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MTA Announces Digital Initiatives to Increase Transparency and Functionality
Email and Text Alert Archive Created; TripPlanner+ Enhanced With Real-Time Information

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced digital initiatives that will increase transparency of its email and text message service alert program, provide more functionality for TripPlanner+ and streamline navigation within the MTA.info website.

Email and Text Message Archive

Building upon earlier transparency initiatives such as an online digital archive of historical delayed and cancelled train information, the MTA has launched a comprehensive archive of all service alerts that have been issued via email and text message for all MTA services since its current MTA-wide email and text alert system was launched in October 2008. The archive is updated in real-time, and is searchable by date.

Here is an example of how it can work. If you were late to an appointment in Long Beach, L.I., on December 2, 2009, but couldn't remember why, you could go to the archive, search for that date, and learn that at 5:57:10 p.m., the LIRR issued the following alert: "The 5:41 PM train from Flatbush due in Long Beach at 6:32 PM is running 10 minutes late due to signal problems."

As of today, the archive has more than 58,600 individual entries, amounting to about 40 updates per day. Each entry contains the date and precise time the message was sent down to the hundredth of a second, the MTA agency that sent the alert, a subject and the body of the message. It is sorted to show the most recent updates first.

From the MTA homepage at mta.info, the archive can be reached by clicking on "Transparency." On the menu page that follows, find the "Email/Text-Message Alert Archive," heading, and click on the words "Web page" underneath it.

"The MTA is the most transparent public transportation agency in the world," said MTA Chairman and CEO Joseph J. Lhota. "The inclusion of this information on the website furthers our transparency achievement by allowing members of the public to carefully scrutinize how we provide service-related information to our customers. We're delighted to provide this level of openness."

Bloggers or anyone who edits or controls a website can now add a real-time feed of our email and text message alerts, as well as the historical archive, by using the archive's RSS feed. The

feed is accessible from the Transparency menu as noted above, or at this link: http://Mymtaalerts.com/rss.aspx.

The addition of the email and text alert archive and its RSS feed was made in response to a request from a coalition of transportation advocacy groups including the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, the Regional Plan Association, the Straphangers Campaign, Transportation Alternatives, the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Reinvent Albany, and the Women's City Club of New York.

Real-Time Disruption Info Added to TripPlanner+

In another recent update to the MTA's digital offerings, the TripPlanner+ function on the MTA's website now makes mention of any current service disruptions in trip-planning results.

"This one change means that TripPlanner+ moves from being essentially a static service that lets customers plan trips in an idealized abstract universe to one that understands and acknowledges how our system is working in real time," said Paul J. Fleuranges, Senior Director for Corporate and Internal Communications. "Our customers asked for this, and we're delivering."

Here's how it works: Let's say you are at New York Presbyterian Hospital and you want to go to the Time Warner Center at Columbus Circle. Normally the fastest way to make that trip is aboard the A train, which runs express making only two intermediate stops. Now let's say that the A line was experiencing delays as a result of a stalled train underneath Central Park West. If you use the MTA's TripPlanner+ to plan a trip, bold red letters in your proposed trip plans will indicate that taking the A train is experiencing delays. That way, you might decide to take the 1 local train to make the same trip, as suggested by an alternate itinerary.

MTA.info Website Streamlined

The addition of these new forms of data comes as the MTA moves to streamline the navigation of its website. The section of the website providing information about the MTA itself has been reorganized to make links easier to find. Previously, a tab called "About the MTA" led to a page listing 45 headings, many with multiple subordinate links. The tab has been renamed "MTA Info" and is streamlined to just 23 headings. (The first heading is now called "About the MTA," which leads to an informative written and visual description of the organization.) Many of the links that had been available under the earlier "About the MTA" page continue to appear under, or have been moved to, the "Doing Business With Us" tab.