

Metro Report Archives

October

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Rail Crossing [Violators Face High Fines](#) Under New Law

Signed by Governor (October 11) Governor Davis has signed into law AB-923, a bill that raises the fine for motorists who fail to stop at a railway crossing. The MTA and SCRRRA co-sponsored the bill which will take effect Jan. 1, 2000.

[Quarterly Report](#) to Special Master Shows Metro Bus Service is

Improving (October 12) The MTA has submitted to the Special Master overseeing implementation of the Consent Decree a quarterly report charting improvements in Metro Bus service that show the MTA is meeting its Consent Decree targets.

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[Metro Trip Planner](#) Gives Custom Itineraries In Seconds

(October 14) A new interactive feature on MTA's website at www.Metro.net is offering customers the definitive answer on how to get from point "A" to point "B" -- wherever those points may happen to be!

MTA Makes [Strong Showing](#) At APTA 1999 International Bus

Roadeo (October 14) The results are in from the American Public Transit Association's (APTA) 1999 International Bus Roadeo held last weekend in Orlando, Florida. Once again MTA's representatives scored well amidst stiff competition.

MTA Division 3 Scores High Marks During [CHP Bus Inspection](#)

(October 15) It was a banner day for Division 3 when the California Highway Patrol conducted its most recent bus inspection at the Cypress Park facility on October 8.

[Ad Campaign](#) To Tell The Public "It's Getting Better on the

Bus" (October 15) Thanks to Operations' sustained efforts, everyone can see that it's getting better on the bus....and MTA is about to trumpet that message in a major new advertising campaign.

MTA Unveils [New Buses](#), New Ad Campaign

(October 18) It was just about a year ago that MTA CEO Julian Burke told the media and the public that he "got the message" that the aging Metro Bus System was in bad need of a fix.

Safety Zone Next Stop on Metro Bus and Rail Journey (October 20) MTA's mascot of safety has taken his message to the Internet. A click of your computer's mouse on MTA's website will transport you to the Metro Bus and Metro Rail Safety Zone where *Safety Guy* offers tips for safe trips on buses and trains.

New Feature! MTA 'Facts at a Glance' Goes On-Line (October 20) The MTA's "Facts at a Glance" is now available via the Intranet. The website features the latest information about the Metro Bus and Metro Rail fleets and personnel, FY 2000 budget, fare structure, Board of Directors, executive staff and other useful data. Just click on "FACTS at a GLANCE" [here](#) or from the home page.

Fraud Investigations, Other Measures Help Reduce Worker's Comp Expense (October 21) During a 12-month period ending in September, the MTA's insurance company investigated 267 cases of possible worker's compensation fraud by agency employees and submitted four cases to the Los Angeles County District Attorney for prosecution. Six other cases are pending and one retired employee was arrested on suspicion of falsifying his insurance claim.

New Pay Stubs Raise Employee Eyebrows, But Finance Officials Stress the Benefits (October 22) Changes on the MTA's new paycheck stubs may have raised some employees' eyebrows, but Finance Department officials say the changes were made to benefit employees or were required by state law.

Metro Rail Project Marks Two Milestones; Testing of Last Major Phase begins Monday (October 22) A subway train marked two major milestones toward completion of the Metro Red Line to North Hollywood late Thursday, while setting the stage for the last major test phase prior to pre-revenue service.

Santa Claus Makes Early Scouting Visit to Metro Red Line's Hollywood/Vine Station (October 25) It's not even Halloween yet, but Santa Claus made an early visit today to the Metro Red Line's Hollywood/Vine station to greet subway riders and scout the route for the 68th annual Hollywood Christmas Parade, Nov. 28.

MTA's New Learning Resource Center Makes Education a High-Tech Experience (October 25) Reading, writing and arithmetic got a whole new look at the MTA with the opening, today, of the Learning Resource Center - a computer "laboratory" where employees can learn subjects ranging from basic math and spelling to PowerPoint.

MTA Schedules Public Hearing on Changes Resulting from North Hollywood Opening (October 25) The MTA will hold a public hearing on Saturday, Nov. 13, to outline proposed bus service changes in connection with the opening of the North Hollywood segment of the Metro Red Line.

Locomotive vs. Van Collision Proves Crossing Violations Risk (October 27) A staged collision between a freight locomotive and a passenger van carrying crash test dummies provided graphic testimony, today, about the risks motorists take when they ignore warnings at railroad crossings.

Lawsuit on Behalf of Former SCRTD Employees Hits Another Snag; Class-Action Status Denied (October 28) The lawsuit filed against the MTA on behalf of former SCRTD employees hit another snag, Thursday, when a Superior Court judge denied the plaintiff's motion to certify it as a class action.

Y2K Project on Schedule with 64 Days Remaining in 1999

(October 28) With just 64 days remaining before the crystal ball drops in Times Square, the MTA's Year 2000 Project remains on schedule, although some mission-critical systems still are being worked on.

UPDATE Board Reaffirms \$30 Mill. for Playa Vista;

Dreamworks/SKG No Longer a Factor (October 28) The MTA Board reaffirmed its commitment, Thursday, to provide \$30 million in funding for improvements to streets serving the Playa Vista Development in Marina del Rey. The Board also removed a requirement funds be withheld unless the Dreamworks/SKG film production company located in the development.

Police Pounce on Pickpocket Plundering Passengers' Packs

(October 28) To the pickpocket, it must have seemed easy pickings – the backpacks of school kids boarding a Metro Bus at the corner of 3rd Street and Vermont Avenue.

Division 8 Wins Contest for Best Halloween Decorations (October

29) More than the usual number of ghosts, goblins and ghouls gathered on Patsaouras Plaza, Friday, to screech and howl that their division's bus was the best decorated.

