



Los Angeles County  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

# Metro News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Ice Age Camel and Elephant Fossils Unearthed at Wilshire/La Brea Metro Purple Line Extension Construction Site



Metro Purple Line Extension workers excavating the future subway station at Wilshire and La Brea Avenue in L.A.'s Miracle Mile District have unearthed the station's second Ice Age fossils: a camel bone and a mammoth or mastodon bone.

Fossils were uncovered April 12 and 13 as Metro's contractor Skanska, Traylor, Shea was digging the subway station box. Cogstone Resource Management, the project's paleontologist, was monitoring excavation work, and temporarily diverted

the digging operation to carefully preserve and extract the fossils using plaster casts. Cogstone paleontologists then transported the fossils to the company's lab in Riverside, California, where they have now identified them.

The first fossil is a radioulna – a combination of forearm bones between the wrist and elbow – from an extinct camel named *Camelops hesternus*. These bones gave the ancient camel added support to displace its body weight over its front and hind legs. The Pleistocene era fossil is approximately 20 inches long.

“It is surprising to most people that camels were once native to Southern California,” said Dr. Ashley Leger, Paleontological Field Director for Cogstone. “Camel bones are quite rare in the fossil record of our area. We are very excited about what we might discover next in this fossil-rich area.”

The Ice Age camel fossil is slightly different than modern dromedary camels. *Camelops hesternus* had longer limbs, knobbier knees, and a larger head. Camels originated in North America about 45 million years ago.

The second fossil is most likely a femur, or thigh bone, of an Ice Age elephant. Referred to as a proboscidean, this elephant fossil comes from either a mastodon or mammoth. These types of early elephants were the largest of the land mammals during the Ice Age. If a mammoth, it would be a Columbian mammoth, not a woolly mammoth. The L.A. area would have been too warm to support woolly mammoths. The bone itself is a major weight-bearing bone, is very robust, and measures approximately 36 inches in length.

Both new fossils are the second ancient animals discovered by the Metro Purple Line Subway Extension Project. Metro's contractor is now building a four-mile subway extension from the Wilshire/Western Purple Line terminus to Wilshire/La Cienega in Beverly Hills. A tusk, tooth fragments and a nearly complete skull from a mastodon were unearthed at the same Wilshire/La Brea Station excavation site last November.

All fossils found at the Wilshire/La Brea station excavation will be handed over to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

For additional project information, please visit [www.metro.net/purplelineext](http://www.metro.net/purplelineext).

**Photo Caption 1:** Cogstone workers place ancient elephant bone in plaster cast to safely remove it from the Wilshire/La Brea subway station excavation.

**Photo Caption 2:** The camel bone measures approximately 20 inches.

**Photo Credit:** L.A. Metro

#### **About Metro**

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is unique among the nation's transportation agencies. Created in 1993, Metro is a multimodal transportation agency that transports about 1.3 million passengers daily on a fleet of 2,200 clean air buses and six rail lines. The agency also oversees bus, rail, highway and other mobility-related building projects and leads transportation planning and programming for Los Angeles County.

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