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The MBTA's \$40 million South Cove maintenance, repair and storage complex will be dedicated tomorrow, allowing the transfer of the system's operations from the 12-acre Cambridge site where the John F. Kennedy memorial center is planned.

The MBTA conducted a three and one-half year search for a relocation site and settled for a long, narrow strip of former Penn Central Railroad land in South Boston in December 1969 after being turned down on other sites in Braintree, Dorchester, Mattapan and Milton.

But the phasseout of operations at the Bennett street yards in Cambridge will probably be stretched out until the end of the year, for two reasons.

First, because of the continuing dispute be-

tween the sponsors and architects for the Kennedy center and Cambridge community groups, there is no longer a sense of urgency to clear out the entire site.

Second, the MBTA is still busy in Cambridge converting the older Blue cars of the Red Line to automatic operation. This will make their signal systems compatible with those of the newer aluminum cars used on the Quincy extension — allowing safer, smoother and more economical operation.

The new storage yards in South Boston, parallel to the Southeast Expressway and Dorchester avenue, have 15 sets of tracks, each stretching a quarter-mile. They will accommodate the 168 cars in the Red Line fleets and probably would have room for more if the Quincy-Braintree extension demands

them in three to four years. (At the other end of the Red Line, the extension from Harvard to Alewife, Arlington or Rte. 128, will doubtless require additional cars and a separate repair-maintenance facility.)

The 32-acre facility will be named for Charles C. Cabot of Dover, the attorney who served as the second chairman of the board of directors from 1966 to 1969.

Mayor Kevin White will be attending a conference of mayors in San Diego and so will not be able to remind the celebrants of promises he extracted from the MBTA after long negotiations in December 1969.

One promise was that the design of the new facilities provide for possible air rights construction of private, tax-generating structures. The tracks

have been laid far enough apart so supporting piles could be driven between them. Before the Penn Central and the New Haven fell into bankruptcy, the railroad yards returned \$150,000 in taxes yearly to Boston.

Another was that when the \$5.1 million bus garage, also located in the South Cove site, is completed — probably by November — the 32-year-old Albany street garage will be razed and the city will have use of that valuable site for renewal.

The South Cove garage will be the first of four large facilities that will allow the MBTA to consolidate its current nine scattered, and inadequate, bus support facilities. The other new facilities will be in Charlestown, at Arborway and in the Alewife area, in or near North Cambridge.

A major advantage will be that in cold weather, diesel buses will not have to be run all night, as they are now, polluting the air and disturbing neighbors.

The MBTA is especially proud of a machine which will allow the removal of flat spots from the steel flanged subway cars much more quickly, economically and accurately than is now possible.

At present, the defective wheel must be removed and then trucked to the old Everett shops because the cars on the Red, Orange and Blue lines cannot readily be shifted to each other.

The "wheel-truing" device costs \$250,000. Operations director Warren J. Higgins said that the machine's automatic precision capabilities should extend the normal life of a steel wheel beyond the current five to six years.



Workmen lay tracks at MBTA storage yard in South Boston. (Sandy Bond photo)