

SUMMARY

Improving Inspections of NYC Transit Stations MTA/OIG Report #10-05

On August 16, 2009, at 10:18 p.m., a large section of the arched brick ceiling at the 181st Street Station on the IRT **1** Line fell onto the platforms and tracks. Fortunately, no one was hurt by the falling bricks, but subway service to that station had to be suspended for two weeks while the station ceiling was temporarily secured. NYC Transit managers had learned in 1999 that a portion of the ceiling at 181st Street was at risk of collapse. However, it did not begin a comprehensive assessment of the ceiling's condition until June 2009, just two months before the ceiling fell.

OIG examined how the condition at the 181st Street Station went unaddressed for nearly 10 years and what lessons could be learned from this event. We also examined two other recent incidents where the failure of a critical station component could have resulted in serious injury or death: the partial collapse of the hung metal ceiling at the Bowling Green Station on the **4/5** Line, and the collapse of a concrete platform panel at the 18th Avenue Station on the **F** Line.

Each of the three incidents reviewed during this audit indicated weaknesses in the adequacy of NYC Transit's station inspections.

Although NYC Transit's Department of Capital Program Management (CPM) was responsible for hiring a consultant to inspect the condition of the historic curved ceiling and finding a permanent solution to the problem, CPM inexplicably did neither.

- Annual inspections by maintenance personnel and a one-time comprehensive survey by capital program consultants failed to question the presence of the temporary wooden shield measuring 400 square feet that had been installed in 1999 to protect the public from falling bricks.
- Some critical station components, specifically concrete platforms at elevated stations and ceilings with hung metal panels, are not subject to structural inspection by any unit of NYC Transit.
- There is no communication between NYC Transit Maintenance of Way inspectors and CPM's station consultants who perform major system-wide reviews of NYC Transit's stations. As a result of this lack of communication, compounded by the weaknesses in station inspections noted above, NYC Transit's capital program for stations is likely to omit projects in critical need of repair or renovation.

OIG recommended and NYC Transit agreed to implement more thorough inspections and to better coordinate the transmission of information between maintenance and capital program personnel. Hung metal ceilings and the station ceilings from which they are suspended are now included on the list requiring regular inspections. Inspection protocols have been revised and strengthened and a newly established high-level inspection task force has begun to compile a list of other hard-to-reach and unique station components that will be subject to regular up-close inspections by maintenance personnel.

Press

[The NY Times 06/29/10 - Inspection Flaws Led to Collapse of Subway Ceiling, Report Finds](#)

[The NY Post 06/29/10 - Look out below!](#)

[AMNews 06/28/10 - MTA failed to inspect stations properly](#)

[AMNews 08/17/09 - PoIs was warned about crumbling 181st Street station before ceiling collapse](#)

