

Metro Report Archives

September 2001 Articles

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MTA Now Providing Phone Information 30% Faster (Sept. 28, 2001) The average wait time for MTA customers who call MTA Customer Information has dropped by 30 percent – to under three minutes – in the past year, according to Warren Morse, deputy executive officer, Marketing and Customer Relations.

Subway Closed as Precautionary Measure When Passengers Became Ill (Sept. 27, 2001) Officials today are puzzling over the identity of an odor that sickened more than 25 Metro Red Line passengers and – as a precautionary measure – prompted suspension of subway operations for about two hours on Wednesday.

So Noted Mayor James Hahn and Councilman Hal Bernson presented a proclamation of appreciation from the City of Los Angeles to CEO Julian Burke...

MTA to Place 88 More Buses on Heavily Traveled Lines by Oct. 1 (Sept. 25, 2001) MTA will add 88 peak-hour buses on heavily traveled bus lines throughout Los Angeles County Oct. 1 to comply with a federal appeals court decision that calls for more bus service.

LA County Officialdom Says 'Farewell' to CEO Julian Burke (Sept. 20, 2001) Los Angeles County officialdom said farewell to Julian Burke, Wednesday evening, with words of praise for the accomplishments of his four years as the MTA's chief executive officer.

Customer Complaints Dip to All-Time Low with Clean, Dependable Buses (Sept. 20, 2001) The deployment of over 400 new buses and the introduction of Metro Rapid bus service in FY 2001 were among factors that contributed to the low rate of customer complaints received by the MTA in July.

20 Months, 19 Days: Operators are Accident-Free on Division 3's Line 201 (Sept. 19, 2001) For the past 20 months and 19 days, the Division 3 operators who drive Line 201 as it snakes its way from LA to Glendale to Eagle Rock have not had a single traffic accident. Not a fenderbender. Not a dint.

Fourth Quarter Review Reveals MTA on the Upswing (Sept. 18, 2001) For the final quarterly review of CEO Julian Burke's tenure, the MTA is on the upswing, having overcome during the past four years a series of financial, operational, construction and organizational problems.

New Bus to be Displayed, Wednesday, on Plaza (Sept. 18, 2001) The lead bus in a new order of 370 NABI coaches will be displayed on the Plaza, Wednesday, from noon until 3 p.m. Among its innovations: redesigned passenger seats and a CNG fuel tank with 15 percent more capacity.

The Staples Center is offering free parking at Lot 5 for rail patrons who would like to take the Metro Blue Line to attend a lighting ceremony marking the grand opening, Friday, Sept. 28, of the Watts

Towers. Lot 5 is only a short walk from the Pico station.

Israeli Minister of Transportation Ephraim Sneh tours MTA system. Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky conducted a tour of the Metro Red and Blue lines and the Metro Rapid bus operation for the minister and his entourage on Sept. 9.

Fasana, Snoble to Appear on Live, [Interactive Cable TV Special on LA Traffic](#) (Sept. 12, 2001) Angelenos fed up with traffic will have a chance to speak up and engage MTA officials in a live, one-hour interactive television dialogue on Sunday, Sept. 30.

Bulletin [Gateway Building Reopens to Public; Bus and Rail Operations Operating Normally](#) (Sept. 12, 2001) The MTA's Headquarters Building reopened to the public today, although a heightened state of security remains in force. Deliveries and other access by non-employees will be permitted. All entrances to the parking structure are now open, although parking is restricted to the south end of the parking structure.

[Board to Add 88 Buses to Fleet; Votes to Seek Rehearing of Appeals Court Ruling](#) (Sept. 11, 2001) Meeting in special session, Monday, the MTA Board voted to voluntarily implement a federal court ruling requiring the agency to add 88 buses to its fleet, despite the fact that the order is stayed until final resolution.

[Union Station Renovation Shouldn't Inconvenience Passengers](#) (Sept. 7, 2001) A six-month project to renovate portions of Union Station is expected to begin in November, but passengers rushing to catch the subway or a commuter train shouldn't be inconvenienced by the construction.

[Got Change? MTA Tests Change Machines at 2 Metro Rail Stations](#) (Sept. 6, 2001) These times, they are a-changin'! The first change machines on the Metro Rail System are being tested at the Universal City and North Hollywood stations.

Bulletin MTA to Open for [Regular Hours, Wednesday](#); Service to Operate Normally (Sept. 11, 2001) The MTA will be open for business as usual on Wednesday; employees should report for their usual work shifts. All Metro Bus and Metro Rail service will operate on normal schedules.

Bulletin [MTA Under Emergency Conditions: Gateway, Divisions Open To Employees, Service Operating Normally](#) (Sept. 11, 2001) In response to apparent terrorists attacks on New York City buildings, the Pentagon and other East Coast sites, the MTA has ordered a heightened state of security for its Gateway Headquarters, operating divisions, bus and rail lines.

Crews Pass [Milestone in Modifying Metro Blue Line 'Tail Track'](#) (Sept. 4, 2001) Construction crews poured 122 cubic yards of concrete, Friday, passing a major milestone of a project to modify the 7th/MTA station to accommodate three-car Metro Blue Line trains.

Maps Provide [Self-Guided Tours of Metro Rail Art, Architecture](#) (Sept. 4, 2001) Three publications that provide self-guided tours of the art and architecture of the Metro Red Line, Blue Line and Green Line are now available in literature racks on the trains and at the MTA Customer Service Centers.

Bulletin Board

- **[MTA's Ralph Sbragia Honored For Disaster Service Work in OC](#)** (Sept. 26, 2001) Ralph G. Sbragia, an MTA Safety Compliance inspector, recently was promoted to the rank of sergeant by the Orange County Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (OCRACES).
- **[The Scots Warmed His Heart During the Sept. 11 Tragedy](#)** (Sept. 25, 2001) Rick Hittinger of MTA Transit Operations was traveling with his mother in Scotland on Sept. 11 when tragedy struck New York City and Washington, D.C.
- Julian Burke: [Thanks for the Memories](#) and Photo Gallery
- Plus! [Musical Tribute](#) Sing-along
- [Michelle Caldwell](#) Named Deputy Executive Officer, Finance
- Division 10's Maintenance Roadeo Team Crowned Regional [Bus Roadeo Champions](#)
- [MTA's Deborah Coates](#), Author of 'Cat Haiku', Didn't Set Out to Write a Book
- **ACCOLADES** [Donna Warren](#) Elected to National Status in Accountants Group
- **[Jake's Adventures](#)**
The Zen of Smash-Jake stuns his quirky opponent, Jim, in a seaside game of Smashball. Too bad most business meetings can't be conducted on a beach with a ball and paddle in hand. And the opportunity to underscore your point – as Jake does – with a bruising slam to a sensitive area.
- **[MTA's Jess Godinez Won Air Force Honors](#)** for Saudi Arabian Desert Duty
- **[Dan Finkelstein of MTA Sheriff's Unit](#)** is Promoted to Captain
- **[Letters](#) are Barometer of Public's Regard for MTA, Stakeholders Editor Says** (Aug. 31, 2001) Beginning today, you can read the letters addressed to Stakeholders Connections on MTA.net.
- **[MTA Screensaver Giveaways Planned as Part of Internet Redesign Launch](#)** (Aug. 31, 2001) As a way of thanking visitors and increasing traffic to targeted areas of the MTA's Internet web site, Marketing has developed a screensaver giveaway in conjunction with the Sept. 1 launch of the redesigned site.
- **'HOW YOU DOIN'?' [Transit Operations](#) Announces 'Divisions of the Month.'**
- **PHOTO GALLERY ['Party of the Century'](#) Marks Division 6 100th Anniversary (Aug. 28, 2001)** Everyone who attended the Division 6 100th Anniversary celebration in Venice last Saturday, had so much fun they want to be at the 200th Anniversary party in – 2101!!
- **[SAVE THE DATE](#) MTA Chief Financial Officer Richard**

Brumbaugh will address the luncheon meeting of the Association of Government Accountants, Los Angeles Civic Center Chapter, on Wednesday, Sept. 12, at 11:45 a.m. at the New Otani Hotel in the Little Tokyo district of downtown Los Angeles. Reservations are required by Tuesday; call Deborah Harrell, 922-4108.

- [Program for Employee Reception](#) Honoring CEO Julian Burke
- Employees invited to [sign the giant farewell card](#) for retiring CEO Julian Burke.
- **Two Farewell Receptions Planned for CEO Julian Burke** (Sept. 6, 2001) Two farewell events for departing CEO Julian Burke – including an employee gathering – have been scheduled later this month.

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THANKS MEMORIES

- Employees are invited to sign a giant farewell board for retiring MTA CEO Julian Burke. The card will be stationed at the Marketing Department reception desk, located on the northwest side of the 19th floor in the Gateway Building. Employees may sign the card during normal business hours through Thursday, Sept. 20. The card will also be available for signing at the Employee Farewell Event on Friday, Sept. 21, on the Plaza Level of the Gateway Building.

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Ruben Hernandez, Mike Ortiz and Rodger Maxwell performed a musical tribute to Julian Burke.

Thanks for the Memories A Special Musical Tribute

*Tongue-in-cheek lyrics by Mike Ortiz
(with apologies to Bob Hope).*

Thanks for the memories.
The strike you did survive,
You talked a lotta jive,
You gave me praise, a tiny raise
Enough to stay alive.
Goodbye, Mr. Burke.

Thanks for the memories.
Hurray, you're finally through
We give Kudos to you,
We had a ball, you pleased them all
Except the BRU.
Goodbye, Mr. Burke.

Thanks for the memories.
You're through, you're finally free.
Please say good-bye to me.
You did your best, you passed the
test
Adios Consent Decree.
Goodbye, Mr. Burke.

Thanks for the memories.
Although the ride was rough,
You're made from the right stuff.
Against the Board, you always
scored,
You showed them you were tough.
Goodbye, Mr. Burke.

Thanks for the memories.
It's time to go away
You're leaving the MTA.
You did your time, you did real fine,
No longer can you stay.
Goodbye, Mr. Burke.

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Union Station Renovation Shouldn't Inconvenience Passengers

By GARY WOSK

A six-month project to renovate portions of Union Station is expected to begin in November, but passengers rushing to catch the subway or a commuter train shouldn't be inconvenienced by the construction.

