

## Metro Report Archives

### April 2002 Articles

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**[MTA Board approves Regional Transit Pass Program for L.A. County](#)** (April 26, 2002)

The MTA Board has taken a major step toward providing transit riders seamless service countywide by approving a regional pass program.

**[CEO Snoble Updates Agency Accomplishments and Reorganization, Development of Service Sectors, at All-Staff Meeting](#)** (April 25, 2002)

Six months into his tenure at MTA, CEO Roger Snoble told employees at Wednesday's all-staff meeting that the agency can be credited with a long list of accomplishments since Fall 2001.

**[Metrolink Accident Draws Offers of Assistance From MTA](#)** MTA offered to assist Metrolink following this morning's collision between a Metrolink commuter train and a Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight train in Placentia. Authorities said two Metrolink passengers were killed and as many as 260 other passengers were injured, some critically.

**PHOTO GALLERY [2002 Rail Rodeo Puts MTA's Best to the Test](#)** (April 23, 2002) MTA's best train operators and mechanics converged on the Red Line rail yard Saturday to compete in the 2002 MTA Rail Rodeo. Employees who attended the event enjoyed a barbecue, a hip-hop clown, and live music under sunny blue skies.

**[Board Committee Recommends Service Sector Council Structure](#)** (April 19, 2002) The MTA's service sector plan moved steps closer to reality, Wednesday, when a special Board committee made several recommendations on how the local sector councils should be structured.

**[Metro Green Line Repairs to be Finished a Week Early](#)** (April 19, 2002) A planned 23-day construction project to modify the track structure for the Metro Green Line tracks at the Harbor Freeway station will be completed one week early, allowing a return to normal service effective Monday, April 22.

**[Policy Change Would Permit Vendors at Some Subway Stations](#)** (April 18, 2002) Flowers, magazines, shoe shines and candy – all this and more could be on sale within a year at some Metro Red Line stations if the Board approves a proposed policy allowing commercial activities on MTA property.

**[Operator Turns in Cache of Diamonds, Rare Coins Left on Bus](#)** (April 17, 2002) When a patron handed Metro Bus Operator Federico Ruelas-Cervantes a zippered pouch and told him someone had left it on his bus in downtown LA, last Sunday morning, he put it aside until he got back to East Valley Division 15.

**[MTA Joins in Celebration of Alameda Corridor Opening](#)** (April 12, 2002) MTA joined elected officials today in celebrating the opening of the Alameda Corridor project. After more than two decades of planning and five years of construction, the \$2.4 billion Alameda Corridor freight rail expressway officially opened and is designed to speed the flow of cargo to and from the nation's two busiest ports.

**[Metro Rapid Bus Earns Downtown Breakfast Club's Rose Award](#)** (April 12, 2002) The MTA's successful Metro Rapid Bus program was honored, Thursday, during the Downtown Breakfast Club's annual Roses and Lemons Awards presentation.

**[CHP SWAT Team Members Learn a Valuable Lesson at RRC](#)** (April 12, 2002) A squad of California Highway Patrol SWAT officers stormed the Regional Rebuild Center, Wednesday — in hopes of getting a better understanding of the MTA's compressed natural gas buses.

**[Transit Officials Hope to Encourage Bus Rapid Transit Nationwide](#)** (April 9, 2002) A two-day workshop drew some 100 transit officials, manufacturers' representatives and others to MTA Headquarters, Tuesday and Wednesday, for discussions on the nationwide development of Bus Rapid Transit systems.

**[Snoble Briefs Fulbright Fellows on LA Transportation Planning](#)** (April 9, 2002) Thirty Fulbright Fellows from around the world, who are studying Los Angeles from an urban planning standpoint, visited the MTA, Monday.

[MTA Rail Rodeo Set for April 20; Families Invited for the Day](#) (April 5, 2002) What does it take to operate a Metro Rail train professionally? To maintain such a complex piece of machinery and electronic?

[Poetry Alert! Poets to Stage Live Readings on Subway, at Union Station](#) (April 4, 2002) Metro Art and the Poetry Society of America will celebrate National Poetry Month, Friday, by staging the first of several live readings in the Metro Rail system.

[Metrolink, MTA Open New Joint Customer Service Center at Union Station](#) (April 3, 2002) Metrolink and the MTA celebrated the opening, today, of their first joint Customer Service Center at Union Station. Located in the East Portal of Union Station, the passenger service window will enable transit patrons to get information about, and buy tickets for, Metrolink's commuter trains, Metro buses, and the Metro Rail system in one central location.

[MTA Co-Hosting 2002 Greater Los Angeles Vendor Fair](#), April 24 (April 2, 2002) "The Spirit of Optimism" is the theme of the ninth annual Greater Los Angeles Vendor Fair scheduled Wednesday, April 24, from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel.

[MTA Employees 'Get The Collar' On Subway Vandal](#) (April 2, 2002) Quick thinking and good timing enabled MTA employees to catch a vandal in the act and stop him from getting away to create more damage.

## Bulletin Board

- ['Old Glory' Flying High At Metro Blue Line Division 11](#) (April 30, 2002) Duane Martin has been trying to get an American flag and flagpole at Metro Blue Line Division 11 for five years.
- [West Valley Division 8 Holds Third Annual Picnic at Lake Balboa](#)
- [MTA Mechanics](#) Moonlight as LA Crime Fighters (April 26, 2002) By day, they're MTA auto mechanics. By night, they fight crime at every turn. No, they're not superheroes – they're Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Reserves.
- [Earth Day](#): Three MTA bus operators joined representatives from other organizations, April 17, at Cal State Northridge's Earth Fair 2002.
- **OBITUARY: [Elsie 'Ms. Penny' Martin](#)** Remembered by MTA Employees : Services Friday at Mount Olive Second Missionary Baptist Church.
- **PHOTO GALLERY [MTA Rail Rodeo was a Family Affair](#)** (April 25, 2002) MTA employees and their families enjoyed a day full of activities while Metro Rail operators and mechanics competed in the 2002 Rail Rodeo Saturday.
- **[CEO Snoble, Deputy CEO Catoe and CFO Brumbaugh to make on-site observations of 'Safety's First' program.](#)** Observations and feedback from CEO Snoble, Deputy CEO John Catoe and CFO Richard Brumbaugh are intended to raise awareness of unsafe acts and conditions that occur agency wide as well as commend good safety performance.
- [Marie Tervalon](#) Wins SCAG's Diamond Award
- [Retirement Dinner](#) Planned for Jesse Castorena
- ['Safety's First'](#) ROC 'n' Rollout
- [Metro Bus Operator Showcased During Sylmar School's Career Day](#) (April 11, 2002) A lot of little kids boarded East Valley Division 15 Operator Lawrence Espinoza's bus, Tuesday. But they didn't go anywhere.
- ['Safety's First' at South Park Division 14](#)
- **[Community Involvement an Integral Part of Life for Division 15 Operator Keith Huling](#)** (April 10, 2002) East Valley Division 15 Operator Keith Huling is brimming with quirky tidbits about the Northeast San Fernando Valley community in which he

lives.

- ['Safety's First'](#) at Non-revenue Division 4
- [Tough and Challenging, Light-Rail Operator Training Stresses Safety](#) (April 9, 2002) Even before train operators can go on the job, they must complete eight weeks of intensive training at the Metro Blue Line Division 11 yards in Long Beach.
- [Wanted: LAPD Transit Specialist Police Reserve Officers](#)
- [Transit Group Appreciation Day: MTA Says 'Thanks' to its Cops](#)
- [Division 5 Gets Skinny: Start of Weight Watchers Program](#) (April 4, 2002) More than 30 MTA employees put their money where their mouth was on Monday at Arthur Winston Division 5, signing up for the Weight Watchers At Work program.
- [MTA Extends Pay, Benefits for Military Reservists on Recall](#) (April 4, 2002) Not long after terrorists struck the United States, Sept. 11, 2001, a number of the MTA's military reservists were recalled to active duty. Most are back now, but 12 remain on active service.
- [A Need for Speed: MTA Mechanics Have Racing in Their Blood](#) (April 3, 2002) Gateway Division 10 Mechanic Leona Swedenhjelm is the only female mechanic at her division, and out of 53 mechanics volunteering at the 2002 Winter Olympics, she was the only woman. But it's her hobby that might seem a little threatening to some men — racing.
- [Changing The Way The World Works, One Girl At A Time](#) (April 2, 2002) On Friday, April 26, 2002, the MTA will participate for the eight time in "Take Our Daughters To Work Day."
- [Snoble Honors Train Safety Volunteers at Luncheon](#) (April 2, 2002) Fifty volunteers who bring train safety messages to neighborhoods along Metro Rail corridors were honored by CEO Roger Snoble during an MTA luncheon, March 25.

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## MTA Employees 'Get The Collar' on Subway Vandal

By STEVEN FLORES

(April 2, 2002) Quick thinking and good timing enabled MTA employees to catch a vandal in the act and stop him from getting away to create more damage.

Douglas Jackson, Assistant Rail Transportation Manager at the Rail Operations Center and his co-worker, James Stevens, entered a Metro Red Line train at the 7th and Metro station on Tuesday, March 19.

As they boarded the train, they saw a young man defacing the inside of the car with a black marker. Jackson immediately notified the train operator using the emergency intercom.

The suspect, later identified as Aaron Ihenacho, saw Jackson talking on the intercom. Jackson and Stevens followed him off the train at the next stop, Pershing Square. There, all three ran into LAPD officers Robert Harris and Edward Nacua, who were on duty at the platform.

Jackson and Stevens explained to the officers what had happened. Ihenacho's black marker was recovered from his pocket, and he was placed under arrest.

