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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](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Elected officials joined Metro and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in a groundbreaking ceremony for rebuilding Ramona Opportunity High School. From left are Guy Mehula, Chief Facilities Executive LAUSD; Diana Tarango, Co-Chair, Review Advisory Committee; Dennis Mori, Gold Line Extension Project Director; David Tokofsky, LAUSD Board Member; Roger Snoble, Metro CEO; Gloria Molina, Chair, Metro Board; Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard; Monica Garcia, LAUSD Board Member; David L. Brewer, LAUSD Superintendent; and Jose Huizar, Los Angeles City Councilman. Approximately six years will be needed to rebuild the school.



Photos by Ned Racine

Metro, LAUSD Action Ensures New School, New Station

- Groundbreaking in East LA marks start of Ramona High reconfiguration project
- Agencies' land swap agreement allows construction of Gold Line station

(May 31, 2007) Officials marked the culmination of an unusual agreement between the Los Angeles Unified School District and Metro during a groundbreaking, Thursday, at Ramona Opportunity High School in East LA.

Board Chair Gloria Molina and CEO Roger Snoble joined LAUSD officials, members of the LA City Council, and Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard and others for the ceremony.

The project will make way for the Metro Gold Line's Eastside Extension. Ramona Opportunity High School serves pregnant teens and other female students in need of an alternative learning environment in grades 7 – 12.

Under its agreement with the school district, Metro is receiving a portion of land now occupied by the existing high school. The land exchange will permit Metro to construct a Gold Line station at Indiana Street. The agency also is acquiring additional land adjacent to the school site to ensure proper reconfiguration of the school.

The agreement is based on a plan the Metro Board approved in May 2006, under which the agency and LAUSD will share the estimated \$47 million cost of the project. Metro's costs will be capped at \$32 million, with LAUSD contributing the remaining \$15 million.



Members of the Bravo Medical Magnet Latin Jazz Band perform at Thursday's groundbreaking ceremony for the rebuilding of Ramona Opportunity High School. The rebuilt school will adjoin the Gold Line Eastside Extension's Indiana Station.

Project on-time, on-budget

During his remarks, Snoble noted that construction of the six-mile Eastside Extension project has reached the halfway mark and is on schedule and on budget. About 40 percent of those holding construction-related jobs come from the area, he said.

"The agency is now targeting 58 schools within a half-mile radius...to teach students the importance of staying safe in the rail construction zone," Snoble said. "Our goal is to reach 58,000 students with safety education outreach by the time the rail line opens in late 2009."

"Ramona Opportunity High School plays an important role in our educational system, and I'm glad we could preserve this long-standing learning facility to continue providing hope and opportunity to female students in need of this school," said Molina. "The school reconfiguration project is now part of the Eastside Gold Line vision and will include a stop sign right in front of the school to serve students from all corners of the County."

"The Ramona Opportunity High School project represents a partnership to bring much-needed resources to the community and students of the Eastside," said LAUSD Board Member Mónica García. "When public agencies collaborate to not only build schools, but build communities, great things can happen."

Phase 1 of the project, which includes administration, 15 classrooms, an infant care facility, multipurpose room and food services, is expected to be completed in January 2009. Phase II, which includes the new gymnasium and the playfields, is expected to be completed in December 2009.

'Toward a common goal'

"Today is a great day for the East Los Angeles community and especially for all those who care about the mission and future of Ramona Opportunity High School," said Roybal-Allard. "I want to thank everyone who worked so hard to make today's groundbreaking a reality. This project is an important example of what we can accomplish when we focus the energies of diverse organizations toward a common goal."

"I am very proud of the way the city, school district, county, and MTA partnered to make this school a reality, and I am excited that the collaboration will continue after the brand new school opens its doors," said LA City Councilman Jose Huizar.

"This will be a gathering place for the community that extends beyond education or public transit," said Snoble, noting that Metro has signed six joint development agreements that will bring much-needed housing and retail shops to the area.

The Ramona Opportunity High School reconfiguration project is part of the LAUSD's \$19.3 billion school construction program to build 145 schools by 2012.

To date, LAUSD has completed 65 new schools and 51 additions, returning 136 schools to a 180-day, full year calendar and providing more than 68,000 new classroom seats for students throughout the District.