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BACK BAY

In Back Bay station, rotting wood delays roof replacement

Posted by Matt Rocheleau February 10, 2011 02:29 PM

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(Matt Rocheleau for Boston.com)

Water leaking from the roof down a long stretch of cement wall inside Back Bay Station drips from an overhang and into strategically-placed, water-filled bins and buckets.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Rotting wooden framing in the lofty, leaky ceiling of Back Bay station has

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delayed progress on a \$1.4-million roof-replacement project.

The roof over the MBTA's sixth-busiest station has been leaking in certain spots for several years and its replacement is overdue. The roof was installed in May 1987 with a 20-year life expectancy. The T could not afford the repair project until a recent boost from federal stimulus funding.



When work began in late September, MBTA officials said the project was expected be complete by November.

However, the discovery by construction workers of the rotting wooden roof framing "due to water leakage over many years" in several areas of the highest section of ceiling has stalled progress, said T spokesman Joe Pesaturo.

"A structural consultant is doing an evaluation and designing repairs that will have to be made before the high roof section is replaced," he said in an e-mail adding, "Much of the lower flat roof sections have

already been completed."

Repairs to the wood framing will begin soon and the remaining roof work will be wrapped up once the weather improves and continuing into spring, the spokesman said.

Heavy successive snowfall followed by rain and ice has caused roofs across the region to buckle and some buildings collapse under the added weight. The MBTA had crews remove "much of the existing snow from the roof" prior to the back-to-back storms of heavy, wet snow that kicked off the month, Pesaturo said.

The rotten wood discovery will add to the project's cost; however, with the original construction bid set at \$992,000 – or about \$400,000 under what was expected – T officials are "confident" the additional needed work will not push the project past its original \$1.4 million projection, he said.

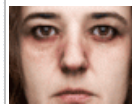
When complete, the 60,000 square-feet of new roof will have a 30-year service life. The station will remain open during construction, most of which will be done during non-service hours to minimize commuter impact, officials have said.

On Wednesday, near the station's Dartmouth Street entrance, two large bins on wheels surrounded by several smaller buckets were arranged to collect water dripping from roof along with signs cautioning those passing by of wet, potentially slick floors.

Employees of a portable food vendor, who declined to identify themselves, said they had to relocate their indoor cart in recent weeks due to water dripping from overhead and interfering with their business. Describing a scene reminiscent of the 1969 hit single "Rain Drops Keep Fallin' on My Head" by B.J.Thomas, they said when it's raining outside, which it wasn't



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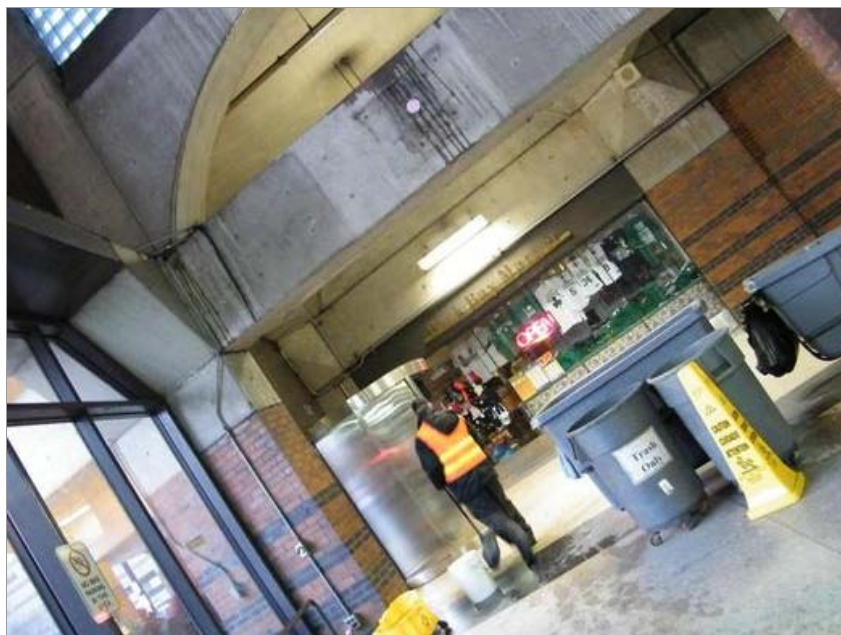
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Wednesday, some areas of the station leak as if clouds had formed inside.

Meanwhile, a Bank of America ATM, that station workers said has been covered for years, had a blue tarp protecting the top of the money-dispensing machine from water, as it did during a visit to the station five months ago.

In another stimulus-funded project scheduled for the station, MBTA officials said in the fall the agency is working to "significantly improve" the two-decade-old air quality problem at Back Bay station. The MBTA acknowledges that the ventilation system doesn't work well, and says it will complete an improved system by 2012.

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(Matt Rocheleau for Boston.com)

An array of bins and buckets are arranged to collect drips, while caution signs warn of wet, potentially slippery floors near the station's Dartmouth Street entrance.

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