

[Metro.net](#) (web)

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](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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After carving out a 1.7-mile tunnel under East Los Angeles, the 2-million-pound tunneling machine packs up and calls it a day.

Lola Comes Undone

Up Close and Personal
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Photos by Ned Racine

(Dec. 7, 2006) Lola, the tunnel boring machine, retired from Metro in December after carving out a 1.7-mile tunnel underneath First Street in East Los Angeles. Lola and her twin sister Vicki were playfully renamed by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa at a ceremony held to observe the 2-million-pound machines underground descent one year ago. Since then, Lola has plowed through 6,984 feet of East L.A. in her eastbound path, churning up half of 232,668 cubic yards of soil (which amounts to a football field 116 feet high, says Tunnel Resident Engineer Tom Saczynski). Throughout the tunneling operation, the 344-foot-long machines maintained 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. -- from Gayle Anderson

