



NEWS

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CONTACT: GARY WOSK/MARC LITTMAN
MTA MEDIA RELATIONS
(213) 922-2712/922-2700
WWW.MTA.NET/PRESS/PRESSROOM
E-MAIL: mediarelations@mta.net

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WAIT FOR TAKING METRO ART TOURS TO DROP BY 50 PERCENT; OVER TWO DOZEN VOLUNTEERS TRAINING TO BECOME DOCENTS

The waiting period for taking MTA's popular Metro Art group tour of the Metro Rail system, provided free-of-charge, will be cut in half when 26 individuals who volunteered to become docents become accredited later this summer.

The soon-to-be docents, presently undergoing a 40-hour apprenticeship program that takes volunteers behind the scenes of the broad range of art in the Metro Rail system and provides insights into the artists, will be joining the current 12-docent unit which gives two-hour tours of the art and architecture featured at 50 light rail and subway stations.

The volunteers, who originate from all walks of life, including a doctor, waitress, a law student and a art history major as well as several experienced docents, were inspired by newspaper articles that ran in local newspapers about the docent program earlier this year and the Metro Art tours they took. Ages range from the late 20s to late 60s.

"I was very relieved and glad people were inspired by the articles," said MTA Docent Program Coordinator Robin Izon. "The response was overwhelming, and the group is very diverse."

According to Izon, the waiting period for weekday tours will drop from six weeks to three weeks and additional weekend tours will be offered as well. The number of tours scheduled each month will increase from five to

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approximately 15.

During the 15-week apprenticeship program, taught by the original docents, volunteers meet the artists who created the eclectic designs that punctuate Metro Rail stations, learn how artists were chosen for the project, the challenges they faced, the ins-and-outs of the creative process, and how the artwork is funded and maintained.

Following their 40-hour apprenticeship program, volunteers will lead a minimum of 12 tours a year of selected segments of the 59.4 mile system.

The 50 Metro Rail stations and Gateway Transit Center feature the work of more than 75 artists commissioned to enhance the transit system in one of the country's largest and most celebrated public art programs.

Since the program's inception in August 1999, docents have led 165 tours of various segments of Metro Rail, which translates into nearly 4,600 people. The MTA is believed to be the first transit agency to benefit from such a program.

Free tours for groups of 15 or more (maximum 60) are available by request. To reserve a Metro Art guided tour, or for more information, call (213) 922-4278.

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