

VIP Ceremony to Kick Off North Hollywood Metro Red Line Opening Weekend

(June 22) Actress Vicki Lawrence and a host of VIP guests will kick off the opening weekend of Metro Red Line service to the San Fernando Valley, Friday morning, with a ceremony and inaugural train ride.

Lawrence, known for her comic performances on the "Carol Burnett Show," will preside as mistress of ceremonies, heading a list of invited speakers who include U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater, FTA Administrator Nuria Fernandez, Congressmen Julian Dixon, Howard Berman and Brad Sherman, California Assembly Speaker Bob Hertzberg, Mayor Richard Riordan and MTA Board Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke.

CEO Julian Burke is scheduled to welcome the guests. Other scheduled speakers are Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, California Secretary of Business, Transportation and Housing Maria Contreras-Sweet, State Sen. Richard Alarcon, Assembly Member Tony Cardenas, Los Angeles Council Member Joel Wachs, MTA Board Member Jim Cragin and Academy of Television Arts & Sciences President Jim Chabin.

Operator tapped for Pledge

Division 8 Metro Rapid Bus Operator Danny Ennis has been tapped to lead guests in the Pledge of Allegiance. An LAPD Honor Guard will present the colors.

Following the 10 a.m. ceremony, guests and media will board trains for the inaugural ride from North Hollywood to the Universal City station where they will be entertained by various cartoon characters and movie lookalikes.

Rail Operator Tu Phan, 37, winner of the MTA's 2000 Rail Roadeo and a 13-year MTA veteran, has been chosen to operate the inaugural train. Operators Rogelio Chacon, Patricia Mayes and William Smiley also will operate VIP trains during the event.

"This is one of the most significant days not only for the MTA, but also for transportation in Los Angeles," Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky said at Thursday's Board meeting. "We'll not only be opening the final leg of the subway, we'll be introducing rapid bus service in the Valley and along the Wilshire/Whittier corridor."

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