



NEWS

December 6, 2000

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

ENCYCLOPEDIA REPORT DETAILS NUMEROUS SUBWAY FOSSIL FINDS

Tens of thousands of years ago, the climate of Los Angeles was much cooler and wetter than it is today and its landscape teemed with ground sloths, horses, elephants and camels, a virtual kingdom of prehistoric creatures. There were even redwood trees.

These are among numerous fascinating revelations chronicled in a recently released MTA-funded report authored by paleontologist Bruce Lander who, with a team of 28 scientists, discovered more than 2,000 fossils, many of them rare, during construction of the Metro Red Line subway project.

There is even evidence of a great flood in the San Fernando Valley 9,000 years ago that swept away trees although weather conditions were drier and more extreme than today.

"This is one of the most important projects we've had in terms of providing new information and data to the scientific community," Lander said. "Our data will lead to a number of new publications."

Academics are in the process of reviewing the significant findings described in the report entitled: "Paleontologic Resource Impact Mitigation Program Final Technical Report of Findings." The Natural History Museum of L.A. County, the George C. Page Museum, University of California, Berkeley, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, Occidental College, California State University, Northridge and other institutions have received the report. The Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Geological Survey,

MORE...

Page 2 Fossil Report

Parsons Engineering Science, and Greenwood and Associates, responsible for the archeological retrieval work during Metro Red Line subway construction, also received the report.

"This extensive body of work advances our knowledge about our world," said MTA Environmental Compliance Manager Jim Sowell.

Fossil finds discussed in the report include:

- 64 extinct species of marine fish, including 39 new to science.
- the tusk of an Ice Age elephant (possibly a Columbian mammoth).
- bones and teeth of a towering American mastodon, western camel and ancient longhorn bison.
- bones of Harlan's ground sloth.
- wood and pollen of land plants including incense cedar and coast redwood trees.
- birds, shrews, cottontails, gophers, mice and kangaroo rats.

"Scholars will find this to be an invaluable, complete reference tool," said Sowell. "The MTA went the extra mile in uncovering these materials. The report also demonstrates how many disciplines are involved in a modern paleontological exploration."

Authored by Lander of Paleo Environmental Associates, the 300-page report contains colorful fossil photos and maps pinpointing where the fossils were found. The report describes, in depth, the more than 2,000 fossils found primarily at the 11 stations that comprise Segments 2 and 3 of the Metro Red Line and covers a period from some 16.5 million years ago to less than 10,000 years ago. Segments 2 and 3 stretch from Wilshire and Vermont to Lankershim and Chandler in North Hollywood, a distance of 10.9

MORE...

Page 3 Fossil Report

miles.

"This report summarizes the results of a multi-year mitigation program supported by the MTA since 1987," Lander said. "It demonstrates the benefits of a major construction project to the science of paleontology. Many of the fossil discoveries are scientifically highly important because they represent the first or oldest fossil record of their respective species."

The fossils can be viewed on the MTA's "Los Angeles Underground" website at www.MTA.net. The fossils also are periodically displayed at the MTA's library, located on the 15th floor of MTA Headquarters at One Gateway Plaza. In addition, a copy of the report is available in the MTA library.

Funding for the report was provided by grants to the MTA from the United States Department of Transportation Urban Mass Transportation Administration and Federal Transit Administration, the state of California and from local transportation funds, including Propositions A and C.

###

MTA-130