

All Smiles for the North Hollywood Segment during MTA Employee Day



Ready for action at North Hollywood station were LAPD Officer Mike Dickson, Sgt. Song Suh, Officer Marco Morales, Officer Matt Valencia, Officer John Downey and Officer Lonnie Benson.



Dennis Mori, North Hollywood Extension project manager, attended Employee Day with his wife Sally, son Brian, and daughter Lauren.



Joe Simpson of Marketing staffed the guest sign-in table.

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Edith Youngblood of Marketing snaps a shot of Bumble the Clown with two young guests.



Ready for the big day were Tom Conner (second left) and his wife, Carol; and Duane Martin (right), his wife, Colleen and daughter, Chastity.



Rail Operations Chief Ralph de la Cruz talks with Rail Operator Ramon Peniche.



Barbara Trigg of Human Resources talks with Moloi Averetta of Yard Control while Manuel Solis of Steiny Electric uses the phone.



Jeanne Kinsel, center, brought her friends Diane Piekarsky of Palm Springs and Bonnie Hoffman of West Los Angeles to Employee Day.



Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky had opening remarks for the Employee Day audience.

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Jess Diaz, rail transportation supervisor, briefs visitors on Segment 3 startup procedures.



George Nickle of Human Resources and a friend were among hundreds who visited the souvenir tables.



Robert Kang of the Regional Rebuild Center provided balloons for the kids.



Tami Moore, daughter of Bill Moore of Quality Management, gets instructions on string tying from Bumble the Clown.



A 1960 photo of Diane Nathanson is featured in a mural at the North Hollywood station.

PHOTOS BY
BILL HEARD

(June 5) Employees, their families and friends got a sneak preview of the Metro Red Line's North Hollywood segment during an event Saturday, June 3, that combined a whistle-stop tour of the three new subway stations with the atmosphere of a neighborhood block party.

And the occasion had everything: music, speeches, gifts, a clown, balloons, giant decorated cakes. And lots of smiles. At least one on the face of each of the more than 2,000 people who attended the celebration at the North Hollywood station.

"I've never seen so many smiling faces at one time," said Dennis Mori, Segment 3 project manager, who brought his family to see what he's been doing for the past several years. "It's very rewarding to know that everybody has worked so hard toward this opening."

Real feeling of satisfaction

His boss, Charles Stark, executive officer, Construction and Engineering, echoed Mori's thoughts. "A day like today gives everybody a real feeling of satisfaction."

Stark said the project, both below ground and at the surface, will be ready for the June 24-25 opening. "A little paving, a little concrete, plant a few trees and we're done."

Meantime, said Ralph de la Cruz, deputy executive officer, Rail Operations, his crews are "exercising all our vehicles, shaking down the equipment."

"Operators have told me, 'We'll finally have a real system that connects so much of Los Angeles County,'" de la Cruz said. "They're rail buffs as well as rail professionals and they're very proud of the system."

Barbara Service, a rail operations supervisor with 29 years of MTA service, is on her third Metro Red Line startup. She's involved with train testing and coordinates with contractors, the LAPD and LA Fire Department to ready the system for operation.

Pretty much problem-free

"This one has been a lot easier than the other startups I've worked on," said Service, who plans to retire soon. "Probably because we learned a lot from the earlier two. This one has been pretty much problem-free."

Jeanne Kinsel, director of Contract Administration, has worked with Metro Red Line construction for 10 years, beginning with Segment 1. Originally brought in to work on contractor claims, she's now involved in retaining consultants to perform studies for the Eastside, Mid-City and San Fernando Valley transportation corridors.

"I think about all the stages the Metro Red Line project has been through and how many times I've been out here wearing a hard hat and boots," she said. "To see it today; it's nice to know we're leaving it for generations to come."

Victor Granillo, a former bus operator and a Metro Red Line operator for the past year, is one of the rail operators that will make the system run day after day. He's pleased that the subway now reaches into the Valley.

"I love it this way. I can't imagine what it was like for the operators when the line was really short," Granillo said.

Going 55 seems slow

What's it like booming through the Santa Monica Mountains tunnel at 70 mph? "Now that I've been operating it for about a month or so, it's normal," he said. "When I go back into the other segments and drop down to 55, it seems slow."

Mike McDonald, 63, a railroad buff who grew up in North Hollywood, remembers when the Pacific Electric Red Cars connected the Valley with downtown Los Angeles.

"You could get on at the North Hollywood station, go down Vineland and Magnolia, then down the middle of the freeway to Highland Avenue, then southbound to Santa Monica Boulevard, then to Sunset, make a right turn on Park and into the subway terminal," he recalled. "It took 45 minutes to an hour."

McDonald is nostalgic, but he doesn't miss the old, slow Red Cars. Looking around at the spanking new North Hollywood station, he said, "The Red Cars were good for their day, but this is going to be great. I think once people find out just how good it is, they'll want it to be expanded."

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