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Photo Credit: Tony Precie

The movable scaffolding shown here alongside a rail car in the Metro Blue Line maintenance shop will be replaced with a safer, more serviceable catwalk.

New Metro Blue Line Catwalk Will Provide Protection, Flexibility

By ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

(Feb. 25, 2004) The Metro Blue Line will welcome the addition of a new catwalk to the Light Rail Vehicle Maintenance Shop later this year, giving workers the ability to safely move about train car tops for maintenance and repairs.

The new catwalk – to be installed in the Heavy Repair side of the shop – will stretch 100 feet long and stand 11 feet tall with guard rails. It will replace movable scaffolding that has been used for years to access the roofs of train cars.

The current scaffolding has proved to be cumbersome because it requires maintenance workers to hoist tools and hoses onto wheeled structures. Workers also must constantly reposition the scaffolding on both sides of the train car to ensure their safety.

“The need for the catwalk is to give us the flexibility to have full service under and above the car,” says Anthony Precie, assistant manager, Rail Fleet Services. “We’ve got to make sure our employees are protected from falls and have the equipment they are going to need right there with them.”

An overhead crane

The new Heavy Repair catwalk is specifically designed to work with an overhead crane and a lifting system that allows employees to work on the roof area and the articulation section that connects paired cars.

Similar in appearance to an accordion, the articulation periodically needs to be removed for repair, service or replacement.

"Because this section moves and flexes often, it requires service maintenance," Precie says. "The catwalk will have cutaways – like a drawbridge – to allow that to happen. This is something the old catwalk doesn't have."

Rail Fleet Services Manager George Kennedy looks forward to the completion of this installation – the second of its kind at the Metro Blue Line.

'A safety issue'

"This is a safety issue and it's going to benefit the employees and the MTA," he says.

The first catwalk was erected at in July 2003 in the Service and Inspection area. Electrical outlets, lighting and retractable hose reels for air and water will be added to that structure as the new Heavy Repair catwalk is assembled.

Construction of the \$300,000 project will begin next month, according to Construction Manager Tom Welch.

"They're ecstatic about it," Precie says of the Light Rail Vehicle Maintenance Shop personnel. "This is going to make their lives a little bit easier and allow them to focus more on their work."

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