

It's a lock: subway tests underway

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After years of free-wheeling turnstiles, L.A. is preparing to lock its subway gates this summer.

As Metro officials prepare to latch the gates on L.A.'s subway system this June, they've had [obstacles to overcome](#) in familiarizing passengers with the TAP cards that are now mandatory for most travelers.

The final frontier, though, has been figuring out a way to allow [Metrolink](#) riders, who use paper tickets, to connect seamlessly with Metro trains once the gates are locked.

The solution: microchip-embedded paper tickets that will unlock gates for Metrolink commuters passing through.

Starting in March, that workaround will be getting a major tryout in the real world, with gates temporarily locking at Union Station's West Portal during certain planned intervals as part of a joint project by Metro and Metrolink.

The object is to see if Metrolink riders and an in-house test group of passengers can navigate the gates smoothly.

Meanwhile, an intermittent series of locking tests has been rolling out elsewhere in the system to see how the TAP card-carrying public is faring—and how Metro employees are responding.

Recent tests at the Wilshire/Normandie, Wilshire/Western and North Hollywood stations have put staffers through their paces responding to patrons' calls for assistance through the "Gate Help Phone System," or GTEL, which is being installed at all stations with gates.

"This whole effort right now is to get our folks who man the GTELS some practice," said David Sutton, Metro's Deputy Executive Officer of TAP. "I don't think they've had any questions they can't answer."

Sutton's team also is grappling with occasional glitches like the bottlenecks that can crop up when a passenger's TAP card doesn't work, or a customer attempts to maneuver a bicycle through an emergency door.

"Customers are on a learning curve, that's true, but they seem to be getting it," Sutton said. "Even at North

Hollywood, which is a very, very busy station, they're getting it.”

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A new "Gate Help Phone System" is being installed.