

Safety Chief Recommends:

MTA 'Should Strongly Pursue' Installation of Four-Gate Vehicle Barriers at Rail Crossings

(Dec. 6) The MTA "should strongly pursue" the installation of four-gate vehicle barriers at all gated rail crossings, Paul Lennon, managing director, Safety and Security, told the Board at its December meeting.

The MTA has recently completed testing a rail crossing protection device that might have prevented the Nov. 27 Metro Blue Line accident that killed a taxi driver and five passengers in Compton, he said.

Device bars all auto lanes

In his report to the Board, Lennon said the "four-quadrant" device bars all automobile lanes at a grade crossing and prevents vehicles from driving around the barrier. The crossing protection equipment that currently is the U.S. railroad standard bars only one lane in each direction.

"Staff recommends the MTA strongly pursue the installation of four-quadrant grade crossing protection devices at all gated, protected crossings," Lennon said. Installation of those devices would require state approval and, possibly, legislation.

Officials have determined that the cause of the accident was the failure of the cab driver to obey traffic laws and signals, Lennon said. The train's operator estimated that only six seconds elapsed from the time she noticed the speeding cab until impact.

Impossible to stop train

"The timing...made it impossible for the train to stop," he said, noting that all crossing gates, lights, signals and warning devices were fully operational.

The MTA has undertaken a comprehensive safety education effort along the Metro Blue Line corridor, Lennon reported, along with applying engineering enhancements, increased traffic enforcement by Sheriff's deputies and a successful legislative campaign that gained an increase in rail crossing violation fines from \$104 to \$271.

He also has met with the mayor of Compton to discuss other measures that could be taken by the MTA and the city to prevent future accidents in the area.

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