

[NY REGION](#)

New York Subway Cell Service to Grow

Stations in Queens Are Main Beneficiaries of Latest Expansion

By

ANDREW TANGEL

Oct. 13, 2014 9:50 p.m. ET



Ceylan Guvenc uses cellular service Monday on a train platform in the 14th Street station in Manhattan. *Kevin Hagen for The Wall Street Journal*

Coming soon to subway stops in Queens: the Internet.

New York City subway riders will be able to use their phones and other devices for the first time in that outer borough along with more underground stations in Manhattan, under a rollout of additional wireless Internet and cellular service expected to be unveiled on Thursday.

Forty additional underground subway stops—[on top of 36 on the Upper West Side and in Midtown linked to the grid last year](#)—would offer cellular and mobile-data access by year's end, according to people familiar with the expected announcement. Eleven are in Manhattan, and 29 would be in Queens.

The rollout of cellular and Internet access at more of the city's approximately 300 subterranean subway stations, along with the availability of wireless Internet at the stops, would mark the latest step to bring one of the world's largest and oldest mass-transit systems further into the digital age.

Underground connectivity is but one item on a long list of improvements eyed for the subway, which opened in 1904.

Riders are still years away from countdown clocks in many of the system's 468 stations to let them know when the next trains are due.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority has also embarked on a lengthy, costly upgrade to an aging signal system that would let it run more trains to [accommodate growing ridership](#).

But greater online and phone access would likely be welcomed by many subway riders who want to stay on the grid while waiting for trains or in transit. The new services also would help riders contact authorities if needed or stay on top of transit alerts, said Andrew Albert, an MTA board member and a member of the New York City Transit Riders Council.

"There are just lots of good reasons to have this service," said Mr. Albert, who was surprised to find full cell service at the Vernon Boulevard-Jackson Avenue stop on the 7 line in Queens.

Details of the expansion were noted on the website of Graybar Electric Co. , a St. Louis company whose representatives said it supplied fiber-optic cables and other equipment for the project.

At the announcement, MTA officials are expected to join representatives from Transit Wireless, the company under contract to install the service, cellular providers and other companies at the Court Square-23rd Street Station in Queens. The station is served by the E, M, 7 and G lines.

The MTA declined to comment ahead of Thursday's planned announcement. People familiar with the plans said the details of the rollout could change.

Adding the service is expected to be paid for privately and cost taxpayers nothing, said one person familiar with the matter.

The free subway Wi-Fi service, which would accompany the cellular service, would be sponsored by [Royal Caribbean Cruises](#) Ltd, according to people familiar with the matter. A representative of the cruise company didn't respond to requests for comment.

The remaining underground subway stations are slated to receive cell and Internet service by 2017, according to the Transit Wireless website.

By early next year, the Fulton Street station downtown and the 125th Street stop in Harlem that serves the A, B, C and D lines are expected to be connected, according to one person familiar with the matter.

Richard Barone, director of transportation programs of the Regional Plan Association Inc., said greater connectivity was an important step needed to modernize the system.

Wiring stations can generally set the stage for introducing advanced systems for paying fares and sharing information with riders, he said.

“We’re behind in wireless,” Mr. Barone said, noting that some transit systems have cellular service in tunnels as well. “The stations alone would be a great accomplishment, especially when we have so many.”

Corrections & Amplifications

:Graybar Electric Co. supplied fiber-optic cables and other equipment for an expansion of wireless Internet and cellular service in New York City subways. An earlier version of this article incorrectly identified Graybar Services Inc., a subsidiary that owns the company’s trademarks, as the supplier.

<http://online.wsj.com/articles/new-york-subway-cell-service-to-grow-1413251411>