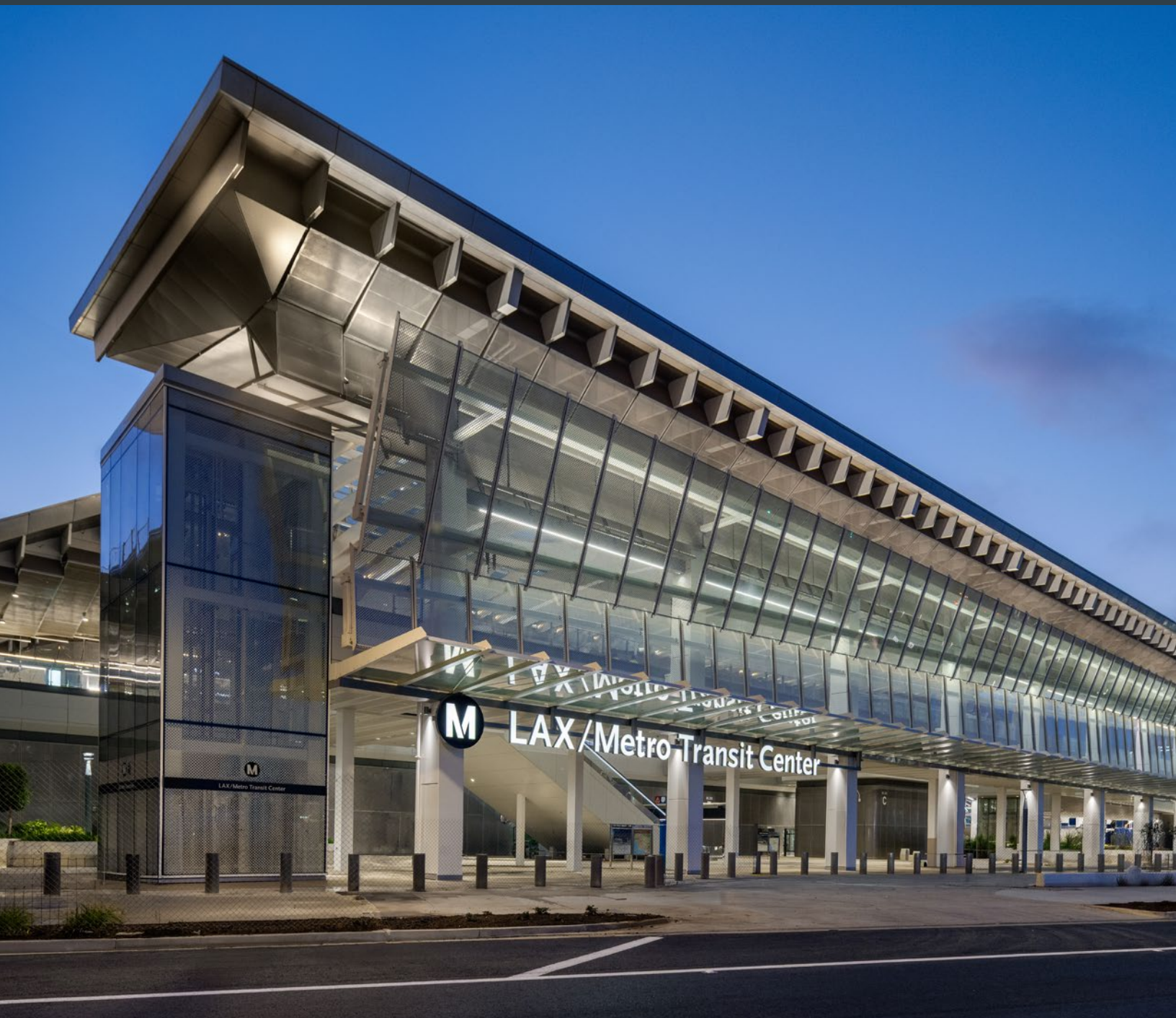
Case study

# **LAX**
# METRO TRANSIT

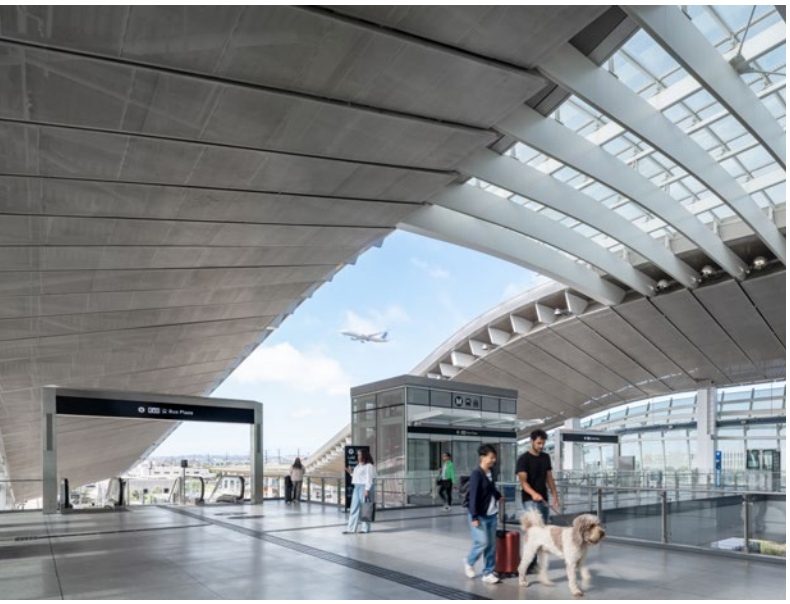


## ARTISTRY ON THE MOVE

As one of the most dynamic metro centers in the world, Los Angeles attracts people from near and far. The city is heralded worldwide for its culture, the entertainment industry, and a vibrant arts scene. Unfortunately, it is also