



City Clerk Council and Public Services &lt;clerk.cps@lacity.org&gt;

## Public Comment re: Construction of LA Metro's Westside Purple Line has been halted due to safety issue

1 message

**Margaret Molloy** <mmmolloy@earthlink.net>  
 To: Mayor Garcetti <mayor.garcetti@lacity.org>  
 Cc: City Clerk & Public Service - CofLA <clerk.cps@lacity.org>

Tue, Oct 25, 2022 at 8:35 PM

### PLEASE SHARE WITH THE MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS, AND METRO BOARD.

Dear Mayor Garcetti, City Council members, and Metro board,

This Los Angeles Times article states that in a memo to the board, Gina Osborn, chief safety officer, and Bryan Pennington, head of program management, said Metro employees are "extremely concerned that TPOG's poor safety culture on this project has created an environment in which new Employees are not trained Superintendents do not enforce policies and procedures to keep people safe and employees routinely face dangers from poor housekeeping."

I do not believe that the number of injuries and circumstances of those injuries cited in this article are a result of "poor housekeeping." This situation is much more grave. We should all be concerned that the safety of workers is not diminished because of the City of Los Angeles's choice to use this vendor because "Tutor's offer was hundreds of millions of dollars lower than its competitors." Generally, a significantly different cost forecast in a similar bid by professionals in the are field is a cause for caution.

Please prioritize worker safety and community safety, and not a presumed deadline for the Olympics in Los Angeles.

Appreciatively,

Margaret Molloy

## Construction of LA Metro's Westside Purple Line has been halted due to safety issue

Los Angeles transit officials suspended construction of part of the \$2.4 billion Westside Purple Line extension for two weeks amid a litany of "serious safety concerns" that have injured dozens of workers since July 2021.

Workers have fallen from ladders, crushed fingers, slipped in mud, been struck by falling manure and hit in the face by a blown hose while completing a 2.6-mile phase of the Purple Line, a 9-mile underground Railroad, which will eventually run from Wilshire Boulevard and Western Avenue to the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center

**Metro officials say they warned project contractor Tutor Perini O&G about unsafe conditions at the underground site, but the substandard conditions persisted.**

**"There is an ongoing pattern of safety issues that have not been adequately addressed by TPOG and that continue to exist unchecked," Metro officials said in a letter sent to the contractor on Friday.**

**The letter warned the group that underground construction could not resume until the company assesses past failures and comes up with a plan to establish a safety culture.**

**"For nearly two years, Metro has been writing letter after letter expressing concerns about the project's safety issues and the number of reportable incidents and avoidable accidents that have occurred," the letter reads. "For whatever reason, TPOG was unable or unwilling to take reasonable steps to address Metro's safety concerns and the situation continues to deteriorate, as evidenced by the number of reportable injuries since that time."**

**Tutor Perini O&G, a joint venture, did not respond to calls Monday.**

**Since July 2021, there have been 32 violations inside and around the project, according to documents sent to the board on Friday. Thirteen of the more serious injuries required medical attention and reporting to government workplace safety agencies. These regulators have been on-site several times over the past six months to investigate violations.**

**"Safety is and will remain our top priority," said Metro spokesman Dave Sotero. "The safety of those constructing our county's transportation projects must always be protected. We expect the contractor to improve their safety policies and demonstrate full compliance with all Metro contractual safety requirements before we allow work to proceed."**

**Sotero said the last time Metro halted construction for safety reasons was on the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor project in August 2016.**

**"It's rare that Metro takes this approach to ensure worker safety," he said.**

**In the dusty underground tunnel, ventilation is poor, stagnant water and dirt are common, and ramps to and from the tunnels are unstable, according to Metro documents describing conditions at the site. Officers found equipment improperly tampered with and conveyor belts missing safety nets.**

Since construction began in 2018, there have been 43 injuries requiring medical attention.

Last year, the board chose the joint venture, led by Sylmar-based Tutor Perini, to build the line, despite skepticism about the company's bid and its balance sheet. The company had been embroiled in a protracted legal battle over allegedly unpaid workers' expenses and had been largely left out of the construction boom. But Tutor's offer was hundreds of millions of dollars lower than its competitors.

A construction council, whose members work on Metro projects, spoke out in favor of the closure.

"The safety and health of our members is the most important thing to us. If the project owner (Metro) needs to take a stand, we support their actions," said Anne-Marie Otey, a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council. "We hope that the violations will be resolved quickly so that our members can return to work. Taking shortcuts is not the answer."

The full subway line connecting downtown to the Westside is slated for completion by 2027, just ahead of the 2028 Olympics. But that could put a damper on their plans. Other lines have experienced setbacks and delays, including the Crenshaw/LAX line, which was years behind schedule after faulty designs had to be refurbished.

Earlier this year, on another section of the Purple Line extension, a construction worker at the Mid-Wilshire site was killed after being hit by a service vehicle carrying parts and people. The site was operated by joint contractor Skanska-Traylor-Shea.

The closure comes as the agency embarks on a massive construction spree ahead of the Olympics and embarks on an even more ambitious plan. Over the next four decades, Metro plans to double the size of its rail lines — with tracks that will connect towns in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains as well as the South Bay, downtown, the beach and the San Fernando Valley with the work-class communities of the Southeast. Fueled by a voter-approved sales tax, the board has touted the build as an economic boon for the region.

"It's disappointing to see projects held up because of a contractor not honoring their contract," said Eli Lipmen, executive director of Move LA, a group that lobbied for the voter-approved tax to fund the subway line. "It is not the first time that this contractor has over promised and failed to deliver.

"These are real people with real families. We should offer them the highest level of security," said Lipmen. "They work in difficult conditions and we want them to come home to their families."

In a memo to the board, Gina Osborn, chief safety officer, and Bryan Pennington, head of program management, said Metro employees are "extremely concerned that TPOG's poor safety culture on this project has created an environment in which new Employees are not trained Superintendents do not enforce policies and procedures to keep people safe and employees routinely face dangers from poor housekeeping."

"We've been closely monitoring injury rates since last year," Metro CEO Ara Najarian said.

Of course, he said, everyone wants the project to be completed. But, he said, this sends a message that Metro is ready to "take a break" to finish it properly.

The current suspension went into effect Friday and runs until November 7, although it may be lifted earlier if the company meets Metro's demands.