



# NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONSTRUCTION OF 6-MILE EXTENSION COULD BEGIN MID-2003**

**MTA BOARD CERTIFIES FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT ON EASTSIDE LIGHT RAIL PROJECT**

The MTA Board today voted to certify the final environmental report on a planned 6-mile light rail extension of the Metro Gold Line through East Los Angeles. The extension would serve one of the most densely populated areas of Los Angeles County.

As a result of the Board action, the proposed project will be sent to the federal government for a Record of Decision (ROD) which is required in order to initiate final design and complete a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA).

The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (Final SEIS/SEIR) for the Los Angeles Eastside Corridor includes responses to the public comments received following last year's release of the Draft EIS/EIR, and a refined analysis. It also includes a detailed mitigation plan, which addresses community concerns regarding impacts during construction and operation of the light rail project.

Construction of the 1.7-mile tunnel portion of the project could begin in mid-2003, construction of the at-grade portion in late 2004/early 2005. The extension could begin operations in mid-2008.

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"The people of the Eastside have a reason to celebrate as construction of this long-awaited project is now within sight," said John Fasana, MTA Board Chair. "The light rail extension will connect Eastside residents with the Metro Rail system which, with next year's opening of the Metro Gold Line to Pasadena, will span 73.1 miles. This project will greatly expand their reach to multiple destinations, and it will get them there in less time."

The Eastside light rail project would serve as an extension of the Metro Gold Line, which is now under construction between Union Station and Pasadena and is expected to begin operations in mid-2003. The extension would operate from Union Station to Atlantic Boulevard along 1<sup>st</sup> Street, then transition to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street via Indiana Street and proceed east along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to Atlantic Boulevard.

The extension would include nine stations and operate at street level with the exception of the tunnel segment through Boyle Heights which was necessitated by the narrowness of streets along this portion of the alignment.

Several features make the Eastside an excellent candidate for such a project. The 40-square-mile Eastside is a densely populated area with a current population of 403,000. That figure is expected to grow 25 percent by the year 2020 and, during the same period, the number of jobs is expected to climb by 30 percent.

In addition, many Eastside residents are frequent users of transit. More than 19 percent of the area's workers use the bus system to get to work as compared to 6.8 percent for Los Angeles County as a whole. In fact, as many as 50 percent of the commuter trips made by residents of some Eastside neighborhoods are made on public transit.

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"The light rail extension will give the people of East Los Angeles an excellent travel alternative as they commute to downtown Los Angeles and beyond," said Gloria Molina, Los Angeles County Supervisor and MTA Board Member. "While the Metro Bus system will remain a vital part of the transit system, this extension will greatly improve their access and speed of travel to jobs, schools, medical facilities and places of recreation."

In January 1998, the MTA suspended work on an Eastside extension of the Metro Red Line subway prior to groundbreaking. The suspended project would have consisted of four stations east of Union Station. Following a study of potential transit alternatives for the corridor, the MTA Board of Directors in June 2000 selected the light rail extension as the preferred mode of choice for the Eastside community.

The Federal Government had committed to fund \$495 million, or approximately 50 percent, of the cost of the subway extension. The MTA studied the light rail alternative with the intent of improving transit mobility while retaining federal funding eligibility.

Following the recommendation of Governor Gray Davis, the state legislature earmarked state surplus funds to fully fund the Eastside alternative. The projected cost of the Eastside Light Rail Transit Project is approximately \$760 million.

"Commuters in this predominantly Latino, working class area, who rely heavily on public transportation, can look forward to having an effective light rail system," said Los Angeles Mayor Jim Hahn, MTA Board 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair. "This system will link them to the rest of Los Angeles."

Persons seeking additional information about the project should contact Henry Gonzalez at MTA at (213)922-3023, or visit the MTA web site at [www.mta.net](http://www.mta.net)