well known for its traffic, congested freeways, and transportation challenges.

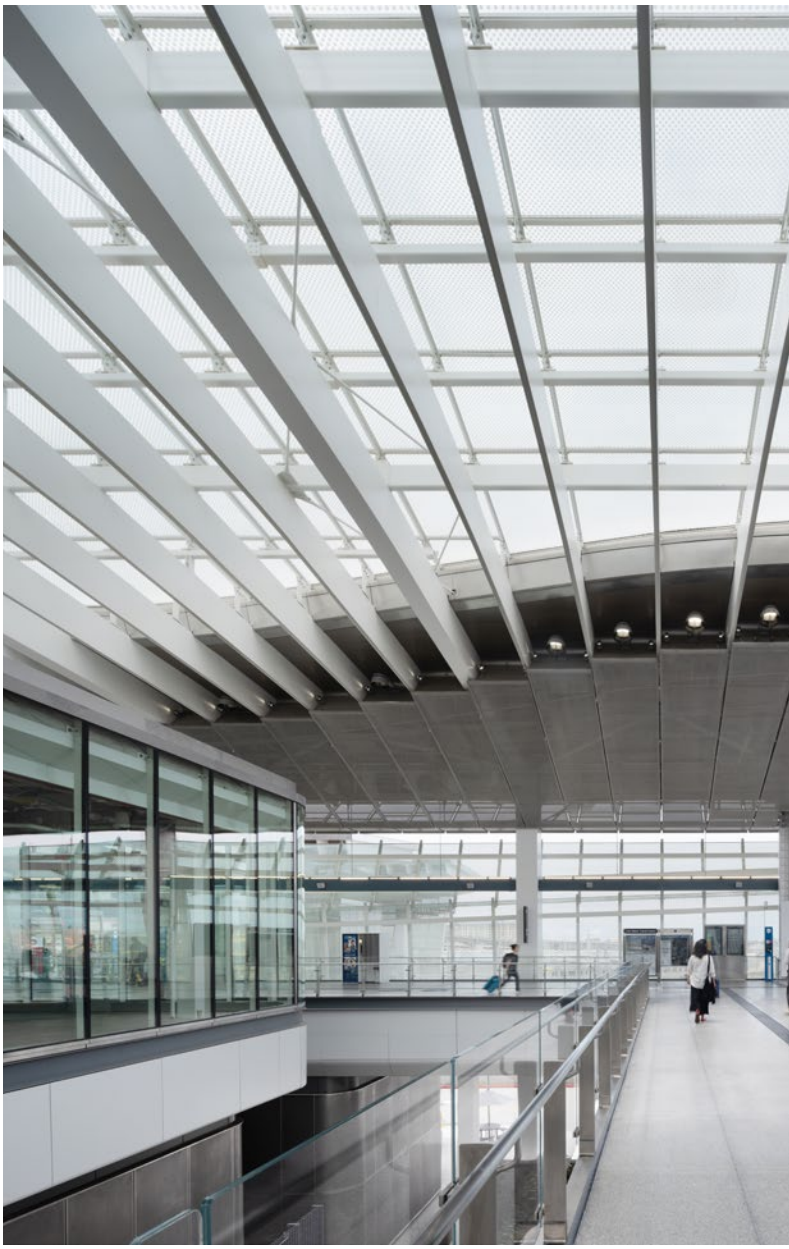
For many visitors and travelers, these challenges are apparent the moment they enter the hub of the city: Los Angeles International Airport. LAX has traditionally been difficult to get in or out of, a prevalent issue for the airport and the city for decades.

