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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Massive Tunnel Boring Machine Reaches First & Soto Streets in Boyle Heights

- Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Milestone

Construction of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension light rail project has reached another milestone as one of two massive tunnel boring machines has now burrowed 2,800 feet from Mariachi Plaza to First and Soto Streets in Boyle Heights.

“Lola” reached the underground station box on Soto Street Friday evening, July 21, and is being positioned this week to start excavating toward Lorena Street. Her sister tunnel boring machine, nicknamed Vicki, will arrive in about four weeks. Tunneling began last February.

By early next year, twin 1.7 mile tunnels will be carved out underground from First and Boyle to First and Lorena streets in Boyle Heights at an average depth of between 50 and 60 feet. Surface streets in Boyle Heights in this section are too narrow to accommodate light rail trains.



The tunnels are part of a six mile extension of the Metro Gold Line from Union Station in downtown Los Angeles through the Little Tokyo/Arts District, Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles. Eight new stations, including two underground, are being constructed.

“With new technology advances, the tunneling is so smooth and stable that no one on the surface is even aware of the amazing progress that is proceeding underground,” said Los Angeles County Supervisor and Metro Board Chair Gloria Molina.

Each tunnel boring machine weighs more than 2 million pounds and stretches 344 feet. The diameter of each tunnel is 21-feet. As the machines advance, pre-cast concrete tunnel lining is installed in the tunnels.

Lola and Vicki were custom built in Germany for Metro by Herrenknecht at a cost of \$10 million each. Construction of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension is being done by Eastside LRT Constructors, a joint venture of Washington Group International, Obayashi Corporation and Shimmick Construction Company.

Construction crews were honored recently for recording 1 million work hours without a lost time work injury.

Photo caption: Underneath East Los Angeles at First and Soto streets. Photo by Gary Leonard.

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