

Tren Suburbano inaugurated

MEXICO: The first 20 km of a planned suburban rail network in Mexico City was inaugurated on June 2, following three weeks of fare-free trial operations.

Known locally as El Tren Suburbano, the line links the former inter-city terminus at Buenavista with Cuautitlán in the north, using an existing right-of-way which has been upgraded and electrified at 25 kV under a 30-year concession agreement. The US\$660m contract to rebuild, operate and maintain the line was awarded in August 2005 to a consortium led by CAF, which has supplied an initial fleet of 20 three-car EMUs, based on RENFE's Class 447. The air-conditioned sets have two driving motor cars and an intermediate trailer, but have been designed to be expanded to four-car formations as traffic builds up.

Services are initially operating between Buenavista and Lechería, serving intermediate stations at Fortuna, Tlalnepantla and San Rafael. The remaining 7 km to Tultitlán and Cuautitlán is expected to open later this year.

Peak-hour trains will run every six minutes, with an end-to-end journey time of 23 min, saving an hour or more compared to parallel bus routes. When the route is fully operational it will have a capacity of 30 000

passengers/h in each direction, and officials expect it could eventually be carry 100 million passengers a year.

The concession includes provision for a 21 km extension from Cuautitlán to Huehuetoca, on which work is expected to start later this year, plus branches from Lechería to Jaltocan and from San Rafael to Tacuba, bringing the network to 79 km. Further suburban railway projects are also being developed to serve other parts of the conurbation, with suggestions that the total network could eventually reach 242 route-km. ◀

*Read more about the project in the March 2008 issue of **Metro Report International***