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Effort to widen
First Street gets
underway as
construction
crews pave the
way for the
Metro Gold Line
Eastside
Extension.

Metro Rail Projects Advance, Joint Developments Blossom

- Eastside tunneling machines due this summer
- Environmental report next step for Exposition Line

By RICK JAGER

(June 3, 2005) The Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension construction project winds up its first year of construction, this month, just as the long-awaited Exposition light rail project appears to be gathering steam. Meanwhile, joint development projects at Metro's transit stations also are accelerating.

Since a groundbreaking last July, work crews have been busy relocating utility lines, drilling piles and excavating along segments of the six-mile alignment. The work is focused on preparing for construction of a 1.8-mile tunnel segment that will serve underground stations at 1st and Boyle Avenue and 1st and Soto Street.

Twin boring machines manufactured in Germany will be inserted to drill the two tunnels. The machines are expected to arrive this summer.

Scheduled for completion in late 2009, the Eastside Extension is Metro's highest priority rail construction project. At a cost of \$898.8 million, with half of the funding coming from the federal government, the rail line will serve eight stations reaching from Union Station eastward through the Little Tokyo/Arts District, Boyle Heights and into East Los Angeles.

Exposition Line

The Board of Directors in April approved a \$640 million full funding plan for construction of the Exposition Light Rail Transit Project, which would operate from downtown Los Angeles to Venice/Robertson Boulevards in Culver City.

The 9.6-mile Exposition line, scheduled for a June 2010 completion, will share common track and two stations with the Metro Blue Line as it leaves downtown LA. The line will then proceed west on the Metro-owned right-of-way on Exposition Boulevard, paralleling the I-10 Freeway.

Approximately eight stations will be constructed between downtown LA and Culver City. A future second phase would extend the Exposition line to Santa Monica.

"The Expo project will have a great significance for LA's Westside and the region," said Board Chairman Frank Roberts. "In addition to providing an east-west commuting option through the heart of Los Angeles, this line will link users to the rest of the Metro Rail System and aid Los Angeles County in its ongoing efforts to meet some of the nation's most stringent air quality requirements."

The next steps will include issuance of a Final Environmental Impact Statement/Report (FEIS/FEIR), followed by the receipt of a Record of Decision (ROD) for the project from the Federal Transit Administration.

Joint Development

Developers and their partners are excited about the growth of the Metro Rail system and are investing more than \$4 billion in at least 30 new development projects around Metro stations.

"As the Metro system expands, more and more Angelenos will be able to live, work and play close to transit," said CEO Roger Snoble. "What we're witnessing today is a growing trend in development around rail that can improve mobility, recreate communities and spur economic development."

More than \$1 billion has already been invested in developments around Metro stations, particularly the Metro Red Line, where a new joint development has helped revitalize portions of downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood.

Transit-oriented developments, which contain a mix of housing, retail, office and entertainment adjacent to transit, are also a key component of the county's new development portfolio. Notable examples are the Del Mar Station and Mission Meridian Village in Pasadena, Sunset and Vine in Hollywood and CityPlace in Long Beach.

Due to the scale of growth occurring near transit, the county is seen as a national model in its efforts to build livable communities in urban areas that surround transit.