Amtrak and Metrolink, along with Catellus Development, will make \$1.4 million in improvements to such areas as passenger and pedestrian tunnels, lighting and signage. Some 15,000 passengers use the portals each day.

Also scheduled to receive a facelift are the station's south patio and restrooms.

The renovation budget includes \$512,000 from Metrolink, of which the MTA will contribute a \$243,200 share.

Lighting to be restored

Original light fixtures will be restored in a manner that maintains unique finishes and character. Newer fluorescent fixtures will be replaced with upgraded fixtures that blend with the historic design.

Current signage will be replaced by light emitting diode (LED) signs. This upgrade will take place during the final phase of the tunnel restoration.

Metrolink ticket vending machines (TVM) in the tunnel area will be shut down temporarily, but passengers will find other TVMs located in several other areas of the station.

The MTA is providing Metrolink nearly \$35 million through the current fiscal year for operation, renovation and rehabilitation. The \$35 million represents 38 percent of Metrolink's current fiscal year budget for operations and rehabilitation.

When factoring in additional capital expansion funds MTA has allocated to Metrolink through the Call for Projects program, the total MTA contribution in the current fiscal year is \$44.5 million, or 19.7 percent of Metrolink's \$226.5 million budget.

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Crews Pass Milestone



Above, Newly poured concrete glistens in the blue light of the "tail track" at the 7th/Metro station. Below, Wooden forms hold the wet concrete in place to form a plinth, or footing, for the reconstructed tracks. PHOTOS BY RODERICK PATES



Above, large metal doors seal off the tail track construction area from the passenger platforms at the 7th/Metro station. Below, a double crossover, taken up earlier by construction crews, awaits installation on the new track bed. PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD



in Modifying Metro Blue Line 'Tail Track'

(Sept. 4, 2001) Construction crews poured 122 cubic yards of concrete, Friday, passing a major milestone of a project to modify the 7th/Metro station to accommodate three-car Metro Blue Line trains.

By realigning the double crossover in the "tail track" just beyond the station platforms, the MTA saved some \$17 million it otherwise would have spent to tunnel out extra footage, according to Engineering and Construction's Tom Lee.

Reconstructing the track bed and moving the double crossover 53 feet south of its original location will cost about \$1.2 million. Lee, the resident engineer, will complete the project the last week of September.

Once completed, the reconstructed tail track will permit the 270-foot, three-car trains to easily switch from one track to the other.

Metro Blue Line trains arriving at 7th/Metro generally discharge passengers on Platform 1, make a switch-over in the tail track and board passengers on Platform 2. During reconstruction of the tail track, however, arriving trains are alternating between Platforms 1 and 2.

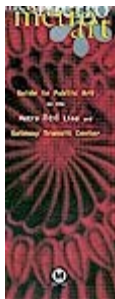
In August, Lee's group also completed a year-long platform extension project on the Metro Blue Line system. LADOT currently is testing signals in downtown sections of the line to ensure that three-car trains can operate safely.

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Maps Provide Self-Guided tours of Metro Rail Art, Architecture

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(Sept. 4, 2001) Three publications that provide self-guided tours of the art and architecture of the Metro Red Line, Blue Line and Green Line are now available in literature racks on the trains and at the Metro Customer Service Centers.



Produced by the Metro Art Department in the form of a folding map, the "Guide to Public Art" reveals the works that enhance each of the 50 Metro Rail stations and the Gateway Transit Center.



A photograph and brief description of the art and architectural features at each station are juxtaposed over a colorful map of the transit line that visitors can use to navigate from station to station.



Published in English and Spanish, the maps also are available at the Los Angeles Visitors and Convention Bureau.

The 50 Metro Rail stations and the Transit Center feature the work of more than 75 artists in one of the country's most celebrated public art programs.

The new fold-out guides aren't the only way the public can tour Metro art. The MTA also sponsors some 30 volunteer docents who lead groups of 15 or more on informative two-hour tours of selected stations.

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Master Sgt. Jess Godinez, far right, finds a bit of shade in the Saudia Arabian desert with members of his Air Force unit.

MTA's Jess Godinez Won Air Force Honors for Saudi Arabian Desert Duty



Jess Godinez

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 5, 2001) Daily temps of 112 to 120 degrees. Sand. Scorching winds. More sand. Gulping down as much as a gallon and a half of water each day. That was life in the Saudi Arabian desert earlier this year for the MTA's Jess Godinez, a master sergeant in the U.S. Air Force Reserve.

Godinez, equipment maintenance manager in the Revenue Department, was one of a dozen local Air Force reservists who flew out of March Field in June to help support the multi-national effort to enforce a "no-fly zone" over Iraq.

His job: supervising a 17-member group of active duty and reserve aerial port technicians who were assigned to Prince Sultan Air Base to coordinate shipments of vehicles, supplies, food and personnel supporting Operation Southern Watch.

During his 45-day tour of duty, the group moved 380 tons of cargo and more than 3,800 passengers and their baggage into and out of the zone. His work earned Godinez honors as Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Month. He also was awarded the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for participation in Operation Southern Watch.

Very, very hot days

But, mostly it was long days of work under difficult conditions. "It was hot, very hot during the day," he says. "At night, it got into the high 80s and 90s. One night, it actually got down to 79 degrees and we had to bring out our sweaters because we thought it was a cold front coming through."

Water was a relief, but also a problem. "They tell you to drink a pint of water an hour," Godinez says. "I didn't think I could do that, but after two or three days, I found myself drinking five or six liters of water a day and that became a norm."

Milk and dairy products were plentiful; one of the world's largest dairies – with some 30,000 cattle – was located just outside the base. Food was typical cafeteria chow, but included a good and tasty variety of dishes, Godinez says.

Luckily, the troops no longer have to live in tents as members of the coalition forces once did. "I arrived at a really good time. The Saudis had just erected brand new dormitories for the English, French and U.S. troops."

Eventually, the 45 days ended and Godinez hopped a cargo flight to Ramstein, Germany, caught a bus to Frankfurt, a flight to Baltimore and another plane to LA. About 25 hours of flying, but a whole world away from what continues to be an international hot spot.

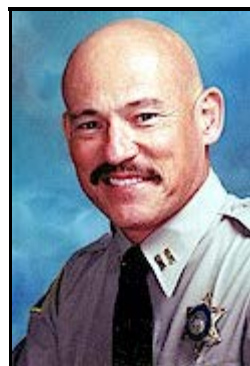
EDITOR'S NOTE: Jess Godinez is a Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam who, with his time in the Air Force, has 26 years' active and reserve service. He and his wife, Mona Lisa, live in Pomona. He has four adult children by previous marriages: Joshua, who works for a software contractor; Brandy, an Air Force staff sergeant and Russian interpreter; David, who works for Southwestern Bell; and Sarah, a certified nurses assistant and college student.

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Dan Finkelstein of MTA Sheriff's Unit is Promoted to Captain

(Sept. 5, 2001) Dan Finkelstein, a 25-year veteran of the Sheriff's Department who recently assumed command of the Transit Services Bureau, has been promoted to the permanent rank of captain.

At the MTA, Finkelstein is responsible for a force of 153 patrol officers, detectives and supervisors who provide law enforcement services for the Metro Blue Line, Metro Red Line and for Metro Bus lines outside city limits. They are assisted by a professional staff of 23.



Dan Finkelstein

Finkelstein joined the Sheriff's Department in 1975 as a law enforcement intern. He was promoted to sergeant in 1987 and to lieutenant in 1991.

Assignments during his career have included the Men's Central Jail, the Carson, Marina del Rey and West Hollywood stations, Court Services Division Headquarters and, most recently, the Metrolink Bureau.

Finkelstein earned an associates degree from Los Angeles Harbor College and a BS in criminal justice from Cal State Long Beach.

Finkelstein and his wife, Ilene, a deputy sheriff assigned to Court Services West Bureau, and their son, Danny, 18, raise and train quarter horses on their Agua Dulce ranch. He and his wife compete as partners in team roping events throughout the West. He also enjoys running, cooking and riding his motorcycle.

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Got Change?



- **MTA Tests Change Machines at 2 Metro Rail Stations**



Change machine prototype in service.

By GARY WOSK

(Sept. 6, 2001) These times, they are a-changin'! The first change machines on the Metro Rail System are being tested at the Universal City and North Hollywood stations.

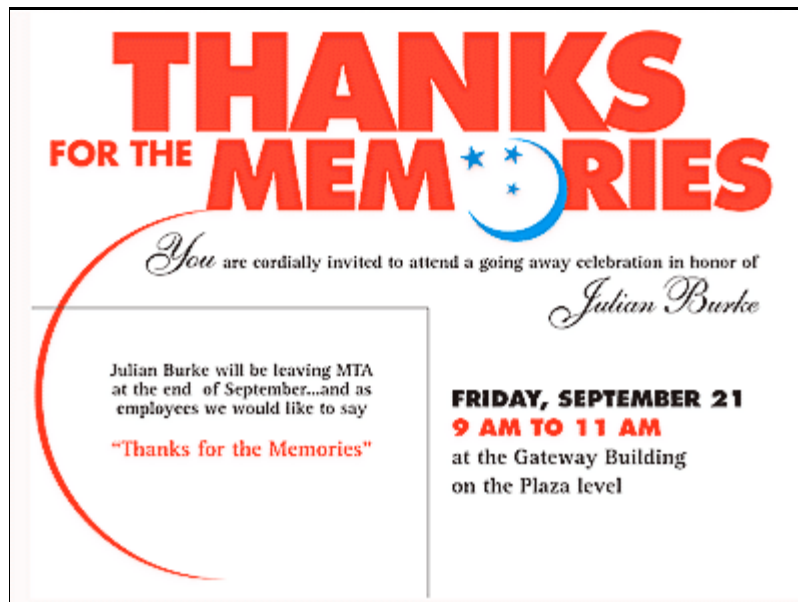
Installed in early June and August on the mezzanine level next to the ticket vending machines (TVM), the change machines accept \$1, \$5 and \$10 bills, old or new, in exchange for dollar coins which then can be fed into the TVMs. If test results are favorable, the change machines also could be calibrated to handle \$20 bills.

