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New Train Line Dedication Ceremony Draws Crowds

All aboard!

That was the sentiment expressed by federal, state, regional and Perris officials Dec. 11 during the Metrolink 91/Perris Valley train line dedication ceremony, an event that drew about 400 people to the new Downtown Perris station on C Street that serves as a stop on the route.

The \$247 million 91/Perris Valley Line extension adds 24 miles from the existing Downtown Riverside to the newly constructed South Perris station on Case Road. Other new Metrolink stations on the extended line—which ends in Los Angeles—include Hunter Park/UCR station in Riverside and the March Field station in Moreno Valley.



New meets old as a modern Metrolink train stands opposite a 1922 steam engine symbolically linking the development of railroad service in Perris.

The new line links Perris to Riverside and Orange counties and downtown Los Angeles. It is expected to remove about 4,300 vehicles from regional roads each day, reducing pollution, opening up Perris to sports, recreation and business opportunities and increasing employment prospects for City residents.

Therese McMillan, the acting administrator for the Federal Transit Administration, noted that Riverside County has some of the most congested freeways and longest commutes in the country. For those commuters, she said, trading a car for the train will provide transportation while soothing frayed nerves.

"It's little wonder why so many people are embracing a new alternative," McMillan said.



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch gives a television interview prior to the Dec. 11 dedication of the Perris Valley Line.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke and City Councilmembers David Starr Rabb, Rita Rogers and Mark Yarbrough attended the dedication. The day's activities included a ceremonial pounding of the final "golden spike" linking the new service to the existing Metrolink line. To commemorate the joining of the new and old, a 1922 steam locomotive from the Orange Empire Railway Museum was lined up next to a modern Metrolink commuter train.

Mayor Busch, a Perris resident for 40 years, said residents have been clamoring for train service for decades.

"It's finally here!" Busch said.

Busch said the new Perris to LA commuter service will provide City residents with improved job prospects, reduce greenhouse gases by taking vehicles off and serve customers with new "Tier 4" diesel locomotives, the cleanest-burning and most efficient available.

"It's a win, win, win situation all the way around," he said.



Therese McMillan, acting administrator for the Federal Transit Administration, talks about the importance of expanding mass transportation during the dedication of the 91/Perris Valley Line on Dec. 11.

Burke said she sometimes rides the Metrolink to work. Commuters on board get to know each other over time and develop a sense of family. She said train service from the City to Los Angeles will promote economic development to the City by exposing Perris' history, culture and recreational opportunities to many more commuters.

"I am ecstatic," Burke said. "It's great to be part of a City that has cohesive leadership and a vision to help it grow. It's Perris' time. Perris is blooming."



Perris City Councilman David Starr Rabb, Councilwoman Rita Rogers, Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke, City Councilman Mark Yarbrough and Mayor Daryl Busch drive a symbolic final stake to complete the 91/Perris Valley Line extension during ceremonies Dec. 11.

Rabb called the dedication a "great event that will make Perris more accessible to get to and from." He said he remembers reading in high school about plans to provide Metrolink service to the City.

"It's a momentous day," he said. "It's finally here."



During a short ride on the Perris Valley Line, Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke displays her satisfaction with riding the Metrolink train.

Rogers echoed sentiments that the rail line will ease traffic, reduce emissions and provide residents a "smooth worry-free commute into Los Angeles."

"We've waited a long time," she said. "This is a very good day."

Yarbrough noted that the ceremony took place on practically the same spot where the California Southern Railroad put Perris on the map more than 120 years ago. In those days, the train carried Perris Valley produce to markets in California and beyond.

"Perris was born through the railway and now we've come full circle," Yarbrough said. "It doesn't get any better than this."



Perris City Councilman David Starr Rabb shoots a video to commemorate the initial train ride on the Perris Valley Line.

Other speakers included Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley and Assemblyman Jose Medina, D-Riverside, a member of the transportation committee. Medina praised the partnerships forged among local, state and federal authorities that resulted in the recent dedication ceremony.

"Sometimes these things feel like they will take forever but they happen because of true partnerships," Medina said.

Ashley said public transportation via Metrolink especially will benefit disadvantaged families with several workers who must share a single vehicle.

"It will enable more working people to find and get to jobs in Orange County and Los Angeles," Ashley said. "This is a real exciting day. It's built. It's here. It's a dream we've had for years."



Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley chats with Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough and his wife, Shelly, during the inaugural ride on the Perris Valley Line.

Following the dedication, dignitaries and members of the public hopped aboard the Metrolink for the short 10-mile ride to the March Field Station, a route that parallels Interstate 215 through Perris. City elected officials and administrators to take photos and videos, chat on Facebook and enjoy the ride.

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