



[Home](#)

[CEO Hotline](#)

[Viewpoint](#)

[Classified Ads](#)

[Archives](#)

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

▶ [Safety](#)

▶ [Pressroom](#) (web)

▶ [Ask the CEO](#)

▶ [CEO Forum](#)

▶ [Employee Recognition](#)

▶ [Employee Activities](#)

▶ [Metro Projects](#)

▶ [Facts at a Glance](#) (web)

▶ [Archives](#)

▶ [Events Calendar](#)

▶ [Research Center/Library](#)

▶ [Metro Classifieds](#)

▶ [Bazaar](#)

Metro Info

▶ [30/10 Initiative](#)

▶ [Policies](#)

▶ [Training](#)

▶ [Help Desk](#)

▶ [Intranet Policy](#)

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The solar array cost \$4.18 million to install but should pay for itself by 2018. It consists of 1,600 panels and represents the largest solar project attempted thus far by Metro.



Photos: Juan Ocampo

Carson Division 18 Unveils \$4.18 Million Solar Panel Array

- 1,600 panels will pay for themselves by 2018.

By JIMMY STROUP

(Dec. 20, 2007) A slight drizzle and cloudy skies couldn't dampen the spirits of Metro staff who attended the unveiling of Carson Division 18's new solar panel array, Wednesday – a 1,600 panel installation that will save more than \$200,000 in annual energy costs.

Metro Board Chair Pam O'Connor spoke first at the ceremony, hailing the "green" project as another of the agency's active measures to consider the environment when deciding and working on projects.



The “green” ribbon cutting ceremony at the unveiling of Carson Division 18’s solar panel array was meant to symbolize the energy efficiency the technology will provide. From left: Hal Snyder, Gas Company vice president; Pam O’Connor, Metro Board chair; Carolyn Flowers, Metro chief operations officer; Dana Coffey, South Bay Sector general manager; and John Mahoney, Chevron Energy Solutions vice president.

“Metro’s now committed to constructing all new facilities and projects – including new transit corridors – using energy efficiency and conservation strategies,” O’Connor said.

“As someone who’s personally concerned about the environment, I think it’s really exciting and a significant contribution of this solar array to the facility here and to the region.”

Metro Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers lauded the project as being financially savvy. Part of the money to pay for the \$4.18-million project was generated through rebates earned with other solar panel projects in the San Fernando Valley at Divisions 8 and 15.

The energy savings could represent a 20 percent reduction in the amount of energy Metro has to purchase to keep Division 18 running each year. It’s projected to save the agency \$17,000 in energy costs monthly.



Rebates from solar projects at West Valley Division 8 and East Valley Division 15 helped augment the cost of this installation. Any rebates that are earned from this project will be reinvested into future solar and energy-efficient projects, said Carolyn Flowers, Chief Operations Officer.

Partnering with local utilities

Flowers said the agency is hoping to generate another \$1.2 million in rebates to finance more environmentally-friendly projects.

"We are currently investing in a three-year plan to install solar panels at all feasible transit facilities that we own and operate," she said. "Partnerships with local utilities – like the Gas Company – will be important to our plan."

Rebates for the project were earned from the Gas Company, and Metro partnered with Chevron's Energy Solution's division for the construction of the solar array.

The building portion of the project completed a full month early, which Chevron's John Mahoney pointed out was an extra month of energy savings.

"The global demand for energy is outpacing global supply. The world literally needs every molecule of energy it can get to meet the demand," he said. "This solar project will help supply electricity in the L.A. Basin in a way that minimizes the impact on the environment."

Power on a cloudy day

But even on a cloudy day, the panels will be generating power. The array was producing 30 kilowatts per hour during the ribbon-cutting ceremony, despite the rainy weather.

"Our goal here is clear. Metro seeks not to just operate the best transportation system in the country," Flowers said. "We've committed to being a leader among transit agencies nationwide in implementing energy efficiency and sustainable projects."