### Booked for vandalism

The amount of damage was less than \$400, so Ihenacho, who recently turned 18, was booked as an adult for misdemeanor vandalism.

The law requires that an offense be committed in officers' presence in order for them to make a misdemeanor arrest. Since the officers weren't in the train when the vandalism occurred, the actual arrest was credited to Jackson. Officers Harris and Nacua took custody of Ihenacho and transported him to jail.

The LAPD places officers on the platforms of the busiest Red Line stations during peak hours to ensure commuter safety. The strategy paid off this time by making officers available to the MTA employees. Together they were able to stop a graffiti vandal.

The LAPD commended Jackson and Stevens for their quick action and assistance in battling graffiti on the Red Line.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** LAPD Lt. Steven J. Flores provided the information for this story. Lt. Flores is assigned to the LAPD Transit Rail Division, which is responsible for providing law enforcement services to the Metro Rail system.

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## **MTA Co-Hosting 2002 Greater Los Angeles Vendor Fair, April 24**

By GARY WOSK

(April 2, 2002) "The Spirit of Optimism" is the theme of the ninth annual Greater Los Angeles Vendor Fair scheduled Wednesday, April 24, from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel.

This year's fair will be hosted by the MTA, the County and City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Unified School District and the Metropolitan Water District.

More than 100 exhibitors will offer a variety of products and services. The sponsors are encouraging owners and employees of women- and minority-owned businesses and other small businesses to attend this year's Vendor Fair.

"The fair is a great opportunity to learn firsthand from procurement officers the ins-and-outs of the bid requirements for the various (sponsoring) organizations and who's who," said MTA Board Chairman John Fasana.

Informative and interactive workshops are scheduled. They will cover such topics as building a website for maximum exposure, tax tips for small businesses, marketing on a shoestring budget, using the Internet for finding more business, and raising a company's financial IQ. There also will be all-day seminars hosted by the event's sponsors.

Fair highlights include:

- Victoria Lowe, CEO of Alert Staffing, named Number One woman-owned business by the Los Angeles Business Journal, will be keynote speaker at a luncheon emceed by KFWB anchor Tracie Savage.
- Opportunity to meet with procurement officers from host agencies with annual budgets exceeding a total of \$8 billion.
- Opportunity to build lasting business relationships and network.

The \$45 registration fee includes admission to the fair, continental breakfast, lunch, vendor fair program and buyers guide.

The MTA has posted the Vendor Fair brochure on [www.mta.net](http://www.mta.net) website.

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## Snoble Honors Train Safety Volunteers at Luncheon

By RICH MORALLO  
(April 2, 2002) Fifty volunteers who bring train safety messages to neighborhoods along Metro Rail corridors were honored by CEO Roger Snoble during an MTA luncheon, March 25.



CEO Roger Snoble addresses train safety volunteers during a luncheon at MTA Headquarters.

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"You deserve an Academy Award for the work that you are doing on behalf of the safety of people," said Snoble.

Attending the event were volunteers from the MTA, Los Angeles Police Department, Sheriff's Department, Fire Department, Alameda Corridor Project, Metrolink, Amtrak, the Public Utilities Commission and the community.

The volunteers, most of them trained by the national Operation Lifesaver organization on how to communicate safety tips to a variety of audiences, received certificates of appreciation from Paul Lennon, managing-director of the Office of System Safety and Security.

System safety manager Abdul Zohbi and Public Affairs Manager Lynda Bybee also presented the volunteers with safety awards.

"This makes me feel so good," exclaimed Kathleen Johnson, as she stepped up to receive her certificate. An MTA assistant auditor, Johnson volunteers to travel to school campuses near the Metro Blue Line to warn students about risky behavior near trains and tracks.

The MTA train safety volunteers are Tony Andersen, Liz Armijo-Holbrook, Rudy Beuermann, Pat Clark, Frank Clarke, Jess Godinez, Bill Moore, Albert Ramirez, Yolanda Rosales, Cynthia Shavers, Joe Vicente, Denise Charles, Joanne Longsdon, LAPD Officer Connie Guerrero, Kathleen Johnson, Andrea Smith and Cristine Coronado.

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## **Changing The Way The World Works, One Girl At A Time**

(April 2, 2002) On Friday, April 26, 2002, the MTA will participate for the eighth time in "Take Our Daughters To Work Day."

As in previous years, the day is for young women in the third grade or older. The goal? To help all girls gain confidence in the workplace and succeed on the road to a bright future. This year's theme is "Change The Way The World Works."

"Take Our Daughters To Work Day" was created by the Ms. Foundation for Women ten years ago and is dedicated to the dreams, ideas, and ambitions of young women.

A number of activities are planned for this year's event, both at MTA Headquarters and at the operating divisions.

Activities at Gateway Plaza begin with an official welcome in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Board Room at 9:00 AM, followed immediately by a panel discussion, "Meet the Special Women of MTA."

### **Community Service Fair**

Other activities include a Community Service Fair and a panel discussion, "Changing the Way the World Works Through Community Service." Separate activities are scheduled at the divisions. Contact your division's coordinator for information.

Sponsors should register their guests early and speak to the activity coordinator for their division or department. Information, registration forms, coordinator contacts, events schedules are available online at the [Human Resources Intranet web page](#).

Completed forms can be submitted to Human Resources, at mail stop 99-4-4. More information is available from your division or department coordinator, or from Jackie Trayner at 922-5203 or Kimberlee Vandenakker at 922-4867.

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# A Need for Speed



^ Division 10 Mechanic Leona Swedenhjelm sits in her brand new Chevy Corvette, which she says she may race after it's paid off.

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## Racing is all the rage for some Metro mechanics

By CHRISTINA ESPARZA

(April 3, 2002) Gateway Division 10 Mechanic Leona Swedenhjelm is used to being the only girl in the group.

She's the only female mechanic at her division, and out of 53 mechanics volunteering at the 2002 Winter Olympics, she was the only woman. But it's her hobby that might seem a little threatening to some men — racing.

"I remember this one guy had a gold '69 Pontiac Firebird," on the racetrack, Swedenhjelm said. "He was mouthing to me, 'I'm gonna whip your \*\*\*,' and he's sitting there shaking his finger at me, and while he's doing that, the light turned green and I took off," she recalled with a laugh. "I left and he was still shaking his finger at me."

Swedenhjelm started racing when she was a junior at John Glenn High School in Norwalk. She owned a 1969 Pontiac GTO and learned to beef it up in high school auto shop.

"Our high school auto shop teacher was very good," Swedenhjelm said. "We used to bring our race cars in — everybody had muscle cars — and he would show us how to make them go faster. He even used to stay after hours to help us."

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Gateway Division 10 Mechanic Leona Swedenhjelm traded in her muscle car for a sleek 2002 Chevy Corvette.



Swedenhjelm's first race was against a Ford Mustang.

"I was excited, and nervous," she remembered. "All I could think was I wanted to beat the guy next to me."

And she did.



## A swollen head

"I was jumping up and down," Swedenhjelm said. "The first time you win, your head gets swollen."

From then on, Swedenhjelm was addicted to speed. She would race her GTO at Terminal Island in Long Beach and at the Firebird Raceway in Phoenix.

Along with her GTO, which went through three engines and 11 clutches, Swedenhjelm also owned a Suzuki GS1150-ES motorcycle and a 1987 Chevy Corvette.

But in August, she said good-bye to her GTO and traded it in for a red 2002 Chevy Corvette with 360 horsepower and convertible top. She hasn't taken it out to the track yet, but said she might after it's paid off.

Until then, Swedenhjelm watches the races from the sidelines. She frequents NASCAR races, truck races and motorcycle races. She even sponsors a motorcycle rider — Central City Division 1 Mechanic Aaron Pine.

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Central City Division 1 Mechanic Aaron Pine races his Suzuki motorcycle in the National Motorcycle Racing Association's Top Gas 8.20 Index competition. Courtesy of Bob Pine



Pine has been racing since he was in elementary school, according to his dad Bob Pine, Body and Trim Leadman at Non-revenue Vehicles Division 4.

## Racing interest snowballed

"He just came by it naturally," the elder Pine said of his son. "He used to race Big Wheels at his elementary school, where they used to have tournaments. He did the skateboard thing. Then he got into radio-control cars. It snowballed from there."

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Bob Pine, helps his son, Aaron, get ready for his next race. Courtesy of Bob Pine



Aaron Pine started racing his 1960 Volkswagen Bug when he was about 18. His father worked as his crew chief when they raced on a track in Carlsbad. A couple of years later, though, the younger Pine discovered something new.

"I borrowed a friend's bike, and I kinda got the bug," Aaron Pine said. "The bike was a bit cheaper, and a lot more fun."

Aaron Pine now races his Suzuki motorcycle in the Top Gas class of the National Motorcycle Racing Association, a class one step below professional riding. And his dad is still his crew chief.

"He's awesome," the proud "Pops" Pine said with an enormous grin. "He's very good at it. He's a very, very good rider."

The Pines, along with Bob's wife, Meri, and Aaron's son, Dakota, travel the country to compete in the 8.20 Index race. This means that the rider cannot reach the quarter-mile finish faster or slower than 8.20 seconds.

### **A matter of focus**

"I just try to focus on what's at hand," Aaron Pine said. "I focus on what's going on on the track. It seems like you're out there by yourself, but you get very competitive."

Although Aaron Pine has held the No. 1 spot in his class two years in a row, and won about \$1,000 in contingency money last season, he finds being with his family is the most rewarding aspect of his hobby.

"I enjoy being able to be out there and spending time with my dad," Aaron Pine said. "He makes it a lot more fun. I appreciate all the help from my parents."

Bob Pine also stressed that the most important element in motorcycle racing is to revel in the excitement.

