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Architect Martha Welborne, Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and former Brazilian official Jaime Lerner ride the Metro Orange Line. Each played a crucial role in creating the popular service.

## Inspiration for Metro Rapid and Orange Line Tours LA's System

- Former Mayor of Curitiba, Brazil rides Los Angeles versions of his visions

By NED RACINE

(Oct. 3, 2007) Although transit systems are too complex to be the creation of one person, the Brazilian official who inspired Metro Rapid and the Metro Orange Line toured the Los Angeles versions of his vision, Sept. 28.

Jaime Lerner, former governor of the Brazilian state of Paraná and three-time mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, joined Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, LA architect and transit advocate Martha Welborne, and Metro officials in riding Metro Rapid Line 754 on Vermont Avenue. They also rode the Orange Line between North Hollywood and Van Nuys.

How did Lerner, a former guest professor at the University of California, Berkeley, react to riding Metro Rapid and the Orange Line?

"I think they are great achievements," he said. "Great contributions for the city. And now since this Orange Line works so well, there won't be any difficulty to increase the lines. People will understand . . . mobility is good for the quality of life."

In welcoming remarks prior to the tour, CEO Roger Snoble acknowledged the debt Metro owes Lerner. "This wouldn't have happened without our policymakers having had the opportunity to meet you, see your system

and believe it also could work in Los Angeles."

**Model for Metro Rapid**

During his first term as Curitiba's mayor, Lerner implemented the Rede Integrada de Transporte, a model for the Metro Rapid system and the Orange Line. Rede Integrada de Transporte sought to move a maximum number of people with a minimum investment in infrastructure.

Snoble credited Welborne – who coordinated LA officials' visits to Curitiba in the late 1990s – with having the foresight to recognize that the city's bus rapid transit system could be adapted to Los Angeles. Metro now operates 18 rapid lines throughout LA County.

For Welborne, seeing Lerner ride the systems he inspired was a rare treat. "It's absolutely overwhelming. It's a moment of professional joy, like few people ever get."

Welborne was working as an architect on a light rail line in Chicago when she heard Lerner give a lecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He said Curitiba wanted to build a subway but could not find the funding.

According to Welborne, Lerner asked "Can I do this with a bus?"

**Beneficiary of success**

Now the Metro Orange Line, the beneficiary of Curitiba's success, averages between 24,000 to 25,000 riders each day and a 65-foot articulated bus is being tested to increase ridership capacity by 15 percent.



Lerner interrupts his Orange Line tour to visit the Laurel Canyon station with Yaroslavsky

Lerner has already used the Metro System as an example for other cities. "In São Paulo, they are always saying, 'We're a car-oriented city.' And I told them, look, there is no more car-oriented city than Los Angeles, and they are doing very well. It's working well. And it will help a lot to increase the quality of life in every neighborhood."

Still, the biggest surprise for Lerner was that Los Angeles followed his vision. "I never expected this from a city like Los Angeles. It's a great example." He sees public transit as inevitable and notes that 74 percent of carbon emissions are in the cities, the majority from cars.

Welborne believes, "The right people were at Metro who were willing to accept the ideas from this 'Lone Ranger'.... They were willing to go to Brazil and consider the ideas. That wouldn't be true in every city."

"Thanks for being our inspiration," Gary Spivak, East Valley Division 15 transportation manager, told Lerner.