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Mexico City to Construct Tenth Route For Metro Subway System

by LADB Staff
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In early September, Mexico City officials announced plans to begin construction of a tenth route for the metropolitan subway system, known as the Metro. The new route dubbed Line B is scheduled to begin service sometime in 1997. Line B, which will connect the northeastern sections of the city with the rest of the capital, will use a combination of underground, surface, and elevated tracks. According to Mexico City Mayor Manuel Aguilera, construction is due to begin by mid-October and continue for about three years. Aguilera said construction for Line B will be funded exclusively from the budgets of the Federal District and Mexico states, thus eliminating reliance on direct federal funds. Line 8, which was completed within the last year, also was constructed without the use of direct federal funds.

The construction of Line B represents the final phase of a master plan to connect various Metro lines through the downtown area. Currently nine different routes connect within an area of 15 square miles in downtown Mexico City. Line 8, which opened within the last year, connects downtown with the southeast sections of the city. Officials have raised the possibility of eventually constructing an eleventh route in southern Mexico City that will not connect at all with the downtown business district.

Meantime, the announcement of the construction of Line B coincides with the 25th anniversary of the inauguration of the Metro system in September of 1969. According to El Financiero International weekly business newspaper, the Metro system currently transports an average of 5 million passengers per day over 110 miles of track. The system, constructed with French technology, has moved an estimated 25 billion passengers since its inauguration.

The Mexico City subway system which ranks among the most efficient and safest in the world is also the most heavily subsidized, allowing fares to remain relatively low. The current fare, which is the equivalent of US$0.12 cents, has not changed since November of 1991. On the other hand, because of the advanced age of the system, Mexico City authorities are now spending about half of the system’s annual budget of US$441 million for maintenance purposes. But officials have found ways to save money, such as refurbishing existing rail cars instead of acquiring new units. About US$194 million has been allocated this year to modernize 234 cars that have been in service since the system was introduced 25 years ago.

According to Metro spokesperson Eduardo Marin, refurbishing will extend the life of the cars by another 15 to 20 years and cost a fraction of the money that would be spent on acquiring new units. Nevertheless, the Metro system has had to acquire some new rail cars in order to service newly constructed metro routes. In fact, officials recently signed a contract to acquire 135 new cars from Spain's Construcciones y Auxiliar Ferrocarriles, at a cost of US$126 million.