"So far, they're holding up really well," said James Cudlip, deputy director of Revenue. "We haven't received too many calls about the machines not accepting bills."

Installing the machines at all 52 Metro Rail stations would cost approximately \$200,000 and would require MTA Board approval. A decision is expected later this year on whether to expand the service.

"Before a decision can be made we need to determine the volume of usage, the rejection rate and how much maintenance will be required," said Cudlip. "The main beneficiaries of these machines will be the people who forever find themselves stuck with large bills and their train is about to pull out."

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Posters will be distributed to all departments and divisions inviting employees to farewell reception. GRAPHIC DESIGN: TUAN LE

Two Farewell Receptions Planned for CEO Julian Burke

(Sept. 6, 2001) Two farewell events for departing CEO Julian Burke – including an employee gathering – have been scheduled later this month.

Burke, whose last day at the MTA will be Sept. 30, joined the MTA in August 1997 for what he thought would be a temporary assignment helping the agency through a financial crisis.

A public reception is set for 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 19, in the Times Mirror Court at the Music Center on Grand Avenue in downtown LA. A program will begin at 7:15 p.m.

The employee reception – themed “Thanks for the Memories” – is scheduled from 9 until 11 a.m., Friday, Sept. 21, on the Plaza outside the Headquarters Building. A program is planned for 10 a.m.

Those who wish to attend the public reception should send a \$25 check or money order, by Friday, Sept. 14, to Patricia Campbell at Mail Stop 99-11-11. The checks and money orders, which will help cover the cost of the reception, should be made payable to MTEFCU, the Metro Transit Employees Federal Credit Union.

Parking is available in the Music Center garage for \$7. For more information about the public reception, call MTA Government Relations at 922-5638.

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Israeli Transportation Minister Tours Metro System



Israeli Minister of Transportation Ephraim Sneh

Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky conducted a tour of the Metro system for Israeli Minister of Transportation Ephraim Sneh on Sunday, Sept. 9, that included a sneak preview of the new home for the Oscars in Hollywood. The minister and his entourage toured the Metro Red and Blue lines and viewed the Metro Rapid bus operation on Wilshire Boulevard. Sneh was particularly interested in seeing the joint development project at the Hollywood/Highland station where a mega-entertainment complex will open in November on land leased from the MTA. Because Israel is planning a light-rail line, Sneh was interested in how MTA financed construction of its rail lines. Sneh and Lipsky also discussed how the MTA ensures safe operation in mixed traffic. During the time the entourage was riding the Red Line, a moderate earthquake struck the Hollywood area. Sneh was impressed that his party wasn't even aware of the quake until they were advised of it after the tour had ended.

PHOTOS BY MARC LITTMAN

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Announcement of Board Decision, Sept. 10, 2001

Today, the Board voted to seek a rehearing of the Ninth Circuit decision and to implement the 88 more buses on top of the 160 in order to meet Judge Hatter's order of 248.



MTA Board Chairman John Fasana responds to questions following special Board meeting.

Board to Add 88 Buses to Fleet; Votes to Seek Rehearing of Appeals Court Ruling

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 11, 2001) Meeting in special session, Monday, the MTA Board voted to voluntarily implement a federal court ruling requiring the agency to add 88 buses to its fleet, despite the fact that the order is stayed until final resolution.

The Board also decided to seek a rehearing of a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision it believes unnecessarily ties the MTA's hands in meeting its other transportation-related obligations.

"The Board is committed to improving bus service for all our riders. We have the buses here," Chairman John Fasana told MTA Report after the Board meeting. But, he said the agency needs clarification of the rulings made by the Consent Decree's Special Master and by Judge Terry Hatter of the Circuit Court.

"(W)e have a countywide responsibility to meet, as well, in terms of dealing with surface arterials, with highways and with rail," Fasana said. "We need flexibility and the ability to deliberate and set policy."

CEO Julian Burke echoed Fasana's statement about the need to get certainty about its Consent Decree obligations. "The reality is that it is a very difficult opinion because it (gives) such wide, wide discretion to the Special Master and to the District Court as to what is permissible for them to order under the Consent Decree."

"It seemed to a great majority of the Board that it was wise to get some further clarification," Burke added, "and in the meantime to comply with (that portion) of Judge Hatter's order that we put 88 more buses into service."

88 more buses on crowded routes

Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky said the 88 buses will be deployed and bus trips will be added on routes and in time segments that exceed the 1.35-times load factor two or more times during the past 12 months. The requirement for 88 more buses is based on a calculation made by the Special Master, he said.

"This means we will have significant additional service downtown and throughout our service area," Lipsky said, noting that nine buses will be added to the Metro Rapid 720 line on Wilshire Boulevard. "For our

customers, it will mean more frequent service at certain of the more crowded time periods.”

With the 88 buses, the MTA will add service even in areas where the agency has scheduled sufficient capacity, because the Special Master based his service requirements on the load factor measure. That is one of the issues the agency is seeking to clarify in the legal process.

The following are excerpts from Fasana’s interview with local media following the Board meeting:

What do you expect out of the rehearing?

Right now, it is impossible to meet the standard the way it’s been applied and interpreted in the recent cases that have gone to the Special Master and to Judge Hatter. We’re seeking a rehearing while, at the same time, focusing on our other responsibilities.

Mayor James Hahn recommended that the MTA not appeal the Court’s order.

Mayor Hahn and the rest of the Board share the concern about the need to improve service. The Board entered into the Consent Decree with the idea of the need for and of the importance of improving bus service. We believe we’ve done that and we think that we have substantially complied with the Consent Decree....

What do you mean by a clarification and a reinterpretation?

The court set the (number of buses we needed to purchase at) 248. We have ordered far more than that and 160 of those already are in service. The clarification comes down to the way the decisions were made. There could be other decisions down the road that could make it difficult for this agency.

There doesn’t seem to be a limit to the Decree in the context of the other responsibilities of the Board and the MTA. From that standpoint, as we seek federal funding for other projects...as we try to meet our varying needs throughout the county – whether they be paratransit needs, carpool lanes, rail service and others – it’s become difficult to operate as an agency.

Isn’t it kind of late to ask that question, since the MTA entered into this Consent Decree five years ago?

That’s a fair question. Those of us who were here when we entered into the Consent Decree had a different interpretation of what our responsibilities were. We all felt it was very important to improve bus service in this county. And we think we’ve taken substantial steps to accommodate that.

The record shows that, with the declining age of the fleet and the new buses coming in, this has been the case. But, there’s been a vast difference in the interpretation of passenger load factors. At this point, you could have any type of traffic incident (that would delay buses) and we would be out of compliance (with load factors). That’s really unacceptable from the standpoint of trying to meet our obligations under the Decree.

Was there consensus on the Board about appealing this?

Those who supported the request for the rehearing reflected the same opinion that I have. What is the role of the courts versus the role of the Board and balancing the obvious need to improve bus service with the other responsibilities we have on a countywide basis?

Is it possible this may end up in the Supreme Court?

That's something the Board may want to consider. It's also possible that after the rehearing the Board would take no action. We would meet again to determine that.

There's some issue over the number of buses. You've said 88 buses, but the Bus Riders Union has said 248 above what you have now. Can you explain the difference in numbers?

I can't explain where the Bus Riders Union is coming up with their numbers, but I can say that the MTA is fully confident that we're 88 buses short of deployment. We've given direction, today, to make sure that those 88 buses – which are here on-site – are deployed. We'll still be getting more buses in that already are on order. We'll have more than enough buses.

What impact will 88 buses have for these bus riders who say their buses are always crowded?

We have questions about that. Even if we put the 88 buses out there, we really might not be carrying additional riders and maybe it won't have an impact on those occasional (load factor) violations in the way the Consent Decree is being interpreted. It might happen anyway. It might have very minimal effect. Now, again, you could deploy those 88 buses in a different fashion and maybe have far more impact if you add additional routes.

Can you characterize the Board's discussions today?

Everyone wants to improve service. There was unanimity in getting the 88 buses deployed and in getting drivers for those buses and mechanics. There was not unanimity, at this point, in terms of pursuing the rehearing.

When would you expect the rehearing to be held?

Our understanding is a month to two months. They may agree to rehear it. They may agree to rehear it with the full panel of 17 Ninth Circuit judges, rather than with the three judges who decided this case. We're asking for all the judges to rehear the case. So, we'll wait and see and, depending on what happens there, we'll meet again as a Board.

And will you abide by what the courts tell you to do?

We think that we are improving the service throughout the county. We've already sent that message. We need the flexibility to operate that service.

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NOTICE: For updated information on the MTA's emergency measures, employees may call the MTA Employee Emergency Hotline at
(213) 680-1531

Gateway, Divisions Open To Employees, Service Operating Normally

In response to apparent terrorists attacks on New York City buildings, the Pentagon and other East Coast sites, the MTA has ordered a heightened state of security for its Gateway Headquarters, operating divisions, bus and rail lines.

MTA Buildings and facilities remain open to employees only. Visitors, including those invited to meetings by employees, will be denied entrance, officials said. Parking in the Gateway Building garage has been restricted to employees only. The only access and exit point is through the Cesar Chavez entrance.

All Metro Bus and Metro Rail services continue to operate normally. The MTA's LAPD and Sheriff's Department contingents have gone to a high state of alert on all rail lines. Bus operators are in Code 1 condition and are being asked to report any suspicious activity aboard Metro Buses.

Meanwhile, the MTA activated its Emergency Operations Center and its Mobile Bus Control Center, although operations continue to be directed from the Bus Operations Center and the Rail Operations Center. Buses are standing by for possible use if evacuations are ordered in parts of the city or county.

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(213) 680-1531

MTA to Open for Regular Hours, Wednesday; Service to Operate Normally

Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001 : The MTA will be open for business as usual on Wednesday; employees should report for their usual work shifts. All Metro Bus and Metro Rail service will operate on normal schedules.

The Gateway Headquarters building, the operating divisions and other facilities will again be open only to employees. Access to the parking garage at Headquarters will be through the Vignes or Cesar Chavez entrances. Employees should park on the south end of the parking structure.

