



Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metro

Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension

NEWS

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF RAIL IN SAN GABRIEL VALLEY

The Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension is set to open on March 5, 2016, bringing passenger light rail deeper into the San Gabriel Valley. However, this isn't the first time the valley has seen passenger rail – or even electric rail.

Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad was founded in 1883 with the goal of bringing rail to Pasadena from downtown Los Angeles. The line opened in 1885, traveling from Pasadena down Colorado and Fair Oaks boulevards through what is now Highland Park into downtown Los Angeles. By 1887, railroad passenger service connected Pasadena to Mud Springs (now known as San Dimas).

Some other early lines include:

- 1886 – The first horsecar line opens, called the Pasadena Street Railroad.
- 1893 – The first electric line opens, called City Railway.
- 1894 – The Pasadena & Los Angeles Electric Railway purchases all Pasadena street railway companies.
- 1895 – Electric line connecting Pasadena to Downtown Los Angeles opens.
- 1898 – The Los Angeles & Pacific Electric Railway Company succeeds P&LA.
- 1902 – Old Pacific Electric succeeds the Los Angeles & Pasadena.
- 1902 – Railroad tycoon Henry Huntington builds the Alhambra and Pasadena Short Lines.

Henry Huntington bought the slightly renamed Los Angeles & Pasadena Electric Railway line in 1899 and incorporated it into the Pacific Electric Railway in 1902. The line was a 4.5-mile extension of the defunct San Gabriel Valley Rapid Transit Railway and originated at what is now referred to as Shorb Junction, a railway nexus 5.5 miles east of the Los Angeles River. In its time, Shorb Junction was one of the busiest transit points in Southern California, and Pasadena rail lines carried more passengers to Los Angeles than any other city. Most of that traffic served Pasadena commuters and visiting tourists from the East Coast.

Huntington opened two additional electric rail lines serving Pasadena. The Pasadena Short Line opened in 1902, and ran from Fair Oaks to Huntington Drive to downtown L.A. The Pasadena Oak Knoll Line served the city of San Marino. Between the two principal routes on the Pacific Electric, the Short Line and the Oak

Knoll lines, the rail cars carried about seven million passengers a year. Both lines were replaced with bus service in the early 1950s.

The general system of local and interurban rail passenger lines that had been developed in the area since 1886 were ultimately folded into Pacific Electric Railway in 1912 during "The Great Merger." Pasadena passengers were routed via Pacific Electric Railway Company Red Car Trolleys to Shorb Station to complete their journey to downtown Los Angeles before Red Car service was discontinued in 1951.

Amtrak took over locomotive passenger rail operations in 1971, serving Pasadena with trains such as the Southwest Chief, Las Vegas Limited, and Desert Wind. In 1994, Amtrak passenger service on the former Santa Fe Line, which is now part of the existing Metro Gold Line alignment, was discontinued to Pasadena. The current Gold Line Del Mar Station sits on the historic Santa Fe Depot in Pasadena, and the Gold Line Foothill Extension has two stations that also are adjacent to historic Santa Fe railway depots: Monrovia Station and Azusa Downtown Station.

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