

Done and dusted: Network Rail and GTR complete transformation of Northern City Line

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Passengers who need to travel in and out of Moorgate station can now enjoy a smarter, cleaner, brighter route thanks to a six-month programme of track renewal, station redecoration and intense cleaning through the Northern City Line tunnels and stations.

The coordinated work programme has been carried out by Network Rail and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), who operate Great Northern train services between Hertfordshire and the City of London terminus.

Great Northern's late evening and weekend services through the tunnels, which had been diverted to King's Cross while the essential work was undertaken, are now running again. This will help key workers and others who absolutely have to travel in and out of the Square Mile.

The work programme completed last weekend had started a year ago when Moorgate station itself was spruced up with new tiling and better lighting. From last December the programme swept on through the

tunnels and the three other stations on their route – Old Street, Essex Road and Highbury & Islington.

The track and tunnel work will make services more reliable, reduce noise and vibration from the railway and improve the condition of the tunnels for both passengers and railway workers. Along with the improvements at the stations, and a new £240m train fleet introduced last October, the environment for passengers has been comprehensively transformed.

Using specialist machinery, Network Rail has cleaned almost 17 kilometres of tunnels, renewed over 3.4 kilometres of 40-year-old track and replaced more than 1 km of the ballast, the stones which support the track.

Essex Road's platform walls have been treated to the same comprehensive retiling as Moorgate. GTR's contractors stripped away about 40 tonnes of old tiles – over 4,000 sacks of rubble – and covered an area of some 600 square metres with the bright new white and blue ceramics. At Old Street and Highbury & Islington, damaged and drab tiling has been removed or repaired, with walls resurfaced in readiness for future decoration.

At all four stations, Network Rail has replaced the old light fittings with new LED lighting, and GTR have given the stations an extensive deep-clean over the past three weekends.

Paul Rutter, Route Director for Network Rail's East Coast Route, said: "Over the last year, Network Rail has carried out significant work to clean the tunnels on the Northern City Line and to upgrade the track along the route.

"This work will improve the reliability of services, as well as making the area more pleasant for passengers and workers who use these stations.

"This project, coupled with the work which Great Northern have done, will vastly improve passenger experience and we look forward to them reaping the benefits."

Tom Moran, Managing Director for Thameslink and Great Northern, said: "Weekend and late-evening services in and out of Moorgate are back up and running, which will help key workers and others for whom travel by train is absolutely essential.

"Our passengers are already enjoying our new air-conditioned trains, which last year replaced the UK's oldest electric mainline rolling stock with a modern, fit-for-purpose fleet. Now, they will also see brighter, cleaner stations on the Northern City Line between Finsbury Park and Moorgate."

Network Rail plan to upgrade the signalling system in the tunnels over the next few years, to a modern, reliable digital system, completing the line's transformation to a 21st-century railway. Further work will mainly be done at night without affecting passenger services.

Photo credit: Network Rail