thus I had a choice of riding two trolleybus routes to reach the tram terminal. I just missed a 7 and had to wait for a 9, which got me to the stub-end station of the suburban carline at Place Pury at 11:15, just five minutes after the departure of the 11:10 tram.

I had visited Neuchâtel after the abandonment of its city system in 1976 and again in 1981, when its current rolling stock was delivered. During that period attractive ex-Genoa streetcars were operating on the line, but there also was a very short branch, Route 5b, only a half-mile long, which was operated by a traditional four-wheeler shuttling back and forth between Areuse and Cortaillod. Unfortunately it was converted to bus operation in 1984. Currently the Boudry Line uses equipment based on Zurich's Tram 2000, similar to the cars on the Waldenburger interurban, Bern's Worb Line, and the older Forchbahn units. Six motors and four control trailers are paired to maintain a 20-minute base headway on the 6-mile route, which has 12 stops (see <http://>

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Switzerland in the Late Summer

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www.urbanrail.net/eu/ch/ne/neuchatel.htm). Entirely on private right-of-way, the mostly single-track line is equipped with automatic block signaling. It is now called Littorail, and the route has been renumbered 215, which is the timetable number for the line in the Swiss Kursbuch.

I also came to Neuchatel in the 1990s to ride the then-new cars, but now wanted to visit again, as I had read the line's future is uncertain, since a large capital investment must eventually be expended for the purchase of

new cars to replace the now-35-year-old units.

The 11:30 two-car train took me to Boudry in 17 minutes and I returned on the same equipment as far as the Champ-Bougin stop (which has an overpass) for photos, where I fell back a headway. Upon arriving back at Place Pury on the next car at 12:26, I noted it was too late for me to catch the 12:24 to Solothurn for the next leg of my journey, so I took some additional pictures from a vantage point in the park where I could observe the cars running at the edge of the lake. I then leisurely worked my way back to the railway station, had a snack, and boarded the 13:24.



Two views of the BTI's modern 1997-built cars at Tauffellen. The left view shows a Biel-bound unit accelerating after pausing to drop and receive passengers. The right view shows the yard with two of the cars laying over before the afternoon rush hour. The BTI was the first recipient of these Stadler designed and built cars, which with their control equipment between two articulated sections, had become very popular in Switzerland. The diesel version was first placed in service on NJ Transit's River Line.



Units from the 300-series are used as backup for the BTI's regular passenger service and for powering freight trains. The series was built between 1966 and 1978 by Schlieren-Oerlikon for the Solothurn-Niederbipp Bahn, which was merged with the BTI to form the Regionalverkehr Oberaargau, which later expanded into the current Aare Seeland Mobil (ASm). I was lucky to see the freight pass by while waiting to continue my journey to Ins.



A Stadler unit lays over at the austere platform of the BTI's Ins terminal. The standard-gauge BLS station is across the street — to the left of the photographer.

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Switzerland in the Late Summer

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Two photos of Neuchâtel's Schlieren-built cars near the Champ-Bougin station on the inner portion of the line. Formerly Route 5, the line was renumbered 215 to match its timetable designation in the Swiss Kursbuch.



A train of two Tram 2000 cars of the Transports Publics du Littoral Neuchâtelois enters the Place Pury terminal at the edge of the city of Neuchâtel. These modern-looking 1981-built cars hold down all service on the 6-mile-long route to Boudry.



Lastly, a view of a pair of Tram 2000 units leaving the Place Pury terminal along Lake Neuchâtel.

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Commuter and Transit Notes

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center, two Trackguard Simis IS electronic interlockings, and Wayguard Simis LC equipment for six level crossings, as well as power supplies and telecoms.

Commissioning is planned by December, 2020. (*Railway Gazette*, May 11)

OSKEMEN, KAZAKHSTAN

The first five of 13 used KT4Dt trams bought from Almaty for 118.5 million tenge have arrived in Oskemen.

The trams were built in 1983-5 and originally operated in Berlin before being acquired by Almaty in 2013. They have been out of use since that city's tram network

closed at the end of 2015.

The ex-Almaty trams have been for use in Oskemen. It is estimated that the cost of transporting all 13 trams will cost 40-50 million tenge.

Tram operations in Oskemen were suspended in March due to the bankruptcy of former operator Takhimi Put. On March 20 the entire enterprise was sold at auction for 444 million tenge to regional administration-owned Eptic.

