



# NEWS

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CONTACT: STEVE CHESSER/JIM SMART  
MTA NEWS BUREAU  
(213) 244-7056, 244-6347  
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## BLUE LINE RAIL CARS EXPERIENCE HIGH RATE OF GEARBOX FAILURES

Gearboxes on the MTA's Blue Line trains have failed much sooner than anticipated, prompting the agency to launch an extensive maintenance and parts acquisition program.

Thus far, 38 gearboxes have failed at mileages ranging from 48,000 to 200,000 miles. The contract specifications for the part called for them to last 1 million miles, said Art Leahy, MTA's Executive Director of Operations.

The failures are due to fatigue caused by excessive stress, which leads to gear teeth fracture, he added. Leahy estimated the cost of repairs would total \$750,000 initially, then \$350,000 annually.

"We are working with the car manufacturer, Sumitomo Corporation of America (SCOA)," he said. "We hope to gain their cooperation in mitigating the cost of repairs."

Leahy noted that all but three of the gearbox failures occurred after the equipment's two-year warranty period expired.

The 54 rail cars now used on the Blue Line were purchased in 1987, and went into service in 1990. The first gear box failure occurred in June, 1991.

Before there had been a significant number of failures, the former Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) contracted in October, 1992, to purchase 15 additional SCOA cars for use on the Green Line, which is scheduled to open in mid 1995. Those 15 cars are in production and discussions are under way with the manufacturer to determine if an alternative gearbox system can be installed, and if an extended warranty will be provided.

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The original design for the cars was based on a similar design used in 12 other cities in North America. Since the receipt of the original 54 cars, a similar problem has occurred on vehicles in many of these other fleets.

Each Blue Line car has four gearboxes. The gearboxes are coupled to an electric traction motor which drives the cars. Repair costs have averaged \$11,500 per gearbox. All failures were discovered while the cars were out of service for routine maintenance.

Future rail car purchases, including an order with a German manufacturer for 74 cars that can be used on the Blue Line's Long Beach and Pasadena segments as well as the Green Line, call for a different motor-gearbox design which is expected to be more durable.

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