



600 VIPs, Guests and Media Welcome Metro Red Line to San Fernando Valley

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(June 23) More than 600 guests and perhaps 60 reporters and photographers turned out on a sunny Friday morning to welcome the Metro Red Line to the San Fernando Valley.

The event began with VIP speeches under a huge white tent set up on the North Hollywood station plaza. It continued underground with an inaugural train ride to Universal City station. There, the VIPs were greeted in pure Hollywood style by Bullwinkle Moose, Rocket J. Squirrel, a Marilyn Monroe impersonator and other character lookalikes.

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"Congratulations to all the people who have supported this project," said actress Vicki Lawrence, doing duty as mistress of ceremonies. "My biggest hope for those of us who live in Los Angeles is that, instead of hopping in our cars next time, we'll give public transit a chance."

Celebration of the future

Welcoming the guests on behalf of the MTA, CEO Julian Burke declared that, "This is not just today's celebration. It's a celebration of the future of rail transit in Los Angeles County."

Burke earned applause from the VIPs and guests, when he finished his remarks by reminding them that, "Earlier this week we cheered the Lakers. Now, I'd like you to cheer the MTA. **GO MTA!**"

Among the first of a lengthy list of speakers, Board Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke called the opening of the North Hollywood Extension "...a move forward and a new direction for the people of Los Angeles."





Mayor Richard Riordan echoed her remarks, adding, "Today, we make history by connecting the Valley and downtown Los Angeles. To all of you, congratulations! We did it!"

A system of our dreams

U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater said the Metro Red Line "represents a strong foundation on which we can build a system of our dreams." He said the subway is "about additional opportunity and those things that give a community life."

California Assembly Speaker Bob Hertzberg, announcing that the state's 2001 budget has just passed, said it contains a total of \$245 million for San Fernando Valley transportation. The funds include \$145 million for an east-west transit corridor and \$100 million for a north-south corridor. And, he said, "This is only the beginning."

The morning's final speaker, Merle Marshall, CEO of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, put the MTA's achievement into a Hollywood perspective. "We in the entertainment industry know how difficult it is to create illusion," she said. "It is extraordinarily difficult to create reality."

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Channel 7 reporter interviews Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky	Rapid Transit fans greet Mayor Richard Riordan and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater
	
"Lucy" leads official exit at Universal City station.	Media frenzy at Universal Station includes Rocky and Bullwinkle.



"Marilyn" entertains the troops on arrival of the VIP train at Universal City station.



Metro Construction Chief Charles Stark talks with Rail Operations Chief Ralph de la Cruz and Segment 3 Project Manager Dennis Mori



Transit Operations Chief Tom Conner and Rail Operator Rogelio Chacon.



Metro Rapid operators (from left) Jesus Vargas, Jose Lopez, Danny Ennis and Alex Bermudez.

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