Service is expected to restart with the ex-Almaty trams repainted with a new livery. The older vehicles which were in use before the suspension of service are likely to be withdrawn. (*Metro Report International*, May 10)

Around New York's Transit System

Two Central Park West Stations to be Improved

MTA New York City Transit has started reminding customers that it will begin critical structural, safety, and other repairs and improvements to two non-adjacent subway stations on the **B** **C** — 72nd Street and 86th Street — on May 7 and June 4, respectively, as part of the Enhanced Stations Initiative (ESI)

In order to expedite the projects, the stations will be closed while the work is being done, with **B** and **C** trains skipping those stations but still available at 81st Street, 96th Street, and 59th Street-Columbus Circle. 72nd Street will reopen in early October, and 86th Street will reopen in late October.

When the projects are completed, customers will benefit from critical structural and safety repairs and improvements to concrete and steel features such as columns, beams, platforms, walls, and stairs. There will also be other improvements and upgrades such as improved waterproofing, turnstile areas with new glass barriers, new security cameras, LED lighting for increased light and energy efficiency, and enhanced signage for easier navigation including digital, real-time service change, and train and bus arrival information.

M Service Resumes

Service on the **M** resumed in the early morning hours of April 30 after a nearly eleven-month-long shutdown to replace the Myrtle Avenue Viaduct and the Fresh Pond Bridge. To meet the needs of **M** customers, MTA New York City Transit undertook a two-phase plan to address the urgent infrastructure needs on the Myrtle Avenue Line. This critical work involved complete demolition and rebuilding of the Myrtle Viaduct and the Fresh Pond Bridge (completed in September). In an embarrassing situation, a switch at Myrtle Avenue failed on the first day of the return to service.

Capital Plan Amended to Fund Station Accessibility

The MTA Board approved a capital plan amendment that significantly increases the agency's investment in ADA accessibility projects as part of the 2015-9 MTA capital plan. The amendment also includes \$300 million to undertake critical station improvements — in close partnership with the City of New York — at key locations, including \$200 million for accessibility enhancements such as elevators, and \$100 million for station circulation enhancements such as redesigned stairs, mezzanines, and platforms. A project to provide ADA accessibility at the Westchester Square station on the **6** in the Bronx will also be added to the Capital Program. The list of additional stations that ultimately receive accessibility and circulation improvements using

this funding will be finalized once better cost estimates are obtained during design. Up to five stations may receive these accessibility and circulation improvements.

NYCT Modernization Plan

NYCT President Andy Byford revealed on May 23 a comprehensive plan to completely modernize every major aspect of the organization and its services, from subways to buses to accessibility to corporate culture.

The plan, called Fast Forward: The Plan to Modernize New York City Transit, focuses on four major priorities which President Byford identified on his first day in office earlier this year: transforming the subway, reimagining the city's public bus network, improving accessibility for all modes, and engaging and empowering NYC Transit's workforce to deliver the best service possible.

The plan's four priorities are all underpinned by three foundations of corporate philosophy that President Byford and his team are working to make the norm at NYC Transit: agility and accountability; safety, security and resiliency; and customer service and communication.

Highlights of the plan include an accelerated rollout of CBTC technology through the system, which would cover almost all the subway in Manhattan south of 59th Street and tackle major chokepoints. That work, originally due to take decades, will take just five to years. The Fast Forward plan also would more than double the amount of elevators in the systems, with a goal to make the entire system ADA compliant by 2034, along with a more critical maintenance program for elevators and escalators. The plan would also include 3,000 new subway cars. The plan did note that there would be some short-term pain with more frequent and longer duration line closures.

Fast Forward also will include changes to the city's bus system, with 4,900 new buses over the next decade (some being electric) and a redesigned bus network. An emphasis on ensuring unblocked bus lanes was also included. The plan also mentioned an overhaul to the Access-A-Ride system, changes to NYCT bureaucracy, employee empowerment programs, and plans to ensure that costs for projects are contained. *(Editor's Note by Alexander Ivanoff: The plan is nothing short of simple and I give credit to President Byford and the entire NYC Transit planning staff for putting this together. Long-term sacrifices are nothing new to New York subway riders, as Manhattan Bridge reconstruction projects made full service over that crossing non-existent for nearly two decades. As a MTA customer, if a safer, faster and more reliable system means some significant inconveniences for a period, I can deal with that.)*