



Angel's Walk improvements will improve the pedestrian and bus links between El Pueblo and transportation facilities at the Union Station complex.

MTA to Play Small, but Important Role in Renovation of El Pueblo Historic Monument

By Bill Heard, Editor

(Dec. 8) Working with the City of Los Angeles, the MTA will play a small, but important role during coming months in the effort to refurbish the historic heart of the city: the 44-acre El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument.

Nestled in a park-like setting just across Alameda Street from the Union Station complex, the El Pueblo buildings and the Olvera Street market are attractions that appeal to locals as much as to tourists. City officials hope to showcase it during the Democratic national convention scheduled here next summer.

Fast-growing center

The El Pueblo site also is adjacent to perhaps the fastest growing transit and business center in the city.

It's on that basis that the MTA Board approved some \$1.7 million in funds through the annual Call for Projects for such transit-related improvements as sidewalks, signage, art and the widening of the Main Street bridge over the Hollywood Freeway to accommodate a user-friendly pedestrian walkway.

"The current bridge is very hostile to pedestrians with noise and exhaust smells from the freeway," says Robin Blair, RTP&D transportation planning manager. He noted that designs for the east side of the bridge, which will be expanded by 35 feet, will have a "dramatic look." Construction could begin in late 2000 or early 2001.

Element of Angel's Walk

The pedestrian improvements will be a part of the Angel's Walk program sponsored by the city and the MTA. Angel's Walk integrates transportation facilities such as Metro Buses and Metro Rail into adjacent commercial and civic developments. Pedestrians in the Olvera Street area, for example, have access to some 3,500 buses each day in addition to rail transportation at Union Station.

The MTA will benefit from the Olvera Street and Angel's Walk improvements by being able to provide improved aesthetics and a desirable destination to its patrons, taxpayers and the public.

"The idea is to help people move easily from Spring Street to Union Station, from Union Station to China Town and to the Civic Center," Blair explains. "That means improving such things as the bus stops, lighting, landscaping, signage and freeway sound buffering."

Renovating historic buildings

Currently, a \$20 million-plus project financed by the city is under way to renovate the Pico House, a hotel built in 1869-70 by Pio de Jesus Pico, the last governor of Mexican California, and buildings in the adjacent Pico and Garnier block. Planning also has begun on possible improvements to county-owned buildings next to the historic Our Lady Queen of Angels Church, across Main Street from El Pueblo.

El Pueblo was settled in 1781 by pioneers from Mexico, becoming the center of society in Southern California. In the 1920, a campaign was launched to save the crumbling buildings. It was opened as a marketplace in 1930 and was named a state historic park in 1953.

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