



Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metro News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

L.A. Metro Announces Winners of Purple Line Extension Section 3 Tunnel Boring Machine Art and Naming Contest



The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) has selected the winners of its art and naming contest for its third and final set of tunnel boring machines that will dig twin Purple Line Extension subway tunnels between Westwood and Century City starting in early 2021.

The names “Aura” and “Iris” were chosen from entries submitted by U.S. veterans and Veterans Affairs (VA) employees as well as UCLA students, alumni and employees.

Derik De Baun, a 2006 UCLA Alumni, was one of the naming contest winners for his recommended name “Aura,” which is Latin for “gold.” According to Derik, Aura strikes gold by being one of the primary official colors for UCLA as well as a color on the seal for the VA. What’s more, athletes from around the world will be “going for the gold” when the subway extension is completed in time for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles.

Clair O’Hanlon, a Veterans Affairs Advanced Fellow in Health Services Research, won the contest for naming the second tunnel boring machine “Iris.” Clair chose the name after Iris Critchell, a living veteran and Angeleno who flew military aircraft during World War II with the Women Airforce Service Pilots. During her military career, Critchell was an internationally recognized flight instructor and aeronautics and aviation educator. Earlier in her life, she also represented the United States in swimming at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany.

“Aura and Iris are two of our newest Angelenos — each of them tributes to our ambitious transit vision, our resilient spirit, and our unyielding focus on building more connected

communities and a stronger future,” said Metro Board Chair and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. “Our region’s recovery from the COVID-19 crisis will reshape our economy for generations to come, and these two tunneling machines will help us reimagine our city as a more sustainable, prosperous, and equitable home for all.”

Royce Soohoo won Metro’s art contest for his digital art piece called “Purple Line Extension,” which illustrates his vision of an ideal community along the nine-mile project corridor.

Metro originally opened its contest for art and naming submissions on April 30, 2020. Members of the public were allowed to vote for submitted entries in August. Nearly 8,100 votes were received for all contest entries. Winners were based on originality and community significance.

“With the arrival of this final set of TBMs, we are now on track to deliver the Purple Line Extension as quickly as possible,” said Metro CEO Phillip A. Washington. “Angelenos will soon have a new high-speed, high-capacity transit alternative primarily running along Wilshire Boulevard. It will greatly improve mobility for everyone traveling on our county’s public transit system.”

Metro has now received the cutterhead and shield for its tunnel boring machines, which are now staged at Metro’s Veterans Affairs construction yard in Westwood. TBMs are being assembled at the site and will then dig eastward to Century City. Metro’s Section 3 contractors, Tutor Perini O&G Joint Venture is building project Section 2 and the Section 3 stations with Frontier-Kemper/Tutor Perini Joint Venture performing the Section 3 tunnel construction.

The TBMs are manufactured in Germany by Herrenknecht AG. They weigh approximately 1,300 tons, are 460 feet long and are 23.49 feet in diameter. They will advance about 60 feet per day once digging begins. The depths of tunnels will vary throughout the underground alignment, ranging from 50 to 120 feet. The TBMs will tunnel five days per week, 20 hours per day and take approximately two years to complete their work.

TBM naming is a mining tradition that originates from a 14th century Saint. Saint Barbara, the patron saint for military engineers and miners, has been revered by underground workers as a symbol of protection and good luck for centuries. This homage evolved into the tradition of giving tunneling machines a female name before digging begins.

The third section of the Purple Line Extension Project spans 2.56 miles and includes two new stations at Westwood/UCLA and Westwood/VA in Westwood. This final section of the project is expected to open in 2027.

Overall, the Purple Line Extension Project consists of three construction phases. When complete, the project will extend Purple Line service nine miles farther west and include seven new stations: Wilshire/La Brea, Wilshire/Fairfax, Wilshire/La Cienega, Wilshire/Rodeo, Century City/Constellation, Westwood/UCLA and Westwood/VA Hospital. When the entire project is completed in 2027, the subway extension is expected to serve 59,000 riders daily – including 17,000 new riders. The project is funded by federal grants and Measure R and Measure M, the 2008 and 2016 sales tax measures, respectively approved by Los Angeles County voters for transportation improvements.

For more information on the Metro Purple Line Extension Project, visit www.metro.net/purplelineext.

About Metro

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) is currently providing lifeline service for essential trips and frontline workers. Metro continues building the most ambitious transportation infrastructure program in the United States and is working to greatly improve mobility through its [Vision 2028 Plan](#).

Metro has proudly pledged to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) [Health and Safety Commitment Program](#) to help ensure the safe return of transit riders as the U.S. recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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