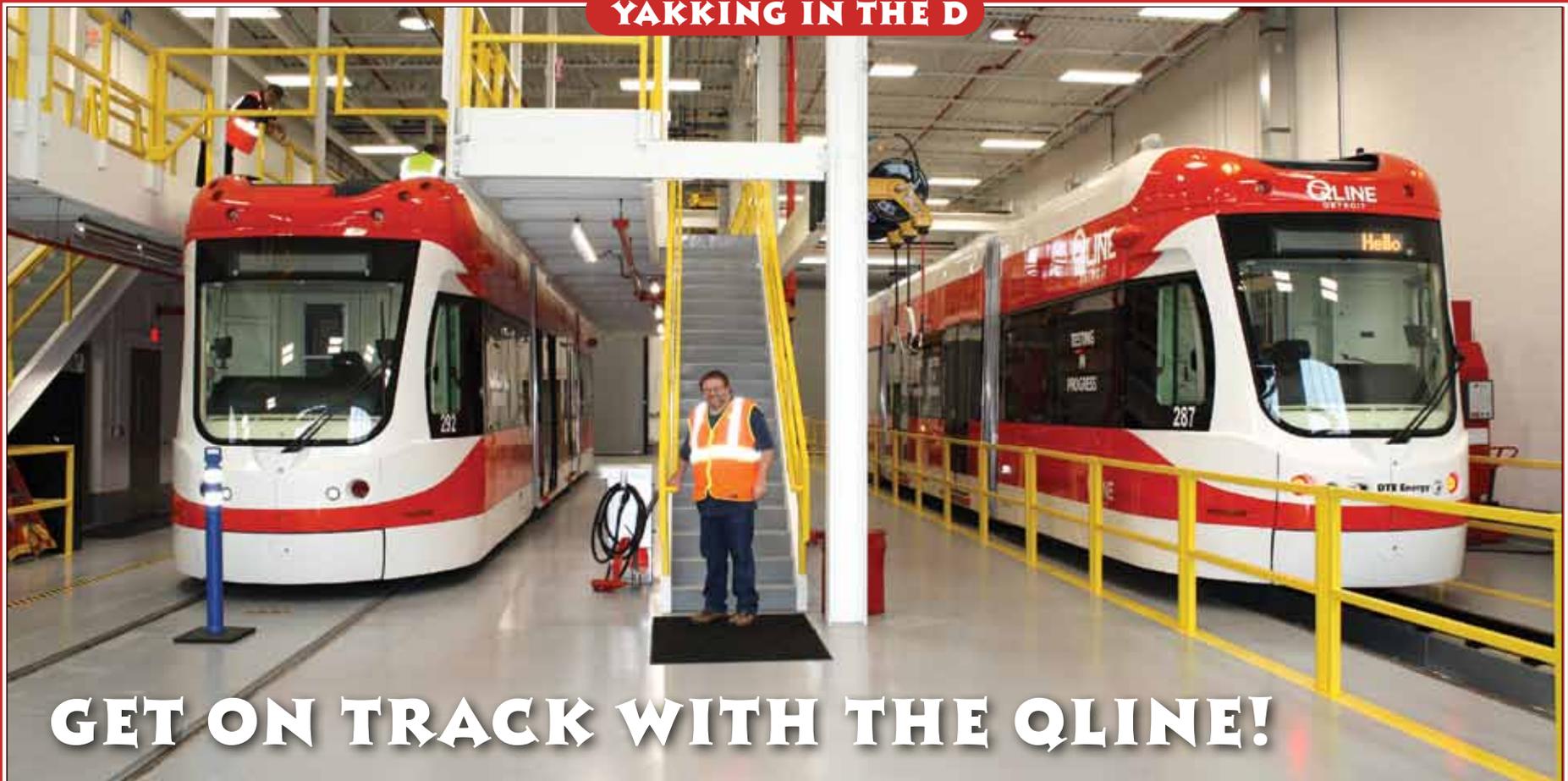


YAKKING IN THE D



GET ON TRACK WITH THE QLINE!

Photos by Marty Westman

QLINE staff perform some final tests and checkup in the week before the QLINE opened. This is the hub, or home, for the QLINE trains in the modern Roger Penske Center near the New Center. It's where the QLINE rests and truly re-charges!



Each QLINE stop has interactive screens and bright colored brick in the modern stations, that also shelter you from the rain (or snow).

Quick! We peeked around the corner from Monroe just in time to see if we could catch the shiny new streetcar whooshing down Woodward Avenue. It didn't take long for the Yak to track the QLINE, the official name of Detroit's M1Rail streetcar route. The brand new streetcars made their debut in Detroit this month. It's time for a primer for riders to figure out what's up with these shiny red cars so we headed to the Penske Center, the classy hub home for the QLINE, near the New Center area.

When we visited, it was time for some final safety checks and previews.

Dan Lijana, communications officer for the M1rail, took us on a quick tour! Dan says these streetcars are very environmentally friendly, powered by lithium ion batteries. That means 60 percent of the operations are off the electrical wire. In the Penske center, you can see them charged, plugged into an outlet by the track. The Yak's been lucky enough to ride other automated transit systems such as the "T" in Boston, the "El" in Chicago, the "Metro" in Washington, D.C. among others, but these aren't considered streetcars. This is a modern streetcar system. It gets the

name "Q" for Quicken Loans, as the company is one of the main funders and supporters. What's not new is the history of streetcars in Detroit. Detroit's last streetcar ran in the 1950s, and routes were in place on Detroit's main streets, including Woodward.

These new ones are quite a bit different. The modern streetcars are Wi-Fi enabled with vertical bike racks and a heating and cooling system. The cars are powered by a 750-volt lithium ion battery, operating 60 percent off-wire, the highest percentage of any streetcar system in the United States. To Dan, the other big news is that it's much more than a streetcar.

"It's a catalyst," says Dan, or something that spurs change. He says this will add to the "walkability" of Woodward and is part of making the city develop as a destination and as part of revitalizing the neighborhoods.

We asked some of the young riders out for an early ride what they thought of the QLINE.

"It's slidey," said Maggie Laree, 6. "It's fun," said her sister Abbie, 8, and brother Evan, 4. Their parents Colleen and Jon Laree

Continued on Page 9.