Operations Statistics Include a Moral to the Story **Never a Dull Report When Satin-Jacobs** **Features Antics of Uncle Pete, Aunt Edith**



By Bill Heard, Editor

(October 1) Ever nod off while reading an MTA report? Well, you haven't read one by Jake Satin-Jacobs.

If you had, not only would you be wide awake, but you'd be as familiar with his Uncle Pete, Aunt Edith, Aunt Mina and other relatives as you would be with the performance statistics he compiles each week for Transit Operations.



For the past year or so, Satin-Jacobs, 51, a chief administrative analyst, has spiced up the operational minutiae of on-time pullouts, mechanic attendance, revenue service hours and assignment ratios by prefacing them with tales of his quirky family members. Written at home on his own time, each of Satin-Jacobs' vignettes has a management object lesson or moral that applies to a business situation.

Jake Satin-Jacobs

In recent issues of the operations performance report, readers learned that Uncle Pete had fallen down an elevator shaft, Aunt Edith beat up a used car salesman and Aunt Mina had no lips, but painted them on like clown make-up. The lessons in these three stories - like the people, themselves - are genuine. They involved the importance of good performance, the value of communications and the need for objective reporting.

"We want to get people to open and look at this important report and to think about the information it provides," he explained. "By using humor, we can raise everyone's expectations of the report and also can share a thought on management philosophy."

"Jake is someone who's thinking about how he can utilize his talents to be more effective in his job," says Tom Conner, Transit Operations executive officer. "Through his initiative, he's gone the extra mile for the benefit of all of us in the organization.

"His stories make the performance data report so interesting, I've shared it with executives in other departments," Conner added. "If they understand what we're trying to accomplish, they may have some suggestions that will help us improve."

The writer of the fables, himself, led an interesting life before joining the MTA in 1996. The son of a German immigrant father and a first-generation German-American mother, Jake Jacobs grew up in Buffalo, N.Y. After high school, he majored in Biology at Cornell University, then taught English to disabled students in Sweden before joining the Peace Corp.

The young man spent a year in India working in an agricultural program, then enrolled at Rochester Institute of Technology in New York, where he earned a Bachelor's degree in photography. Moving next to San Diego, he became interested in acting and writing for publications and for the screen. His 50-plus screenwriting credits include an episode of "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

Satin-Jacobs' 12 years in acting included roles in six feature films, including the 1987 movie, "Driven to Kill," and a Movie of the Week feature with Lewis Gossett Jr., "Gideon Oliver." He also had roles on the TV situation comedies "Coach" and "Golden Girls."

With that background, what inspires him to write a report preface? "Generally speaking, some issue will arise in the week prior to when I write a story," said Satin-Jacobs. "Some stories come from life experience, some from management text books. I prefer lessons that come from regular people, sometimes very weird people like my family."

Satin-Jacobs is married to Patti Satin-Jacobs, a senior administrative analyst in MTA Quality Assurance. Who, he says, is a normal person.

Click here to read [Jake's story](#) about Uncle Pete.

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Hundreds of Openings for Operators, Mechanics during MTA Job Fair

By Jose Ubaldo

(October 1) The MTA will be looking for talented men and women to fill key positions as bus operators and mechanics during a job fair Saturday, Oct. 9, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Regional Rebuild Center.

The job fair will give attendees an opportunity to learn about various employment opportunities, including hundreds of openings for bus operators and mechanics. No bus driving experience is required for operators; the MTA will provide training.

The salary for bus operator trainees (BDOF) is \$8 per hour. After graduation, the rate is \$10 per hour. From this position BDOF drivers can become part-time bus operators at higher pay.

The salary during the training period for part-time operators is \$8.62 per hour. The start rate is \$11.21 and the top rate is \$13.79 per hour. The starting salary for the Mechanic "C" position is \$17.04 per hour and the top rate is \$21.19.

For more information, call the MTA Job Line at 922-6217 or visit the Internet web site at WWW.MTA.NET.

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Equipment Engineering Moved from Procurement to Operations Maintenance

(October 4) In an organizational realignment of MTA Procurement, the 47-member Equipment Engineering department will report to Operations Maintenance, effective Monday, Oct. 4.

Executive Officer Gwen Williams, who recommended the change shortly after being named to head Procurement, said the group's functions "didn't really fit" in her department.

Known formally as Vehicle/Equipment Acquisition and Warranty, the group is headed by the manager, John Drayton, who now reports to Richard Hunt, deputy executive officer, Operations Maintenance.

Equipment Engineering is responsible for warranty processing, inspections and reliability analysis of new buses. Employees also inspect vehicles during the manufacturing process to meet federal requirements and ensure the vehicles meet MTA contract specifications.

"Their job won't change," said Hunt. "The department will continue to have a close working relationship with both Procurement and Operations Maintenance."

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Mentors to Work with Student Operators in Revised Metro Bus Training Program



ON-THE-JOB TRAINING—Operator-Mentor Luduvico Castro, a 27-year MTA veteran, shares a moment with student operator Miguel Contreras at Division 9 in El Monte. Contreras, a former restaurant worker, is in his second week of mentor-supervised training.

By Bill Heard, Editor

(October 4) Transit Operations this week launches a revised training program that promises to "improve the quality and caliber of our student bus operators and increase their readiness to enter public transit service," says Dan Ibarra, deputy executive officer, Bus Operations.

A major element of the modified operator training program will be the extensive use of mentors – experienced Metro Bus operators who will be paired with the fledgling operators for three of their five weeks of instruction.

"The operators we chose as mentors are top transportation professionals," says Ibarra. "They set perfect examples for our students in their appearance, their demeanor, their professionalism and commitment."

Ibarra's high hopes for the new training program are based on a test conducted during June in which 10 students were linked with mentors. Comparing records with students who did not work with mentors showed, that during their first 90 days on the job, the mentor-trained students performed measurably better, had less absenteeism, fewer accidents and customer complaints.

