

Welcome to the Penn Station Access quarterly newsletter. MTA's Penn Station Access Project will bolster equity, regional connectivity, and reliability by upgrading Amtrak's existing Hell Gate Line and providing four new accessible stations in the East Bronx. Read on to learn more about recent progress, community engagement, and upcoming work. For past newsletter issues, click [here](#). For updates on specific areas along the project corridor where work will take place, sign up [here](#).



*Crews working at the Parkchester / Van Nest Station Site - January 2025*

## **Project Progress: *Laying the Foundation***

In only a few months, construction crews completed the pile caps and grade beams — a major foundation component for station entrances at all four locations. Now, crews continue to install the utility, sewer, and drainage systems for each station entrance. Utility infrastructure at Parkchester / Van Nest Station is notably near the finish line, with the underground utility conduit 95% complete and work progressing on the sewer system.



Above: New signal bridge at Leggett Interlocking - December 2024

## Replacing Signal Towers for Leggett Interlocking

### A conversation with Caitlin Grant, Project Manager at RailWorks

*“The tower is a straightforward enough piece of infrastructure, but erecting it is a big deal — and difficult to accomplish.”*

We’ve mentioned in a previous edition ([Issue #10, November 2024](#)) just how important Leggett Interlocking is to the Penn Station Access Project by ensuring Amtrak service is uninterrupted while construction moves forward. But in order to get Leggett Interlocking commissioned, construction crews have to replace three century-old rusted steel signal towers with lightweight and robust aluminum towers just like the one in the photo above.

It’s a challenge: in order to accomplish this, the tracks underneath need to be empty, which could disrupt Amtrak service — but it takes hours to coordinate a crew, set up construction equipment, move cables, and set the new tower in place. Careful planning and communication are needed to keep the tracks vacant without causing service disruptions. That’s not to mention the fact that this is a one-shot process: as Grant says, “You don’t start it if you can’t finish.” The placement of these towers is far from random: train operators need to maintain a visual line of sight to the next signal of 1,500 feet — which is quite a challenge on such a curvy stretch of tracks. And what about when they take down the rusted old towers to replace them? “Demo will have us sweating,” she admits, because they often have a limited stretch of time, and a scheduled four-hour window becomes half that after trains run late and other schedule changes. “It’s an unpredictable thing.” Grant and her colleagues roll with the changes and keep working to keep signal tower replacement, Leggett Interlocking commissioning, and the entire Project moving forward — to keep the people of the Bronx (and beyond) moving as well.

# Using Envision for a Sustainable Penn Station Access

The goal of our Project is to provide sustainable transit service to the underserved communities of the East Bronx. We are working closely with the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI) to track the Project's sustainability, resiliency, and equity using their Envision framework. The program tracks several indicators, including resource allocation, long-term resiliency, stakeholder engagement, construction impact minimization, and improvements to long-term community mobility and access. In its pursuit of Gold Level Certification the Project Team continues to follow specific protocols and sustainability initiatives at every step of the way.

*On the Left: Amtrak right-of-way near the location of the future Co-op City Station, October 2024*



*Crews receive the pre-cast concrete for Bronx River Bridge, February 2025*

## What's Next? Bronx River Bridge Prepares to Launch

Utility and sewer work will continue to advance at all station locations, and testing continues apace for the upcoming Leggett Interlocking commissioning. Over at the Bronx River Bridge site, pre-cast cement has been delivered, the first major step in preparation for the bridge launch next quarter. This launch will create a brand new bridge span supporting Track 1, a new track installed as part of the Project. Watch out for next quarter's newsletter for more information and updates on this critical milestone!



## Contact Us

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