



MTA Employees Marvelous on "Modern Marvels"

By GARY WOSK

(July 25) Former Houston Oilers wide receiver/running back Ed Tanner, who now drives Metro Buses out of Division 18, will be featured along with Gary Spivack of Transit Operations and Rex Gephart of Transit Planning on the History Channel series "Modern Marvels." The episode will be aired Thursday, July 27, at 10 p.m.

Past, present and future buses of all shapes and sizes and purposes are the focus of this installment of "Modern Marvels." The three MTA employees will discuss the latest technology and challenges of operating a large public transit system.

Tanner's appearance on the show marks the first time in nearly two decades that the personable Pasadena resident - who grew up in South Central LA and attended Los Angeles City College and Kentucky State College - has received this much attention.

Dodging a defender

"I definitely miss the excitement of the football field, but I was fortunate to have found a job that is as challenging as dodging a 325-pound defender, is rewarding and fun," said Tanner, who is engaged to be married later this year. "Most importantly, serving the public is very important and something I look forward to doing everyday."

During the approximately 10-minute MTA segment, Tanner, Operations Support Services Manager Gary Spivack and Planning Manager Rex Gephart described the Metro Rapid bus project and its computerized system for monitoring service performance along the two demonstration lines. They also discussed the "talking bus" and the benefits of compressed natural gas vehicles among other topics.

The episode, entitled "Buses," will spotlight a variety of buses, ranging from transit and school buses to former Oakland Raider's coach John Madden's cruiser and a 48,000 pound luxury liner with satellite TV and hot tubs. It will show the different stages of building a bus from the ground up.

Local producer for show

The installment was produced by Sherman Oaks-based Actuality Productions, which has filmed 120 shows for "Modern Marvels," including features on Hoover Dam, the Statue of Liberty, the Golden Gate Bridge, Mount Rushmore and television.

"It was fascinating. I learned a lot," said Acutality Productions writer/producer Luke Ellis. "When the History Channel first requested the show, the subject did not seem that fascinating, but as we got into it there was more information than we could possibly use on a one-hour show."

"Spivack and Gephart provided a behind-the-scenes look at the technology that is improving the transit system in Los Angeles," said Ellis, "while Ed Tanner provided an in-the-trenches perspective from someone who is actually working with these new systems. He was very congenial, just a very nice gentleman."

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