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Tunnel boring machine is about to be lowered at Mariachi Plaza Station construction site.



Photos by Juan Ocampo

## Eastside Extension: Tunnel Boring Machine Lowered into Position

- 'Vicki' and 'Lola' will excavate twin 1.7-mile tunnels beginning in January

(Dec. 15, 2005) Thursday marked a major milestone for the Metro Gold line Eastside Extension as Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Supervisor Gloria Molina, other elected officials and community leaders witnessed the second of two massive tunnel boring machines being lowered into position in the Mariachi Plaza station box at First and Boyle Streets.



With the tunnel boring machine in the background, CEO Roger Snoble and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa note milestone in construction of Eastside light rail.

Next month the machines, nicknamed Lola and Vicki, will begin boring twin 1.7 mile tunnels at an average depth of 50 to 60 feet between Mariachi Plaza and First and Lorena in Boyle Heights where narrow surface streets cannot accommodate light rail trains.

Fully assembled underground, each tunnel boring machine – built in Germany at a cost of \$10 million each – will weigh more than 2 million pounds and stretch 344 feet. They will carve 21-foot diameter tunnels and install pre-cast concrete tunnel liners.

"The City of Los Angeles, especially the Eastside, is moving forward now as we enter this critical tunneling phase," said Villaraigosa.



Officials assemble for photo at the site where tunnel machines will begin boring twin 1.7 mile tunnels.

"It's a milestone that was achieved thanks to a united community, united local leaders and a united Congressional delegation," noted Molina. "It won't be long before we can all see the light at the end of the tunnel and that will be a welcome sight, indeed."

**\$500 million in federal funds**

"The federal government has committed nearly \$500 million for the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension that will provide a critically needed safe, affordable and efficient mode of transportation to the residents of East Los Angeles," said Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (Calif. - 34) who represents Boyle Heights.

"For the families of the East Los Angeles community whose transportation needs have been ignored for far too long, this is truly a day to celebrate," she said. "Next stop: East LA."

Vicki and Lola are closed-faced earth pressure balance machines (EPB), rather than open face machines such as those used in building the Metro Red Line. The EPB machines have been widely used in Europe including during construction of the English Channel tunnel.

The machines are better capable of handling the excavation by providing increased ground support during tunneling to reduce the risk of excessive ground settlement.

The amount of earth excavated from the two tunnels by Vicki and Lola could cover an entire football field from sideline to sideline and end-zone to end-zone 15 stories high.