"We started all of this to go out and have fun," Bob Pine said. "Winning is the frosting on the cake. It's nice to win, but you can't win all the time. When the fun is gone, then it's time to move on to something else."

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A snip of the scissors signaled the opening of the joint MTA-Metrolink Customer Service Center in Union Station's East Portal. From left representing the MTA staff are Laura Bernal of Records and Mail Services; CEO Roger Snoble, Councilman Hal Bernson and Tracy Daly, Metrolink assistant executive officer. PHOTOS: ED SCANNELL



## Metrolink, MTA Open New Customer Service Center at Union Station

By SHARON GAVIN, Metrolink

(April 3, 2002) Metrolink and the MTA celebrated the opening, today, of their first joint Customer Service Center at Union Station.

Located in the East Portal of Union Station, the passenger service window will enable transit patrons to get information about, and buy tickets for, Metrolink's commuter trains, Metro buses, and the Metro Rail system in one central location.

"This joint Customer Service Center is a natural extension for both Metrolink and the MTA," said Los Angeles City Councilman Hal Bernson, chair of Metrolink's Board of Directors and a member of the MTA Board. "We share more than just the space here, we share a commitment to providing excellent service to all of our customers."

MTA Board Chairman John

Fasana said, "The new center provides transit users with a one-stop shopping opportunity. Providing these services under one roof will encourage our customers to explore more of the county via public transit."

More than three-quarters of Metrolink's passengers go through Union Station each weekday, but downtown Los

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JUST THE TICKET: from left, Linda Weifenbach, Metrolink's first passenger when it opened in 1992; MTA Customer Service Manager Gail Harvey; Councilman Hal Bernson; Tracy Daly, Metrolink assistant executive officer; and CEO Roger Snoble.



Angeles is not the final destination for half of them. The ability to link the regional commuter railroad's trains with MTA's bus and rail lines is crucial to the system.

"We do everything we can to make the transit connections as easy as possible," said Bernson. "By opening this Customer Service Center we will be taking one more step out of the process."

Until the Customer Service Center opened, Metrolink information was available only at a window in the west end of Union Station, at the Metrolink website and through the 1-800-371-LINK customer service phone number.

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## Division 5 Gets Skinny

- **Start of Weight Watchers Program**

By ERIC RAPP

(April 4, 2002) More than 30 MTA employees put their money where their mouth was on Monday at Arthur Winston Division 5, signing up for the Weight Watchers At Work program.

Division Manager Mike Lensch wanted to reduce employee injuries and assist those who wanted to lose weight but were having trouble. Lensch is a participant in Weight Watchers and has lost more than 50 pounds since he started.

"I haven't felt this good in years," he says.

With the At Work program, Weight Watchers aims to make it easy for employees to participate by coming to their workplace.

It's perfect for Bus Operator Lateefah Bussey, who joined the program Tuesday. As she says, "I'll be at work anyway, so I don't have to go out to some other place after I get home."

For one hour, once a week, Weight Watchers representative Erica Sercus will come to Division 5 to meet with the employees enrolled in the program. After a brief and confidential weigh-in, the remaining time will be spent in a group meeting designed to help each member towards his or her goal.

### Winning points

The program is simple to understand. Every person is assigned a number of "points" per day based on their current weight. Every food portion is equivalent to a certain number of points, based on fat content, calories, and other factors.

The idea is to eat foods with the correct number of points rather than worrying about eating specific things. There are no forbidden foods. The program teaches better eating habits by emphasizing portion control and a healthier diet.

For instance, a double cheeseburger with fries may sound good, but would probably use up much of a day's worth of points, whereas healthy foods such as broccoli or other vegetables have almost no points at all.

Weight Watchers has determined the number of points for most food, including fast food, ethnic food, and home-cooked meals. All this information is included in the At Work starting kit.

### Helping each other

Patsy Goens, Division assistant manager, is joining the Weight Watchers At Work program not only to lose weight, but to show Division 5 employees that management is committed to this program. She also wants to expand the division's weight room to include cardiovascular exercise machines as well as weights.

Cookie Robertson, a 23 year MTA veteran Bus Operator who is signing

up to be a member, says that having a support group of fellow employees will help make the program work even better.

She was a Weight Watchers member once in the past and says, "It really worked."

Support isn't the only thing fellow members can offer. "We can keep an eye on each other too," Lensch says.

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**POETRY ALERT**

**Poets to Stage Live Readings on Subway, at Union Station**

- [Schedule of events](#)

(April 4, 2002) Metro Art and the Poetry Society of America will celebrate National Poetry Month, Friday, by staging the first of several live readings in the Metro Rail system.

The opening two-hour event will begin at 4 p.m., April 5, in the East Portal of Union Station. Poetry readings also are scheduled from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., April 9, 16 and 23 aboard subway and light-rail trains.

The readings are a collaborative effort of the Poetry Society of America and the MTA and are part of the current "Poetry in Motion L.A." literary arts program held on Metro Buses. Admission to each event is free.

The events feature readings by Elena Karina Bryne, noted poet and the regional director of the Poetry Society of America, as well as by LA-based poets Chris Abani, Briony Bax, George Chacon, Jennifer Kwon Dobbs, Amy Gerstler, Eloise Klein Healy, Larry Jaffe, John Kovatch, Gina Lain, Suzanne Lummis, Ellyn Maybe, Aleida Rodríguez, Antonietta Viallamil and Stephen Yenser.

Works by these and other poets appear throughout the year on placards installed in some 2,250 Metro Buses. Over the life of the 2001-2002 series, more than 26,000 bus cards will be inscribed with the works of 24 locally and internationally recognized poets and will bring poetry to more than one million bus riders a day.

The literary arts program is supplemented by the distribution of 120,000 bookmarks that replicate 11 of the poetry bus cards. The bookmarks are distributed on Metro Buses and Metro Rail trains and are available at Los Angeles County libraries.

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**Schedule of events**

Friday, April 5, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

UNION STATION (East Portal): Poets Eloise Klein Healy, Suzanne Lummis, Aleida Rodríguez, Antonietta Villamil and Stephen Yenser, read from their works included in the current Poetry in Motion® L.A. series.

Tuesday, April 9, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

METRO RED LINE: Departing from Union Station at 4 p.m., poets Larry Jaffe, Jennifer Kwon Dobbs, and Deborah Elder Brown will wander the stations and trains of the Metro Red Line to read selected poems from the Poetry in Motion® series until 6 p.m. Gateway Plaza East Portal, Vignes & Cesar Chavez streets, Downtown.

Tuesday, April 16, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

METRO BLUE LINE: Departing from the 7th Street/Metro Center/Julian Dixon Station at 4 p.m. Poets Elena Karina Byrne, John Kovatch, Gina Lain and Ellen Maybe will wander the stations and trains of the Metro Blue Line to read selected poems from the Poetry in Motion® series until 6 p.m.

Tuesday, April 23, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

METRO GREEN LINE: Departing from the Imperial/Wilmington/Rosa Parks Station at 4 p.m. Poets Chris Abani, Briony Bax, Elena Karina Byrne and George Chacon will wander the stations and trains of the Metro Green Line to read selected poems from the Poetry in Motion® series until 6 p.m.

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## **MTA Extends Pay, Benefits for Military Reservists on Recall**

(April 4, 2002) Not long after terrorists struck the United States, Sept. 11, 2001, a number of the MTA's military reservists were recalled to active duty. Most are back now, but 12 remain on active service.

Now, the original 180-day military leave the agency granted those reservists is at an end or will expire this month. To ensure that these employees maintain comparable pay and benefits, CEO Roger Snoble has approved a 180-day extension of military leave.

The extension will provide a continuation of benefits and supplemental pay. The supplemental pay will give the reservists a total salary equivalent to their full MTA salary.

The extension was granted following a survey of how other public agencies in California are handling the long-term military call-up. The survey found that other agencies have adopted similar extension policies.

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We Brake for Judges - Yard tracks at Divison 20 can barely contain this 80,000 pounds of Red Line steel rarin' to compete in the MTA Rail Rodeo.

### MTA Rail Rodeo Set for April 20; Families Invited for the Day

(April 5, 2002) What does it take to operate a Metro Rail train professionally? To maintain such a complex piece of machinery and electronics?

The MTA's 2002 Rail Rodeo, scheduled Saturday, April 20, at the Metro Red Line yard, will test the skills of some 15 train operators and an equal number of rail equipment maintenance specialists. The winners will represent the MTA at the APTA International Rail Rodeo, June 10, in Baltimore.

This year's Rail Rodeo will be a family event with food, refreshments and entertainment for the kids. All employees are invited. The rail yard is located at 320 Santa Fe Ave., about a mile or so south of MTA Headquarters.

"I hope employees will come out April 20 to watch Team Rail in action," says Rail General Manager Gerald Francis. "This event will give our rail operators and maintenance specialists an opportunity to test their skills and abilities against their peers. Getting the chance to represent the MTA at the International Rail Rodeo is like being on an all-star team."



^ 2001 MTA Rail Rodeo winners Tu Phan, left, and Robert Rodriguez, center, with RTOS Chris Medina, left, coach and instructor represented MTA at the International Rail Rodeo.

### Rail Rodeo events

During the Rail Rodeo, which will occupy much of the day, competing operators will be judged on uniforms, customer service and safe operation of a train over a course in the yard and on the main line. Events include pre-departure inspections, coupling and uncoupling procedures and a safety quiz.

Rail equipment maintenance specialists will participate in nine events, including a written exam. They'll be tested on mechanical aptitude and must solve hands-on problems involving electrical and electronic circuitry. The specialists who place in the top three positions will form a team that

will represent the MTA in Baltimore.

"We've developed these events to mirror last year's international rail rodeo," says Art Crabtree, Equipment Engineering manager.

