NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

NEWSDAY, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2001

Untangling Manhattan Subway Lines

By Errol A. Cockfield Jr.
STAFF WRITER

The subway system gently untangled knots along its downtown Manhattan tracks Friday. Transit workers tested precarious routes and measured vibrations to learn if the surface above would hold.

They steered trains across some subway lines, but avoided paths directly under the toppled World Trade Center, fearing they might upset the elaborate search for the lost.

"It's a balancing act because we have to consider the impact of our operation on the rescue and clean-up activity," said New York City Transit spokesman Al O'Leary. "It would make an already unstable situation even more unstable."

They succeeded in some areas, opening stops here and there, but transit officials remained doubtful as to when the system would be its former self.

O'Leary warned daily subway riders to again expect stubborn hurdles as trains bypass stops in lower Manhattan south of Canal Street. The system was relying on buses to ease the snarl, he said.

Subway tests found most of the system is sound and the city expected to restore some service around the Wall Street area by the end of the weekend, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said during a news conference.

But he was cautious, saying, "I don't know yet how much access there will be to the Wall Street area east of Broadway." Staten Island Ferry service will resume Monday, he added.

New York City Transit extended the Nos. 4 and 5 lines. They had been terminating at Grand Central Station with passengers needing to transfer to finish the commute to Brooklyn. But Friday the 4 and 5 continued into Brooklyn with some diversions.

Officials maintained their detour of the N and R lines, which connect Brooklyn to Manhattan through tracks that run feet away from the collapsed World Trade Center towers. They ran the R in Brooklyn from 95th Street to Court Street, and redirected the N from Astoria to Penn Station. A section of the N also was running from Stillwell Avenue in Brooklyn to Court Street.

The scene at the stations at Rector and Cortlandt streets displayed the most punitive effects of Tuesday's collapse on the subway system. As of late Friday, the Nos. 1 and 9 lines were still unable to run south of Chambers Street.

O'Leary said wreckage blocked transit officials from entering the subway station at Cortlandt. They stole glimpses within, he said, and feared most of the station had caved in.

"What we've seen is the northernmost point in the tunnel," O'Leary said. "That is literally filled floor to ceiling with debris."

O'Leary said transit workers were cleaning some stations around the trade center. Even as workers rebuilt rails and stations, NYC Transit had donated equipment — front end loaders, cranes and dump trucks — to the rescue team that dug to find life beneath the gnarled piles of concrete and metal.

Staff writer Joshua Robin contributed to this story.

CITY_21MC100_011829411

NYC-WTC_000412153