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STATE OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

January 6, 2020

Mr. Patrick J. Foye  
Chairman  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
2 Broadway  
New York, NY 10004

Re: Safety at Stations  
Report 2019-F-16

Dear Mr. Foye:

Pursuant to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article X, Section 5 of the State Constitution and Section 2803 of the Public Authorities Law, we have followed up on the actions taken by officials of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority – Staten Island Railway to implement the recommendations contained in our audit report, *Safety at Stations* (Report [2016-S-91](#)).

**Background, Scope, and Objective**

Staten Island Railway (SIR) is a subsidiary of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Administratively, SIR is a separate operating unit, reporting to New York City Transit's Department of Subways. SIR operates a single rapid transit line, which runs the length of Staten Island (about 14 miles) from St. George Terminal to the southern terminal at Tottenville. Riders can connect with New York City Transit system buses at many of SIR's 21 stations or to the Staten Island Ferry. SIR operates 24 hours a day with service every 30 minutes, and more frequently during weekday rush hours.

From July 1, 2017 to December 3, 2019, SIR's Maintenance of Way (MOW) Infrastructure Department (Infrastructure) records show at least one safety-related incident was reported on 142 dates. The process of responding to an incident starts when the Rail Control Center receives the call, prepares an Exception Report, and notifies MOW and/or the Engineering Department of the incident, requiring a field inspection and/or investigation of the issue. A foreman is dispatched to the site of the incident and prepares a SIR Infrastructure Department Station Inspection Form (Form). The completed Form is reviewed and, depending on the severity of the defect, Infrastructure determines the appropriate action. There are four types of defect priorities, ranging from "A" defects, which affect safety, security, and revenue and must be made safe or repaired upon immediate

response, to “P” defects, which are non-safety project-type work requiring longer duration and planning to complete.

We issued our initial audit report on June 15, 2017. The objective of our audit was to determine whether SIR has taken appropriate steps to address safety-related issues at all of its train stations, including determining if Customer Assistance Intercoms (CAIs) are operational and accessible to all. We found that SIR documented its inspections of facilities where safety-related incidents occurred and the actions taken to remediate conditions that might have contributed to such incidents. However, in certain instances, responses to safety-related incidents were not documented. A lack of pertinent policies and procedures as well as staffing shortages likely contributed to lapses in documenting incidents and the related SIR responses. Also, we noted that SIR’s CAI system was not operational system-wide.

The objective of our follow-up was to assess the extent of implementation, as of December 18, 2019, of the two recommendations included in our initial report.

### **Summary Conclusions and Status of Audit Recommendations**

SIR officials made progress in addressing the problems we identified in the initial audit report. Of the two audit recommendations, one was implemented and one was partially implemented.

### **Follow-Up Observations**

#### **Recommendation 1**

*Develop written policies and procedures pertaining to SIR’s response to safety-related incidents at the stations, including, but not limited to:*

- *How the incident is routed to the Engineering Department, MOW, or other unit;*
- *Supporting documents required for all incidents, including those where the incidents are addressed immediately and no work order is issued; and*
- *When multiple inspections of an incident area result in different findings, reconcile the differences, and document what final conclusion has been reached.*

Status – Partially Implemented

Agency Action – The 90-day response to our initial audit stated that written procedures were developed, drafted, and implemented. On December 3, 2019, we received a copy of the written procedures. To determine if they were implemented, we sampled 30 of the 142 folders containing information about safety-related incidents and the actions taken to address the conditions. Four Forms were not provided. We found six folders contained 28 defects but only one work order. SIR provided five additional work orders. Eighteen of the 27 work orders were still outstanding as of December 16, 2019; 15 of the 18 priority “B” defects were not repaired within the 180 days, as required. SIR officials advised us that “B” defects remain outstanding

for longer periods of time because they have to focus on “A” priority defects and they have a limited number of staff. SIR officials could not locate three work orders. Lastly, for one defect, SIR officials informed us the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) is responsible for addressing the defect because it is on Staten Island Ferry property, which is owned and operated by DOT.

## **Recommendation 2**

*Establish a formal timeline for the complete activation of the CAI system.*

Status – Implemented

Agency Action – The 90-day response to our initial audit stated that all CAIs are active and available for public use. On December 10, 2019, we randomly selected two stations (Clifton Park and Tompkinsville) to test the audio and video functions on four CAIs. Based on our observations at the Rail Control Center, all four CAIs were working.

Contributors to this report were Robert C. Mehrhoff, Joseph F. Smith, Netash Phull, and Jim Cherian.

We would appreciate your response to this report within 30 days, indicating any actions planned to address the unresolved issues discussed in this report. We thank the management and staff of Metropolitan Transportation Authority – Staten Island Railway for the courtesies and cooperation extended to our auditors during this review.

Very truly yours,

Carmen Maldonado  
Audit Director

cc: M. Woods, MTA  
D. Jurgens, MTA  
Division of the Budget