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Operator Egriselda Molina will put the Eastside Extension through its inaugural paces to break through cascades of ribbons at East L.A. Civic Center ceremony on Saturday. VIPs will board the official Metro Gold Line Inaugural Train at Union Station. Photo: Gayle Anderson

## Momentum Builds for Gold Line Eastside Extension Opening

- Metro Employees, Community Excited about Riding New Train
- **Online [Opening Celebration Sunday, Nov. 15](#):** Free Rides, the First Ever Boyle Heights Block Party and Mariachi Festival and Other Community Festivities Planned for Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension

By Laura Kloth  
Staff Writer

To say neighborhood residents are excited about Sunday's opening of the Gold Line East Side Extension might be a slight understatement.

"This one is going to be big. It's a whole new part of town. The community is very excited out there," said Bruce Shelburne, Director of Scheduling and Service Development.

Equally excited are the 500-plus Metro employees including Service Attendants, bus and train operators, Customer Service Agents, and Metro officials who will be shepherding crowds at Union Station, as well as the Extension's eight new stations.

"We'll have people on the platforms, on the crosswalks, in the mezzanine, in the queue lines," said Shelburne.

Amid final preparations at the Extension's Atlantic station this week, Shelburne was tapped on the shoulder by at least 10 people who wanted to know more about the new train, and when they would get

to ride it.

"Everybody who walked by asked me something. They're all so excited for the train to be coming. That really is kind of a neat feeling," Shelburne said, noting that he's had a role in every new line opening since 1990 when Metro cut the ribbon on the Blue Line.

With three-car trains with as many as 150 passengers per car running all day Sunday, Shelburne estimates some 80,000 passengers will take advantage of the free ride day. "We've got capacity to carry over 100,000 passengers," he said indicating the trains will run about every eight minutes.

### **Safety and order**

This week, Customer Information Agent Marie Tervalon assisted with the last-minute training of the Metro Safety Ambassadors who will move crowds safely around the four street level stations. "People are really gung ho about it in East L.A.," Tervalon said.

Customer Information Agent Jacqueline Exeart – who, like Shelburne, has also worked every Metro opening since 1990 – said that in the past, the crowds have been very orderly.

Her most vivid memory was seeing the reaction of the passengers when the new Metro Red Line train they were aboard doubled its speed through the tunnel on its way to Universal City, giving passengers a mini high speed rail experience.

"You get to meet a lot of people, not only transit users, but people who love trains," said Exeart. "You meet a lot of people who were here in California when they use to have rail, and are very impressed with the system. You hear all the stories about how California use to have trains, and why they took them out."

When it's time to board for the first time, she said, "It's just amazing how their eyes light up, and for the people in that community who know that now they can get from point A to point B."

Customer Information Officer David Ullrich remembers working the Metro Green Line opening and dealing with the "hoards" of people. "I worked mostly crowd control. It was crazy and it was fun," he said.

### **Timing, planning and rock 'n roll**

Fortunately, Shelburne noted, this opening isn't happening on a blazing August day like the Metro Green Line did in 1995 when long lines of people waited while dignitaries gave speeches or the start-up of the Metro Blue Line when capacity was maxed out and not everyone got to ride the new train.

This time around, he said, a VIP event is scheduled for the Saturday before the opening and, because of the time change and single day offerings, the crowds will be more manageable.

Communications Manager Fran Curbello, who has organized events for every Metro rail opening, remembered the Metro Blue Line opening with this observation.

"There were throngs of people; it was standing room only. They [the visitors] really enjoyed it. I think trains were so new to people, I think

they saw it as an amusement park ride," she said.

For those planning to hang out at Union Station, Metro's own Blue Liners will join Tervalon to entertain guests at Union Station with classic rock songs rewritten to include the Metro Gold Line name.

So, lyrics like BTO's "Taking Care of Business" just might sound more like "Riding on the Gold Line...Every Day."

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