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[Safety](#)
[Pressroom \(web\)](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Metro Projects](#)
[Facts at a Glance \(web\)](#)
[Archives](#)
[Events Calendar](#)
[Research Center/Library](#)
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[Metro Classifieds](#)
[Retirement Round-up](#)

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[Strategic Plan \(pdf\)](#)
[Org Chart \(pdf\)](#)
[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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PHOTOS: AJITH PEIRIS



Solar panels installed at Division 15, like these shown on the roof of the transportation building, will provide 20 percent of the division's power needs.

Installation of Solar Power Panels goes off without a Hitch

- The 1,638-panel installation is largest at a U.S. transit property

By ARLENE LIM

(May 10, 2005) After months of construction, the solar panel installations at East Valley Division 15 and West Valley Division 8 are complete.

"We're happy that it's installed and it was successful," said Tim Lindholm, Facilities Operations project manager for the solar panel installation. "It's an innovative way to use all this empty rooftop real estate at these divisions."

The 1,648 panels, which can generate a maximum of 426 kilowatts, are currently generating 400 kilowatts on a sunny day. Even on not so sunny days, the panels have been performing well.

"They're exceeding our expectations," said Lindholm, who has noted that the solar power system in the San Fernando Valley sector is the largest such installation ever at a U.S. transit property.

'100 percent sound'

There had been some concern about possible wind damage to the panels, which are installed on the roofs of the transportation and maintenance buildings at the two divisions.

But, even after a season of heavy rains and wind, the panels and buildings are still "exactly where we want them to be and 100 percent structurally sound," says Lindholm.

Actually, the rain has served as a good cleanser of the dust and dirt that can accumulate and decrease the productivity of the panels. The next sunny day after the rains, the power output increased.

The panels will be publicly unveiled, June 1, with many, including the press expected to attend.

"We've had a lot of support for this through our Board members and elected officials, so it's just a chance to publicly unveil it," said Lindholm.

More installations soon

New panels will be installed at two more facilities. According to Lindholm, the West Los Angeles Transportation Facility - the new Division 6 - will integrate solar panels as car shade structures.

The Transportation Building at San Gabriel Valley Division 9 also will have a solar generation element. Both projects will begin construction in summer 2005.

If the panels prove to be a success and funding is secured, Lindholm hopes that, in time, more facilities can enjoy the benefits of solar power.

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