To qualify for the Rail Rodeo, participants must meet strict requirements for job attendance and performance, and safety on the job.

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## LAPD Transit Group Appreciation Day



Participating in the event, from left are, Lt. Greg Yacouban, Capt. Ken Garner, MTA Chief of Staff Maria Guerra, Cdr. Robert Hansohn, Lynda Bybee of MTA Public Affairs, sector General Manager David Armijo, Paul Lennon of MTA Security and Lt. Duane Hayakawa. PHOTOS: BILL HEARD

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### MTA Says 'Thanks' to its Cops

- You can be appreciated, too. See metro.net:  
[Wanted: LAPD Transit Specialist Police Reserve Officers](#)

(April 5, 2002) Nothing says "Thanks" like good food and good music – and Transit Group Appreciation Day, which honored the officers and administrative staff of the LAPD's Transit Group – featured both.

Held at the Transit Group offices at the Regional Rebuild Center, the event was sponsored by the Transit Group Boosters Association, a community organization formed to support the LAPD's Police Explorer's program and other activities.



"Not Yet," an MTA employee band, provided music.

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Wanted:

## Volunteer LAPD Transit Specialist Police Reserve Officers

By Sgt. PAUL PARTRIDGE

(April 5, 2002) Have you ever wanted to explain something to a police officer? Here is your opportunity.

The Los Angeles Police Department's Transit Group would like to invite any interested MTA employee to join the ranks of LAPD by becoming a volunteer Specialist Police Reserve Officer. This invitation is open to all MTA employees and their friends.

... and, you'll be appreciated, too! See [Appreciation Day: MTA Says 'Thanks' to its Cops](#)

Transit Group, headquartered at Gateway Plaza, provides law enforcement service for the Metro Red Line, as well as for Metro Buses operating within the city of Los Angeles.

The LAPD also needs volunteer Line Reserve Officers. Line Reserves go through the same training and perform the same tasks as full-time police officers, although they do not have peace officer status.

Volunteer Specialist Reserves, in addition to being available to consult with LAPD personnel, will be given opportunities to provide instruction to various LAPD entities, especially Transit Group.

### Explorer advisors

Additionally, those who are interested in, and are selected to be, volunteer Explorer Advisors will be classified as volunteer Specialist Reserves.

There will also be some social activities from time to time throughout the year.

Special assignments include, but are not limited to:

- Chemist
- Physician
- Teacher
- Advertising Artist
- Photographer
- Statistician
- Computer Systems Analyst
- Chaplain
- Technical Writer
- Criminalist
- Computer Programmer

In no case would the requirements of any assignment exceed the training and abilities of the Specialist Police Reserve Officer.

Contact Sgt. Paul Partridge, Transit Group Community Affairs supervisor, at (213) 922-3794, or e-mail at [partridgep@mta.net](mailto:partridgep@mta.net), for questions, additional information and an application form.

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## Transit Officials Hope to Encourage Bus Rapid Transit Nationwide

(April 9, 2002) A two-day workshop drew some 100 transit officials, manufacturers' representatives and others to MTA Headquarters, Tuesday and Wednesday, for discussions on the nationwide development of Bus Rapid Transit systems.



▲ FTA Chief Counsel William P. Sears said Bus Rapid Transit systems are important to transit's future.

Titled "Action Plan for a Thriving BRT Market," the workshop reflected growing national interest in transit systems that combine many of the attributes of bus and light-rail transportation. Topics included involving bus manufacturers, speeding up BRT development and communicating with the transit industry.

The MTA co-sponsored the workshop along with the Federal Transit Administration, Calstart and LADOT. The FTA hopes to encourage the introduction of BRT systems throughout the country.

Keynote speaker William P. Sears, chief counsel for the Federal Transit Administration, acknowledged that his agency considers Bus Rapid Transit to be a key element in transit's future.

CEO Roger Snoble, welcoming workshop participants, described the MTA's wide-ranging efforts to relieve traffic congestion – including providing rail service, HOV lanes, Metro Rapid Bus service and the Bus Rapid Transit project planned for the San Fernando Valley's Burbank-Chandler corridor.

Noting that freeway speeds have slowed dramatically in the past 10 years, Snoble said, "In the long run, we have to find better ways to move people."

Rex Gephart, project manager for the MTA's Metro Rapid Bus program, described the 26-mile Wilshire/Whittier route and the 16-mile Ventura Boulevard route. The MTA recently identified 23 new Metro Rapid corridors throughout the county based on transit dependency, population and employment density.

▼ Project manager Rex Gephart noted that the MTA's successful Metro Rapid Bus project has attracted new transit riders.

Six of the 23 corridors are currently in the planning stage. When they are opened, Los Angeles will have four east-west and four north-south Metro Rapid Bus lines.



The MTA's goal for the first two Metro Rapid Bus lines was a 25 percent improvement in travel times over regular bus service. Travel times have improved by 29 percent on the Wilshire/Whittier line and 23 percent on the Ventura line.

From end to end, the operators "manage the line," Gephart said. "The key to this service is having the bus operators work with one another."

Ridership is up 42 percent on the Wilshire/Whittier line and 38 percent on the Ventura line, he said. One-third of the increase reflects riders who

are new to public transit.

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▲ Light rail training instructors Hector Gutierrez, foreground and Arnold Johnson, far left, keep class of trainees on track at Metro Blue Line Division 11.

- **Tough and Challenging, Light-Rail Operator Training Stresses Safety**

By ERIC RAPP

(April 9, 2002) If you've ever thought that operating a light-rail train would be easy, you've got another think coming.

Even before train operators can go on the job, they must complete eight weeks of intensive training at the Metro Blue Line Division 11 yards in Long Beach.

And that's just the beginning. Veteran operators say that just being safe on the line takes all their concentration, every minute that they are on the job.

Operators Lauren Young and Jesus Serrano say they must look out for many dangerous situations. One is pedestrians who try to make it through grade crossings before the train comes.

A particular problem they've both noticed lately is people sitting on retaining walls right next to the right-of-way. "If one of them fell backwards, that would be it for him," says Serrano.

With 210 tons of steel at their command, operators must be on their toes at all times.

- **Tough training**

It all starts in the classroom.

Trainees study four areas of light-rail operation: rulebook, standard operating procedures, vehicles, and operation proficiency.

Every day of training ends with a test. Prospective operators who score less than 70 percent on any test are immediately sent back to their original job. Trainees who score more than 70 percent but less than 90 percent get a chance to retake the test. If they don't score more than 90 percent on the retake, they too go back to their original job.

In addition to written tests, trainees also receive plenty of hands-on

experience.

Much practical instruction occurs in the yard. Trainees have to learn how to operate the rail cars. They also must learn how to diagnose and fix common faults in cars that have been set up by instructors. If they can't, they must leave the training program.

"Before they can even get in the cab, they have to learn a whole new language," says instructor Hector Gutierrez.

With these kinds of tough standards, it's no wonder that only about 50 percent of each training class actually makes it through.

"Our goal is to place well-trained, confident operators on board these trains to provide safe efficient service to our customers," says Duane Martin, manager, Light-Rail Division. "Although training standards are set high and the 'rail boot camp' is tough, hundreds of bus operators and supervisors have made it through successfully over the 12 years of the Metro Blue Line's operation."

- **Taking the Challenge**

A new class of prospective operators began on April 1. For them, all the tough training will be worth it if they can make it through.

"It's much more challenging than I thought it would be, but I'm happy to be doing something new," says Bruce Robertson, a 12-year MTA veteran.

Harry Schouten, another trainee, looks forward to being a train operator because he believes that "rail is the future of Los Angeles County." Like Robertson, Schouten says he has found the training very challenging and fun.

The final hurdles for these trainees and the others in their class will be the final day of training – an entire day of testing that will challenge the trainees to remember everything they've learned.

They also must accomplish two safe round trips between Los Angeles and Long Beach on the main line.

Trainee Garry Ngo is ready to take the challenge. He's hoping to gain experience with trains so that, some day, he can take that knowledge back to his native land of Vietnam.

"I want to help my country," he says.

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✓ Rich Morallo of Public Affairs welcomes international Fulbright Fellows to the MTA for a meeting with CEO Roger Snoble.



- **Snoble Briefs Fulbright Fellows on LA Transportation Planning**

By ERIC RAPP

(April 9, 2002) Thirty Fulbright Fellows from around the world, who are studying Los Angeles from an urban planning standpoint, visited the MTA, Monday.

After a tour of the Port of Long Beach to discuss freight movement, the group took the Metro Blue Line to downtown Los Angeles, where they toured Union Station before congregating at MTA Headquarters for a presentation on the many aspects of transportation in Los Angeles.

CEO Roger Snoble started the afternoon with an overall view of the ways the MTA currently plans transportation in Los Angeles, and the ways in which it was planned in the past. He noted that Los Angeles, unlike many other cities, had most of its growth after the automobile became a dominant force in American life.

For the future, Snoble suggested that it is time to change the way we plan transit in the city, and use the right tools to solve the problems of congestion.

"Adding lanes to a freeway," he said, "is like trying to solve obesity by loosening your belt."

Luckily, there are many alternatives, including light rail, Rapid Buses, and carpooling programs. "Los Angeles is the world's largest transportation lab," said Snoble.

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▼ Metro Bus Operator Keith Huling, a community activist in the Northeast San Fernando Valley, is playing a key role in obtaining transit services for the Children's Museum of Los Angeles.



### **Community Involvement an Integral Part of Life for Division 15 Operator Keith Huling**

By AMY HOWELL

(April 10, 2002) East Valley Division 15 Operator Keith Huling is brimming with quirky tidbits about the Northeast San Fernando Valley community in which he lives.

