

Major project continues to digitalise London's Northern City Line

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Network Rail and Great Northern are reminding passengers planning to travel this weekend to check their journey, as trains between Finsbury Park and Moorgate will be diverted into London King's Cross.

On Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 October, engineers will continue with work to upgrade the track and signalling system on the route in the latest stage of the East Coast Digital Programme.

Major progress has been made over the summer on the project, which will create the first main line digital railway in the UK. Great Northern has successfully tested one of its trains using a digital in-cab signalling system for the first time, demonstrating that the system on-board works in a real operational setting.

The railway is divided into sections and signalling is a traffic light system which keeps trains a safe distance apart. The current signalling system only allows signallers to communicate with trains at fixed points – and any unplanned disruption can have a domino effect across the network.

Fitting trains with the latest in-cab technology and removing the old lineside signals will allow signallers to communicate with trains continuously. Being able to respond in real time will boost reliability, reduce

delays and allow more trains to run in future. It will also improve safety for workers, meaning they spend less time on track repairing equipment or maintaining the railway.

Ahead of passengers being able to enjoy more reliable journeys on the Northern City Line by next summer, vital improvements to the track and signalling can only be done safely when the section of the line between Finsbury Park and Moorgate is closed.

Passengers can find out how their journeys will be affected this weekend with Great Northern or via National Rail Enquiries.

There will also be further changes to services on the Northern City Line to and from Moorgate on Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 November, Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 November, and Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 December. Additional work is also planned over the Christmas period. The Northern City Line is expected to be fully digitally signalled by 2023.

Network Rail has sent more information on the work to people who live nearby and held a community event where people could ask questions about the project. The next meeting is taking place at Gillespie Park Ecology Centre from 18:00 until 20:00 on Thursday 30 September.

Toufic Machnouk, Network Rail's Director, Industry Partnership Digital, said: "We've made significant progress on upgrading the signalling over the summer and this weekend our teams are continuing to deliver the East Coast Digital Programme. This work will bring more reliable journeys for passengers by next Summer and reduce delays.

"We want to thank passengers for their continued patience whilst this vital work takes place. Trains are being diverted to keep people moving and we advise passengers to check their journey and allow extra time."

Jenny Saunders, Customer Services Director for Thameslink and Great Northern, said: "Network Rail have worked hard with us to make sure our customers can get where they need to be during this work. Trains that normally run in and out of Moorgate will run to and from King's Cross instead, with some times changed. Tickets to Moorgate can be used on the Tube or 271 bus. Please check before you travel and be aware there may be short-notice changes due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19."

Photo credit: Network Rail