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Eastward Ho: Laboring behind a curtain of concrete discs, tunnel boring machines Lola, at left, and Vicki, on the right, are about to break through the first segment of the tunnel excavation underway beneath East Los Angeles.



Photo by Luis Inzunza

Tunnel Breakthrough Expected on Gold Line Eastside Project

- Tunneling will continue after pause at 1st and Soto

(July 21, 2006) Lola, the tunnel boring machine, is expected to poke her head out of the tunnel she's been digging beneath East Los Angeles sometime today.

The breakthrough will take place at the 1st and Soto station site in Boyle Heights, about three-fourths of a mile east of where tunneling began on the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension last Feb. 23.

The second tunneling machine, Vicki, is not far behind Lola in digging a parallel tunnel.

After passing through the station site at 1st and Soto, the two machines will continue excavating the 1.7-mile tunnel through to Lorena Street where the above-ground portion of the rail line resumes en route to its terminus at 3rd and Atlantic.

Throughout the tunneling operation, the 344-foot machines are maintaining a depth of 50 to 60 feet below the surface, carving out 21-foot, 4-inch-diameter tunnels and installing pre-cast concrete tunnel liners.

The 5.9-mile Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension is expected to open in late 2009.

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