Queen Elizabeth has placed orders with a local chrysanthemum farm. Scenes from the 1998 movie, *The Players Club*, were filmed near his home. Huling himself is good friends with resident Bill Marshall, who played the title role in the 1972 vampire parody, *Blacula*.

But his connection goes well beyond an awareness of pop culture trivia. "I've been involved with the community many, many years," said Huling, who has lived in Pacoima since 1962.

Huling received a Certificate of Appreciation from former Los Angeles City Council Member Richard Alarcon's office in March 1997 for his participation in a drug activity reduction program. Aimed at getting dealers and users off the streets and into rehab or jail, Huling said the program was introduced "so we could make our community safe."

He is involved with the local chapter of the NAACP, and participated in last December's Snow Day, a community fair co-organized by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks and Communities and Schools.

Huling also was part of the Hansen Dam Feasibility Committee, formed to earmark funds for the maintenance of the dam, located in Lake View Terrace, just a few minutes from his home.

#### **His latest community venture**

Huling's latest community venture is the North Valley campus of the Children's Museum of Los Angeles, which will be located within the Hansen Dam Recreational Area. The museum is the first to be built in the San Fernando Valley.

The museum will be adjacent to the Lake View Terrace Branch of

the Los Angeles Public Library, currently under construction and scheduled to open later this year. The site also will feature a first-of-its-kind baseball academy, swimming and fishing lakes, a picnic area and a playground.

Combining his passion for community advocacy with the experience he has gained from 13 years as a Metro Bus operator, Huling is a representative of the Children's Museum's Commission for Greater Los Angeles.

Museum CEO Sally Thompson says the commission is composed of individuals who have demonstrated community or corporate leadership. "He's very excited about the project," she said.

"Keith understands the fact that having the site out there, transportation is an issue because there really aren't enough bus lines," said Thompson. "He's really diligent about the fact that there needs to be adequate transportation for people who might not be able to drive out that far or don't have access to a car."

Thompson said there is concern not only for the transportation needs of people visiting the site from Downtown Los Angeles and areas farther away, but also from other parts of the San Fernando Valley.

### **Seeing that things are done right**

Both Thompson and Huling hope existing Metro Bus lines that serve the area will offer extended services once the museum opens. They also are aiming to implement a shuttle that would travel between the North Hollywood Metro Red Line station and the recreational area.

"He has been doing research and talking with some folks," said Thompson. "He's looking at that whole community and saying, 'How do we increase the transportation so that more folks can access that whole site?'"

Huling was recommended to serve on the commission by fellow representative Marie Harris, who has lived in Pacoima for some 35 years and has known Huling since he was a little boy.

"He's just a wonderful person, and very devoted to children. I've always tried to involve him," said Harris, who was appointed Honorary Mayor of Pacoima in 1987.

Huling is "fascinated, amazed and proud" to be a part of the process that will eventually yield the first museum in the San Fernando Valley.

Does he consider himself a community advocate? Not necessarily. "I just like to see things done, and that they're done right."

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## 'Safety's First' at Non-Revenue Division 4



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< Richard Hunt, deputy executive officer, Operations, explains the importance of safety during a Safety's First program at Non-Revenue Division 4. "There's nothing worse than going to someone's home," he says, "knocking on the door and telling them that their loved one is not coming home."

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> Non-Revenue Division 4 Mopper/Waxer Darnell Doyle wins a MTA gift basket from the Safety Wheel after correctly answering a safety question.

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< Non-Revenue Division 4 Superintendent Rich Morton emphasizes the fact that safety is critical, even when not on the road.

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## 'Safety's First' at South Park Division



< South Park Plumber Johnnie Anderson spins the Safety Wheel to see which prize he'll receive.

> Managing Director for Security and Law Enforcement Paul Lennon explains to South Park Shops Division 14 and Vernon Yards Division 34 employees Wednesday that safety is a community effort.



< Deputy Executive Officer Milo Victoria stresses that safety should always be top priority before performing a task.

April 11, 2002 PHOTOS BY CHRISTINA ESPARZA

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Prospective MTA bus operators? Five students from Ms. Frick's pre-kindergarten class at Fenton Avenue Charter School in Sylmar enjoyed their tour of a Metro Bus by East Valley Division 15 Operator Lawrence Espinoza. PHOTO BY AMY HOWELL



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### **Metro Bus, Operator Showcased During Sylmar School's Career Day**

By AMY HOWELL

(April 11, 2002) A lot of little kids boarded East Valley Division 15 Operator Lawrence Espinoza's bus, Tuesday. But they didn't go anywhere.

Four pre-kindergarten through first grade classes were given a tour of Espinoza's bus during the first day of Fenton Avenue Charter School's three-day Career Day.

"They got excited just to get on the bus," said Espinoza. "We talked about what it takes to become an operator and procedures of the bus."

Espinoza talked to the students about qualifications needed to be an MTA bus operator, stressing the importance of education. "They were very, very well behaved and real reciprocal."

"I was more than happy to do it," Espinoza said, who would participate in another career day if given the opportunity.

#### **Different types of vehicles**

The biannual Career Day showcases different types of vehicles from various agencies and companies for students in the pre-kindergarten through first grades. Guests are invited to speak to students in upper grade levels.

In addition to Espinoza and the Metro Bs, representatives and vehicles from Caltrans and two local machinery companies also were on hand.

An LAPD officer spoke to students from the air in a helicopter that hovered over the school. Firefighters and two fire trucks arrived late, due a fire earlier that morning in the Pasadena area.

"They [the MTA] have never been here before," said school counselor and Career Day coordinator Toni Frear. "I'd love to have them on a yearly basis. I'd definitely like speakers for the older kids."

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## MTA Joins in Celebration of Alameda Corridor Opening

- [Photo Gallery](#)

By Rick Jager

(April 12, 2002) MTA joined elected officials today in celebrating the opening of the Alameda Corridor project. After more than two decades of planning and five years of construction, the \$2.4 billion Alameda Corridor freight rail expressway officially opened and is designed to speed the flow of cargo to and from the nation's two busiest ports. MTA provided \$358.7 million towards the project for preliminary engineering and construction. More than 1,000 people attended the grand opening ceremonies near downtown Los Angeles.



Moving freight signals long-awaited opening of Alameda Corridor.

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The Alameda Corridor is a series of bridges, underpasses, overpasses and street improvements that separate freight rail, passenger and street traffic. By consolidating four railroad branch lines serving the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the Alameda Corridor eliminates more than 200 at-grade crossings where rail and street traffic conflict, thereby easing traffic congestion and significantly reducing air and noise pollution from idling trains, trucks and cars. The project stretches through eight cities along a 20-mile route. The centerpiece is the Mid-Corridor Trench, a below-ground trainway running parallel to Alameda Street for 10 miles.

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GALLERY

> MTA Board Chairman John Fasana greets Mayor James Hahn as he arrives for the opening ceremonies of the Alameda Corridor Project.



^ MTA Board member Don Knabe, left, and Board President John Fasana welcome Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary, United States Department of Transportation, right, and Maria Contreras-Sweet, Secretary of Business, Transportation and Housing Agency to the official opening of the Alameda Corridor project.



< MTA Board Member and Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe thanks MTA for its involvement in the Alameda Corridor Project at the opening ceremonies.

> CEO Roger Snoble greets Maria Contreras-Sweet, Secretary of Business, Transportation and Housing Agency following the official opening of the \$2.4 billion Alameda Corridor Project.



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PHOTOS BY RICK JAGER

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California Highway Patrol Officer Jim Decello practices hiding from the on-bus camera at the Regional Rebuild Center.

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## CHP SWAT Team Members Learn a Valuable Lesson at RRC

By CHRISTINA ESPARZA

(April 12, 2002) A squad of California Highway Patrol SWAT officers stormed the Regional Rebuild Center, Wednesday — in hopes of getting a better understanding of the MTA's compressed natural gas buses.

Equipment maintenance instructors at the RRC taught the officers how to disable the CNG buses from the outside, how to hide from the bus cameras in case the bus has been hijacked, and where not to shoot.

"If they shoot in the wrong place," said Equipment Maintenance Instructor Ron Cotroneo, "it could become a catastrophic event."

Cotroneo has been training Los Angeles County Fire Department personnel on how MTA buses operate for about 15 years, but the SWAT team also should be trained in case a human needs to be battled instead of a blaze.

### SWAT team is first on the scene

"The SWAT team is usually the first on the scene in a hostage situation," Cotroneo said. "They need to know, one, how to disable the bus, and two, where not to shoot, should that become necessary."



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CHP Officers Armando Rios, left, and Jim Decello check the bus driver's screen to see if they can spot their supervisor behind them.

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Cotroneo said he might start training SWAT teams every month as more CNG buses are on the road. Just last month, in fact, this training would have come in handy.

"Some kid hijacked a bus and took off on a joy ride," he said. "For some reason he stopped, but the engine kept running until one of our guys went out there and turned off the switch on the back of the bus."

Officer Armando Rios said the training has been helpful.

"We have a better understanding of what obstacles we're going to face if someone hijacks a bus," he said. "This gives us hands-on training, which is always good."

"People would usually say 'Just shoot at the bus,'" Rios continued. "But we have more knowledge. Now we know what not



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CHP Officer Armando Perdomo learns to shut off an MTA bus from the rear engine compartment.

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to shoot.”

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## Metro Rapid Bus Earns Downtown Breakfast Club's Rose Award

(April 12, 2002) The MTA's successful Metro Rapid Bus program was honored, Thursday, during the Downtown Breakfast Club's annual Roses and Lemons Awards presentation.

The Metro Rapid Bus program was among 11 Roses presented during the event. Others receiving awards included the restoration of City Hall, the Chinatown Gateway Monument, the new Hope Village community and Wilshire Union Center.

