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## **Stations Along Historic El Monte Busway Get Facelifts, New Art and Amenities For Riders**

Two El Monte Transitway bus terminals and the historic El Monte Station -- granddaddy of the El Monte Busway and busiest bus terminal west of Chicago -- are getting facelifts.

Stations at Cal State LA and Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center, just east of downtown Los Angeles, have undergone \$2 million in modernization and security improvements and been repainted and enhanced with beautiful tile murals designed by Los Angeles artists known for their public art projects. This project was spearheaded by Metro.

In addition, the El Monte Station has been landscaped, repainted and, of prime importance to riders, additional berths have been added to accommodate more buses. The El Monte Station project was spearheaded by Foothill Transit.

"We wanted to enhance the structures by making them safer, easier to use and more inviting for the thousands of people who travel through them every year," said Metro Board member and County Supervisor Gloria Molina, who spearheaded the drive to get funding for the project. "At the same time we saw an opportunity to add art to make the areas -- and our county -- a little brighter."

"The two structures are essential to our system and they have served us and our patrons well," said Jack Gabig, general manager of Metro's San Gabriel Valley sector, where the LA County USC and Cal State LA stations are located. "It was time for a refurbishment but we didn't want to replace them because they are structurally perfect for the job. The best answer was a makeover that would bring the stations up to today's standards."

Improvements at El Monte Station were the best way to preserve the distinctive site while modernizing it, according to Paula Lantz, Foothill Transit vice president. "El Monte Station is perhaps the most vital transportation hub for Foothill Transit service. Providing the project management and funding to make it possible has been a very rewarding experience all around, from our interaction with Metro during the process, to receiving feedback from our customers. We anticipate these improvements will enhance the profile not just of the station, but of regional public transportation, positioning it as both a viable and a comfortable alternative to the individually operated automobile."

At LA County-USC Medical Center Station, artists Franka Dienhelt and Claudia Reisenberger of Merge Conceptual Design created a tile mural echoing the east/west bus connection between the San Bernardino Mountains and Los Angeles. Cool blues and greens thread through the murals at the bus boarding and elevator lobby areas. They also created the paint scheme. The artists were commissioned through Metro Art.

For the Cal State LA Station, they selected fiery crimson for the pedestrian bridge, with tile surrounding the two elevator enclosures in a pattern of red racing through a field of taupe. New lighting and signs and structural upgrades to both the stations and the connector pedestrian bridges will improve comfort and safety.

"The stunning paint schemes and tile art work bring a sense of permanence and quality to a formerly abused environment and benefit our customers, as well as thousands driving the I-10 Freeway and beyond," said Jorge Pardo, art and design manager of Metro Art.

Just 10 minutes apart, the two stations were not part of the original 11-mile El Monte Busway, connecting the El Monte Station with the Long Beach Freeway. They were added when the Busway was extended a few years later. There are three stations along the route that now spans 13 miles from the El Monte Station west to Union Station in downtown Los Angeles.

Dedicated in July, 1973, El Monte Station was the nation's first bus terminal built exclusively for a mass rapid transit operation. The circular structure at Santa Anita Avenue and Ramona Boulevard was designed to speed

bus movement as well as passenger flow, according to a 1972 Southern California Rapid Transit District publication. At the time, transit officials said, “the

Busway – and its ultra-modern station facilities – will prove to be an initial step in the renaissance in public transportation for Los Angeles County.” It cost \$945,000 to build. The \$3 million station improvements just completed include six new bus berths, a new public address system, new lighting on the upper and lower levels and renovations of signage, shelters and benches.

In 1975, the El Monte Busway carried 12,000 passengers per day. Today it carries an estimated 40,000. The El Monte Station hosts an estimated 1,100 bus trips per day, making it the busiest station west of Chicago.

- Editors Note: Digital photos of mural art are available by contacting Kim Upton at Metro Media Relations, (213) 922-2703 or (213) 922-2700.

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