



Metro Rail Train Operators, Frank DeMascio, foreground, and Jesus Ruiz, fire up a modern-day Pacific Electric "Red Car" to mark 10th anniversary of Metro Rail.

PHOTOS BY GAYLE

ANDERSON

'Red Car' Debut on Metro Blue Line Marks 10th Anniversary of Metro Rail

By GAYLE ANDERSON, Associate Editor
(July 14) With the sound of a familiar "e-tone" horn announcing its departure, a modern-day Pacific Electric "Red Car" took its first passengers on a nostalgic ride following ceremonies marking the 10th anniversary of Metro Rail and the return of rail service to Los Angeles.

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MTA Chair Yvonne Braithwaite Burke told some 200 guests and attending media that the two Metro Rail cars, outfitted to look like the popular PE cars of the 40s, "symbolize a continuum of rail service in Los Angeles, from the glory days of Pacific Electric to the new glory days of Metro Rail."

The event, held at 10 a.m., Friday, near the Washington Station in downtown LA, celebrated the anniversary with an inaugural ride on Metro Blue Line light-rail cars fashioned to look like the historic trolleys that traversed the region nearly 60 years ago.

Color scheme and details

The 90-day conversion project, a replication of the Red Car's familiar color scheme and details, was painstakingly applied by Division 11's Rail Paint and Body staff, Lee Hetherington and Brian Montalbano.

A perfect replication right down to the buttons on the vintage conductor uniforms worn for the occasion by Division 11 train operators Jesus Ruiz and Frank DeMascio, the nostalgic PE-like cars began picking up surprised and delighted passengers on the inaugural ride.



The trains will continue in operation indefinitely, said Duane Martin, rail division transportation manager. Although train operators will not wear the historic conductor uniforms, they all will have the opportunity to operate the specially outfitted cars.

Undergoing a face-lift

During ten years of operation, the Metro Blue Line has transported more than 135 million boarding passengers. It is presently undergoing a \$9.7 million face-lift with the extension of 19 Metro Blue Line station platforms to accommodate three-car trains. Work on the platform project began in May and is expected to be completed by late summer 2001.

Ridership on the Metro Blue Line has reached 63,000 average weekday boardings, a five-percent increase since the June 24 opening of the North Hollywood extension of the Metro Rail subway in the San Fernando Valley. Overall ridership on the 59.4 mile Metro Rail System has increased to 211,015 daily boardings, up 42 percent compared to May figures of 149,050 daily boardings.

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Metro Blue Line "pocket track" at Washington Station is site of anniversary celebration.	Division 11 craftsmen Brian Montalbano and Lee Hetherington attended to the "Red Car" details.
	
MTA Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke is joined at the podium by City Attorney James Hahn, flanked by sister Janice and mother Ramona.	With Supervisor Burke at the helm, "conductors" line up VIPs for inaugural ride: from left, MTA Board Member James Cragin, Operator Jesus Ruiz, Long Beach City Councilwoman Jenny Oropeza, Janice, Ramona and James Hahn, and Operator Frank DeMascio.

	
<p>Inaugural Ride begins at Washington Station.</p>	<p>Pacific Electric car is a nostalgic sight from the opposite side of the platform.</p>

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