



A youthful Mariachi orchestra help Metro San Gabriel Valley Communications Manager Helen Ortiz spread the word on safety.

MTA Participates in East LA's Annual Mariachi Festival

By NED RACINE

(Jan. 3, 2003) An audience estimated at 9,000 joined the Twelfth Annual Mariachi Festival, Nov. 17, to listen to local musicians playing traditional Mexican music.

Audience members also streamed by an MTA booth where the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension's Construction Impact Team offered a preview of the rail project to come.

Mariachi Plaza, tucked between 1st Street, Boyle Avenue, and Pleasant Street in Boyle Heights, serves as the site of the annual Mariachi Festival and the site of the first underground station on the eight-mile light-rail project.

To reach out to the Boyle Heights community, MTA supported the festival by making its property at 1st and Boyle available for parking. The property will serve as the mucking site when construction on the project's 1.7-mile tunnel begins.

In partnership with Planning, the Construction Impact Team displayed a model of the Boyle station, distributed maps of the alignment, answered participants' questions about the upcoming construction and gave away cardboard rail cars.

Showing MTA's Commitment

"We thought it was particularly important to participate in this year's festival because 1st Street and Boyle will be the location of the first of two underground stations for the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension," explained Yvette Robles, Senior Community Relations Officer and point person for the Construction Impact Team. "We thought supporting the festival showed our commitment to the community on the eve of construction."

Begun in 1989, the Mariachi Festival takes its name from the traditional Mexican



The Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension's Construction Impact Team offered a preview of the rail project to come at the MTA booth. Pictured here are Metro San Gabriel Valley Communications Manager Helen Ortiz and Regional Transportation Planning & Development Director Diego Cardoso.

band, a form of music that must now compete with American popular music for young listeners' attention.

"We are interested in involving the kids in Mariachi music because it gives them training in instruments, which they can always use, but it also gives them a sense of cultural pride and belonging," said Margarita Cannon, Mariachi Plaza Program Director.

This year's event raised \$17,000. Proceeds provide after-school programs where children can learn the art of Mariachi music.

"We're looking forward to MTA's renovation of Mariachi Plaza," Cannon added.

Mariachi Plaza is a community project of Nosotros, a non-profit organization, co-sponsored by the city of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department.

[Back to MTA Report](#)