The 70 or so operator-mentors currently in the program were selected by their divisions based on exemplary work, attendance and accident records. They were expected to have excellent interpersonal and customer relations skills.

Each mentor candidate attended three weeks of classroom work

designed to whet the operators' ability to instruct, set goals and give directions. The training also gave the mentors an opportunity to refresh their ability to coach students in the driving skills and professional attitudes expected of a proficient operator.

"There's a big difference between being a driver and an operator," says Ibarra, who was a line instructor for four of the five years he drove a bus during the 1970s. "A driver steers the vehicle down the street. An operator drives safely and provides on-time service while interacting positively and professionally with our customers."

Transit Operations Supervisors Brenda Esquivel and Helen Perez of Central Instruction revised the operator training program to include a mentor-supervised training period. They also developed the mentor curriculum and a workbook for the program. Through the program, operator-mentors can gain federal certification as "behind-the-wheel" trainers.

Newly hired operators now attend 15 hours of lectures during their first week of training, then 20 hours of behind-the-wheel training before being assigned to a mentor. After three weeks on the road with a mentor, the students return to Central Instruction for 28 more hours of classes, final testing and DMV licensing.

"Spending three weeks on the job with a mentor gives the student operators a frame of reference for what they'll be taught during the balance of their hours in class," Ibarra explains. The classes include advanced lectures on operating policies and procedures.

Currently, the Bus Operations mentor program has 33 openings. Ibarra wants to maintain a cadre of about 100 mentors at all times in order that each division can have at least eight mentors on staff.

"We should pick the best of the best to be mentors," says Ibarra. "Then train and certify them to better prepare our students for the rigors of the job as Metro Bus operators."

Attributes of an Operator/Mentor

- * Commitment to customer service * Desire to teach others
- * Excellent interpersonal skills * Good supervisory skills
- * Ability to lead by example * Satisfactory work record
- * Satisfactory driving record * No customer complaints

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Senate Joins House in Approving Funding for MTA Construction, Bus, Other Projects

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The bill, HR-2084, earmarks \$59 million for MTA transportation projects. In various provisions, the bill provides:

\$50 million to complete construction of the Metro Red Line North Hollywood Extension;

\$4 million for preliminary engineering, design and environmental work for future fixed guideway projects in the East Side and Mid-City corridors;

\$3 million for bus and bus-related purchases to assist the MTA in complying with the Consent Decree and to implement the Accelerated Bus Procurement Plan;

\$1 million for Intelligent Transportation Systems projects; and

\$1 million for job access and reverse commute grants.

In addition, Foothill Transit received \$1.75 million for buses and the Municipal Operators Coalition received \$2.5 million. Metrolink received \$1.25 million for the Gateway Transit Center.

The House version of the HR-2084 originally had recommended a total of \$64.5 million for the MTA, but the conference committee cut \$4 million from funds for bus purchases, \$1 million from design and environmental work for Mid-Cities and East LA corridor projects and \$800,000 from intelligent transportation system projects.

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Board Chair Burke Makes Committee Assignments

(October 5) MTA Board Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke has announced committee assignments and named directors to chair the committees.

Burke selected the following directors to chair the Board's five standing committees: Don Knabe, Construction Committee; Gloria Molina, Finance and Budget Committee; Hal Bernson, Operations Committee; and Jose Legaspi, Planning and Programming Committee. Burke will chair the Executive Management Committee.

Here's the full roster of the five Board committees:

<u>CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE</u>	<u>FINANCE & BUDGET COMMITTEE</u>
Don Knabe, Chair	Gloria Molina, Chair
Frank Roberts, Vice Chair	John Fasana, Vice Chair
Jenny Oropeza	Michael Antonovich
Jose Legaspi	Don Knabe
City Vacancy	City Vacancy
George Battey, Jr., Ex Officio	Tony V. Harris, Ex Officio
William Dahl, Ex Officio	
Tony V. Harris, Ex Officio	
<u>EXEC. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE</u>	<u>OPERATIONS COMMITTEE</u>
Yvonne Burke, Chair	Hal Bernson, Chair
James Cragin, Vice Chair	Yvonne Burke, Vice Chair
Richard Riordan	James Cragin
Zev Yaroslavsky	Michael Antonovich
Hal Bernson	John Fasana
Tony V. Harris, Ex Officio	Tony V. Harris, Ex Officio
<u>PLANNING & PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE</u>	
Jose Legaspi, Chair	
Jenny Oropeza, Vice Chair	
Gloria Molina	
Zev Yaroslavsky	
Frank Roberts	
Tony V. Harris, Ex Officio	

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'Impossible,' MTA Tells District Judge Who Ordered 248 Buses Placed in Service

(October 5) Although the MTA will buy additional buses to meet the U.S. District Court's most recent Consent Decree ruling, the agency asked the judge to delay his order, Monday, declaring that it "... requires achievement of an impossibility..." to obtain and place the necessary buses into service within 30 days.

On Sept. 23, Judge Terry Hatter ordered the MTA to purchase 297 new buses. In response, the MTA will immediately act to place orders for that number of buses at a projected cost of \$115.8 million.

Judge Hatter also ordered the MTA to obtain 248 temporary buses to provide additional service by Oct. 23. The MTA already has placed 96 additional buses into service and has had plans to add 64 more by December, 1999. Judge Hatter's order would require the MTA to accelerate the deployment of those 64 buses and add 88 more.

In a declaration included in the MTA's request to the court, Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky testified that "putting a temporary fleet into operation within 30 days...is beyond the physical means of the MTA."

It might be possible to find the necessary buses within the existing MTA fleet by renovating old buses and delaying the retirement of others, Lipsky said, but "locating, hiring and training qualified personnel to operate and maintain the new service buses simply is not possible within the 30 days allotted."