The Emergency Operations Center and the Mobile Bus Operations Center will continue in activation at least through Wednesday afternoon. No serious incidents were reported on any bus or train today. The MTA's LAPD and Sheriff's Department units remained on high alert, while bus and train operators were asked to report anything suspicious.

Extra trains were added to the Metro Green Line, Tuesday, to transport passengers and employees evacuated from LAX.

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(213) 680-1531

Gateway Building Reopens to Public; Bus and Rail Operations Operating Normally

Wednesday, Sept. 12, 2001 : The MTA's Headquarters Building reopened to the public today, although a heightened state of security remains in force. Deliveries and other access by non-employees will be permitted. All entrances to the parking structure are now open, although parking is restricted to the south end of the parking structure.

Transit Operations reports that Metro Bus service is back to normal with the exception of areas around LAX. Metro Blue Line and Metro Green Line ridership were reported down about 5 to 10 percent. Metro Red Line service was normal, except in downtown, due to a lower number of transfers from Metrolink.

MTA officials directed non-represented employees who left work before the 3 p.m. authorized departure time, Tuesday, to note the hours taken as TOWP on their timesheets.

Employees who would like to receive counseling as a result of Tuesday's tragic events may contact the MTA's Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-221-0945. EAP calls, handled by an outside agency, are confidential.

During any future emergencies that affect the MTA, employees can get updated information about work hours, bus and train operations by calling the MTA Employee Emergency Hotline at 213-680-1531.

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**Jake's
Adventures**
By Jake Satin-Jacobs

Editor's Note: (Sept. 12, 2001) Jake stuns his quirky opponent, Jim, in a seaside game of Smashball. Too bad most business meetings can't be conducted on a beach with a ball and paddle in hand. And the opportunity to underscore your point – as Jake does – with a bruising slam to a sensitive area.

The Zen of Smash

My friend Jim is an odd character.

He's pear-shaped from the combination of years of limited exercise and decades of eating chocolate chip cookies, to which he is uncontrollably addicted, and washing them down with apple juice, which he pours on everything, including his Quaker Natural cereal.

He is chinless, with small teeth, bulging eyes and, until recently, when I threatened to kill him if he did not have it removed, he sported a ponytail comprised of twenty or thirty of the few hundred hairs he has left on his head.

Jim is six feet, six inches tall. His skin is translucent and you can see all his veins and arteries. He looks like a giant glass vase blown by a craftsman who had spent the first years of his career making balloon animals at children's parties.

I've known Jim for twenty-five years. I see him twenty-five or more times a year and each time we spend at least eight hours together. That represents about half a million hours of companionship and, in the whole time, we've probably had fewer than 1,000 hours of conversation.

To say that he is quiet would be an understatement. We can go for twenty hours grunting at one another and pointing or just nodding. That's partly the result of our being very much in tune with one another and partly because, as regards most things, he has nothing to say. It may also account for at least part of the issue that has ended three marriages for him.

Left him for a volleyball player

Jim and his first wife met when they were in Navy Boot Camp. After a year of marriage, Mavis hooked up with a sailor more to her liking. Jim doesn't talk about it much. His second wife, to whom he was married for ten years, left him for a volleyball player named Tina. He doesn't talk much about that either.

His third wife refused to leave the house if she had a chancre sore, a blemish or indigestion. She would also remain indoors during the two weeks prior to and following the full moon. Jim actually left her because he couldn't get any "quality alone time." I don't think he will ever talk about that.

Jim and I are clearly very different. We are certainly not bound together by conversation. We are united in "SMASH." That is what aficionados of the game call Smashball, a little-known and less understood game of paddleball played on the beach, using an eight-inch diameter oak paddle and a 1½-inch hollow rubber ball.

In this game there are no boundaries; there is no net, no scoring and no apparent winning or losing. The object is simply to keep the ball in play. It sounds childish. Then again, while Jim and I are quite different, we are both very childish. SMASH is the way we are learning to be adults.

People who don't know the game are confused by it. They sometimes stand, staring for fifteen or twenty minutes trying to discern the boundaries, rules and scoring. Most of them walk away, shaking their heads, understanding that they don't understand.

No water, no beach

I love the guys from Cincinnati or Gila Bend -- places where they either have water but no beach or lots of beach and no water and certainly no SMASH -- who will stand watching with the whole family and then, as they walk away, describe the rules and scoring of the game in detail to the innocents surrounding them.

Play always starts out gently and kindly. "Let's get a rhythm," I always tell Jim. The volleys are short and looping enough for slow, lumbering Jim to get to them. Even then, he usually returns the ball ten feet beyond my reach and I end up running back and forth like a terrier trapped in a small room with an agitated bat.

I try to stay calm and be understanding. Jim is a little out of shape. I am in better physical condition. It is incumbent upon me to run down his wayward shots and gently loft them within easy reach of his translucent arms.

Eventually, I get tired and start grouching about his failure to move his feet and his paralytic stroke that sends the ball flying in random directions. He responds with a plethora of lame excuses that involve his joints, tender footsies and the position of the sun.

As the game progresses and he loosens up, Jim responds with greater effort and it becomes less frustrating and tiresome for me. But each time I raise the level of play, reducing the arc of the ball and increasing its speed, we repeat the same silly ritual of accusations and justifications. Eventually, with time and patience on my part, we reach a point where the ball is moving with pace; we are standing twenty-five feet apart, we are both running and sweating and there is only one thing left to do. WELT (more in a moment).

A little psycho-drama

Now, I said that the game had no scoring and it doesn't. There are no points. There is simply an end. After several minutes of running full tilt, swinging as hard as possible, the blaming and defensiveness disappear the little psycho-drama begs for resolution

The need for and the joy of exacting payment was never clearer to me than June 22, 1999, when, after a long and frustrating volley in which I had blamed Jim for all my troubles on and off the invisible court and badgered myself unmercifully for each shot that was not perfectly hit, I let fly an unspeakably hard shot, which struck Jim on the thigh, one inch west and two clicks north of testosterone central.

A purple, circular, brightly-ringed WELT immediately popped through his skin and Jim dropped to his knees like a stunned infidel at a miracle. I was beside myself with joy, jumping up and down and screaming the way I imagine I would if I suddenly inherited enough money to fund a healthy retirement.

When Jim had gotten to his feet and recovered enough to resume a

somewhat masculine posture, we ran at each other and bumped chests or high-fived or something equally macho-idiotic. I really don't remember. I was giddy and lightheaded, bathing in the blood of my prey.

No agenda, no one in charge

SMASH reminds me of many business meetings. There is usually no agenda and no one is really in charge. The participants have little in common outside the topic at hand. Some people appear useless, but have sudden moments of brilliance. Others are just not up to the task. Some people play better than others.

The better players have to exercise restraint, lobbing topics into the area of understanding of the slowest participants. Communication has to work its way through all the accusations and excuses before any real dialogue can take place.

Most meetings may be like bad Smashball – endless, meaningless exchanges. But the really good meetings are like really good SMASH. The participants eventually work through the defensiveness and forget the accusations, the pace quickens and it all ends with a decision.


When the decision is made depends upon the exhaustion of the participants. Who makes the decision depends on expertise, power and a neurotic need for resolution. The idea of final resolution is celebrated by all – winners and losers alike.

Jake Satin-Jacobs is a Chief Administrative Analyst in Transit Operations

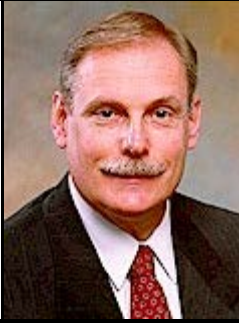
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AccessTimeWarner



**Fasana,
Snoble to
Appear on
Live,
Interactive
Cable TV
Special on LA
Traffic**



MTA Board Chairman John Fasana, above left, and incoming CEO Roger Snoble, at right, will present an overview of what the MTA and other agencies are doing on a variety of fronts to ease traffic. Show airs on Sunday, Sept. 30, at 7 p.m.

(Sept. 12 2001) Angelenos fed up with traffic will have a chance to speak up and engage MTA officials in a live, one-hour interactive television dialogue on Sunday, Sept. 30.

The MTA and Time Warner Cable will sponsor a special edition of Parallax Forum, titled *L.A. Traffic Jam – Is There A Way Out?* The program will air live from 7 to 8 p.m. on KVLV, Ch. 6, in the West San Fernando Valley and city-wide in all Los Angeles cable households on LA 36.

The program also will be carried on the city's education and community access station, Channel 16, in Santa Monica and other municipal cable channels throughout the county.

MTA Board Chairman John Fasana and incoming CEO Roger Snoble will present an overview of what the MTA and other agencies are doing on a variety of fronts to ease traffic today and what can be done to ensure mobility in the face of massive population growth projected for the next 25 years.

"The traffic show is another attempt by MTA to expand its community outreach," said Public Relations Director Marc Littman. "We want to engage all sectors of the public in the debate about traffic."

Questions can be e-mailed

Live, streaming video of the program may be accessed on the World Wide Web at www.accesstimewarner.com by clicking on the Parallax Forum icon. Questions may be e-mailed in advance to parallaxforum@aol.com.

Viewers can call (818) 773-0654 during the show to ask questions or to comment. Bilingual interpreters will be on hand to assist Spanish-speaking callers.

"We're looking to engage the public in a healthy dialogue about traffic problems today and the ones that we will face in the future with up to 3 million more people moving into L.A. County in the next 20 years," Littman added. "This is a chance for the public to directly ask MTA officials what the MTA is doing to deal with traffic."

For more information about the program, call (213) 922-4609 or check the MTA's Internet site at www.mta.net or Time Warner Cable at www.accesstimewarner.com.

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(Sept. 13, 2001) The Staples Center is offering free parking at Lot 5 for rail patrons who would like to take the Metro Blue Line to attend a lighting ceremony marking the grand opening, Friday, Sept. 28, of the Watts Towers. Lot 5 is only a short walk from the Pico station.

Metro Blue Line passengers can disembark at the 103rd Street station, a 17-minute trip, and walk south two blocks to Watts Towers, a historical monument consisting of nine major sculptures.

Located at 1727 East 107th Street, the Towers have been closed since the Northridge Earthquake in 1994.

