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## Blue Line will shut down for much of 2019

*It's a part of a \$1.2-billion renovation*

By **Matt Tinoco** | Mar 26, 2018, 12:20pm PDT | **32 comments**



The Blue Line will close in two phases, starting in January. | Shutterstock.com

For eight months next year, sections of the aging Blue Line—which is used by 70,000 riders every day—will be closed for repairs and upgrades.

The line is wearing out and needs major maintenance. It's Metro's oldest and most heavily used light-rail line, and it has been in continuous operation since it opened 28 years ago in 1990.

Once the work is complete, Metro aims to shave about 10 minutes off the trip from Downtown Los Angeles to downtown Long Beach, reducing travel time from 58 minutes to 48 minutes.

But first, to make the needed repairs, Metro will close the Blue Line in two phases in 2019.

“Closing the Blue Line was not our first option,” says Tim Lindholm, Metro's executive officer of capital projects. “We finally decided that this is the only way we could do it, you know, rip the Band-Aid off approach.”

Lindholm says Metro officials considered doing the work over a three-year period. That would have kept the line open, but with delays. They ultimately decided that eight months of no service was better than three years of poor and unreliable service.

From January through April, Blue Line trains will operate only between 7th Street/Metro Center in Downtown Los Angeles and the 103rd Street/Watts Towers station in Watts, with no service between from the Willowbrook Station to Long Beach.

That section is scheduled to mostly reopen in May, when the stretch from Downtown LA to Willowbrook will close. It is set to reopen in September.

The Willowbrook/Rosa Park station, where passengers transfer between the Blue and Green Lines, will be closed for all eight months for extensive renovation and updating.

Expo Line service will also be paused between Downtown Los Angeles and the 23rd Street/LA Trade Tech station, but Metro hasn't yet released exact details and dates to the public.



Opening day for the Blue Line, on July 14, 1990. It took three years and \$877 million to build. | Metro Transportation Research Library and Archive

Details are still being hashed out, but Lindholm says there will be some variation of local “Blue Line emulator” service that stops at closed stations, and an express bus service between Long Beach and Downtown Los Angeles.

During the shutdown, Metro will be overhaul most of the line’s overhead catenary wire system, its signal system, portions of worn-out track, aging station infrastructure, and other “state of good repair” upkeep.

Metro will also perform some work at the overburdened Washington/Flower junction to help trains flow through the intersection more smoothly. The agency will also add several new “interlockings” to the line, which let trains switch from one-track to another.

“If we have an issue on the Blue Line today, and it happens in the wrong area, it can lead to 20-minute headways, which is no good for anyone,” said Lindholm. “These interlockings are going to allow us, if there is a problem like a dead train, an accident, or something out of our control, to single-track with 10 minute headways, which is huge.”

Lindholm says Metro recognizes that shutting down the Blue Line for eight months is a “risky proposition,” especially when [system ridership declining](#). But, he says, it’s needed to provide better service.

“It’s really important to us that we don’t lose riders,” Lindholm says. “To us, it will be a failure if we lose riders when we open the Blue Line back up.”

Metro anticipates the overhauled Blue Line will fully re-open in September 2019, shortly before the [Crenshaw](#) Line—which will eventually link the Expo Line to LAX—is scheduled to begin service in October of 2019.

- [The Blue Line’s future: 5 ways Metro plans to fix its oldest rail line](#) [Curbed LA]
- [Metro is replacing the decades-old train cars on the Blue](#) [Curbed LA]