Lipsky noted that to operate the extra 88 buses, the agency would need to hire and train 102 bus operators, 32 mechanics and 18 service attendants. The MTA's hiring process is about seven weeks long. Six weeks of training are required for an operator, three weeks for a mechanic and one week for a service attendant.

Lipsky also said the MTA doesn't yet know where the \$97 million required to operate the additional 88 buses will come from. The agency has formed four committees tasked with looking at possible new sources for funds, sources of potential savings, possible service efficiencies and re-evaluating previously programmed funds.

In its submission to the court, the MTA argues it would breach statutory and contractual obligations, as well as violate the Consent Decree, if it takes funds from other programs without proper process to pay for the buses required in the court order. Such a move, the agency argues, could forfeit funding for future transportation projects, including bus programs.

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Caltrans Warns I-10 Freeway Users of 55-Hour Closure, Beginning Oct. 22

(October 6) If you travel the San Bernardino Freeway (I-10), Caltrans has a warning for you: Use an alternate route for four days, Oct. 22 through Oct. 25.

For a 55-hour period, the two outside lanes of a three-mile section of the eastbound I-10 will be closed from 8 p.m., Friday, until 5 a.m., Monday, between the Rt. 57/210 interchange and the Garey Avenue exit in Pomona.

In addition, the connector road from the southbound 210 to the eastbound 10 will be closed. All the westbound lanes in that section will remain open. A number of ramps also will be closed in the affected area.

The lane and ramp closures are part of Caltrans' \$15 million pilot project to rehabilitate this stretch of I-10 using new, fast-setting concrete paving techniques. Construction began in April and should be completed early next year.

For more detailed information and suggested alternate routes during the San Bernardino Freeway closure, please click on [Caltrans](#) for a project overview, detour text and map. You also can call Caltrans at 213-897-3656.

Also, Metrolink operates train service along the I-10 Freeway corridor weekdays and Saturday from San Bernardino to Union Station. Information: (800) 371-LINK or (800) 371-5465.

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MTA, Caltrans to Open Car Pool Lane in Santa Clarita/Antelope Valley

By Rick Jager

(October 6) The MTA will join Caltrans and local elected officials on Thursday, Oct. 7, to officially open the second segment of a car pool lane along Route 14 linking Santa Clarita with Palmdale and Lancaster.

The new 10.7-mile car pool lane is located between Sand Canyon Road and Escondido Canyon Road and is expected to carry approximately 4,000 persons per hour during the peak period commute.

The MTA provided all the funding for the project's \$32 million construction cost. The project's design was funded by Caltrans.

Over the next six years, three other High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes are scheduled to open along State Route 14 with the entire 36-mile HOV corridor scheduled to be completed in 2004 at a projected cost of \$127 million.

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Judge Gives MTA More Time to Find Buses to Meet Court Order

(October 7) Federal District Court Judge Terry Hatter has modified his Sept. 23 Consent Decree order and now has given the MTA until Jan. 3, 2000, to put 248 temporary buses into service.

Hatter's original ruling ordered the MTA to place 248 buses in temporary service by Oct. 23 until it could replace those buses with 297 new coaches. With the buses the agency already had put on the street this year, plus 64 buses the MTA had planned to place in service by December, Hatter's order meant that the MTA needed to add 88 buses by the Oct. 23 deadline.

The modified court order now allows the MTA until Nov. 5 to find the 248 temporary buses and sets Jan. 3 as the date by which they must be placed in operation.

"We're grateful Judge Hatter has recognized that we're doing the best we can," said Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky. "In the extra time he has given us, we are trying to identify funding sources, find the vehicles, and hire and train operators, mechanics and service attendants."

Although the MTA is making every effort to comply with the court order, the agency also intends to reserve future options by filing a request with the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals for a stay of Hatter's order.

To operate the 88 buses, the MTA would need to hire and train 102 bus operators, 32 mechanics and 18 service attendants. The MTA's hiring process is about seven weeks long. Six weeks of training are required for an operator, three weeks for a mechanic and one week for a service attendant.

Lipsky said the MTA will need \$97 million over five years to operate the additional 88 buses. The agency has formed four committees tasked with looking at possible new sources for funds, sources of potential savings, possible service efficiencies and re-evaluating previously programmed funds.

The MTA has argued that it would breach statutory and contractual obligations and be inconsistent with the Consent Decree, if the agency were to take funds from other programs without proper process to pay for the buses required in the court order. Such a move, the agency has argued, could forfeit funding for future transportation projects, including bus programs.

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Governor Vetoes Transit Zone Bill After Passage by House, Senate

UPDATE

(Oct. 11) Governor Davis has vetoed SB 372, a bill that would have required transit zones to honor labor agreements between the MTA and its unions.

In a brief veto message, Davis said, "I do not think it is appropriate for the state to mandate how local public agencies conduct collective bargaining with their employees."

Once known as SB-1101 – and then amended into SB-372 – the measure passed both houses after overcoming Republican opposition and a ruling by the legislative counsel that the amendment violated the Legislature's policies.

Supporters of the transit zone union bill had said the pay and benefits of MTA employees transferred to a transit zone must be protected. The MTA Board, which opposed the bill, told lawmakers that the formation of transit zones is a local matter and that the legislature should not place conditions on how zones are formed.

The Board has adopted Local Transportation Zone Guidelines that require "adequate provision" for employees "who may be displaced, or whose wages, hours, place or conditions of employment are or may be adversely affected by zone implementation." The guidelines also cite state Public Utility Codes requiring protection for workers and labor agreements between the MTA and its unions.

Proposed transit zones in the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys want to operate a total of 27 percent of MTA service hours and 28 percent of peak hour buses. In late May, the MTA Board approved pre-applications filed by the Greater San Fernando Valley Transportation Zone and Foothill Transit.

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- \$50 million to complete construction of the Metro Red Line North Hollywood Extension;
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- \$3 million for bus and bus-related purchases to assist the MTA in complying with the Consent Decree and to implement the Accelerated Bus Procurement Plan;
- \$1 million for Intelligent Transportation Systems projects; and
- \$1 million for job access and reverse commute grants.