The grand opening event, 7:30 p.m. -10:30 p.m., will feature entertainment, a community cake-cutting and addresses by dignitaries. Parking at Staples Center will be available from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Two other events, the Day of the Drum Festival and Watts Towers Jazz Festival are scheduled on Saturday, Sept. 29 and Sunday, Sept. 30. Free parking will be available in Lot 5 only on Sept. 30.

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ACCOLADES

metro.net welcomes reports on achievement, honors and recognition of MTA employees from community, volunteer and professional organizations. Click here to send information to [ACCOLADES](#).



Donna Warren

Donna Warren Elected to National Status in Accountants Group

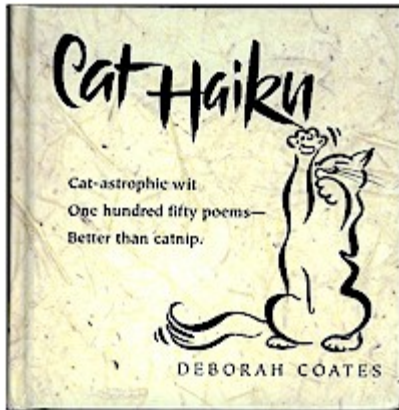
(Sept. 13, 2001) Donna Warren, a contract costing auditor in the MTA's Management Audit Services Department, has been elected the Southern California education coordinator by the Association of Government Accountants (AGA).

Warren, who holds the AGA's Certified Government Financial Managers (CGFM) designation, was selected to membership in State and Local Government Track Committee for the organization's 2002 National Conference next July in Atlanta.

As regional coordinator, Warren will assist AGA chapter educational chairs in facilitating new ideas and best practices for membership recruiting and retention. As a committee member, she will be responsible for identifying keynote speakers and sessions for the conference.

The 20,000-member AGA promotes the interests of government financial managers, as well as those who work with government financial matters in the private sector and in academia.

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Here's a sampling of some of Deborah Coates' favorite haiku:

You are my best friend,
Person Allergic to Cats.
Let me shed on you.

I hide under the
Bed. I don't want to be friends.
Take that child away!

Thanksgiving: there are
No words. A dead bird bigger
Than I am, and cooked!

I'm not sure what this
Was when it was alive, but
Isn't it nice now?



A bit of advice:
Purring is just a decoy.
Trust me on this one.

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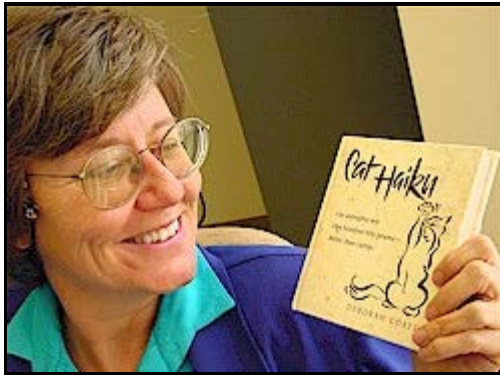
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Haiku filled her mind
'Till they overflowed a box.
Publish or toss 'em.

-- B.H.



MTA's Deborah Coates, Author of 'Cat Haiku', Didn't Set Out to Write a Book



Deborah Coates' book, "Cat Haiku", is now on bookstore shelves in the U.S. and will be published in England in October.

[READ: Excerpts from "Cat Haiku"](#) by Deborah Coates. Illustrated by Sandra Bruce

By BILL HEARD, Editor
(Sept. 14, 2001) Deborah Coates, author of a newly published volume of humorous poems titled, "Cat Haiku," didn't set out to write a book. It was a painful nip on the hand from her cat, Pinch, that was the cat-alyt that started her on the road to success.

Coates, 47, a management reviews supervisor in the MTA Inspector General's office, was reading peacefully at home one evening. Pinch dozed on her lap. "Suddenly, she just reared up and bit me. I yelled, 'What did you do that for?' That's when the first haiku came to me."

That was in early 1999 and for the next several months, 60 haiku – three-line, 17-syllable Japanese-style poems – flowed from her pen. Enough to fill a shoebox. Written from the cats' perspective, they chronicled the eccentricities of Pinch and Pippin, Coates' other feline companion.

"After awhile," recalls Coates, an energetic woman with an infectious laugh, "the box was pretty full and I kept tripping over it. I thought, 'I've got to do something with them or throw them away.'"

She needed an agent

So, she typed them up and sent them off to a couple of publishers. When that effort didn't pan out, she checked around to see who was publishing books about cats and realized that she needed an agent.

The reference book, "Writers Market," led her in late 1999 to a New York City agent that primarily represents first-time authors. Her agent helped her organize and polish the manuscript, then held an auction for the publishing rights.

Time-Warner won the publishing rights in early 2000, but it wasn't just about the money.

"We liked their concept better," says Coates. "I felt it should be a lower price book and not some whoop-te-doo hardback with a dust jacket. It's a fun little book. An impulse purchase."

But, with only 60 haiku in hand, Time-Warner thought the book needed something more: 90 additional haiku!

Thinking in haiku

"For awhile I was thinking in haiku," she laughs. "Waking up in the middle of the night and writing them down. Trying to write them while driving to work – which I don't recommend!"

"Cat Haiku" was printed this summer – 10,000 copies initially – and was placed on bookstore shelves across the nation in late August. The haiku on the cover describes it as:

*"Cat-astrophic wit
One hundred fifty poems –
Better than catnip."*

The book, which sells in the U.S. for \$13.95, is expected to be released in England in October and in Japan later in the year. Coates is scheduled for a book signing at 8 p.m., Nov. 30, at the Barnes & Noble bookstore in Pasadena.

Her advice for aspiring writers: "Don't give up! I'm 47 years old and my first book has just been published."

As for her own future as a writer, Coates says, "I'm hoping this isn't just a fluke. I have a couple of other things in the wings. Whether they go anywhere is anybody's guess."



Author with a hug for Pinch, who inspired many of Coates' haiku.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A native of Glendale, Calif., Deborah Coates earned a business degree at Whittier College and a master's degree from the American Graduate School of International Management in Glendale, Ariz. She did a stint in the Peace Corps in Cameroon, West Africa, then served as a Foreign Service Officer in Jamaica, Haiti and Singapore.

Prior to joining the MTA Inspector General's Office, she worked for the City of Glendale and for the South Coast Air Quality Management District. She lives in Mount Washington with her cats, Pinch and Pippin. "Cat Haiku" is dedicated to her godson, Quinn Bolander, 8, because, "He makes me laugh even more than the cats."

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Division 9 Bus Operator Mark Holland, left, and Division 10 Maintenance Team, at right, from left, David Klinkenborg, Alan Wong and Doug Creveling.

Division 10's Maintenance Rodeo Team Crowned Regional Bus Rodeo Champions

- **Results:** See [maintenance team](#) and [bus operators](#) standings.

By STEVE MULLALY

(Sept. 14, 2001) Division 10 mechanics – Alan Wong, Doug Creveling and David Klinkenborg – were crowned the Southern California Regional Bus Rodeo Champion Maintenance Team during regional competition last weekend in Hemet, Calif.

Of the 14 bus operators who competed, 1st place honors went to Riverside Transit Authority. The MTA's Bus Rodeo champion operator, Mark Holland of Division 9, placed fourth.

Fourteen transit properties competed in the second annual event. The Rodeo was conceived to give Southern California transit property Rodeo winners a chance to compete prior to the APTA International Bus Rodeo competition, Sept. 29, in Philadelphia.

This year was the first time maintenance teams were invited to compete in the Regional Bus Rodeo. Six maintenance teams registered for the event.

As 2001 champions, the Division 10 maintenance team received 1st place plaques commemorating their achievement, along with a Perpetual Trophy that will soon be displayed at MTA Headquarters.

Congratulations to Alan Wong, Doug Creveling and David Klinkenborg and to Operator Mark Holland for their outstanding achievements. We look forward to your success in Philadelphia!

Listed below are the results of the maintenance team and bus operators standings.

Regional Maintenance Team Results – Event Points

Transit Team	Written Test	Bus Insp.	Brake Board	Power Train	Obstacle Course	Total Points
Los Angeles County (LACMTA)	18	250	200	200	233	901
Orange County	23	75	200	200	176	674

Transit (OCTA)						
Golden Empire Transit (GET)	14	100	90	100	196	500
Big Blue Bus (Santa Monica)	22	50	200	100	29	401
OMNI Transit (San Bernardino)	12	15	100	0	125	252
Montebello Transit (City of Montebello)	15	55	40	50	-11	14

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Operators Regional Bus Rodeo Results

Place	Transit Property	Total Points
1st	Riverside Transit Authority (RTA)	617
2nd	Santa Coast Area Transit (SCAT)	591
3rd	OMNI Transit (San Bernardino)	590
4th	L. A. County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA)	583
5th	Culver City Bus (Culver City)	560
6th	Golden Empire Transit (GET)	560
7th	Foothill Transit	536
8th	Big Blue Bus (Santa Monica)	480
9th	Torrance Transit	472
10th	Orange County Transit Authority (OCTA)	465
11th	National City Transit (NCT)	440
12th	Montebello Bus Lines (City of Montebello)	428
13th	Long Beach Transit	367
14th	Norwalk City Transit	288

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Fourth Quarter Review Reveals MTA on the Upswing



Carolyn Flowers, Executive Officer, Administration, and Richard Hunt, Executive Officer, Operations, deliver reports at quarterly review.

IN SUMMARY:

[Countywide Planning and Development](#)
[Transit Operations](#)
[Support Services](#)
[Engineering and Construction](#)
[Office of the CEO](#)

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 18, 2001) For the final quarterly review of CEO Julian Burke's tenure, the MTA is on the upswing, having overcome during the past four years a series of financial, operational, construction and organizational problems.

Kicking off Monday's review, Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky observed that the MTA has completed important construction projects, has developed the nation's most modern bus system and has added innovative new passenger service.

The agency also has regained its confidence and has improved its financial situation to the point that MTA bonds have been upgraded – a key indicator of the agency's stability.

"We should give ourselves a round of applause," Lipsky told employees assembled in the Board Room. "The organization has gained a lot of respect and we can move forward knowing that we have a great base to build on."

