



Crews Fight Rust and Dust to Revive Rail Lines

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Oct. 18) Bustin' the rust and a cloud of dust. That's what greeted MTA Rail

Operations staffers, Wednesday morning, when they launched into a massive effort to revive the two light-rail lines and the subway. The MTA expected to have about 20 percent of service running on all three rail lines by 4 p.m., with 75 percent operating on Thursday.

"The rust was thicker than we anticipated on the Metro Green Line," says Ralph de la Cruz, deputy executive officer, Rail Operations. He dispatched "sweep trains" to run the tracks several times to break up the red deposits.

Because of the rust buildup during the past 33 days, sensors in the tracks were barely able to detect the presence of the sweep trains, a hazard that crews had to correct before the trains could operate safely in passenger service. Without active sensors, the train control and protection systems would be unable to determine speeds or assure safe operation.

Crews encountered similar, but not as thick, rust conditions on the Metro Blue Line. It was heaviest on a stretch of track just north of the Artesia station. Again, the problem was ensuring that the train protection system was working properly and controlling speeds, but by 11:30 a.m., Wednesday, trains were running at track speed on all three rail lines.

Overgrown tree branches

Trees also posed a problem. During the month-long hiatus, trees in some yards along the Metro Blue Line had overgrown the tracks and were brushing against the sweep trains. Trimming crews were sent out to cut back the branches.

Meanwhile, Sheriff's deputies on bicycles and motorcycles cruised the line flagging down traffic at intersections while MTA crews inspected crossing gates and electronic circuits. The officers also reminded neighbors, some of whom have been jaywalking across the tracks, that rail service would resume soon.

The first trains dispatched through the Metro Red Line tunnels made the passage in a cloud of dust, although the sweep trains turned up no electronic circuit problems such as those on the light-rail lines.

A couple of elevators were out of service at the Universal City station. If they can't be repaired in time, the MTA will have to provide a bus bridge between the North Hollywood station and Hollywood/Highland in order to comply with ADA rules.

"This is a complicated piece of machinery that's been out of service for a month," de la Cruz said. "We're overcoming the glitches. There are no show stoppers."

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