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## **Giant Tunnel Boring Machine "Lola" Reaches End of Tunnel for Eastside Light Rail Construction Project**

### **Video**

- Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension is Scheduled to Open in Late 2009

Another major milestone was reached in the construction of the Eastside Light Rail construction project when "Lola", the massive Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) finished burrowing a 1.7-mile eastbound tunnel of the underground segment for the Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles.

Lola reached the underground box of the East Portal at First and Lorena streets in Boyle Heights Tuesday (Nov. 14). Her twin sister, "Vicki," is a few weeks behind in the westbound tunnel. Tunneling began last February.

"Today's breakthrough marks a watershed moment in the history of this project," said LA County Supervisor and Metro Board Chair Gloria Molina. "I know that my mentor, the late Rep. Ed Roybal, would be so proud of our progress. The Eastside Extension was his dream – and today we are that much closer to connecting the Eastside to Metro's mass transit network."

The twin tunnels were carved out from First and Boyle to First and Lorena streets at an average depth of between 50 to 60 feet. Surface streets in Boyle Heights in this section are too narrow to accommodate light rail train cars.

"This is truly an historic day for eastside residents with the completion of the first of two tunnels being constructed for this eastside extension of the Metro Gold Line," said Los Angeles Mayor and Metro Board Member Antonio Villaraigosa. "Once completed, this project will go a long way in easing traffic congestion and will provide a usable transportation option for this densely populated area."

The tunnels are part of the six-mile extension of the Metro Gold Line that will link Union Station in downtown Los Angeles with Little Tokyo/Arts District, Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles by late 2009.

"I'm excited about this crucial project being built for eastside residents and can't wait for this important passenger service to begin," said US Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard. "Today's breakthrough puts us just that much closer to the opening of this light rail line that will provide real transportation alternatives and new opportunities for the residents of the eastside communities."

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

The amount of earth excavated from the two tunnels could cover an entire football field from sideline to sideline and end-zone to end-zone 15 stories high.

Eastside construction workers have logged nearly 1.3 million hours with no lost-time injuries, setting a record that has astonished long-time construction safety executives since starting work on the project in July 2004.

"This is an incredible accomplishment and speaks volumes to our commitment in making safety priority number one," said Metro CEO Roger Snoble.

The Tunnel Boring Machines, nicked-named 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.

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