MTA Board Chairman John Fasana, CEO Roger Snoble

and Rex Gephart, Metro Rapid program manager, represented the agency at the awards presentation.

The Metro Rapid Bus demonstration opened in June 2000 with 75 peak hour buses deployed on the 26-mile Line 720, serving Wilshire/Whittier, and the 16-mile Line 750, serving Ventura Boulevard. Service has since been expanded to a total of 105 peak hour buses – 83 on Wilshire/Whittier and 22 on Ventura Boulevard.

### Ridership up by 40 percent

Ridership in the two transit corridors has increased by a total of 40 percent since the introduction of Metro Rapid. Some 90,000 patrons now use either the Metro Rapid or local service on Wilshire/Whittier, while about 18,000 ride the Ventura bus lines.

Metro Rapid buses have improved travel times in their corridors by 29 percent along Wilshire/Whittier and 23 percent along Ventura Boulevard, according to Gephart, the project manager.

Within three months, he expects another improvement in travel times along the Wilshire/Whittier line when the City of Beverly Hills and Los Angeles County install signal priority equipment within their jurisdictions.

The MTA also will meet with Santa Monica officials to discuss the installation of signal priority equipment along that portion of the Wilshire/Whittier line.

Meanwhile, the MTA has plans to phase in Metro Rapid service in six more transit corridors over the next two to three years. That will give the agency four east-west and four north-south Metro Rapid bus lines.

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^ A Rose is a Rose: CEO Roger Snoble, center, displays Downtown trophy awarded to MTA for the Metro Rapid Bus program. Savoring the moment are Countywide Planning Chief Jim de la Losa, left, and Metro Rapid program manager Rex Gephart.





## Operator Turns in Cache of Diamonds, Rare Coins Left on Bus

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(April 17, 2002) When a patron handed Metro Bus Operator Federico Ruelas-Cervantes a zippered pouch and told him someone had left it on his bus in downtown LA, last Sunday morning, he put it aside until he got back to East Valley Division 15.



Operator Federico Ruelas-Cervantes didn't know a pouch left on his bus contained diamonds and rare coins until he turned it in at Division 15.

Imagine Ruelas-Cervantes' surprise when he and Dispatcher Quincy Floyd opened the pouch to inventory the contents and found – a cache of eight diamonds valued at \$80,000, an 1875 U.S. coin worth \$69,000, Asian coins possibly valued at \$5,000, several other rare coins and an electronic organizer.

"When we opened it and saw the gems, I didn't know what to say or think," says Ruelas-Cervantes, an extra-board operator who joined the MTA in 1999. "There was no ID and no card."

After completing an inventory that probably topped \$155,000, according to certificates and other documents found with the valuables, the two put everything back in the pouch and locked it up for safekeeping. On Monday morning, Floyd notified the LAPD's Transit Group.

Transit Group officers Doug McCombs and Greg Ortiz, along with Detective Emma Ramirez from the LAPD's burglary and auto theft division, responded. They inventoried the bag and documented its contents.

### Police located the owner

With a little detective work, the officers were able to locate the pouch's owner and return it with the diamonds and the coins by mid-day. The man, who had just broken up with his wife, police said, was despondent over the double loss.

"He was very thankful everyone made an effort to get the property back to him," says Lt. Greg Yacoubian. "He's also back together with his wife."

For his role in returning the valuables, Ruelas-Cervantes will receive a Certificate of Commendation, according to Division 15 Transportation Manager Karl Downs.

"He's an outstanding, honest person who was doing his job as he was trained to do it," Downs says. "He wasn't interested in what was in the pouch – he didn't even look."

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## 'Safety's First' ROC 'n' Rollout

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< Communications Officer Jeff Ringsrud, left, and Division Activities Committee Representative Norma Carrasco, who have put together 18 safety program rollout events, take down the "Safety's First" banner for the last time at Rail Operations Control.

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> Rail Transit Operations Supervisor Josie Robles shows off the T-shirt she won after successfully answering a safety question at the last of the MTA's Safety's First rollouts.

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April 17, 2002 PHOTOS BY CHRISTINA ESPARZA

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## Retirement Dinner Planned for Jesse Castorena

(April 17, 2002) The staff at Central City Division 1 recently bade farewell to Manager Jesse Castorena, who is retiring after nearly 29 years of service.

A retirement dinner for Castorena is planned April 27 at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in the City of Commerce. The event, with dinner, a retirement ceremony and entertainment, will begin at 6 p.m. The hotel is located at 5757 Telegraph Road.

For more information, contact Jerry Cruz at 922-6401 by Thursday, April 18.

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^ Central city Division Manager Jesse Castorena, pictured here at "Best of the Best" awards banquet in 2001, retires after 29 years of service.

## Policy Change Would Permit Vendors at Some Subway Stations

(April 18, 2002) Flowers, magazines, shoe shines and candy – all this and more could be on sale within a year at some Metro Red Line stations if the Board approves a proposed policy allowing commercial activities on MTA property.

The Executive Management and Audit Committee gave its stamp of approval to the policy, Thursday, and sent it to the full Board for consideration at its April 25 meeting.

A study by an auditing firm recommends rail station concession stands as a means of generating additional revenues for the MTA. The study also indicates that rail station concessions would make transit “more convenient and attractive” to patrons.

The only commercial activity currently allowed at Metro Rail stations is a pilot program begun in 1995 that permits seven plaza-level vendors at Wilshire/Western and Wilshire/Vermont. Board policy, as well as fire, life and safety regulations, had prohibited concessions on the station mezzanine levels.

### Concession stands now feasible

In recent years, however, Metro Red Line Segment 1 stations have been retrofitted with fire sprinklers. Segment 2 and 3 stations were constructed with built-in sprinklers. With the fire hazard reduced, permitting concession stands within the stations became more feasible.

If the policy is approved by the full Board, the MTA could permit vendors on the plaza level at various Metro Red Line stations, including North Hollywood and Universal City, within the next 60 days, according to Real Estate Manager Velma Marshall.

Licensing mezzanine-level concessions could be accomplished within a year, but details of which stations would have them, the number of vendors and the kinds of goods permitted have not yet been finalized.

An interdepartmental team consisting of Real Estate Department, MTA Rail Operations and Countywide Planning, Security and Engineering is developing the detailed implementation plan for the vending program.

### Vendors on the plazas

The initial plan is to allow limited cart vendors at the plaza levels on a first-come, first-served basis. A Request for Proposals will be issued to select a master tenant to operate concessions on the mezzanine levels of the rail stations.

Under the proposed policy, concessionaires could sell jewelry, sundries, newspapers, magazines, candy, photos, flowers, food in closed containers, among other items. Services could include shoe shines, self-



This hot dog stand at the Wilshire/Western station is part of a successful pilot program to permit vendors at some Metro Rail stations.

service postal machines, ATMs, dry cleaners and film developer drop-off and pick-up services.

Vendors would not be permitted to sell or use alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, chewing gum or nuts in a shell. Hot food items also would be prohibited, along with any other activities deemed by the MTA to be unsafe or incompatible with transit operations.

By permitting concession stands and vendors, the proposed policy states, the MTA would expect to generate revenue, increase transit ridership, provide services to patrons and provide development and business opportunities to the private sector.

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## Marie Tervalon Wins SCAG's Diamond Award

(April 18, 2002) Marie Tervalon, an MTA Customer Service agent, has been named a Diamond Award recipient by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).

SCAG chose Tervalon for her outstanding achievements in promoting ridesharing during 2001. Along with other award winners, she will be honored April 23 during a luncheon at the Regal Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles.



Marie Tervalon

Hosted by Jennifer York, KTLA-TV traffic reporter, the event will feature CEO Roger Snoble as guest speaker.

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## **Board Committee Recommends Service Sector Council Structure**

(April 19, 2002) The MTA's service sector plan moved steps closer to reality, Wednesday, when a special Board committee made several recommendations on how the local sector councils should be structured.

The membership of the councils, the scope of their activities and how much authority the MTA should give them are major policy issues facing Board members as the agency moves toward the July 1 opening of service sectors in the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys.

At the Board's direction, CEO Roger Snoble, Deputy CEO John Catoe, Chief of Staff Maria Guerra and others have made a number of service sector presentations to get feedback from local officials and citizen organizations.

"In general, the service sector concept was well-received," Guerra reported to the Board's Ad Hoc Service Sector Committee. But, she said those who heard the presentations expressed a variety of opinions about how service sectors could best serve their transportation needs.

### **Nine-member councils**

During a late-afternoon meeting, the committee voted to recommend that the full Board "support the establishment of governance councils."

A second vote proposed councils with up to nine members. The motion included a provision to recognize the structure of any existing "entities" that might be designated as a sector's governance council.

The committee also will recommend that elected officials and/or private citizens may serve as council members.

Council members would be paid a stipend to attend meetings, no more than two a month. The stipend amount will be determined at a later committee meeting.

Other issues, including delegation of Board authority to the councils, will be discussed at future meetings.

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## Metro Green Line Repairs to be Finished a Week Early

By ED SCANNELL

(April 19, 2002) A planned 23-day construction project to modify the track structure for the Metro Green Line tracks at the Harbor Freeway station will be completed one week early, allowing a return to normal service effective Monday, April 22.



▲ Construction crew members work to modify the Metro Green Line tracks at the Harbor Freeway station.

“This is good news for our passengers who have been very patient through two weeks of construction,” said Board Chairman John Fasana. “They endured a longer commute without complaint while we completed a very necessary repair project.”

“In addition, Metro Builders & Engineers Group, LTD, our rail and bus operations staff, maintenance of way personnel, and station attendants are to be congratulated for a job well done,” he added. “This was the first time MTA has had to impact peak hour service with a project of this magnitude, and their professionalism kept the amount of inconvenience to our passengers to a minimum.”