In addition, Foothill Transit received \$1.75 million for buses and the Municipal Operators Coalition received \$2.5 million. Metrolink received \$1.25 million for the Gateway Transit Center.

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Quarterly Report to Special Master Shows Metro Bus Service is Improving

(October 12) The MTA has submitted to the Special Master overseeing implementation of the Consent Decree a quarterly report charting improvements in Metro Bus service that show the MTA is meeting its Consent Decree targets.

"Anyone who thinks the MTA is not living up to the Consent Decree should read this report," Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky said during a briefing for local media. "The report includes statistical tables showing how the MTA has reduced overcrowding, retired overage buses and improved service quality."

The report for the period ending Aug. 31, 1999, shows "dramatic reductions" in the number of times buses were recorded as overcrowded. On the 20 busiest lines, buses were in compliance with load factors 99.25 percent of the time, with only 58 instances of overcrowding in 7,725 fixed 20-minute time periods. Using the 20-minute sliding window method, load factors were exceeded only 191 times on these lines.

Schedule adherence also has shown significant improvement thus far this year, according to the report. Better on-time performance is primarily a result of fewer buses running ahead of schedule. Three "tiger teams" of transit operations supervisors are monitoring service to ensure on-time performance.

Bus purchases and deliveries were generally on schedule during the reporting period. As of Sept. 1, 455 new buses and 175 converted ethanol buses had been placed into service. Although the bus procurement program is only 22 percent complete, operating divisions now have adequate operational spares to back up daily service requirements, the report said.

Lipsky noted that the MTA Board recently approved the purchase of 297 buses in addition to the 2,095 the agency already had planned to buy by 2004. The MTA will add 160 buses into service by the end of 1999 and is working toward placing 88 of the additional buses into service by the federal court's new deadline of Jan. 3, 2000. The agency also is trying to find the \$97 million needed to operate the extra 88 buses for the next five years.

The quarterly report shows that outlates and trip cancellations due to lack of a bus operator were reduced to a point that only 50 trips out of 65,346 pullouts in August were affected. Missed trips also have been all but eliminated. During August, only 14 trips were missed.

Although on-time performance has improved greatly, the number of miles between road calls remains a problem. The current average stands at about 1,200 miles between calls, with 2,000 miles between calls as the target. The most frequent cause of road calls - engine failures - has decreased, while the number of unexplained road calls has increased. The MTA will continue to look for the source of these problems.

"We can still do better," Lipsky said, "but we are proud of all we have accomplished so far."

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MTA Makes Strong Showing At APTA 1999 International Bus Roadeo

(October 14) The results are in from the American Public Transit Association's (APTA) 1999 International Bus Roadeo held last weekend in Orlando, Florida. Once again MTA's representatives scored well amidst stiff competition.



Division 9 bus operator Mark Holland finished in 10th place out of 74 operators competing in the 40-foot class. The operators' skills behind the wheel were put to the test as they maneuvered their coaches on a difficult 11-part obstacle course which included judgment stops, right and left hand reverses and passenger stops.

ON THEIR WAY--Top operator Mark Holland, above, and maintenance team, below, from left, Andrew Filimaua, Juan Villalba and John Tena with MTA Board Chairman Yvonne Brathwaite Burke.



Division 2's maintenance team of John Tena, Andy Filimaua and Juan Villalba finished in 12th place out of 49 maintenance teams who battled to see which team was quickest to diagnose mechanical problems planted on two widely used transit bus engines and to diagnose defects on

an air brake board, and which team was most skilled at making a brake adjustment on a front wheel mockup.

Overall, MTA notched 8th place out of 47 transit properties who competed for bragging rights as "Best Overall Transit Property."

This year's top honors went to the following: AC Transit (Oakland, CA) for "Best Overall Transit Property," MTA of Harris County (Houston, TX) in the "Bus Maintenance Roadeo Competition," and AC Transit (Oakland, CA) in the "Operators 40-foot Obstacle Course Competition."

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New Metro Trip Planner Gives Custom Itineraries In Seconds

(October 14) A new interactive feature on MTA's website at www.mta.net is offering customers the definitive answer on how to get from point "A" to point "B" -- wherever those points may happen to be!

Thanks to the Metro Trip Planner, customers with internet access can now choose any starting and ending point in LA County and within seconds receive a detailed itinerary for making their trip, complete with timetable information, maps and fare requirements.

The new feature actually allows customers to access the largest and most accurate database of transit information in the county...the very same one used by Metro Information agents to answer some 7,000 telephone inquiries each day. But unlike 1-800-COMMUTE, the Metro Trip Planner never closes. It's available without waiting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from anywhere in the world.

"Internet access continues to grow," says Warren Morse, deputy executive officer, Marketing and Customer Relations, "and the Metro Trip Planner uses that phenomenon to place transit assistance at our customers' fingertips, whether they're daily riders or just planning a visit to the area."

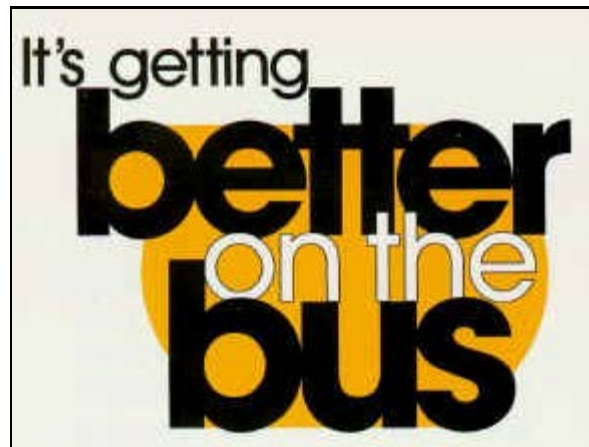
All the user has to do is to enter a street address or intersection for their starting and ending points, indicate when they'd like to travel and what their fare category is. The Metro Trip Planner does the rest. Since many streets have similar names, the trip planner asks for additional information if it has trouble recognizing an entry; it also recognizes major landmark destinations like UCLA and LAX.

