

ASCE MLAB Awards

Nomination of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Project For Outstanding Government Civil Engineering Project

A. Summary Reasons for Selecting the Gold Line Eastside Extension Project

Bringing mass transit to the East LA community, the 5.9 LRT extension is now a fundamental component of the greater LA rail network. The Eastside Extension now carries East Los Angeles residents to Greater Los Angeles faster and more efficiently than ever before. Connecting East Los Angeles directly to Pasadena as well as to the entire Metro Rail system, the \$899 million design-build project adds rapid rail transit service to a culturally rich, vital, densely populated, transit-dependent, predominantly Hispanic community with more than 125,000 residents.

Although it plowed uncharted territory—this was the first LACMTA project to be delivered via the design-build protocol—the Eastside Extension was completed *with an unprecedented low 3 percent change orders*, and with *no claims*.

The Eastside Extension project had a substantial social and economic impact on East Los Angeles, relieving the community's longstanding virtual isolation that resulted from the lack of transit options.

The deliberate integration of community-inspired artwork into the design resulted in improved quality of life, overcoming previously persistent local pockets of inner-city blight.

The tunneling operations were successfully conducted beneath heavily populated areas, in terrain that is seismically very active.

The unusual coupling of design-build techniques with an aggressive partnering approach smoothed the progression of work, notwithstanding the technical and financial complexity of a transit project undertaken by multiple contractors working amidst a bevy of often differing stakeholders.

B. Detailed Description of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension

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East Los Angeles first underwent large-scale development in 1875, with the introduction of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Numerous electric streetcars followed, with rail service connecting East L.A. to downtown. But the subsequent collapse of rail service in Los Angeles hit this growing region with particular impact. Finally, on November 15, 2009, rail transit returned with the opening of the Eastside Extension. It was a long time coming; after planning commenced in 1989, the project stalled in 1998 for financial reasons. Re-launched in 2000, there was a crucial change—the project was transformed into a design-build project.

Converting the design-bid-build project to the design-build delivery protocol played a major role in making the project happen. In this first design-build project for the LACMTA, the project team actually *shortened* the construction process by exploiting design-build's financial and temporal advantages. The new approach gave the owner the ability to set a flexible framework for creating acceptable solutions. And the project team used design-build to great advantage—the contractor could now set priorities during design; the owner could authorize early-release construction packages; the designers and contractor could work collaboratively during construction; and the contractor was free to determine efficient methods for achieving project goals. That flexibility equipped the project team to handle some daunting challenges—such as incorporating a completed tunnel structure design into the design-build contract.

Design-build proved to be an effective delivery protocol that could overcome those challenges. But this wasn't a typical design-build project; its advantages were augmented through a unique partnering program. This advanced partnering structure facilitated the timely elevation and resolution of potential issues. It was an effective approach: Change orders from the project only ran about 3 percent, and there were no claims.

But the ultimate measure of any project's value is its service to the community. According to Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, an East Los Angeles native himself, "For the first time in nearly half a century—since the last trolley ran down First Street—rail will again carry passengers from downtown L.A. to East Los Angeles . . . one of the most transit-dependent communities in Los Angeles."

Los Angeles county supervisor and transportation board member Gloria Molina added, "With the opening of La Linea de Oro—the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension—Eastside residents now have access to jobs, schools, medical centers, shopping, entertainment, and cultural opportunities throughout our county. In turn, the region will get the benefit of Eastside talent, our rich cultural heritage, our dedicated work ethic, and our welcoming business climate. It's a winning combination for the whole county."

The community immediately confirmed those endorsements of the project's value; more than 50,000 East L.A. residents boarded the Eastside Extension on the day it opened.

For more details on the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Project please see Attachment A.