



NEWS

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RIDERSHIP ON 6-YEAR-OLD LOS ANGELES METRO RAIL SYSTEM ALREADY RIVALS NUMBERS REPORTED IN OTHER MAJOR U.S. CITIES

Ridership on the first elements of MTA's new light and heavy rail transportation system, opened in 1990, exceeds that of 12 other major U.S. cities which operate rail systems.

Statistics also indicate rail ridership in Los Angeles has doubled in the last two years.

Nearly 100,000 passengers use three Metro lines on an average week day. The MTA operates the light rail Blue and Green lines, and subway Red Line - a network of approximately 48 connected miles of track, which helps relieve congestion on area streets and freeways.

Two years ago, ridership on the Metro Blue Line and Metro Red Line equaled 50,450.

MTA's ridership figures are even more impressive when compared with major U.S. cities with lines less than 20 years old.

Ridership on St. Louis' highly regarded light rail line is only slightly better than MTA's Blue Line; the Blue Line is carrying twice as many passengers than lines in Sacramento, Portland and Buffalo; twice as many as San Jose; and about the same as San Diego's much older trolley.

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MTA's newest line, the Metro Green Line, open since August 1995, is used by approximately 2,000 more passengers a day than the nation's newest light rail line, launched in Dallas in June 1996.

"In only six years, our ridership in Los Angeles equals or exceeds figures reported in other major cities," said MTA Board Chairman Larry Zarian.

"This is especially impressive because some of the other systems are much older than ours," he added. "Clearly, the people of Los Angeles are not as attached to their automobiles as is commonly believed."

Based on September 1996 numbers, ridership on the Metro Red Line - a 5.6-mile subway which travels from Union Station in Downtown Los Angeles to Wilshire and Western boulevards - increased 61 percent over the previous year to 36,500, the highest tally yet for the Red Line. Patronage has increased steadily since July when the Red Line was extended to include three new stations along the Wilshire corridor.

Patronage on the Metro Blue Line increased 13 percent to 45,500 daily boardings for the month, compared to last year. The 22-mile Blue Line extends from Long Beach, the second largest city in the county, to 7th Street/Metro Center in downtown Los Angeles.

Metro Green Line ridership increased to a new record of an average 17,100 riders per week day, up 60 percent over a year ago. The Green Line traverses 20 miles between Redondo Beach and Norwalk and serves one of the busiest airline terminals in the world, the Los Angeles Airport.

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"This latest statistical evidence proves that Los Angeles rail ridership figures stack up nicely with our counterpart systems," said MTA Chief Executive Officer Joseph E. Drew. "If these ridership trends continue, our Los Angeles rail system will one day become a model for the rest of the world.

"When one looks back in history, it is not all that surprising Southern Californians are beginning to embrace rail travel again. At one time, we had the largest inter-urban rail system in the world. Indeed, film buffs will recall seeing the Pacific Electric Red Car in numerous Keystone Cops movie scenes.

"People who lived in Los Angeles back in the 1920s would be surprised to learn there are still commuters today that prefer a daily dose of freeway gridlock over the convenience and comfort of the train. There are strong indications, however, that the mind-set of yesteryear is finally beginning to return."

Los Angeles' ridership rate is exceeded only by New York City (4.3 million); Boston (751,000); Chicago (672,000); Washington D.C. (508,000); San Francisco (265,000) and Atlanta (185,000).

Los Angeles' ridership exceeds Denver (13,000); San Jose (20,000); New Orleans (21,000); Pittsburgh (24,000); Buffalo (25,000); Cleveland (26,000); Sacramento (26,000); Portland (27,000); St. Louis (44,000); San Diego (50,000); Miami (71,000) and Baltimore (74,000).

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