Addressing this problem drove Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) to allocate nearly $1 billion to pursue a dynamic solution. The goal was to create something more than just another transit hub, developing a permanent, sustainable solution that would last for generations. In addition to utilitarian function, it was meant to be a gathering place that feels welcoming as well as functional.



The result is the new LAX Metro Transit Center at 96th Street Station in Inglewood, CA, an iconic gateway serving one of the world's busiest airports. At the heart of the center's visual and functional program are sweeping, ribbon-like ceilings clad with approximately 80,000 square feet of GKD Omega 1520 PC metal mesh, a material that feels industrial yet elegant.

**"The functional aim was for the LAX Metro Transit Center to connect the airport with the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) regional rail and bus network," recalls Maya White-Turre, AIA, Senior Associate with architecture firm Gruen Associates. In partnership with Grimshaw Architects and ARUP, Gruen led the design of the transit center. "The designers, client, and the city had aspirations for an iconic gateway to Los Angeles that serves as a model of inclusive, sustainable, and community-driven transit development."**



The multifaceted station is intended to serve more than 45,900 daily boardings with room for future expansion. It had to also accommodate bicycle riders, the Crenshaw Green Line, buses, and the Automated People Mover (APM) serving LAX, all while creating a space that would improve air quality, mitigate climate impacts, and reduce the notorious traffic nightmare presented by LAX's drop-off loop. Schedule was also a driving factor, as the project needed to meet Metro's aggressive "Twenty-eight by 28" initiative for a transit- first 2028 Olympics, as well as LAWA's modernization goals ahead of the World Cup and Super Bowl.

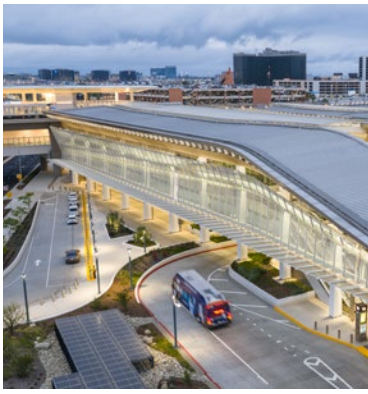
Design discussions began in 2017, and by June 2018 early schematic concepts included protective canopies swooping through the space, creating dynamic, ribbon-like roofs. Through this aesthetic, LAWA sought a design that conveyed strength and permanence.