In addition to personal computers at home, most schools, libraries and community centers now have Internet access, as do hotel concierges and travel agents. As a result, there are countless outlets through which people now can easily access customized Metro Bus and Metro Rail schedule information.

You can try the Metro Trip Planner by visiting www.mta.net.

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Ad Campaign To Tell The Public...



(October 15) Thanks to Operations' sustained efforts, everyone can see that it's getting better on the bus....and MTA is about to trumpet that message in a major new advertising campaign.

Launching October 18, the campaign revolves around the theme "It's Getting Better on the Bus." Ads appearing on bus exteriors, billboards and in newspapers will highlight the bottom-line benefits that are the result of MTA's resolve to give improved bus service its highest priority: "More New Buses," "More Frequent Service," "More Reliability" and "More Security." On board "take-one" brochures also will deliver the message.

"The campaign seeks to take the cumulative impact of dozens of improvements and convey their bottom-line effect in a concise manner for our riders and the general public," says Warren Morse, Deputy Executive Officer of Marketing & Customer Relations. "By reinforcing the many enhancements our riders are seeing daily," he adds, "we also gain a strong platform through which we can promote continuing bus service improvements." As an underlying purpose, the ads also serve to inform the public that as a result of MTA's commitment to improved bus service, their tax dollars are being spent responsibly.

The campaign was created internally by MTA's Marketing department working in conjunction with the Graphics department and the Print Shop. David Sutton, Robin O'Hara, Elizabeth McGowan, Paula Cummings and Tuan Le are among the major contributors to the effort.

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MTA Division 3 Scores High Marks During CHP Bus Inspection



The mighty maintenance staff of Division 3.

Story and photos by Ed Scannell



(October 15) It was a banner day for Division 3 when the California Highway Patrol conducted its most recent bus inspection at the Cypress Park facility on October 8. Typically, the CHP inspects 20 buses at a MTA division. But when the 16th consecutive bus passed muster without a single bus being taken out of service, inspectors were impressed enough to call it a day. "This is an excellent statement that supports the hard work that the dedicated staff has been performing at Division 3," said Maintenance Superintendent John Roberts. "Congratulations go out to everyone at the division for a successful inspection. The CHP typically inspects buses at each division once per year, examining the condition of the brakes, steering, air system and suspension, as well as the maintenance records and the operators' and mechanics' drivers logs. This time around, inspectors issued a total of only 18 write-ups for minor defects which led one inspector to remark that the condition of the buses he inspected at Division 3 was the best

he had seen at the MTA in the ten years he has been assigned to the region.

HARD DAY'S WORK--Top, Lead Mechanic John Arnold; center, Maintenance Manager Milo Victoria and Lead Mechanic Tim Wong, and below, Mechanic "A" Frank Espinosa make the inspection rounds.

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MTA Says "It's Getting Better on the Bus" Authority Unveils New Buses, New Ad Campaign



By Ed Scannell

(October 18) It was just about a year ago that MTA CEO Julian Burke told the media and the public that he "got the message" that the aging Metro Bus System was in bad need of a fix.

Joined this morning at Division 3 by LA County Supervisor and MTA Board Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke and flanked by some 40 new CNG buses, Mr. Burke took to the microphones again to say that while much remains to be done, service on the system is improving.

New buses, more service on the road and better supervision are easing overcrowding on MTA's busiest bus lines and improving passenger comfort. Customer complaints are down, performance indicators are up and the Metro Bus System is safer today than ever before thanks to policing by the LAPD and the LA County Sheriff's Department.



Underscoring the message were testimonials by Division 3 bus operator

Art Alva (pictured above) and Michael Williams, a member of the MTA's Passenger Advisory Committee, and MTA Marketing's unveiling of a new advertising campaign aimed at spreading the word that, "It's Getting Better on the Bus."

Performance indicators show the Metro Bus System really is getting better. Not only are complaints down, but on-time pullouts have climbed by 3% from a year ago to 99.1%. Metro Buses racked up more than 51 hundred miles between mechanical failures in August, up 28.7% from August 1998. Moreover, the MTA continues to make gains in on-time performance and Consent Decree passenger load factor compliance.

"We're proud of what we've done," said CEO Burke at the Division 3 news conference. "We've got a ways to go, but we're ready to be looked at."



Division 3 bus operators get ready to roll out the new line.

Photos by José Ubaldo

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Safety Zone Next Stop on Metro Bus and Rail Journey

(October 20) MTA's mascot of safety has taken his message to the Internet. A click of your computer's mouse on MTA's website will transport you to the Metro Bus and Metro Rail Safety Zone where *Safety Guy* offers tips for safe trips on buses and trains.

Created by illustrator Steve Gray, the cartoon character *Safety Guy* adds a light touch to a serious subject, and coupled with the

animation of MTA Webmaster Joe Simpson, the approach has particular appeal to children.

In addition to offering safety tips, *Safety Guy* invites site viewers to take a pair of quizzes, the Metro Rail Passenger Safety Challenge and the Metro Bus Passenger Safety Challenge, to see how much they've learned about safety on their visit to the site.

Answer every question right and you'll earn a personalized safety certificate autographed by *Safety Guy*. An incorrect answer prompts an "Oops!" from *Safety Guy* who gently tells you there's a better answer and coaxes you to try answering the question again.

"We don't want people to fail the tests," said MTA Marketing's Robin O'Hara. "The purpose of the Metro Rail Passenger Safety Challenge and Metro Bus Passenger Safety Challenge is to reinforce good habits."

