



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

## New Advances in MTA Real-Time Digital Communications

VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY March 19, 2014

| ISSUE: **TRANSPORTATION**

### **MTA Bus Time Now Covers All Buses in New York City; Four in Ten Railroad Riders Have Downloaded Free Apps for Metro-North and LIRR**

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced two major steps forward in digital real-time communications provided to Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) customers. All buses in New York City now provide real time tracking on smartphones, through text messages and online. This allows customers to know how far away the next bus is at more than 22,000 bus stops serving every route in New York City. And in the three months since the release of official apps for railroad customers, LIRR Train Time™ and Metro-North Train Time™, approximately 120,000 people have downloaded the apps for iPhone and Android. Based on ridership statistics, about four out of ten railroad passengers have downloaded the apps.

### **MTA Bus Time™ Goes City-Wide**

“Keeping customers informed is a key mission for the MTA, and MTA Bus Time is an excellent example of how providing information makes traveling better,” said MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast. “Just as subway countdown clocks make waiting for the next train easier, MTA Bus Time is a way our customers can ‘Know Before You Go.’”

The initiative required installing enhanced GPS hardware and cellular data transmission equipment on 5,700 buses, which send their location and route information to a central server every 30 seconds. The server uses sophisticated algorithms to determine how far each bus is from the next stop.

Customers can see this information by visiting [mta.info/bustime](http://mta.info/bustime) on the web or a smartphone, or by texting a unique code for each bus stop to 511123. Numerical codes and digital QR codes are posted on the Guide-A-Ride signs at bus stops in Staten Island, the Bronx and Manhattan, and will be posted in Brooklyn and Queens starting this week.

The system is used more than 5 million times per month. Customers access it 3.2 million times per month with mobile web browsers, 1.7 million times per month by SMS text message, and 550,000 times per month on desktop web browsers.

The data generated by MTA Bus Time is also used to study how buses operate their routes, in order to improve their performance. In one recent example, data was used to study bus use and determine route changes for new service improvements coming to Coop City in the Bronx.

As part of the State's unprecedented commitment to transparency, the MTA Bus Time data feed is also available at no charge to software developers, who can create their own interfaces and apps for it.

### **LIRR and Metro-North Apps Receive Positive Reception**

The strong demand for the LIRR and Metro-North Train Time apps has been fueled in part by positive reviews on blogs and by customers writing on the Apple App Store and Google Play. Reviews of the apps, which are free, have been very positive. On the combined ratings of Google Play and the Apple App Store, 71% of 294 reviews for Metro-North Train Time were

either 4 or 5 stars and 68% of 240 reviews for the LIRR Train Time were either 4 or 5 stars.

The apps also make it easy to find out fare information, see railroad maps, and learn about stations, including waiting room hours, parking availability, connecting transit services, status of accessibility for the disabled, elevator and escalator status, and phone numbers for area taxi companies. Each app also includes real-time service status, brief up-to-the-minute service alerts, railroad news items, info on special deals and getaway packages, and more detailed notices about service changes resulting from planned track work. And each app also includes information about connecting with the railroad via social media, email and 511.

**To learn more about the apps, including how to download them to your iPhone, iPad, or Android smartphone, visit these web sites:**

- Metro-North Railroad: <http://web.mta.info/mnr/html/traintimeapp>.
- Long Island Rail Road: <http://web.mta.info/lirr/traintimeapp/>

In addition to supporting the efforts of scores of app developers who use MTA data and intellectual property in 130 transportation-related apps that can be found in the MTA's App Center, the two railroad apps are just two of eight apps that have been officially created or commissioned by the MTA itself.

**The other MTA apps for iOS, Android are:**

- Subway Time, which provides real-time train arrival estimates for all stations on the L, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 subway lines and S 42nd Street Shuttle.
- The Weekender, which lets New York City Subway customers visualize weekend service changes caused by subway track work.

- MTA Drive Time, which provides graphically animated views of current travel speeds and travel times on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, RFK Bridge, Queens-Midtown Tunnel, Bronx-Whitestone Bridge, Throgs Neck Bridge, Hugh L. Carey Tunnel, Henry Hudson Bridge, Cross Bay Bridge and Marine Parkway Bridge.

- Meridian, which provides comprehensive information about the permanent artwork installed throughout the MTA system, including the ability to search by line or by artist, get turn-by-turn directions to the art, and see photos.

- Grand Central, which combines information about where to eat, shop, and run errands within Grand Central with Metro-North track listings and departure times.