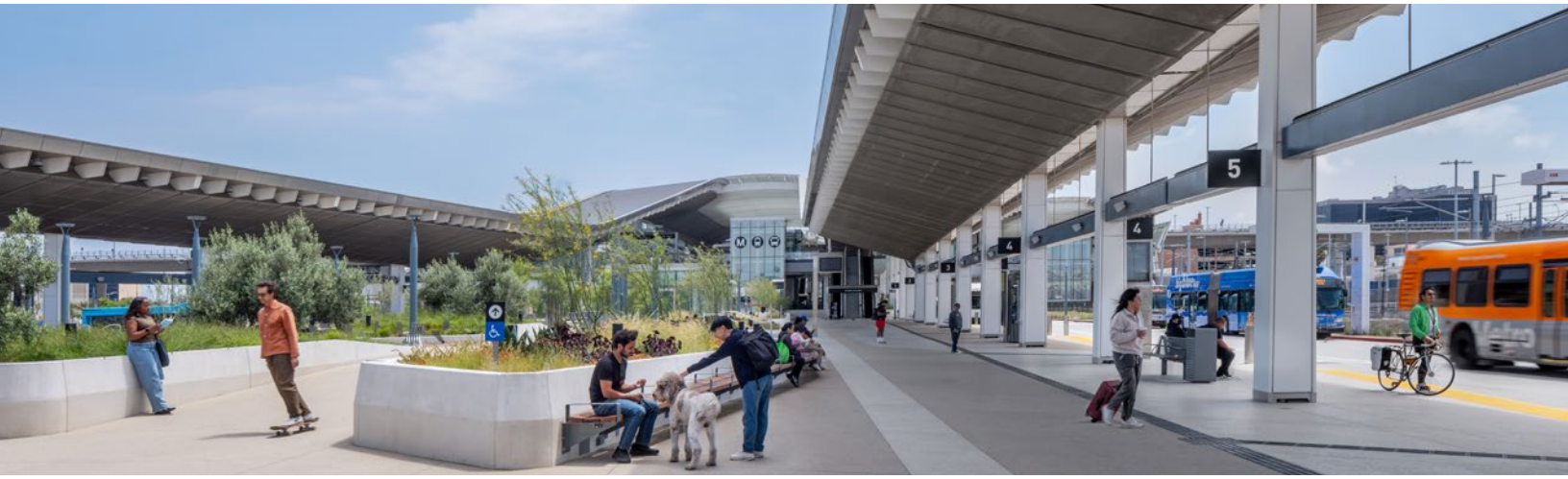
**"The goal was to create something that would stand for 100 years, so from LAWA's perspective everything had to be sustainable," says Andy Franks, project lead and regional manager with GKD. "Everything from roof components, roof alloys, and ceiling modules had to be stainless steel."**

This commitment to longevity informed all parts of the project, including the ceiling treatment. The design team envisioned two ribbon roofs whose undersides would be constantly visible to passengers, echoing the sweeping station roofs of many historic, recognizable train stations around the world. But the ceilings needed to do more than just look nice.

"The mesh elegantly screens the conduits and pipes required for a modern station's electrical, plumbing, fire protection, security, and PA systems," White-Turre explains. "The 50% open area of the Omega 1520 PC weave proved to be an effective solution. It reveals just the right amount of the technical complexity of the infrastructure above. The weave texture has a certain tactility which feels light and airy, yet technical. Durability, maintenance, and the percentage of open area to allow acoustic absorbance were critical factors. An open weave mesh with an absorptive acoustic treatment on the underside of the roof made an effective combination in reducing reverberation times."

Other metal fabric manufacturers were initially contacted for the project, but ultimately GKD stood out in its willingness to be a true partner in the project. GKD stepped up to meet the ambitious design, engineering, and sustainability requirements. More than just a supplier of high-quality components, GKD was able to provide engineering support and creativity to solve complex installation challenges.