Among the departmental accomplishments cited for the April-June 2001 period were:

Countywide Planning and Development

- Received Board approval of the Long-Range Transportation Plan.
- Completed environmental studies and reviews for the Eastside, Mid-City/Wilshire and San Fernando Valley east-west corridor projects.
- Obtained more than \$411 million in federal and state grants for MTA projects.
- Completed the \$900-million Call for Projects.

Transit Operations

- Reduced bus revenue service hour costs to \$98.42 and heavy rail hourly operating costs to \$220.96.
- Improved bus cleanliness ratings and on-time pull-outs.
- Reduced customer complaints.

Support Services

- General Services installed new card-reader devices in Headquarters stairwells and elevators.

- Real Estate generated \$17 million in revenues from property sales and leasing.
- Human Resources conducted an agency-wide internal customer satisfaction survey.
- Successfully implemented the Performance-Based Compensation program.
- Procurement implemented the Purchase Credit Card program.
- Risk Management increased participation in the Transitional Duty program by 11 percent.

Engineering and Construction

- Completed preliminary engineering for transit corridor projects.
- Completed the Division 1 CNG fueling station a month ahead of schedule.
- Completed the Metro Blue Line platform extension project on schedule and under budget.
- Closed out the Metro Green Line sound wall project.

Office of the CEO

- Completed a System Safety Management Program plan for Bus Operations.
- Government Relations developed outreach programs for elected officials.
- Ethics saved more than \$10,000 by developing an e-mail data base for lobbying registrations and annual statements of economic interest.
- Equal Employment Opportunity eliminated a backlog of cases.

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New Bus to be Displayed, Wednesday, on Plaza

(Sept. 18, 2001) The lead bus in a new order of 370 NABI coaches will be displayed on the Plaza, Wednesday, from noon until 3 p.m. Among its innovations: redesigned passenger seats and a CNG fuel tank with 15 percent more capacity.

"These seats are different," says John Drayton, manager, Vehicle Acquisition, "and they'll be more comfortable for our passengers."

The new seats are contoured and will provide better back support and more hip-to-knee room for passengers. The larger CNG tanks will give the buses a greater operating range.

The low-floor, 40-seat buses also will have security cameras placed both inside and outside the coach. Engines will have the latest components, fuel and emission upgrades.

The MTA now has 430 low-floor, CNG NABI buses in its fleet. When the final bus of the current 370-bus order is received in June 2002, the agency will have a total of 800 NABI coaches. Michael Chang of Equipment Engineering is project manager for the NABI purchase.

"We expect this bus to be every bit as reliable as the existing NABI fleet," says Drayton. "They're among the best performing buses the MTA has ever had."

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Michelle Caldwell Named Deputy Executive Officer, Finance



Michelle Caldwell

(Sept. 19, 2001) Michelle Caldwell, a 19-year veteran of the MTA and its predecessor agencies, has been named deputy executive officer, Finance, in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

In moving to OMB, she leaves the Office of the CEO where, since 1998, she has headed the New Business Development Department. She will continue to be responsible for that activity.

As head of new business development, she established a lease/leaseback program that has delivered more than \$30 million to the MTA and promises more in the future.

Caldwell joined the SCRTD's Human Resources Department in 1982 and later worked in Metro Rail project management, including grant applications, budgeting, estimating and scheduling.

Beginning in 1992, Caldwell served as manager and then as director, Capital Planning and Grants Management, where she planned and managed funding grants for MTA projects. In 1997, she was named deputy executive officer in Transit Operations and was given responsibility for schedules, systems, performance analysis, budget and instruction.

Caldwell graduated Magna Cum Laude in 1976 from California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks with a bachelor's degree in communications. In 1982, she graduated Cum Laude with a master's degree in business administration from Pepperdine University.

She and her husband, Odus, a high school principal, live in Northridge with their children, Erik, 16, and Drew, 15.

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Silver Lake residents Bob and Roberta Stone hop aboard Line 201 bound for Metro Red Line Wilshire/Vermont Station.

20 Months, 19 Days

Operators are Accident-Free on Division 3's Line 201

(Sept. 19, 2001) For the past 20 months and 19 days, the Division 3 operators who drive Line 201 as it snakes its way from LA to Glendale to Eagle Rock have not had a single traffic accident. Not a fenderbender. Not a dint.

That's seven days a week for more than 300,000 long, hard miles without a scrape. Accident free for the 20-plus month period between Jan. 1, 2000 and Sept. 19, 2001.

"This safety records shows that the operators on Line 201 are conscientious, caring and diligent in the performance of their duties," says Transit Operations Chief Richard Hunt. "Their safety record speaks for itself."



Senior Operator Benjamin Walker of Division 3 frequently drives Line 201.

"Line 201 goes through some narrow streets and the operators have to be very careful," says Don Karlson, Division 3 assistant transportation manager. "A lot of skill is involved and hazards to be overcome. It's a great accomplishment and we're very proud of the operators."

A circuitous course

Heading north from Wilshire/Vermont, Line 201 hangs a right on Beverly, then heads northeast into Silver Lake. It crosses the I-5 and passes through Atwater Village en route to Glendale. Jogging past the Glendale Galleria, the line begins a westerly course into Eagle Rock and its terminus at Glenoaks Park.

Twenty months without a traffic accident "is pretty unusual," says Matthew Barrett, chief administrative analyst, who compiled the statistics for Transportation Administration. Only two other Metro Bus lines have come close to Division 3's record for Line 201.

Operators on Division 8's Line 161 (Westlake Village/Agoura Hills) had only two unavoidable accidents in the past 13 months while posting some 365,000 miles. Operators on Division 18's Line 119 (108th

Street/Lynwood) drove some 234,000 miles in 13 months with only two unavoidable accidents.

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CEO Julian Burke and FTA Regional Administrator Leslie Rogers share a moment during Wednesday's reception.

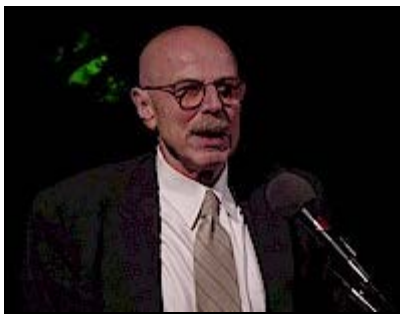
Brian Williams of Mayor James Hahn's office presents Burke with a commemorative street sign.

Board Chairman John Fasana presents Burke with Board Proclamation.

PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD

LA County Officialdom Says 'Farewell' to CEO Julian Burke

[Click here to view larger image or to make your copy of this photo](#)



"I really am moved," Burke told guests at the reception.

- [FRIDAY EVENTS Program for Employee Reception Honoring Julian Burke](#)

By BILL HEARD, Editor (Sept. 20, 2001) Los Angeles County officialdom said farewell to Julian Burke, Wednesday evening, with words of praise for the accomplishments of his four years as the MTA's chief executive officer.

During a reception at the Music Center that drew about 200 local officials and MTA employees, Burke – whose last day with the agency is Sept. 30 – was cited as the leading force in the reinvigoration of the agency's financial condition and the restoration of its credibility with federal and state funding partners.

"It was a different day when Julian came aboard the MTA," said Board Chairman John Fasana, the evening's MC. "We now have seen a tremendous turnaround at the

MTA – a turnaround that would not have occurred without the steady leadership that has been provided by Julian Burke."

Supervisor Yvonne Burke noted that MTA morale was low and that projects had been stalled by a recession and other factors before Burke's arrival. "He has turned this agency around and has made a tremendous difference for the County of Los Angeles. He has brought a new spirit to MTA."

Commendations presented to Burke

Commendations also were presented to Burke by officials representing the office of Mayor James Hahn, the Alameda Corridor, Southern California Association of Governments and others.

Leslie Rogers, FTA regional administrator, praised the "professionalism, candor and integrity that (Burke) brought to all our endeavors...."

Rogers read a commendation from FTA Administrator Jenna Dorn that said, in part: "Under your leadership, MTA has made an important, positive contribution to the Greater Los Angeles community, helping to

revitalize neighborhoods and provide access and opportunity to people throughout the area.”

In response, Burke said he was moved by the speakers’ remarks.

“As the end of my tenure approaches, I am overwhelmed – almost with grief,” he said. “However, that feeling should give way to my understanding that public service is a transient gift that Americans bestow generously on people. And sometimes even unexpectedly. This was a gift to me.”

Credited his staff and Board

The CEO also credited the MTA staff and members of the Board with much of the success of his administration.

“While I have worked hard at this job, I didn’t work alone,” he said. “I could never have done this job without the support and intelligence and effort of so many colleagues within the MTA. And without the support and understanding of the Board that I’ve had all along this period....”

On Thursday, Burke was back in the office and was participating in the Executive Management Committee’s deliberations. An employee-only reception for the CEO is scheduled from 9 until 11 a.m. on the Plaza outside MTA Headquarters. A commemorative program will begin at 10 a.m.

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Customer Complaints Dip to All-Time Low with Clean, Dependable Buses

By GARY WOSK

(Sept. 20, 2001) The deployment of over 400 new buses and the introduction of Metro Rapid bus service in FY 2001 were among factors that contributed to the low rate of customer complaints received by the MTA in July.

The ratio of customer complaints declined from 6.37 complaints per 100,000 daily boardings in July 1997 to 3.15 complaints per 100,000 daily boardings in July 2001.

That's a new record and perhaps the strongest indicator yet -- among others noted in an FY 2001 performance review -- that the Metro System continues to improve.

"From a technical standpoint, it seems that the service we're putting out is getting more dependable," said Transit Operations Chief Richard Hunt. "We're more reliable, more comfortable and more passengers are recognizing this because our complaints are down significantly. We're also safer as well as more punctual.

The appearance of Metro Buses, a priority since a cleanliness program was initiated in September 1999, also has shown marked improvement.

Cleanliness has improved

In September 1999, on a scale of 1 to 10 for bus cleanliness, the operating divisions averaged between 4 and 5. In April, May and June 2001, that rating improved to a 7.4. Criteria included the condition of dashboards, windows, graffiti control, bumpers, the driver's area and the step well.

Significant progress also was reported in such categories as fewer cancelled bus runs and a higher percentage of buses pulling out from divisions on time, both of which impact the number of customer complaints.

