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Rail General Manager Mike Cannell expressed appreciation for Gold Line employees, in particular the 254 rail workers who moved 75,000 passengers at Sunday's opening, at the Operations Committee meeting on Thursday. *Photo by Gayle Anderson*

Employees Thanked for Making Gold Line Opening Run Smoothly

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Nov. 19, 2009) Employees who helped launch the Edward R. Roybal Metro Gold Line East Side Extension received a huge pat on the back from CEO Art Leahy and other Metro officials this week.

"Thank you and congratulations," said Leahy Nov. 19 as he addressed several dozen rail employees who assisted in the start up process of the Gold Line Extension.

The Nov. 15 opening was officially deemed a success by Rail General Manager Mike Cannell who also expressed appreciation to his employees, in particular the 254 rail workers who moved 75,000 passengers at Sunday's opening.

The Extension unveiling brought out people from all areas including a woman, who Leahy said, confessed that she'd lived in Monterey Park for 40 years and had never been to the East Side.

"It really is another example of the MTA revolutionizing Los Angeles," Leahy said during the Operations Committee



CEO Art Leahy congratulates Board, staff in Tuesday's Daily Brief report ...

meeting today.

"Everybody associated with this did a great job," said Bruce Shelburne, Director of Scheduling and Service Development.

Shelburne's boarding predictions were right on target as he noted that one of the smartest decisions was to split up riders going from the Atlantic stop on one end to Pasadena on the other by making them switch trains at Union Station.

While some people wondered why they couldn't ride straight through, Shelburne said it was the only way to guarantee that everyone would get a chance to ride.

"It took a lot of effort to get folks through the station all day long. We got everybody to where they were going," he said.

The peak period came around 2 p.m. when some riders had to wait more than an hour to board a train.

The Union Station elevator stopped working for a while, but was quickly repaired. The elevator and escalator at the Mariachi Station also stopped working for a brief time, while buses were made available to transport riders who needed special assistance.

Leahy was very grateful to the employees who helped with crowd control at Union Station. "Union Station was one tough operation. It was more congested than when the Red Line opened," he said.

In coming weeks, Metro staff will study riding patterns on the new route to determine how the trains are being used and make further schedule adjustments.

During the weekend opening of the Edward R. Roybal Gold Line Extension to East Los Angeles, Metro carried 75,000 friends of the line to eight brand new stations on Sunday. As I traveled amongst them on the train and enjoyed the festivities at Union, Little Tokyo Arts, Mariachi and East Los Angeles Civic Center stations, I was filled with pride and moved by the history of the event that reconnected, by rail, one of our region's oldest neighborhoods and a place where our diverse ancestries first called home in Southern California.

I was fortunate to walk into this success --- a light rail line completed on time, within budget and without incidence and delivered into service of a deserving community, specifically due to the commitment of this Board and the outstanding efforts of staff throughout the agency.

In advance of the safety enhancements for the line recently approved by the board, additional safety measures were deployed on Monday morning with ten crossing guards positioned at the five schools closest to the alignment to assist students crossing Metro tracks. The guards escort children to and from school in the morning and in the afternoon and will be in place until June 20, 2010.

Additionally, traffic control officers have been stationed at key locations in the City and the County and will remain for the next two weeks to assist motorists crossing the tracks. The 24 Ambassadors remain on post from 6:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on weekends. In addition, over 200 bilingual Spanish/English warning signs have been posted on the right-of-way to ensure critical messaging is taking place.

Many residents throughout the area are enjoying the cultural richness of Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles for the first time as they have personally articulated to me and other staff riding the system.

Congratulations to the Board and the staff on this historic achievement!

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