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Thang Tran is ready to welcome passengers aboard Metro Express Line 450X.



Sleepless Night Produced Idea for Metro Express Service

By RICH MORALLO

(June 30, 2005) Schedules supervisor Thang Tran couldn't sleep one night in mid-April as thoughts of operating an express line in the South Bay kept him awake.

"I always have ideas on how to make public transit simple and fast," said Tran. The concept of an express bus from the Artesia Transit Center to downtown Los Angeles fascinated him.

The next morning, Tran briefed his managers on his late-night ideas and got their concurrence.

"After that followed an intense two-week period of confirming the feasibility of the express service with several Metro departments, including Scheduling, the bus division, Fleet Management, Facilities Maintenance, Stops and Zones, and Marketing and

PHOTOS: RICH MORALLO



Gateway Cities General Manager Alex Clifford congratulates South Bay General Manager Dana Coffey on the startup of the Metro Express.

Communications," said Tran.

"Everyone said OK," he recalled. "Our test trips gave us good results and we planned an express schedule on the Harbor Transitway with only one stop at the Metro Green Line Station, cutting the trip to downtown to under 30 minutes."

Welcomed passengers

On Wednesday, about two and a half months after that sleepless night, Tran welcomed passengers aboard Metro Express 450X Line buses at the Artesia Transit Center.

"This a great day for South Bay residents who want a faster trip to Los Angeles," said Tran, standing in the doorway of the blue 40-seat NewFlyer low - floor bus.

"To promote the line, we staged an open house at the center with information tables and offered free rides for three days this week," said Service Development Manager Madeline Van Leuvan.

The line will operate during peak hours Monday through Friday, with four roundtrips in both the morning and afternoon.

Passengers like the new service.

'Line is just wonderful'

"I rode the 450X yesterday and will ride it again today," said Jim Coburn with DMJM Harris, who caught the 6:55 a.m. bus on Wednesday. "I've been using the Artesia Transit Center for five years to travel to my office downtown, and this new express line is just wonderful."

Coburn's family has a history with local transit. His father helped design El Monte Division 9 and his grandfather was a scheduler for the SCRTD.

Also catching the 6:55 a.m. bus was Shirley Groves, who was headed to the downtown courts. She noted that Metro Express is a "quicker ride," compared to other Metro lines from the South Bay.

"I like it," said Paul Samms, who on the return Metro Express trip also noted that it was a faster ride.

Ideas benefited transit



Passengers board the new Metro Express line at the Artesia Transit Center, bound for downtown Los Angeles



From left, Division 5 Operator Jean Dykes, Administrative Analyst Dixie Dorsett, TOS Debbie Blair and Division 5 Operator Marcia Walker staffed an information table during an open house at the Artesia Transit Center.

Tran, recently recognized as a Metro Employee of the Quarter, has had other ideas that benefited local transit and Metro.

The five-year Metro supervisor started a route masters program that centralized bus operator assignment instructions from 30 different files, and created a network folder that shared bus schedule information with other Metro departments.

"I appreciate General Manager Dana Coffey and Service Development Manager Madeline Van Leuvan for their openness, full support and encouragement; my team partners for their collaboration and diligent work; and all involved departments for their collaboration and quick turn-around." said Tran.

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