



NEWS

January 23, 1996

CONTACT: STEVE CHESSER/JIM SMART
MTA MEDIA RELATIONS
(213) 922-2718, 922-2700
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MTA RESPONDS TO PUBLIC CONCERNS ABOUT MOUNTAIN TUNNELING; PROHIBITS BLASTING BENEATH HOMES, WILL REDUCE WATER PUMPING

The MTA, responding to public concerns about tunnel excavation beneath the Santa Monica Mountains, now will seek Board approval of plans to require its contractor to eliminate the use of explosives under most residential property and to implement construction techniques that will avoid lowering the water table beneath Runyon Canyon Park.

"The experts have presented a new construction plan that will avoid the need to use explosives beneath primarily residential areas of the mountains," said Larry Zarian, MTA Board chairman and a Glendale city councilman. "Where explosives must be used, mainly beneath Runyon Canyon Park, the strength and frequency will be reduced. Like distant thunder, you might hear it, but you won't feel it."

Zarian said heavy construction equipment can be used to tunnel through the areas where the use of explosives originally was planned. In those areas where blasting is mandatory due to rock conditions, use of explosives will be limited to no more than three times a day for a maximum of 10 seconds each, or less than half of one minute a day. This phase of tunnel excavation is expected to last about 14 months.

"We are concerned about the ecological health and vitality of the mountains and of Runyon Canyon Park," said Zarian. "The MTA will institute a total grouting program that will plug up fissures in the rock to avoid draining any more water from the mountains than is absolutely necessary."

(MORE)

Page 2, MTA RESPONDS TO CONCERNS

"These steps, along with irrigation planned in Runyon Canyon Park, should ensure the survival of native plants and animals that depend on ground water and seasonal springs," said Joseph E. Drew, interim MTA chief executive officer.

Zarian also has directed the MTA to staff a field office as quickly as possible in the Runyon Canyon area in order to respond immediately to community concerns, residents questions or problems during the construction period.

"We are taking these steps to avoid inconveniencing our neighbors and to ensure that we can complete the construction project on schedule," Zarian said. "MTA has listened and will respond to their concerns regarding tunneling through the Santa Monica Mountains with our commitment to minimize those impacts as much as possible."

"This tunnel faces fewer difficulties than many others under construction or in operation around the world," said Dr. Dan Eisenstein, the lead panelist and a professor of geotechnical engineering at the University of Alberta. "In view of the attention focused on this tunnel, we looked at the issues of construction explosives and ground water control. We have identified ways to minimize the use of explosives, and to reduce the amount of water that would have to be pumped out of the tunnels as they are built."

###

MTA-010