

[Home](#)[CEO Hotline](#)[Viewpoint](#)[Classified Ads](#)[Archives](#)[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](#)

Need e-Help?

Call the Help Desk
at 2-4357

[Contact myMetro.net](#)

Online at zev.lacounty.gov, and republished here with the kind permission of the official Third District website of Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky.

Orange Line extension's rolling forward fast



Orange Line project manager Hitesh Patel at new privacy fence going up in Chatsworth.

- Online at zev.lacounty.gov, and republished here with the kind permission of the official Third District website of Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky.

Hitesh Patel has been riding the Orange Line since Day One.

Since he lives in Yorba Linda, he hasn't actually been a daily commuter on one of the route's high-tech "Metro Liner" buses, which run from Warner Center to North Hollywood on compressed natural gas.

But as deputy project manager of the rapid transit busway's original stretch, he's been onboard throughout the planning, engineering, construction and 2005 launch of a line that wasn't expected to attract 22,000 daily weekday riders until 2020.

It hit that ridership mark its first year out, and continues to average about that today—making it a bona fide transportation hit.

So naturally, there's a sequel in the works. And this time, Patel is running the show.

Patel, a 13-year veteran of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, is project manager of the [Orange Line Extension](#), which will extend the line four miles northward from Warner Center to its final destination between Devonshire and Lassen streets in Chatsworth.

At the moment—and until the job wraps up in the summer of 2012—that makes him a very busy guy.

Ever since the contractor, Brutoco Engineering & Construction, Inc., got the go-ahead to start work in March, there's been a flurry of activity on the project.

A new 8-foot-high "privacy fence" is going up beside a mobile home park near the Chatsworth station—of one four new stations to be built as part of the project, along with new platforms at a fifth, in Canoga Park. The fence, which shields homes from construction hassles and looky-loos, is something residents had been seeking.

"We had a big input," says Jan McLeod, manager of the 198-home Chatsworth Mobile Home Park. "We needed the fence, so we got the fence. That was a big important thing for us. We're not looking forward to the next couple of years, but I keep saying to the residents, 'Remember the end goal.' "

That end goal—greatly improving transit "connectivity" in the Valley with a line projected to carry 45,500 a day by 2030—might seem a long way off. But workers already are hustling to set the stage for construction to start in May on a 500-foot bridge over Lassen Street that is one of the project's most ambitious elements.

To that end, workers are now preparing to relocate utility lines underground—a process that should start in May and end in the fall. That means intermittent lane closures have begun on Lassen during the day, with some night work expected as the project progresses.

In addition to navigating the host of approvals needed to start the work, Patel reports that 50 businesses leasing Metro property along the extension line already have been relocated, with two more to go by the end of the month. Three other businesses have had their leases with Metro modified, which means that their property lines are changing to allow the busway to go through. In addition, 26 billboards have been removed.

"We had a lot of challenges, but we worked through them," Patel says.

He's hoping that a needed agreement with Union Pacific can be obtained in coming weeks, allowing the Orange Line work to go forward across its property.

Meanwhile, Metrolink has relocated tracks and is building new rail signals to replace its current signals, which must be removed to allow for building the Lassen Street bridge.

Even before Brutoco came aboard, Metro had worked to design the parking lot north of the Chatsworth station, which is being built near the existing Metrolink parking lot. The design is intended to reflect community aesthetic preferences, including earth-tone light standards, expanded landscaping and a white split-rail fence along Devonshire.

Olga Lopez, senior community relations officer for Metro, said there's been a fairly light volume of calls about the project so far—about 500, many of them seeking information on the extension and its route. As work accelerates, she's expecting more. Meetings have been held with the Chatsworth and Canoga Park neighborhood councils, and more are planned.

Patel, 53—who was born in Uganda, lived in India and went to college in England—is a civil engineer by training. He worked at Caltrans before joining Metro in 1996. Given his experience on the original Orange Line, he thinks the busway's success—with 7.46 million riders in fiscal 2008—is something to build on for the future.

"The extension will provide greater access to more of the Valley," he says, "by improving north-south mobility and linking with the Chatsworth Metrolink station."

And, in the words of Scott McConnell, Metro's senior construction manager on the job, "we're off to a good start."

The \$215.6 million extension project, which also includes a bicycle/pedestrian path, is receiving funding from Measure R, the half-cent sales tax passed by voters in 2008. Its hotline can be reached at (213) 922-3668. The email address is molextension@metro.net.

Posted 4-21-10

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)