



NEWS

February 26, 1996

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METRO RED LINE COMING TO WILSHIRE

The Metro Red Line subway is expanding two miles and three stations along Wilshire Boulevard this summer. It is the Red Line's first expansion since opening in January 1993,

The extension, construction of which began in June 1991, brings the length of the Red Line to 6.4 miles, and adds stations on Wilshire Boulevard at Vermont Avenue, Normandie Avenue, and Western Avenue.

"When the Wilshire segment opens, thousands of additional riders will have access to the Metro Rail system," said MTA Chairman Larry Zarian. "This leg of the Red Line, which will serve one of the most congested areas of the County, will offer new and faster travel opportunities on a safe, reliable and efficient mode of transportation."

The expansion of three new stations, when added to the five already in service, is projected to increase ridership on the Red Line to over 40,000 boardings per day by the end of the first year of service.

"We expect that this segment will boost ridership throughout the Metro Rail system," said Joe Drew, MTA's interim chief executive officer. "When we opened the Green Line last summer, ridership jumped on the Blue and Red Lines. Overall, we saw a 23 per cent increase in rail ridership last year, and I predict we'll see continued improvement this year with the opening of the Wilshire Corridor."

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The Wilshire Corridor is the first extension of the Metro Red Line, and the first portion of Segment 2 to open for passenger service. Segment 2 also includes three stations along Vermont Avenue and two stations on Hollywood Boulevard. The Vermont/Hollywood portion of Segment 2 is projected to open during winter 1998.

A comprehensive bus-rail interface plan is being developed to ensure easy access to each of the stations from both nearby communities and more distant locations. Three community meetings and a public hearing were conducted to gather public comments and concerns. Responses were incorporated into the plan, which is scheduled for consideration by the Board of Directors at its February 28 meeting.

"Opening this first section of Wilshire will significantly improve travel times and decrease congestion along one of the city's busiest thoroughfares," said Nate Holden, Los Angeles City Councilman and an MTA Alternate Director. "Extending the subway will lead to better air quality, and will be a real boost to the community and the region."

The Wilshire corridor includes \$3.4 million for improvements to sidewalks, tree plantings and amenities such as bus benches and information kiosks. Known as streetscape, the intent is to revitalize an area and make it more attractive and accessible to pedestrians.

"Streetscape is part of our commitment to leave an area better than we found it," said Drew.

"We're particularly proud of our improvement in safety while building the Wilshire corridor," said MTA's construction executive Stanley Phernambucq. "We achieved more than a 50 per cent reduction in lost time accidents, and brought the rate down to less than the national average."

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Construction of the Wilshire corridor overcame many challenges. The pond at MacArthur Park was drained to allow excavation of an access shaft for the tunnel boring machines. The tunnel machines successfully mined through both hard and soft ground conditions without significant subsidence problems.

The station at Vermont Avenue is the deepest so far in the Red Line system, and features a unique, two level passenger platform to accommodate both the tunnels that continue west to Western Avenue and the tunnels that turn north along Vermont.

The Wilshire corridor will operate with the same Breda rail cars currently in service between Union Station and MacArthur Park. Additional cars have been ordered, and will enter service with the opening of the Vermont/Hollywood corridor.

The two miles of the Wilshire corridor puts the total mileage of the Metro Rail system at 48, or just past the halfway point of the 95 miles projected under the MTA's Long Range Transportation Plan.

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