



NEWS

JUNE 1, 1994

CONTACT: STEVE CHESSER/JIM SMART
MTA PRESS RELATIONS
(213) 244-7056/244-6347
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOSSIL REMAINS OF FOUR ICE AGE ANIMALS FOUND BY METRO RED LINE TUNNEL MACHINE OPERATOR

The fossilized remains of four prehistoric animals have been recovered from Ice Age rock deposits deep beneath Hollywood. An alert tunnelling machine operator constructing the Metro Red Line made all four discoveries.

The scientifically important fossils – the leg and toe bones of an Ice Age horse, a partial lower molar of a mastodon, the left forefoot of an extinct bison, and molars from an extinct camel – are the first such remains found in the area. They are further evidence that the alluvial rock formation in the Hollywood area was deposited in the Pleistocene period and ranges in age from 10,000 to 280,000 years.

"These remains suggest there is moderate to high potential for finding additional fossil remains as we continue construction," said James Sowell, manager of environmental compliance for the Rail Construction Corporation (RCC). "We have a recovery program built into our environmental procedures, but we must give great credit to the machine operator who made all four finds."

Michael Guinther, a tunnelling machine operator employed by tunnel contractor Shea/Kiewit/Kenny, discovered the horse leg and toe bones March 8 while digging at a depth of 47 feet below the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Gramercy Avenue. He carefully removed the fossils from the rock, wrapped them in a towel and turned them over to the project manager.

The bones were accepted by the RCC's paleontology consultant, Paleo Environmental Assoc., Inc., of Altadena, and turned over to the George C. Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits for identification.

(MORE)

FOSSILS FOUND

Page 2

On March 31, Guinther found a second fossil deposit – the partial mastodon molar – 60 feet beneath the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and St. Andrews Place. On April 2, he recovered the bison forefoot some 250 feet west of the mastodon fossil, near the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Gramercy Avenue.

The bones from these finds were submitted to the San Bernardino County Museum Division of Earth Sciences for identification.

Finally, on April 20, while operating the tunnel boring machine some 65 feet beneath the surface just east of the Hollywood Freeway, Guinther made his most recent discovery, the camel teeth. The molars were submitted to the Page Museum for identification.

"We will be closely monitoring the excavation of the Hollywood/Western and Hollywood/Vine subway stations right from the surface down for any additional fossils or archeological remains," said Sowell. "It is our intention to preserve any finds and our construction procedures take such discoveries into account."

Sowell said the RCC preservation procedures call for fossils and other significant finds to be prepared and identified, then donated to museums along with an appropriate endowment to cover costs of research, preservation and storage.

Paleo Environmental Assoc. has instructed Red Line construction workers on proper procedures to follow when fossil remains are uncovered. The firm also monitors construction sites to help identify, scientifically evaluate and preserve any finds.

#