Over time, ground settlement at the Harbor Fwy. Station caused a slight depression of two inches at three locations of the track structure.

This condition made it necessary for MTA to create and adjust a temporary support system until a more permanent solution could be devised. The integrity of the station, itself, was not compromised by the problem, nor was passenger safety placed at risk.

The repair work got underway April 6. Crews removed existing concrete slabs under the tracks at the three locations and replaced the slabs with concrete railroad ties and gravel ballast. In the event of additional settlement, the MTA will be able to adjust the track surface with minimal service impacts.

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### **Metrolink accident draws offers of assistance from MTA**

(April 23, 2002) MTA offered to assist Metrolink following Tuesday morning's collision between a Metrolink commuter train and a Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight train in Placentia. Authorities said two Metrolink passengers were killed and as many as 260 other passengers were injured, some critically.

MTA provided a bus to transport northbound Metrolink passengers from Fullerton Station to Norwalk Station and Union Station during the afternoon commute. In addition, MTA safety personnel contacted Metrolink and offered their assistance.

The apparent slow-speed head-on collision occurred shortly after 8 a.m. at Orangethorpe Avenue and Richfield Road when the southbound Metrolink train bound for San Juan Capistrano was struck by the BNSF train. The Metrolink train was stopped at the time of the collision.

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## Bus Operators Participate in University's Earth Fair

PHOTOS: AMY HOWELL

By AMY HOWELL

(April 23, 2002) Three MTA bus operators joined representatives from other organizations, Wednesday, in celebrating Earth Day at Cal State Northridge's Earth Fair 2002.



Hollander, Carrasco and Lopez served as MTA representatives for Earth Fair 2002.

Division 2's Norma Carrasco, Division 8's Mark Hollander and Division 15's Eddie Lopez served as MTA representatives, handing out goodies like sports bottles, notepads and pencils, along with schedules and pamphlets, to passersby.

Hollander especially took pride in giving soccer ball-shaped foam stress balls etched with The Safety Guy to those who stopped at the MTA table.



Bus operators Mark Hollander, Eddie Lopez and Norma Carrasco answer questions posed by a Cal State Northridge student.

"We have the largest natural gas bus fleet in the nation," said Hollander, explaining that he and the other operators were on hand, in part, to promote that aspect of the MTA.

Carrasco said they also were in attendance "to promote our transportation system, our bus system, our anti-graffiti program."

"We're here to answer any questions regarding any of our schedules, any of our lines in our system," said Carrasco, noting that this is the fourth year the MTA has participated in Cal State Northridge's Earth Fair.

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## Metro Rail's top operators, mechanics join the Winner's Circle

Click on images to view in full



**Top Ops:** back row from left, Rail TOS and instructor Chris Medina, Rail General Manager Gerald Francis, Rail Division Transportation Manager Rita Malone and Rail Transportation Superintendent Jess Diaz congratulate top-scoring train operators, foreground from left, Tu Phan, Robert Rodriguez and David Resendez.



**Top Mechanics:** Director of Rail Services Dave Kubicek, left, and Division 11 Rail Equipment Maintenance Instructor Russell Homan, at right, congratulate top-scoring mechanics Ronnie Burt, Eric Petersen, Kiet Tran, Juan Ruvalcaba.

PHOTOS BY GAYLE ANDERSON

[Winners All:](#) Complete list of 2002 Competitors

## 2002 Rail Rodeo Puts MTA's Best to the Test

by ERIC RAPP

(April 24, 2002) MTA's best train operators and mechanics converged on the Red Line rail yard Saturday to compete in the 2002 MTA Rail Rodeo. Employees who attended the event enjoyed a barbecue, a hip-hop clown, and live music under sunny blue skies.

The winners, announced Tuesday at Red Line Division 20, will travel to Baltimore in May to represent the MTA in the International Rail Rodeo.

Gerald Francis, Rail General Manager, says that even though the competition is friendly, the contestants take it seriously. "They really want to go to Baltimore and represent us there."

Events challenged participants' knowledge and skills. All participants had to meet rigorous standards for attendance and job performance before they could compete.

### Train Operators aim for perfection

Operators were first subjected to a strict check of their uniform and required documents.

Then they quickly completed a safety test, performed a thorough pre-departure check of a Metro Rail car, and coupled and decoupled two rail cars as perfectly as they possibly could.

Operators also spent about 45 minutes operating Metro Rail cars on a course that spanned from the south end of the yard to Union Station, performing precision stops, spotting potential hazards, dealing with problem customers (played by volunteers), and communicating with yard and main line controllers. Judges looked over their shoulder at every turn.

This year's top three scorers are all from the Red Line. Robert Rodriguez took first place with an amazing 899.5 points out of a possible 1,000. Hot on his heels were Tu Phan with 883 points and David Resendez with 817.

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[MTA Rail Rodeo was a Family Affair](#)

**MORE!** Martin Batistelli's blow-by-blow account on the [SCADA Systems Engineering & Maintenance web page](#) on the MTA Intranet.

Rodriguez and Phan, who represented MTA at last year's international championship in Boston, will travel with coach and instructor Chris Medina to this year's competition in Baltimore.

Rita Malone, Red Line Rail Transportation Manager, says "they are some of our best-trained operators. We wish them the best in the competition in Baltimore."

### **Maintenance Specialists shoot for the gold**

Mechanics participated in a series of events that tested their dexterity and knowledge of tools, electronics, and rail car components.

They also completed a written test that tested not only their knowledge of rail mechanics and electronics, but safety procedures as well.

Top honors for mechanics went to the Blue Line's Ronnie Burt, whose 840 points out of 900 possible was the best this year.

Bringing in second place by a narrow margin of 6 points was Juan Ruvalcaba from the Red Line with 710 points, followed closely by Eric Petersen of the Blue Line with 704 points. All three will represent MTA in Baltimore, attended by instructor Russell Homan. Red Line maintenance specialist Kiet Tran qualified as an alternate with a strong showing of 677 points.

<b>MTA Rail Rodeo 2002 Competitors</b>	
<b>Train Operators</b> Michael Barnes, Blue Line Rogelio Chacon, Red Line Kevin Devlin, Red Line Raymond Mandujano, Red Line Tu Phan, Red Line Ruben Ramirez, Blue Line David Resendez, Red Line Robert Rodriguez, Red Line Darnell Taylor, Green Line Jesus Valdez, Red Line Kenneth Wilkerson, Blue Line	<b>Mechanics</b> Glen Abraham, Red Line Alan Addie, Green Line Ronnie Burt, Blue Line Tadeo Cubero, Red Line Eric Czintos, Blue Line Eric Petersen, Blue Line Jose Rodriguez, Blue Line Juan Ruvalcaba, Red Line Joselito Suarez, Red Line Andre Tran, Red Line Kiet Tran, Red Line

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## Elsie 'Ms. Penny' Martin Remembered by MTA Employees

By CHRISTINA ESPARZA

- A viewing will be held today from 1 to 7 p.m. at Ashley-Grigsby Mortuary, 9920 South Central Ave., Los Angeles. The funeral is scheduled for noon, Friday, April 26, at the Mount Olive Second Missionary Baptist Church, 9401 Zamora Ave., Los Angeles.

(April 25, 2002) Remembered for her workmanship, kind nature and her cookies, Mopper-Waxer Elsie Martin, also known as Ms. Penny, died last Thursday in her sleep of arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease. She was 58.

Penny worked at the MTA for almost 15 years, and in that time, she gained a reputation of being motherly and warm.

"She always fed the guys," said Brenda Cummings, general clerk at the Regional Rebuild Center. "People would say 'There's the cookie lady.' She was a kind-hearted person, She loved the Lord, and she loved people. She was always smiling and always had a kind word to say about someone."



Elsie "Ms. Penny" Martin

Olivia Nelson, Equipment Records Specialist at Fleet Management and Support Services, remembers Penny as a woman who wanted to solve the world's problems and cared very deeply for the people around her.

"She was a really, really nice person who was always very considerate of the other employees," Nelson said. "She'd mother other people and was always concerned about her fellow co-workers."

Custodial Services General Services Supervisor Joe Coleman said Penny had a strong work ethic.

"She was a good employee," he said. "She got along with her peers and had good attendance until her health started to decline."

Penny's pride in her job and strong character is what Media Relations consultant Gayle Anderson says made her memorable.

"She's the only person who made me clean my desk. And it even lasted a couple of days," Anderson said. "She had good energy and she was a strong worker. She did her job to the max."

Penny is survived by her son, Ronnie; and her two sisters, Dolores and Gail Sanders.

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- CEO Snoble updates Agency accomplishments and reorganization, development of Service Sectors, at all-staff meeting



Click [here](#) for your copy of LACMTA Organization Chart.

By ED SCANNELL

(April 25, 2002) Six months into his tenure at MTA, CEO Roger Snoble told employees at Wednesday's all-staff meeting that the agency can be credited with a long list of accomplishments since Fall 2001.

Snoble applauded the work of MTA staff and said his impression of the MTA since coming to the agency has changed greatly.



CEO Roger Snoble introduced administration team and unveiled new LACMTA Organization Chart.

"Coming in I thought maybe we'd need to do a lot of work, that there were going to be many things in need of change," said Snoble. "I think the biggest and most pleasant surprise to me is that this is a damn good agency. There are some individual problems with it, and we need to fix those, but, overall, I think it's a lot better than what people understand it to be throughout the country, even better than what some people within the agency might have thought about it."

Among the many accomplishments Snoble cited were the approval of final environmental impact reports for the San Fernando Valley east-west busway and the Eastside light rail extension, Board approval for 23 new Metro Rapid lines, implementation of an aggressive safety campaign, establishment of a model for improved local services, completion ahead of schedule of Metro Green Line track stabilization work, completion of a new customer survey, budget reductions, and ridership growth.

