



NEWS

April 1, 1997

CONTACT: GARY WOSK/JIM SMART
MTA MEDIA RELATIONS
(213) 922-2712/922-2700
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRE-CONSTRUCTION ON METRO RED LINE SUBWAY ENABLING RELOCATED EAST L.A. RESIDENTS TO OWN HOMES FOR FIRST TIME

It's always tough to move.

As East Los Angeles residents begin relocating from acquired homes located near four planned subway stations - pre-construction is set to begin in May - the MTA realizes being sensitive is just as important as distributing 42-month rental assistance checks, which can be used as down payments on homes.

Sensitivity also is just as important as finding residents adequate replacement housing - a household cannot be relocated from a property in disrepair to similar conditions.

"They sincerely love East L.A. and what it has meant to them," said MTA Public Affairs Representative Luis Hernandez. "There is an emotional bond. Many of these families have lived in the same apartments and homes for well over 20 years...there's a cultural attachment. Separating yourself from local merchants and friends is very emotional."

By the year 2004, when Phase One of the extension to First and Lorena streets is complete, the subway will serve as a bridge, if you will, to jobs once thought as being out of the transportation loop for thousands of East Los Angeles residents. However, it's the present the MTA and East L.A. residents are most concerned with.

Typically, in the beginning, people do not want to move, report staff in

MORE...

Page 2 Relocation

the MTA's Real Estate Services Department, but as a growing number of residents are discovering, their quality of life improves.

For instance, take the case of single-parent mom Catalina Hernandez and her three children. For 22 years, home was a 350 square foot duplex - her sons slept in the living room. The family decided to use the 42-month supplemental lump sum rent check provided by the MTA as a down payment on a home in Bell. Ironically, it is located on a tree-lined street named Mayflower Avenue.

The reality of living in larger and more pleasant accommodations hasn't quite sunk in for Hernandez, 58. The family now lives in a comparatively palatial three bedroom, one bath home - that includes a large backyard with an orange tree, a two-car garage and sits on a 6,000 square foot lot with room to spare for add-ons.

"It's a dream come true, thank God," says Catalina, who served carne asada during a weekend house-warming fiesta. "It will cost a little bit more but I am willing to make the sacrifice in order to meet my financial obligations."

The real estate agent who showed them the property says it was love at first sight. "Automatic, right away, everyone agreed," says Francisco Gomez of Century 21.

Gilma Reyes, husband Samuel and five sons also love East L.A., but not enough to trade in their first home in Carson, accessed via security gates and situated on a clean, pothole free street. The home affords three bedrooms, built-in wooden cabinetry, a large bathtub and measures 1,700 square feet.

MORE...

Page 3 Relocation

"It's bigger and prettier than the tiny apartment in East L.A we lived in for 27 years.," says Gilma. "We could not have done this without the assistance of the MTA. Coming up with a down payment would have been impossible. It was a very good experience, very pleasant."

One of Gilma's sons, Alex, 18, shares his parents' enthusiasm. "I am very happy that my parents finally own a home," he says.

Treating people like human beings, and not like statistics, is the key to helping people adjust as quickly as possible to a pending relocation, says the MTA's Lynn Bell-Orona, Real Estate Services.

"Listening to what they have to say and offering assistance without being overwhelming is essential," Bell-Orona, a senior real estate officer, points out. "Also very important is explaining all of their options and limitations."

Typical concerns, says Bell-Orona, include: "Who's going to help me"? "What if I cannot find another home or apartment?" Which school will my children attend?" and: "The new apartment is not close enough to my doctor, what will I do?"

"You need to be very sensitive to the fact you're displacing someone, that you, on behalf of the MTA are making them move," Bell-Orona continued. "I put myself in their place: How would I react?"

Families like the Reyeses and Hernandezes are benefiting from the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970, which the MTA strictly abides by.

###