In the first quarter of FY 1999, more than 1,700 bus runs were cancelled, compared to zero in the last quarter of FY 2001.

The percentage of buses leaving bus divisions on time has increased from 94.19% in August 1997 to 99.53% in June 2001.

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THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES



- **PROGRAM for JULIAN BURKE
EMPLOYEE FAREWELL RECEPTION**

- Friday, September 21, 2001
- 10 a.m.

Program Announcer: Ed Scannell

- **Welcome remarks** and introduction of Master of Ceremonies Frank Cardenas
- **A moment of silence** honoring the people of New York and Washington, D.C., and the thousands of people, including the passengers, who lost their lives in last week's terrorist attacks.
- **A special salute** to our own Law Enforcement Offices, Fire, Life & Safety representatives and all of the Men and Women of MTA that daily support the MTA behind the scenes.
- **Dennis Flowers** leads singing of "Stars Spangle Banner" and Flag Salute
- **Remarks:** Frank Cardenas
- **Special Video Presentation**
- **Introduction of Speakers:** Frank Cardenas

Remarks:

Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky
Support Services Dick Brumbaugh
Countywide Planning Jim de la Loza
Operations Richard Hunt
Construction Charles Stark
UTU, Chairman James Williams
ATU President Neil Silver
Arthur Winston, Special Guest

- Special Presentation by the MTA Daycare Center
- Special Presentation "Thanks for the Memories" a special song written to honor Mr. Burke written especially for this occasion by MTA's Michael Ortiz

Remarks: Mr. Julian Burke CEO/LACMTA

Closing Remarks: Frank Cardenas

- Musical Interlude "Thanks for the Memories"

Entertainment provided courtesy of
"Gateway Jam Band" & "Dennis Flowers," MTA Security

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Editor's Note: (9/25/01) Rick Hittinger of MTA Transit Operations was traveling with his mother in Scotland on Sept. 11 when tragedy struck New York City and Washington, D.C. Here's his account of those moments.

The Scots Warmed His Heart During the Sept. 11 Tragedy

By RICK HITTINGER

My mother and I were in a pub in Edinburgh, Scotland. We had just come in and ordered some food when the bartender came over and asked if we were 'Yanks.'

He said that we should watch the TV, as something was happening in New York. It was 5:15 p.m., local time, and we looked up just as the second plane flew into the World Trade Center. We could not believe our eyes and ears!

The pub was almost empty when we had arrived and was beginning to fill up as we continued to watch in horror.

We stayed for the next two hours and never did eat our meal. People came over to us, hugged my dear Mom and shook my hand while telling us how very sorry they were.

They asked us to tell everyone when we got home that the British, Scottish and Irish people would stand and be counted with us!

It also was so very moving when Queen Elizabeth II had the Band of the Coldstream Guards play our National Anthem at the memorial services in London.

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MTA to Place 88 More Buses on Heavily Traveled Lines by Oct. 1

By RICK JAGER

(Sept. 25, 2001) MTA will add 88 peak-hour buses on heavily traveled bus lines throughout Los Angeles County, Oct. 1, to comply with a federal appeals court decision that calls for more bus service.

The Board in early September agreed to add the additional buses, while at the same time asking the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals for a rehearing to further clarify how the Consent Decree is to be interpreted.



First of a new order of NABI coaches debuts at MTA Sept. 19. Among its innovations: redesigned passenger seats and a CNG fuel tank with 15 percent more capacity.

Over the past two years, the MTA has added 160 buses into service. The remaining 88 buses will bring the total to 248, the number ordered by the court. Lines to receive the additional buses were selected based on the volume of passengers who use the lines as well as those lines with a recent history of excessive crowding.

As part of the deployment of the additional 88 buses, the MTA will promote 145 part-time bus operators to full-time and will hire an additional 30 mechanics and 18 service attendants.

Efficiencies to offset costs

Total costs of the additional bus service are estimated at \$11.4 million in FY 2002. The added costs will be off-set by operating efficiencies, overhead cost reductions, lower fuel costs and spare part cost savings.

The MTA currently has a record amount of bus service on the road and will have completed the process of purchasing more than 2,000 new state-of-the-art CNG buses by 2004. The agency already has taken delivery of more than 1,300 new CNG buses.

Forty-six bus lines will receive added service in at least one peak hour time period. Those lines are: 2, 4, 14/37, 16/316, 18, 26/51, 27/28/328, 33/333, 38/71, 40, 53, 55, 60, 66, 68, 81, 83/84/85, 90/91, 105, 108, 110, 115/315, 130, 152, 163, 164/165, 166, 167, 169, 175, 183, 204/354, 205, 206, 207/357, 212, 217, 230, 234, 236, 243, 444, 484, 561, 620, & 720.

Twenty bus lines will receive added service in both the morning and afternoon peak periods. Those lines are: 45, 53, 66, 68, 81, 90, 108, 110, 152, 163, 165, 166, 200, 212, 234, 251, 260, 268, 434, & 720.

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So noted...



Mayor James Hahn and Councilman Hal Bernson presented a proclamation of appreciation from the City of Los Angeles to CEO Julian Burke at his last Board meeting, Wednesday. A similar resolution was presented to Burke by Chairman John Fasana on behalf of the MTA Board. PHOTO: BILL HEARD (9/26/01)

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MTA's Ralph Sbragia Honored for Disaster Service Work in OC

(Sept. 26, 2001) Ralph G. Sbragia, an MTA Safety Compliance inspector, recently was promoted to the rank of sergeant by the Orange County Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (OCRACES).



Ralph G. Sbragia

OCRACES is a volunteer organization operated under the auspices of the Orange County Sheriffs Department's communications section. It provides communications support and technical expertise during local and regional emergencies.

Sbragia has been an active member of the group since obtaining his amateur (ham) radio license in February 1992. Last January, he was honored as the OCRACES' Member of The Year for 2000.

Sbragia's leadership roles have included coordinating OCRACES' participation in annual national emergency preparedness "Field Day" exercises and coordinating support of more than 25 law enforcement teams participating in the annual Baker-to-Vegas Challenge Cup relay foot race.

Assists in emergency preparedness

At the MTA, besides his Safety Compliance duties, Sbragia continues to assist Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Kathy Murrell in the development of an amateur radio Disaster Communication Group.

During times of disaster or crisis, the group assists the MTA with communications between its properties and between the MTA and the city, county and state Emergency Operations Centers. His skills also were used during the MTA's Y2K preparation and the Democratic National Convention.

Sbragia provides training to MTA employees interested in becoming amateur radio operators and participating in the MTA Disaster Communication Group. Classes are held at lunch as interest and students are available.

If you're interested in Sbragia's work or in any classes offered, e-mail or contact him at 922-7369. "HamBones" can reach him at W6CSP.

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Subway Closed as Precautionary Measure When Passengers Became Ill

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 27, 2001) Officials today are puzzling over the identity of an odor that sickened more than 25 Metro Red Line passengers and – as a precautionary measure – prompted suspension of subway operations for about two hours on Wednesday.

Two LAPD officers and an elderly woman were transported from the Wilshire/Western station to area hospitals for medical evaluations. Other passengers were treated at the scene for dizziness, nausea and shortness of breath.

The LA Fire Department's HAZMAT team thoroughly checked the Wilshire/Western station but found no evidence of a toxic substance. The station's alarms, which detect methane gas and hydrogen sulfide, did not trip during the incident, but fans were activated as a precaution to clear the station's atmosphere.

At the direction of the LAPD, controllers at the Rail Operations center halted all Metro Red Line service just after 5 p.m. and ordered evacuation of the 16 stations.

Streets around Wilshire/Western were closed to rush-hour traffic while the investigation was in progress.

Blue Line stopped at Pico

With the 7th/Metro station closed, Metro Blue Line service was stopped at the Pico station, but otherwise operated normally. There was no disruption of Metro Green Line service.

Metro Red Line service was restored at 7:05 p.m. and by about 8 p.m. subway trains were back in operation with five-minute headways. Some Metrolink trains were held briefly at Union Station to receive subway passengers who were delayed by the shutdown.

During the suspension of subway operations, the Bus Operations Control Center set up a bus bridge for Metro Rail passengers between Union Station and Westlake/MacArthur Park. From that point, passengers could use Metro Rapid Line 720 or Line 20 buses.

Supplemental service also was added to Line 156 to transport Metro Rail passengers between the San Fernando Valley stations and Wilshire Boulevard.

"We had excellent coordination between our Metro Blue Line operations supervisors and the Metro Bus supervisors," said Ralph de la Cruz, deputy executive officer, Rail Operations. "We were able to transport passengers by bus from Pico station to the North Hollywood station. It was an inconvenience, but we were able to move passengers."

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MTA Now Providing Phone Information 30% Faster

(Sept. 28, 2001) The average wait time for Metro customers who call MTA Customer Information has dropped by 30 percent – to under three minutes – in the past year, according to Warren Morse, deputy executive officer, Marketing and Customer Relations.



The MTA's 99 Customer Information Agents provide personalized directions for travel via Metro Bus and Metro Rail.

On an average weekday, Metro Information handles as many as 7,000 telephone calls from bus and rail riders. The MTA's 99 Customer Information Agents provide personalized directions for travel via Metro Bus and Metro Rail.

As recently as three years ago, customers often had to wait an average of 12 minutes or more for an available agent.

To remedy the situation, Metro Information improved its ability to forecast call volumes and embarked on a program of training and supervision for its information agents.

Antiquated computer equipment at 100 workstations was replaced and upgraded to state-of-the-art networked computers capable of responding to customer requests at lightning speed.

Most calls now can be handled faster and more efficiently, and the time customers must wait for an available agent has been dramatically reduced. Today, the average wait time is often under three minutes, with the majority of calls being answered in less time than that.

Metro Information is continuing to explore options such as automated voice response and on-line maps that could enable its agents to assist customers even faster in the future.

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Read [Letters to Stakeholders](#) online at www.mta.net

We Get Mail

Letters Posted [September 28](#) and [September 14](#)

I love the Metro Red Line subway and enjoy using it to get to my office quickly. I have only one critical comment: The ticket machines need to be looked at. They are extremely sensitive and don't accept all bills, specifically old or very new dollar bills. They often will not accept new dollars and old worn ones. This creates a problem when someone is trying to make the train or is stuck down there with no options. The change machines are good but often of out change. The machines should be adjusted or updated to take all dollars bill and the new fives.