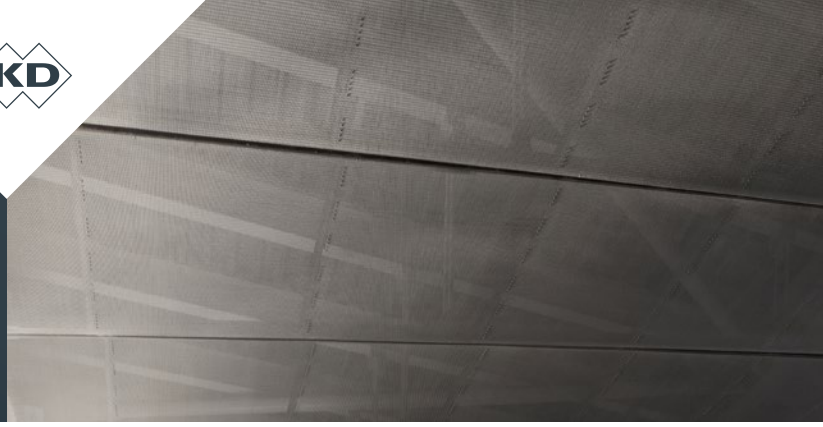


PROJECT DETAILS

**Owner**
Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation Authority

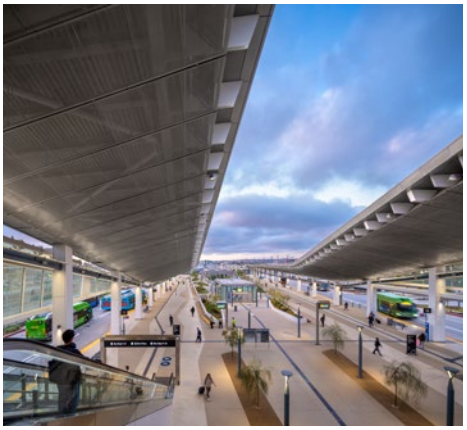
**Architect**
Grimshaw, Gruen Associates, and Arup

**Mesh Type**
Omega 1520 PC



One key innovation came with the decision to use Omega 1520 PC, a rigid mesh, instead of the originally specified Omega 1520, which is a flexible mesh. While nearly identical to the eye, the PC version could be welded to frames at only the ends and supported using defined intermediate connection points – much like a comb hooking the material to keep it flat and stable. "The bonus is that by using Omega 1520 PC it removes the need for tensioning hardware at both ends. This reduces loads that a tensioned panel would have exerted back to structure," Franks says.

Containing more than 60% recycled content, Omega 1520 PC supports the project's sustainability goals and helped it achieve LEED Gold certification. The Type T316L stainless steel alloy is also essential for withstanding the challenging marine climate.

Between 2018 and the project's completion in 2024, GKD produced approximately 1,400 unique panels. Each one was individually sized and shaped to create flowing, organic forms. The fabrication process had to meet stringent LA certification requirements. Each panel was carefully crated and shipped in phases over the multi-year construction period.

Installation required careful coordination between GKD, installation partner Enclos, and numerous other trades. The adjustable substructure helped compensate for construction tolerances and field variations.

The LAX Metro Transit Center officially opened on June 6, 2025, immediately making its mark on Los Angeles's transportation landscape. Weekday ridership on the Crenshaw Metro Line increased almost 140%, Saturday ridership jumped nearly 200%, and Sunday ridership soared over 200% compared to pre-opening numbers.

**"There was genuine joy expressed by the public and civic leaders who see a more extensive transit network as fundamental to making a better Los Angeles," says White-Turre. "Metro's Chief Program Executive Officer Tim Lindholm called it 'the most important project of his career.'"**

For a city long defined by its car culture and notorious traffic, the LAX Metro Transit Center represents a new way to get to the airport. It's a glimpse of a more sustainable, connected future that reduces emissions, improves air quality, and brings communities together.

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