



NEWS

May 31, 1996

MEDIA ADVISORY

WHAT: In celebration of the grand opening of the Metro Blue Line TeleVillage, MTA invites the public to participate in a community celebration. The open house event will feature demonstrations of the TeleVillage center, safety and educational games, live entertainment, giveaways, food and fun.

The Blue Line TeleVillage is a community-based computing, teleconferencing, information and service center with a state-of-the-art computer center equipped with 12 Pentium computers providing access to the Internet for inner city residents.

WHEN: Saturday, June 1, 1996
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

WHERE: Martin Luther King Transit Center
(Adjacent to the Metro Blue Line Compton Station)
300 North Willowbrook Avenue
Compton

CONTACT: Rick Jager, MTA Media Relations at (213) 922-2707
MTA Media Relations at (213) 922-2700
Metro Blue Line TeleVillage center at (310) 604-7717

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MTA-124

June 28, 1996

CONTACT: STEVE CHESSER/JIM SMART
MTA MEDIA RELATIONS
(213) 922-2718, 922-2700
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOS ANGELES RED LINE SUBWAY MARCHES WEST

Like a victorious army on the march, Los Angeles County's Metro Red Line subway has advanced west two miles beneath Wilshire Boulevard and established a new beachhead at Western Avenue. This is an army of progress, which has left three gleaming new stations and a street beautification program known as streetscape to mark its progress.

On July 13, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) opened to the public the Wilshire Corridor of the Metro Red Line. It was the Red Line's first expansion since the original 4.4 mile segment opened in January 1993. The extension, which was begun in June 1991, brings the length of the Red Line to 6.4 miles, and adds stations on Wilshire Boulevard at Vermont, Normandie, and Western Avenues.

The opening was marked with festivities at the three new stations, and free rides on the opening weekend for the entire Red Line system.

"When the Wilshire segment opened, thousands of additional riders gained access to the Metro Rail system," said MTA Chairman Larry Zarian. "This leg of the Red Line, which serves one of the most congested areas of Los Angeles County, will offer new and faster travel opportunities on a safe, reliable and efficient mode of transportation."

The expansion of three new stations, when added to the five already in service, is projected to increase ridership on the Red Line to over 40,000 boardings per day by the end of the first year of service.

"We expect that this segment will boost ridership throughout the Metro Rail system," said Joe Drew, MTA's chief executive officer. "When we opened

the Green Line last summer, ridership jumped on the Blue and Red Lines. Overall, we saw a 23 per cent increase in rail ridership last year, and I predict we'll see continued growth this year with the opening of the Wilshire Corridor."

The Red Line offers connections to Metro Buses and Metrolink and Amtrak trains at Union Station's Gateway Transit Center, and links with the northern terminus of the Blue Line Light Rail to Long Beach. The Blue Line in turn connects at its mid-point with the Green Line Light Rail, which runs west from Norwalk along the median of the 105 Freeway to Los Angeles International Airport, and then south to Redondo Beach (see *Transit California* Sept. 1995).

The Wilshire Corridor is the first portion of the Metro Red Line's Segment 2 to open for passenger service, and opened on schedule. A further 4.8 miles of Segment 2 includes three stations along Vermont Avenue and two stations on Hollywood Boulevard, and is projected to open during the winter of 1998. The price tag for the entire 6.8 mile, eight station segment is \$1.6 billion. The federal government is funding approximately 50 per cent of the cost, with the remainder coming from State transit grants and local sales tax returns dedicated to rail projects.

The MTA adopted a bus/rail interface plan for the Wilshire corridor to make the rail system more accessible and make the buses more efficient by reducing duplication and using the cost savings to improve service.

The plan envisions the Western Station becoming a prominent transit hub, with an initial 4,000 bus riders per day estimated to transfer to the rail line, with several thousand more transferring to local bus services. Passengers from those lines can transfer, free of charge, to the Red Line or to local bus service. Rail passengers traveling west can likewise transfer to a bus at no charge.

Travel time from the Western Station to Union Station is 12 minutes—less than a third of the time the same trip would take in a car or bus during morning or afternoon rush hours.

The Wilshire corridor includes \$3.4 million for improvements to sidewalks, tree plantings and amenities such as bus benches and information kiosks. Known as streetscape, the intent is to revitalize the area and make it more attractive and accessible to pedestrians.

“Community aesthetics are important to our quality of life,” said Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, L.A. County 2nd District Supervisor and an MTA director. “That’s why I fought hard to ensure that stations along the Wilshire Corridor would not resemble sterile and lifeless concrete wastelands.”

“The three stations and the associated Streetscape improvements will increase the viability of Wilshire Center and help create an identity of place,” said Gary Russell, Wilshire Chamber of Commerce vice president. “The Red Line will bring in new business, and provide greater access to the rest of the County. We’re on our way to becoming the first major urban village in Los Angeles—a place where people live, work and shop in the same area.”

Construction of the Wilshire corridor overcame many challenges. The pond at MacArthur Park was drained to allow excavation of an access shaft for the tunnel boring machines. The tunnel machines successfully mined through both hard and soft ground conditions without significant subsidence problems.

“We’re particularly proud of our improvement in safety while building the Wilshire corridor,” said MTA’s construction executive Stanley Phernambucq. “We achieved more than a 50 per cent reduction in lost time accidents, and brought the rate down to less than the national average.”

The station at Vermont Avenue is the deepest so far in the Red Line system, and features a unique, two level passenger platform to accommodate both the tunnels that continue west to Western Avenue and the tunnels that turn north along Vermont.

All three stations have their own individual art identity, and the artists were selected by community-based panels. The art is integral to station design and incorporates themes from the surrounding neighborhood.

For example, the Art Deco features of the Western Station were inspired by the nearby Wiltern Theater, while a mural at the Normandie Station depicts Wilshire Boulevard's annual Festival of Masks Parade.

Service will be maintained by the initial fleet of 30 Breda rail cars that served the Union Station to MacArthur Park segment. Additional cars have been ordered, and will enter service with the opening of the Vermont/Hollywood corridor.

The two additional miles puts the combined mileage of the Metro Rail system--Blue, Green Line and Red Line--at 48, or just past the halfway point of the 95 miles projected in the MTA's Long Range Transportation Plan.

"We're building a transit system that will be both vital and viable for the next 100 years," said Zarian. "When this project is complete, even our critics will have to concede that we were visionaries."

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