

LOCAL WORKER PROFILES



Yesenia Lopez



Yesenia Lopez is a first-period carpenter apprentice (Local 661) working on the Automated People Mover (APM) project. Following in the footsteps of her brother, who is also a union carpenter, Yesenia entered the construction trades after working for several years operating loaders at a vehicle auction yard and deciding to try something new. The APM project is her first construction project, and she enjoys the camaraderie on the jobsite. Confident in her transition, Yesenia finds that the hands-on nature of the work appeals to her personality and allows her to utilize the construction skills her father taught her from a very young age. When asked what it is like to be a woman working in a male-dominated industry, Yesenia did not hesitate. "My teammates have been very helpful and are always willing to teach me new things," said Yesenia. "Being a woman has not been a barrier." Yesenia's superintendent noted that even though she is only a first-period apprentice, she has already demonstrated the talent, mastery of skill and willingness to learn needed to advance.

Luis Esparza, Jr.



Luis Esparza, Jr., a cement mason journeyman (Local 600), has worked on the APM project for over two years. Luis, whose father is a foreman on the APM project and whose grandfather worked as a non-union concrete finisher, decided to enter the construction trades after initially working as a graphic designer. He was prompted to follow the family footsteps after realizing that office work did not suit him and that he craved more variety and a better earning potential. Now, after 12 years in the industry, Luis has worked on a variety of interesting projects, including underground rail, a power plant, highway work and residential development. He notes that construction is a hard job and though it is not for everybody, it can make for a very rewarding career. A native of Southern California, Luis has resided in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Palms for five years and enjoys the urban way of life, particularly enjoying a bowl of authentic Japanese ramen on Sawtelle Boulevard. Luis is currently saving up to buy a home and notes that his decision to enter the trades has made it possible.

Michael Robinson



Michael Robinson is an operator (Local 12) on the APM project. He joined the project in November 2019 after being recruited by a LINXS superintendent who had worked with him on another major infrastructure project near his home in Inglewood, California. Michael, who was described by his supervisor as being a "real stand-up gentleman who is exceedingly honest and fair," has been working as an operator for 17 years after entering the trades on a recommendation from his cousin who is an engineer. Previously, he worked for almost 20 years as a state worker in the California Department of Motor Vehicles, deciding to make a switch when he realized he had enough vacation time saved up to be able to launch his new career without leaving his job right away. A former athlete, Michael credits sports for building his character and instilling in him the value of teamwork, both of which have equipped him to excel in his work. Michael is a proud father to four daughters and appreciates that through his work, he is able to help his local community and leave for them a tangible legacy that will outlive him. He recommends to anyone considering a career in the building trades to research career training opportunities thoroughly and talk to as many people as possible.

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Steven Parra



Steven Parra is a fifth-period laborer apprentice (Local 300) on the APM project currently working in traffic control. Steven came to the project in November 2020 after working three years on a variety of other construction jobs, including water treatment plants and demolition projects. The APM project is the first time Steven has worked in traffic control, and he has enjoyed watching the structure go up inside the LAX Central Terminal Area while learning something new. Steven also enjoys underground pipe installation, and before joining his union apprenticeship program, he spent eight years working in landscaping. Steven's entry into the construction trades in search for a higher-paying career follows in the footsteps of several of his family members who also work in the trades. When asked if he had any advice for those considering a career in the construction trades, he encouraged early participation. "The sooner you get involved the better, from a benefits and pension perspective."



Patrick Sanders

Patrick Sanders is a first-period carpenter apprentice (Local 562) who has worked on the APM project since April 2021, following the completion of his union's boot camp. Patrick lost his job due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was seeking a way to support his newborn son when his cousin suggested that he look into a local career exploration program. Through the program's educational events, Patrick had the opportunity to learn more about the various career tracks in the construction trades and was provided with information on available opportunities and additional resources. Within days, he was matched with a sponsorship opportunity and went to work. Previously, Patrick was working near some of the city's largest infrastructure projects and always wondered what it would be like to be involved. Today, Patrick reports that he is happy with the change and that he enjoys the physical nature of his work. When asked how he anticipates this choice will affect his life long-term, Patrick said, "It puts me in a great position to provide for my family and live comfortably. I may even start my own business someday with the knowledge I've gained." Patrick has lived all his life in South Central Los Angeles and feels good about the meaningful contribution he is making to his community and the legacy he will leave behind for his son.

Ricardo Ramirez



Ricardo Ramirez is a second-period carpenter apprentice (Local 562) who has worked on the APM project since September 2020. A life-long resident of Los Angeles, Ricardo first joined the construction trades as a non-union plumber after completing the HireLAX program on a friend's recommendation in 2017. When the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted his ability to find consistent work in residential and commercial plumbing, Ricardo reached out to his HireLAX contacts to inquire about other available opportunities. Shortly thereafter, he started the union apprenticeship program and joined the APM project, where he has been learning pile driving. Ricardo found that working on such a big project felt a bit overwhelming at first, but he has grown accustomed to the pace of the work and has enjoyed all the learning opportunities. When asked if he had any advice for others considering careers in the construction trades, Ricardo recommended taking some time to gain exposure to different trades and opportunities to find the right one and noted that the HireLAX program offers this along with a support network committed to helping him find long-term success.