Brian Palaski, Los Angeles

EDITOR'S NOTE: *There have been problems with the bill acceptors on our TVMs. The equipment is old and the original manufacturer no longer supports or provides upgrades for this model. We have been experimenting and making modifications. We are also talking to several vendors to see if they can build something for us. This last option looks promising. We are also in a procurement to replace and install all new TVMs on our stations. Regarding the change machines, our service staff will increase the monitoring and servicing of the machines.*

Why don't MTA bus operators call out the stops? I know it is the law. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that drivers call out the stops.

In my estimation, over 75% of MTA drivers make no attempt to call the stops. The rest: 25% do not know how to use the microphone. What a joke it is to see them whispering the stops.

Is MTA going to do something about this?

Western Center for Disability Law and the American Civil Liberties Union both want to see the MTA get its employees to follow the law or they might have to follow legal remedies, if MTA can't show some progress.

What is being done to train the operators to get them to follow the law?

Frank Boothe, Sylmar

I work at Universal Studios and live in North Hollywood, so I usually take the Metro Red Line to and from those two stations - which works great from me. However, the issue I find most irksome is that hardly a week goes by when one or more of the escalators do not work at either one or both stations. Usually it takes anywhere from a couple of days to a week or more before they are running again. I think it is inexcusable for an escalator at a

public transit station to be out of service for more than an hour.

Would someone in authority at the MTA please get on the ball and find out why this keeps happening and find out what can be done to keep all the escalators at all the stations working?

Thanks for letting me vent.

CAE, North Hollywood

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We have checked the following sources to respond to your e-mail. Our contractor, Mitsubishi Electric, informed us that they were not aware of any scheduled lengthy equipment shutdown for preventative maintenance at Universal City and North Hollywood stations. In addition, they stated that they have a mechanic "sweeping" the stations every morning to restart any down equipment. MTA also tries to restart as many units as possible.*

According to our trouble ticket report, we did restart one escalator at the North Hollywood station and two escalators at Universal City station during the week of 9/3/01.

Equipment can be shut down for various reasons. If the stop switch or any safety sensor is triggered, the equipment will be shut down immediately. Almost all personnel work in the Metro Red Line system (such as LAPD, custodian service, Facilities Maintenance, and traction and power personnel) all have been issued a key to restart the down unit.

The public can call (213) 922-5041 to report any non-running elevators or escalators.

(Re: Mariposa/Nash Green Line station) The taggers are tagging the station daily again! I notice that two more of the glass panels on the escalator have been etched. They are also etching the glass on the elevators. I suggest you view the videotape and try to catch them or the station will soon look like the Harbor Freeway Green Line station. I believe the tagging is being done by just one or two employees of El Segundo businesses on their way home from work (probably early in the morning, maybe before 6 a.m.) They are destroying the station!

John Saldin, El Segundo

We Get Mail

Letters Posted September 14

In all the discussion about the consent decree "pilot program" lines, what has been ignored is that three of those lines - two of which serve the San Fernando Valley - have never been implemented.

Those two, Lines 426 and 530, would connect one of the Valley's major east-west arterials - Sherman Way - to the North Hollywood Red Line Station with fast, limited-stop service, all day, seven days a week. Yet the changes for Line 426 were halted just before they were to take effect in December, 1997, and have never been resurrected; Line 530 was supposed to start last summer, but was similarly delayed. Neither of those restructurings have been given new implementation dates.

The Metro Red Line has been serving the North Hollywood Station for more than a year now; it is particularly disgraceful that these two lines, which could carry many passengers quickly to that station, sit neglected on the drawing board. The purpose of the pilot program is "to improve mobility for the transit dependent community". Is denying Metro Bus passengers a fast connection to Metro Rail an improvement? I think not.

On weekends, there is a lack of frequent service on the north-south arterials in the West Valley, so there are few opportunities to connect with Metro Rapid service on Ventura Boulevard to Universal City Station, but these two lines could provide a needed community connection through the middle of the Valley. Any savings that come from restructuring existing pilot program lines need to be reinvested by implementing Lines 426 and 530.

The pilot program is one of the few good things that came out of the consent decree. Why hasn't it been fully implemented?

Kymberleigh Richards, Public Affairs Director, Southern California Transit Advocates

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The 426 reverse commute operation is not likely to be successful given the success of the Metro Red Line. The 426 runs in the same corridor as the Metro Red Line and adds little if any benefit. There are discussions between the City and the MTA concerning reconfiguring services which are operated by both carriers. The idea would be to provide more frequent service along Sherman Way and into the North Hollywood station. The proposed service changes will impact a number of lines and resources that otherwise would have been used for the reverse commute option.*

As far as the 530 and 577 goes, they are the subject of a bid package that will close soon. While the United Transportation Union did raise concerns over the duplication of segments, it was not the only impediment. These routes did not move forward prior to the Air Quality Management District ruling on compressed natural gas and any new coaches would have to comply with MTA policy. Contractors were not willing to develop fueling facilities if they couldn't recover their costs.

The 218 which operates from the basin across Laurel Canyon is doing fairly well.

I would like to draw your attention to what I believe is a blatant example of Metro System fare discrimination. Metrolink riders who come to Los Angeles and continue their trip on the Metro Red Line and then MTA Metro Buses pay higher fares than Metrolink riders who come to Norwalk and continue their trip on the MTA's Metro Metro Green Line and then MTA Metro Bus.

Specifically, if someone exits a Metrolink train in Norwalk and catches the N4 shuttle bus to the Metro Green Line and then rides the Metro Green Line and then transfers to any MTA Bus, they ride for free. However, if someone exits a Metrolink train in Los Angeles and catches the Metro Red Line and then transfers to any MTA Bus they pay \$1.35.

Please tell me why the MTA will take Metrolink customers home to the South Bay for free, but they won't take me home to the

Hollywood/Griffith Park area for free? Why does MTA charge me for the same service?

Bryan J. Blumberg, Franklin Hills, Los Angeles

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The initial transfer to Metro Rail or the Metro Bus System is free, however, the patron is required to pay \$1.35 for the second transfer, bus or rail. The only exception to this is a free transfer to Metro Green Line shuttle routes 625 and 626 in the El Segundo area. These shuttles are seen as extensions of the Metro Green Line and allow the free transfer to persons accessing the El Segundo employment area. Metrolink fare media is honored (and reimbursed by Metrolink) on any MTA bus/rail service which serves a Metrolink station. This includes the Metro Green and Red lines, but not the Metro Blue line (except between Metro Center and Grand Station by special agreement with Metrolink). MTA Bus lines serving a Metrolink station will honor Metrolink fare media, and because several South Bay bus lines serve Union Station/Gateway Center in downtown Los Angeles it happens that they will accept Metrolink fare media from patrons transferring from the Metro Green Line (presumably at the Harbor Transitway, for example).*

You can transfer free to the Metro Blue Line for travel only as far as San Pedro Station. The reason for this was that several years ago many Metrolink patrons used the Metro Red and Blue lines to access L.A. Trade Tech, so an exception was made to access the college. Also at that time, the Metro Red Line only operated downtown, so the downtown portion of the Metro Blue Line was added to the free transfer list. Metrolink patrons traveling on the Metro Blue Line beyond San Pedro station must pay full fare.

Why is it that all the Metro Rapid Buses running on Wilshire are always freezing cold? Why do the drivers have to keep the air from 6am-11pm (which are the different range of times I've been on this bus) blowing cold at full blast?

This is more of a complaint than a question. Every time I ride this bus (which is a long ride), I end up with bone aches and headaches. I understand that there are far too many people on the bus at the same time. However, everybody around me shivers cold wishing the bus driver would realize that we are all freezing. The air conditioning doesn't have to be at full blast, it only needs to be a continuous flow.

For this reason, I hate boarding the 720. I am only 19 years old, but already my knees, and my bones. It is unhealthy for everybody to come out of the 720 to a temperature 20 degrees hotter.

ML, Los Angeles

I love the Metro Red Line system and enjoy using it to get to my office quickly. I only have one important comment. The ticket machines need to be looked at. They are extremely sensitive and don't take all bills. Specifically, old or very new dollar bills. They often will not accept new dollars and old worn ones. This creates a problem when someone is trying to make the train or is stuck down there with no options. The change machines are good but often of out change. The machines should be adjusted or updated to take all dollars bill and the new fives.

Brian Palaski, Los Angeles

When the trains run on schedule the Metro Red Line North Hollywood train arrives one or two minutes before the Wilshire/Western train.

Since this is the only real Metro Red Line transfer point, and sometimes the trains don't pass each other as scheduled, why don't you have the one train conductor tell the other train conductor, "dude, wait one minute at Wilshire/Vermont, I'm running a tad late," instead of making people wait five to seven minutes?

Do you really want people to constantly feel like they have to run downstairs to catch their train?

And what's the big hurry to make it to Wilshire/Normandie and then Wilshire/Western since the train conductor is just going to take a 10 minute break anyhow, since that is the end of the line? I don't get it.

TP, Hollywood

The Artesia Metro Blue Line station is frequently blocked by freight trains causing problems for Sheriff's and passengers wanting to get to work. I was told by a Sheriff that the train company is fined \$10,000 each and every day for blocking the station. Why can't that money be used to resolve the problem and build a bridge or tunnel allowing passengers to get to work and sheriff's to deal with more important problems? Common sense and risks of injury or death makes this station unsafe. Passengers are left with the decision of getting to work late or chancing a crossing over the freight train while it's stopped (and getting to work on time) or walking around by the casino and over the street bridge (10-15 minute walk). The fine should be used for a solution.

D.O., Hermosa Beach

Has anyone at the MTA looked at the feasibility of running all Metro Red Line trains to North Hollywood and then running just a shuttle between Vermont/Wilshire and Wilshire/Western?

With this arrangement, frequency of service would be improved for all the riders on the northern leg with only a minor impact on service (a quick change of trains) for those going on the Wilshire/Western leg.

Richard Core, Hollywood

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