Wireless Mesh Provides Wi-Fi Coverage for Passengers through New York Penn Station

LOS GATOS, Calif. -- (BUSINESS WIRE) -- OCLMedia, an AV/IT Systems Integrator that delivers wireless, voice, video and data services, announced the completion of a significant project to eliminate Wi-Fi blind spots and add bandwidth for Amtrak passengers traveling to and from New York City.

Contracted by Amtrak, OCLMedia was able to complete construction of a dedicated wireless network that significantly improves connectivity and delivers a true high-speed signal to trains while traveling through the New York tunnels and when stopped at the New York Penn Station platforms. The technology used – wireless infrastructure mesh from Firetide – supplements the area's Wi-Fi coverage. Previously, when an Acela Express train arrived in the tunnels under the East River and Hudson River, Wi-Fi coverage was interrupted due to a lack of cellular broadband signal.

"We are now able to ensure Wi-Fi coverage in the 12 miles of tunnels and on the platforms around Penn Station in New York City," says Neeshard Ahamad, president and CEO of OCLMedia. "This is the first time this wireless technology has been installed in a tunnel system. Our mission was to link the advanced digital communications systems needed to provide the public with optimal service."

OCLMedia installed Firetide mesh nodes in the tunnels and on the trains. Firetide's infrastructure mobility architecture allows for uninterrupted connection between the fixed and mobile nodes, delivering seamless Wi-Fi for the passengers. The fixed mesh nodes also provided an alternative to installing fiber in the tunnels, which would have taken 2 to 3 years to deploy and the costs would have been five times as much as the wireless mesh solution. OCLMedia's timeframe was 2 to 3 months for this project.

The installation is part of the network that supports AmtrakConnect®, the free Wi-Fi service now installed on Amtrak Acela Express trains and coming later this year to Northeast Regional and other Amtrak trains.

"In this digital age, it is more vital than ever that our customers have Internet connectivity while traveling," said Emmett Fremaux Jr., Amtrak Vice President of Marketing & Product Development. "We are dedicated to the continued improvement of AmtrakConnect® to meet this need."

"Because of our previous Wi-Fi work on Amtrak stations, we were asked to conduct a feasibility study, produce design and engineering plans, and implement a system that would ensure platform and tunnel Wi-Fi coverage," explains Ahamad. OCLMedia has done station Wi-Fi projects for Amtrak in Washington, DC, Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York City, Providence, Boston and Denver.

"Amtrak's vision, implemented by OCLMedia, is a great example of leveraging technology to improve passenger services, even in the most challenging conditions," said Bo Larsson, CEO of Firetide. "This unique project shows that Firetide's mesh technology provides a cost-effective alternative to fiber while infrastructure mobility adds unique capabilities, not possible with any other wireless or wired approach. Wireless mesh essentially extends wire-like connectivity all the way to the train."