While highlighting many of the organizational changes he has spearheaded, Snoble said he was aware that change induces stress.

"Many times when an organization as large as this one is going through a change, it does create some additional stress that normally isn't there," said Snoble. "We need to understand that most of the time change is for the better, but one of the things I think is most important to deal with stress is to make sure you have a balanced life."



^ CEO Roger Snoble introduces General Manager Richard Rogers. v Below, General Manager Dana Coffey.

"You need to have a good strong personal life, a good strong personal relationship with your families and the people that are close to you so that the job doesn't become everything to you," he added.



Snoble said development of the five service sectors continues on track. He announced the hiring of Dana Coffey, Division 18 transportation manager, and Tracy Daly, Metrolink assistant executive officer, as the fourth and fifth of five sector general managers. The other three general managers previously announced include David Armijo, Jack Gabig and Richard J. Rogers.



^ General Managers Jack Gabig, left, and David Armijo.

In addition to development of the service sectors, Snoble said MTA's near-term road map includes the mid-2003 start up of Metro Gold Line service, completion of a five-year Short Range Transportation Plan, beginning of Metro Rapid Bus service on Vermont Avenue and South Broadway, inauguration of the Regional Pass Program, completion of a dozen more HOV projects, reducing accidents and workers compensation costs, improving our relationship with the state and federal governments and other agencies, growth in Metro Bus and Metro Rail ridership, and improvement in customer service.

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PHOTOS: GAYLE ANDERSON

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- **MTA Board approves Regional Transit Pass Program for L.A. County**



Prototype design of regional pass.

By ED SCANNELL

(April 26, 2002) The MTA Board has taken a major step toward providing transit riders seamless service countywide by approving a regional pass program.

Beginning in Summer 2002, transit riders who use the services of more than one of a dozen Southland transit operators will have the option of using a monthly regional pass called EZpass. EZpass will be valid for unlimited travel on the Metro Bus and Rail systems and on the fixed route bus systems of 11 municipal operators.

"Many riders use more than one transit system, a situation which up until now has produced confusion and frustration by forcing them to carry extra cash or purchase additional transit passes," said John Fasana, MTA Board Chair. "Much like the European Union, MTA and these 11 municipal operators have agreed on a common 'currency' that will end the confusion and frustration, and, we believe, encourage thousands of other commuters to try public transit."

"EZpass also will make for quicker boardings and eliminate the need for transfers and tickets," Fasana added.

EZpass will be priced at \$58 for a regular pass, \$29 for seniors, and \$29 for the disabled (with appropriate identification including either an MTA Disabled ID card, Medicare card, LACTOA card or DMV placard).

EZpass will entitle the pass holder to unlimited local travel on all MTA buses and trains and on the fixed route bus systems of the following municipal transit operators: Culver City Municipal Bus Lines, Foothill Transit, Montebello Bus Lines, Gardena Municipal Bus Lines, Commerce Municipal Bus Lines, Long Beach Transit, Norwalk Transit, Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus, Torrance Transit, Santa Clarita Transit and LADOT (Los Angeles Department of Transportation).

When it goes on sale, EZpass will be available at most Metro Pass sales outlets and other outlets countywide.

The multi-operator task force that developed EZpass and the regional pass program will encourage future participation of other local transit providers, Metrolink and other counties. The cost of the program for fiscal year 2003 will be approximately \$2 million, which will be paid from Proposition A and C local transit sales tax funds.

EZpass represents the first major phase of a universal fare system (UFS). Within three years, MTA will debut an electronic smart card that will be accepted by the aforementioned transit providers, Metrolink and paratransit service providers.

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## MTA Mechanics Moonlight as LA Crime Fighters

By CHRISTINA ESPARZA

(April 26, 2002) By day, they're MTA auto mechanics. By night, they fight crime at every turn.

No, they're not superheroes – they're Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Reserves.

Non-revenue Division 4 mechanics Peter Ostry and Saul Garcia get paid a very modest salary to work as part-time deputies in the cities of Industry and West Hollywood, respectively.



MTA mechanics Saul Garcia, left, and Pete Ostry work a minimum of 20 hours a month for \$1 year to be Los Angeles County Sheriff's Reserves.

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Sign up here: [www.lasdreserve.org](http://www.lasdreserve.org).

"You do everything that a regular deputy does," Ostry, who has been a reserve since 1997, said. "The only difference is, you go out there for \$1 a year."

Sheriff's Reserves, who are required to work a minimum of 20 hours a month, receive the same training as regular deputies, but go through a more condensed version of the academy. A Reserve cadet, for example, must absorb the same material in a weekend that a deputy cadet covers in a week.

### Hand-to-hand combat

Such training includes weapons, hand-to-hand combat, physical training to build stamina and classroom studies that teach language, laws and radio codes, among other things.

Garcia, who is assigned to Metro Red Line Division 20, has been a Sheriff's Reserve for 18 years, and sees his volunteering as an interesting form of community service.

"My motivation was to serve the community and I felt I could make a difference," Garcia said. "I felt law enforcement was a great personal challenge."

Ostry has always been interested in law enforcement, and has a sister who used to work for the Los Angeles Police Department. However, he thought that, rather than being a full-time police officer, being a Reserve would best fit his lifestyle.

"I was looking into being a full-time peace officer, and so before jumping directly into it and finding out I didn't like it and doing it six to seven days a week, I figured I'd sign up to be a Reserve," Ostry said.

Garcia considered becoming a full-time law enforcement officer, but also chose to be a Reserve so he can remain at the MTA.

"At the beginning, I wanted to see what law enforcement was all

about," Garcia said. "But, I decided to stay with the MTA. It was best for me. I enjoy working for the MTA and I didn't want to start a new career."

### **Some peculiar people**

Although the two don't work as often as regular deputies, both have seen their fair share of excitement and have run into some peculiar people. Ostry once detained a woman for domestic violence against her boyfriend and, another time, arrested a courteous criminal.

"This one guy I arrested said the funniest thing," Ostry recalled. "He turned around and told me, 'Deputy, you're the nicest deputy I've ever been arrested by.' I never got a compliment like that before."

Also caught by surprise was Garcia, who made what at the time appeared to be a simple arrest, only to learn later that it helped disband a notorious theft ring in Los Angeles.

"I was working surveillance one night, and arrested someone who had stolen a cellular phone," Garcia said. "It turned out that person was linked to a theft ring and his arrest led to the recovery of millions of dollars worth of electronic equipment. I'm really proud of that one."

As a person who had sometimes been critical of police, Ostry has gained an appreciation and an understanding of those in law enforcement since he has been a Reserve.

"Law enforcement is definitely interesting because you come across different people, and you get to see both sides of it," Ostry said.

For Garcia, being a reserve has been a very rewarding experience. "It's a privilege to be given an opportunity to be in law enforcement. I'll keep doing it as long as I'm healthy and able to do it."

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Sheriff's deputies and MTA Security officers salute as Light Rail Manager Duane Martin (in suit) orders the raising of the long-awaited American flag over Metro Blue Line Division 11.



### **'Old Glory' Flying High At Metro Blue Line Division 11**

By ERIC RAPP

(April 30, 2002) Duane Martin has been trying to get an American flag and flagpole at Metro Blue Line Division 11 for five years.

After the terrorist attacks last September 11, Martin, who is Rail Transportation Manager for Light Rail Operations, and Assistant Manager Henry Castaneda made it their personal mission to finally get a flag for the division.

But with flags in short supply throughout the nation, they had more trouble than they ever thought they would.

Martin searched high and low for a flag while Castaneda worked with Facilities Maintenance to order and install a flagpole. Finding the right spot for the pole proved to be no easy task either, since digging meant checking that there were no underground utilities in the way.

Martin and Castaneda persisted. A flag was eventually located at a "Mom 'n Pop" store in Long Beach. A vault was dug for the pole.

Now, nearly six months later, the Stars and Stripes flies proudly over the entrance to Division 11, where it is also visible to passengers on the Metro Blue Line.

Although it has been flying for several weeks, the flag was officially raised last Tuesday. MTA Security officers and deputies from the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Transit Group, as well as members of the Division 11 family, attended the ceremony.

After the ceremony, Martin spoke briefly about what it meant to the division to finally have this symbol of America. "God bless America," he said, "and the employees of MTA."

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## West Valley Division 8 Holds Third Annual Picnic at Lake Balboa

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> Operator Jack Dedrick's daughters, Acting Division Transportation Manager Maria Reynold's son, Chris, and Johnny Doyle, who attended the April 27 picnic with Mechanic "A" Leader Ed Varso, jump up and down in the "Sports Arena" Moon Bouncer. A "Blue's Clues" Moon Bouncer was also set up to entertain the children who attended the picnic.

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> Stenographer and self-proclaimed "Division Mom" Karen Pedini takes a break from barbeque duties, along with Operators Terry McCrary, Tom Impliazzo, Marc Hollander and Jeff Holderman.

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> Operator Jeff Holderman fills Operator Miguel Hernandez' plate with food, while a hat-sporting Transportation Division Dispatcher Larry Haynes socializes at a nearby picnic table.

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> Operator Mario Liwag's daughter, April, hangs out with cousin Grace Dilig, as do Mechanic "A" Leader Ed Varso and girlfriend Leeann Holbrook.

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> Operators Scott Manco, Norma Uribe, Ed Marshall, Chuck Yurko and Miguel Hernandez, along with Yurko's



girlfriend, Maria, and Operator Terry McCrary's wife, Mari, relax in the sun, while Uribe's dog waits for a treat.

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April 30, 2002

Text and Photos by Amy Howell

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