



Last major phase of planned Blue Line trolley work underway

By **JAMES PALEN**, The Daily Transcript
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The final phase of construction is underway to modernize the 32-year-old San Diego Trolley Blue Line, as the project administrator, the San Diego Association of Governments, began major construction work on the region's most heavily used transit service line last week.

In conjunction with the Metropolitan Transit System, SANDAG began trolley renewal work on the Blue Line in 2010, with the replacement of overhead electrical wire. In three years, additional crossovers, switches and signals have been installed. Grade crossings have been improved, and now those improvements have set the stage for the final phase of work.

The Blue Line serves an average of 45,000 riders per day during the workweek, according to SANDAG. The latest and final round of the planned work will include a complete rebuild of the line from Barrio Logan to San Ysidro. The setting up of temporary boarding platforms, the demolition and rebuilding of existing stations, and the replacement of track within stations and at adjacent grade crossings are all within the scope of the project.

Funded by the regional half-cent sales tax program known as TransNet, California Proposition 1B and 1A bond money, and federal dollars, the trolley renewal project is scheduled to be completed in 2015. **Flatiron Construction** is the general contractor for the latest Blue Line renovations, which will cost \$58 million.

More than half of the \$660 million that will in the end be spent to modernize the trolley system is being spent on Blue Line improvements because it requires more extensive work than the already-upgraded Green and Orange lines, which required only overlays on station platforms to accommodate low-floor cars. When finished, the trolley system upgrades will include 65 low-floor trolley cars.

"In the San Diego region, we are not just dedicating resources to new and expanded transit services. We also are making strategic investments to upgrade our existing transit network," SANDAG Chair and Santee Councilmember Jack Dale said in a release. "The modernization of the Blue Line will make our system more efficient and accessible, enhancing the ridership experience for millions of passengers for years to come."

The Barrio Logan, Harborside and Pacific Fleet stations will be the first to get rebuilt, with construction expected to last five to eight months at each station. Renovation of the remaining nine stations will be phased to minimize disruption to riders, SANDAG said Tuesday in a release. All stations along the Blue Line will remain open during the construction period.

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