The *Safety Guy* website is the latest addition to a variety of materials MTA Marketing has produced to encourage rail and bus safety. Plans call for the distribution of bookmarks featuring the website address to elementary schools sometime after the first of the year. Click here to visit [Safety Guy](#).

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Fraud Investigations, Other Measures Help Reduce Worker's Comp Expense

(October 21) During a 12-month period ending in September, the MTA's insurance company investigated 267 cases of possible worker's compensation fraud by agency employees and submitted four cases to the Los Angeles County District Attorney for prosecution. Six other cases are pending and one retired employee was arrested on suspicion of falsifying his insurance claim.

These are perhaps the toughest measures in a series of efforts the MTA is making to reduce the cost of a program that currently is costing the agency \$32.4 million annually. That amounts to \$5.38 of the MTA's \$108 hourly revenue service operating cost the MTA has forecast for FY 2000.

The most noticeable improvement, according to Deborah Guy, managing director, Risk Management, is the drop in employee claims for recurrence of previous injuries. Claims have been reduced from an average of 145 per month to only 17. Each recurrence claim is now investigated thoroughly, instead of being accepted at face value.

The Transitional Duty Program, initiated last January, also has helped get injured employees back to work 41 percent faster. Under the program, injured employees are given duties that accommodate their temporary disabilities. Experience has shown that these employees avoid the "disability syndrome" and actually heal more quickly.

"The Transitional Duty Program is a vital component in controlling our worker's compensation costs," says Guy. "We see it as our biggest opportunity for cost reduction."

As of Aug. 31, 161 employees had participated in the Transitional Duty Program and 70 of those had returned to full duty. The program has saved the MTA \$492,000.

In July, 1998, 444 employees were off work on temporary disability. That figure has been reduced to 335 - a 25 percent decrease. Also down by 25 percent were average monthly claims from 313 in the first quarter of FY 1999 to 235 in the first quarter of FY 2000.

"The numbers are beginning to show signs of improvement...but worker's compensation is not 'fixed' at the MTA," Guy reported to the Board's Finance Committee. "We continue to implement the best industry practices to reduce costs and create a safer, better work place for our employees."

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New Pay Stubs Raise Employee Eyebrows, But Finance Officials Stress the Benefits

(October 22) Changes on the MTA's new paycheck stubs may have raised some employees' eyebrows, but Finance Department officials say the changes were made to benefit employees or were required by state law.

A number of employees contacted the CEO HotLine to inquire about the use of home addresses, Social Security numbers and bank account numbers on the redesigned pay stubs. They expressed concern about privacy in the event a pay stub is lost or stolen.

But Terry Matsumoto, executive officer, Finance, says the information could not easily be used by an unauthorized person. The bank account number, for example, doesn't indicate which bank holds the employee's account.

The account number was added to the pay stub to assist those employees who make direct deposits into more than one account, usually checking and savings. That's probably 25 percent of those who have direct deposit, according to Matsumoto.

Social Security numbers are now printed on pay stubs in accordance with California law, he says. The old pay stubs, which did not include Social Security numbers, had been in violation of the law. The new stubs also show federal and state income tax withholding information.

Printing the mailing address on the pay stub also is a convenience to those employees who are away from their work locations on pay day. Because the pay stubs are enclosed in a sealed window envelope, pay clerks can now just drop the envelope in the mail, Matsumoto says.

He notes that a form printed at the bottom of the memo accompanying the new pay stubs allows employees to provide a change of mailing address, if desired.

"The new information on the pay stubs provides an audit trail for employees," Matsumoto says. "I think most people will find this to be a convenience."

See What's Up for an [employee's comments](#).

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Metro Rail Project Marks Two Milestones; Testing of Last Major Phase begins Monday

(October 22) A subway train marked two major milestones toward completion of the Metro Red Line to North Hollywood late Thursday, while setting the stage for the last major test phase prior to pre-revenue service.

The four-car train, driven by Rail TOS Ricardo Perez, was the first to be powered up on the new 6.3-mile section of track that links Hollywood and the San Fernando Valley. Its journey through the tunnels, crossovers and tail tracks during a seven-hour test also showed that trains will be able to operate with positive clearances, according to Rail Activation Manager Lee Agee.

On Monday, Oct. 25, testing of the Automatic Train Control System is scheduled to begin. The system ensures train separation and prevents over-speeding, among other safety measures. Although many other tests will be conducted before pre-revenue service starts next March, this will be the last of the major systems to be tested, Agee says.

The rail startup team threw the switch late Sunday, Oct. 17, that for the first time electrified the third rail in the Segment 3 tunnels.

The opening of Segment 3 in mid-2000 will expand the Metro Red Line system to 17.4 miles. The new section includes three stations at Hollywood/Highland, Universal City and North Hollywood.

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MTA's New Learning Resource Center Makes Education a High-Tech Experience



Learning Resource Center staffers Wayne Nguyen and Marlene Love show study materials to Nicky Astilla of the Mail Room.

By Bill Heard, Editor

(October 25) Reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic got a whole new look at the MTA with the opening, today, of the Learning Resource Center - a computer "laboratory" where employees can learn subjects ranging from basic math and spelling to PowerPoint.



Jackie Davidson of Quality Assurance tries out the computer program tutorial at the Learning Resource Center.

Located on the fourth floor at Headquarters, the lab will be open from 7:30 a.m. until 5 p.m., Monday through Friday to any employee who wants to enroll in the scores of courses provided by Human Resources

Development and Training. Some computer courses, available on CD Rom, may be checked out for home study.

"The Learning Resource Center is for use by all employees, contract and non-contract, to enhance professional skills or for personal development," says Deborah Bishop, senior training coordinator. "With the computers available here, employees can practice with the software or complete the math, reading or writing tutorials."

