

The Bulletin



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THOUSANDS DELAYED AS POWER FAILURE SHUTS DOWN NORTHEAST CORRIDOR FROM WASHINGTON, D.C. TO NEW YORK CITY

Four Commuter Agencies and Amtrak Affected

by Randy Glucksman

A power failure on Amtrak's busy Northeast Corridor halted service shortly after 8 AM May 25, 2006. An investigation later revealed that it began at 7:55 AM, when two heavy-duty breakers at the Jericho substation north of Washington, D.C. opened, sensed a problem, and stopped powering the overhead wires. I was lucky, because I was already in Manhattan, having arrived almost a half an hour earlier. One of the commuters who normally rides my train told me that he took a later train that day. PA announcements were made at Secaucus that there was no service to New York, and that riders should remain on the trains and go to Hoboken, the next stop.

According to *The New York Times*, two breakers then activated at a substation in Sunnyside, New York; however, the system continued to work. But, at 8:02 AM, three breakers opened at the Richmond substation near Philadelphia. A few seconds later another circuit breaker opened at this location and the whole system began to fail. Because of this, all electric trains immediately lost power, and of course, air-conditioning. The car body lights went off after the batteries were drained. This was the most extensive power disruption since the August, 2003 blackout. At press time, the cause of the initial incident had still not been determined.

The table below shows the impact of the power outage, which covered 225 miles.

AGENCY	NUMBER OF TRAINS	NUMBER OF PASSENGERS
Amtrak	27	4,205
NJ Transit	15	35,000
SEPTA	23	8,000
MARC	3	5,000

Close to home, two NJ Transit trains were trapped in the North (Hudson) River Tunnels, including one that had two pregnant women aboard. They were on the train for nearly five hours. Passengers were walked from a train that was just outside of New York Penn Station into the station.

Amtrak reported that power began to be restored at 10:30 AM. Diesel engines were dispatched to move the stuck trains. There were delays to service west of New Haven, and there were some reports that Metro-North New Haven Line trains carried passengers between New York and New Haven.

NJ Transit began operating a limited service on the Northeast Corridor Line at 1 PM. After 5 PM, service was increased to four trains per hour on the Northeast Corridor Line and two trains per hour on the North Jersey Coast Line. *Midtown Direct* service continued to operate to/from Hoboken. Because of the reduced service out of NY Penn, passengers were directed to use PATH, or

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Commuter and Transit Notes

by Randy Glucksman

MTA Metro-North Railroad (East)

No time was wasted: as soon as MTA approved the construction of the Yankee Stadium station, a contract was awarded to DMJM+Harris (which did the 10% design) to complete the 30% design specifications and cost estimates. These will be used for the environmental assessment. It is planned to have this new station in service in time for the opening of the new Yankee Stadium on Opening Day, 2009.

A contract has been awarded to Brookville Locomotive for the purchase of up to 25 switching/shuttle 2,000 hp locomotives. The base order will be for 11 units, 5 of which will be jointly funded by Metro-North and CDOT, while the remaining 6 are all CDOT. Metro-North's current fleet of 21 diesel-electrics have an average age of 42 years, with the latest rebuild having taken place 10 years ago. It is intended for these new units to be used in shuttle service and switching and seasonal work. Three options were included, as follows: five for Metro-North, four without HEP for Staten Island Railway, and five for Metro-North and CDOT.

As of the end of April, Metro-North's revenue fleet was as follows:

CLASS	NUMBER
M-1	30
M-2	241
M-3	140
M-4	54
M-6	48
M-7	316*
FL-9, FL-9M, FP-10	11
P-32 (DM)	31
P-40	6
COACH	211

* Ultimately, there will be 336 M-7s.

Since 1984, there have been significant changes in ridership, as is shown in the table below.

TYPE	1984	2005
Commutation to Manhattan	59.4%	45.5%
Reverse Commutation	1.3%	3.8%
Weekday Discretionary	24.9%	29.9%
Weekend Discretionary	11.4%	15.2%
Intermediate	3.0%	5.6%

Other fare collection news: Metro-North began testing a hand-held Ticket Issuing Machine for the sale of tickets on-board trains on May 10. This test will end in August. The transit agency is also considering the use of smart cards. Web ticket sales now exceed on-board sales; however, TVM sales provide the largest share of ticket sales. In 1999, cash/checks accounted for 86% of

sales. As of February, 2006, this segment has been reduced to 32%. Electronic payments have taken their place. Credit/Debit card sales, which were 14% in 1999, now account for 64% of ticket revenue. All monthly tickets sold through Mail&Ride and at stations, as well as select weekly and round-trip tickets, are issued on the Joint Commuter Rail/MetroCard stock.

Correction: In last month's column, I included FP-10 413 in the list of FL-9s that were used during April, which it was not.

MTA Long Island Rail Road

Timetables with the effective date of May 22-July 23 were issued for the Port Jefferson, Oyster Bay, Hempstead, Babylon, and Montauk Branches and Shea Stadium, in advance of the existing editions, which had an end date of June 4. There is a note on the Shea Stadium timetable that there is now earlier service in both directions to the stadium. The Ronkonkoma timetable was reissued for the period June 5-July 23. For all of the other branches not previously mentioned, the March 6-June 4 editions were extended until July 23. LIRR explained that the reason for these changes was a revised track program. All branches will receive new timetables on July 24.

As promised, a special timetable folder was issued for the Belmont Stakes, which were held on Saturday, June 10. The schedule was very similar to what was operated last year. The normal schedule on days that the track is open calls for two eastbound and two westbound trips between Jamaica and Belmont. However, for this event, there were six trips from Penn Station and 12 trips from Jamaica. Scheduled return service to Jamaica consisted of four trips between 3:53 PM and 5:17 PM, then starting at 6:30 PM, until 9 PM, trains departed from Belmont Park every 15 minutes for Jamaica. A color-coded queuing system was established at Belmont Park, and passengers were advised that once they were inside this area, wait times could range from 15 minutes to 2 hours.

Some final timetable notes: A Montauk Branch timetable was produced which allowed Sperry Rail testing from May 22-24, and a schedule card was issued for the special construction schedules that were in effect during midday hours June 19-23 between Yaphank and Greenport. Work crews were replacing switches in Medford and Riverhead.

The Cannonball is back! Go figure: After I wrote in the May *Bulletin* that the Long Island was no longer referring to its Friday summer afternoon train to Montauk as *The Cannonball*, the railroad releases its "Hamptons and Montauk" timetable for this year. And this train has

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