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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [Ask the CEO](#)

► [CEO Forum](#)

► [Employee Recognition](#)

► [Employee Activities](#)

► [Metro Projects](#)

► [Facts at a Glance](#)
(web)

► [Archives](#)

► [Events Calendar](#)

► [Research Center/ Library](#)

► [Metro Classifieds](#)

► [Bazaar](#)

Metro Info

► [30/10 Initiative](#)

► [Policies](#)

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► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Metro Rail General Manager Gerald Francis, center, shows members of the Danish Parliament's Transport Committee the entrance to the Union Station tunnel walkway in the East Portal.



Photos by Bill Heard

Danish Parliament Transport Committee Tours Metro System

- Visiting LA to compare Metro Rail with new Copenhagen subway

(Aug. 29, 2006) Fifteen members of the Danish Parliament's Transport Committee, accompanied by the country's ambassador to the United States, toured the Metro System on Tuesday.

With the growth of Denmark's population and the on-going construction of a Metro system in Copenhagen, the delegation has much to learn from large American cities like Los Angeles, said Ambassador Friis Arne Petersen, who is based in Washington, D.C.



Visiting Metro, from left are Danish Parliament members Flemming Damgaard Larsen and Poul Andersen, shown here with their host, Metro Rail General Manager Gerald Francis, and the Danish Ambassador to the United States, Friis Arne Petersen.

The recently completed first phase of Copenhagen's Metro is an automated driverless system with 26 trains, 17 stations and about 10.5 miles of track. In the future, the underground system will have four lines, including one that will circle the city by 2012 and one that will terminate at the airport.

The delegation is particularly interested in how LA is coping with its "enormous growth in numbers of citizens and vehicle traffic in combination with public transportation," Petersen said, adding that the Danes are interested in the integration of various modes of transportation.

Extensive bicycle network

Although the automobile is still the dominant means of transportation, Denmark is noted for its extensive bicycle transportation network. Nearly a fifth of all trips in Copenhagen are by bicycle, while nearly a third of all daily commutes in that city of 1 million are by bike.

Members of the Transport Committee, the ambassador noted, would work with the Danish secretary of transportation to determine "what kind of investment Denmark should make in the transportation sector – a sector which has become increasingly more important for economic development and the growth of our society."

"Without a well-functioning transportation sector and transportation policy," Petersen said, "you cannot have rapid economic development."

The delegation, led by Transport Committee Chairman Flemming Damgaard Larsen and Member of Parliament Poul Andersen, heard a presentation by Metro Rail General Manager Gerald Francis before setting out on their tour.