

New Communications Technology for MTA's Operating Divisions

By **BILL HEARD**, Editor

(Sept. 10, 2003) The second phase of an 18-month project that is bringing state-of-the-art communications technology to MTA's operating divisions will be completed this month. The entire project will be finished by year's end.

Spearheaded by the Information Technology Services (ITS) department, the project involves wiring 18 transportation and maintenance facilities to receive upgraded computer service, high-speed telephone lines and modern phone sets.

"It's exciting for the divisions," says Chief Information Officer Elizabeth Bennett, "because, from a technology standpoint, it puts them on a par with MTA Headquarters for deploying new technology now and into the future."

Scheduled for completion, this month, are wiring projects at divisions 6, 8, 9, 4 and 15. Divisions 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 18 and the Metro Gold Line's Midway Yard were wired earlier this year.

Scheduled for December completion are the Metro Red and Blue Line yards, the Red Line Maintenance of Way facility, the Regional Rebuild Center and the Vernon Yard.

Crews have been stringing wires and installing jack boxes for computers and phones at each facility. At some divisions, a communications room with connections for the new equipment had to be constructed.

Bennett credited Systems Project Manager Larry Fordon of ITS, Supervising Engineer Rudy Rey of Facilities Engineering and Senior Contract Administration Frank Foster of Construction Contract Administration for moving the project toward completion.

New digital phones

Three-button analog telephones, which many divisions have had for 20 years or more, are being upgraded to Nortel digital systems that can support an unlimited number of area codes. For the first time, divisions will have voice mail, teleconferencing and hands-free options.

The new wiring system has lines dedicated to computer use that will give operating divisions access to MTA's network with more features and faster service. Videoconferencing between operating divisions and the downtown headquarters a possibility for the future.

Employees will be able to use all current management information systems, such as FIS. M3, the new Maintenance and Material Management System, and ATMS, the new Advanced Transportation Management System, also will be available once they are implemented.

The new wiring system also is being deployed to support an important element of the M3 project: Fleetwatch, a computer-based fueling system for CNG and diesel buses. All bus divisions will be wired into Fleetwatch by the end of November.

Bennett expects to see more computers in use at the operating divisions, not only by office staff, but also by mechanics working on

MTA's new generation of high-tech equipment, and even by operators who may have access to computer terminals in the division train rooms.

"Part of the reason for doing this," she says, "is to support the new systems, like M3, that will be implemented shortly."

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