Computer software program tutorials include Windows 95, Microsoft Word 97, Access 97, Excel 97, Outlook 97 and PowerPoint 97. A student can learn a program with prompts from the CD Rom or can watch an instructional video on a screen placed next to the computer.

The Center, which features eight computer-equipped study carrels, also provides a tutorial in typing and a program called, Simuweb, an Internet simulator. Simuweb teaches the basic concepts of the world wide web, plus use of browsers and home page design.

Perhaps the most extensive computer-based tutorials are provided by the Lifetime Learning Series of 111 "books" covering basic to advanced levels of math, writing and reading. Each book includes a lesson and exam.

Although most lessons take about an hour or so, a student can proceed through a book at his or her own pace. The system permits students to keep track of the lessons they've completed and their scores on each exam.

The 57-book math series covers such topics as fractions and decimals, geometry, graphs and data usage, becoming progressively more difficult as they proceed into algebra I and II. The writing series of 10 books covers spelling, nouns and verbs, sentence structure and style. The 44-book reading series proceeds through practical and general to literature, science and history.

"These courses would provide an excellent review and background if you were preparing to take a college placement exam," says Susan Robles, a trainer and analyst. "You'd be way ahead of the game."

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MTA Schedules Public Hearing on Changes Resulting from North Hollywood Opening

By Rick Jager

(October 25) The MTA will hold a public hearing on Saturday, Nov. 13, to outline proposed bus service changes in connection with the opening of the North Hollywood segment of the Metro Red Line.

In addition, the public is encouraged to comment on the MTA's Metro Rapid Bus Demonstration Project to be implemented next year, as well as other service change proposals designed to improve the operation of the Metro Bus system.

The public hearing will begin at 10 a.m. in the Board room.

To enhance rail service and reduce service duplication when the subway extension opens in mid-2000, the MTA is proposing modifications to Lines 96, 152, 154, 163, 166, 183, 230, 418, 420, 424, 425, 426, 427 and 522. These service changes would take place in May 2000 or later.

The Metro Rapid Bus Demonstration Project will introduce new, fast, high-quality bus service in key transit corridors on the Eastside, and in Mid-City and the San Fernando Valley. This service will upgrade and replace existing service in the Whittier/Wilshire and Ventura Boulevard corridors. Affected bus lines are 318, 320, 322 and 425.

Other service changes include implementation of experimental route 418 (LACBD-Roscoe Bl. Express) and new route 434 (Los Angeles-Santa Monica Express). Line 429 (Los Angeles-Sunset Blvd. Express) would be cancelled. The effective dates for implementation would be December, 1999.

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Santa Claus Makes Early Scouting Visit to Metro Red Line's Hollywood/Vine Station



Photos by Jose Ubaldo

(October 25) It's not even Halloween yet, but Santa Claus made an early visit today to the Metro Red Line's Hollywood/Vine station to greet subway riders and scout the route for the 68th annual Hollywood Christmas Parade, Nov. 28.



At the station to meet the jolly ol' elf were a group of stocking-capped youngsters and the local media, as well as City Council Member Jackie Goldberg. Representing the MTA were Warren Morse, deputy executive officer, Marketing, and Jess Diaz, rail transportation superintendent.

Taking advantage of Metro Rail's proximity to the crowded parade route, the Hollywood Christmas Parade has collaborated with the MTA to offer a special discounted Grandstand Ticket package to the event.

The package, offered at \$20, includes a reserved grandstand seat near the intersection of Hollywood and Vine, a celebrity souvenir program and round-trip fare to the event on the Metro Red Line or any Metro Bus line. Fares for additional bus and rail connections are not included in the package.

"We are delighted to join the Hollywood Christmas Parade in encouraging spectators to use the Metro Red Line and come see the parade," said Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky.

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'Risky Business' on the Rails

Locomotive vs. Van Collision Highlights Death Risk, Fines for Crossing Violations

Place mouse on image to see live action!

Text and Photography

By Ed Scannell

(October 27) A staged collision between a freight locomotive and a passenger van carrying crash test dummies provided graphic testimony, today, about the risks motorists take when they ignore warnings at railroad crossings.

The spectacular crash also served as a warning to motorists who cross railroad tracks illegally - and live to tell the story - that the cost of such a risky move will soon increase.



California Assembly Bill 923, sponsored by the MTA and SCRRA and recently signed into law by Governor Davis, will increase the penalty for motorist violations at railroad crossings from \$104 to \$271 beginning Jan. 1, 2000. A third violation could cost offenders as much as \$500. These are the same fines paid by motorists who violate laws regarding

freeway carpool lanes or who run red lights on streets.

"The MTA and other rail transit agencies in California have gone to great lengths to prevent accidents and injuries, yet some people persist in ignoring the warnings at railroad crossings," said CEO Julian Burke. "We are hopeful that the prospect of higher fines will cause potential violators to think twice about risking their own lives and the lives of others."

Fines collected under AB 923 will help support a variety of safety measures including driver education, the placement of barricades and gates, and the installation of additional surveillance cameras that identify violators and provide evidence needed to cite them. The MTA currently employs 10 surveillance cameras on a rotating basis at 17 of the 100 grade crossings on the Metro Blue Line.

In addition to the use of gates, flashing lights and other safety equipment, the MTA conducts an ongoing public educational outreach to residents, businesses, community groups, senior centers, schools and safety fairs. A team of eight Sheriff's Department motorcycle deputies was formed in recent months to enforce the vehicle code at all of the crossings, as well as to enforce the laws prohibiting jaywalking and trespassing by pedestrians.

"We feel obliged to educate people and to discourage them from taking risks," said Paul J. Lennon, MTA managing director of safety and security. "Grade crossing safety on the Metro Blue Line is just as important to us as safely transporting passengers."

Today's collision was staged by a Hollywood stunt team along North Main Street just north of downtown Los Angeles.

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Police Pounce on Pickpocket Plundering Passengers' Packs

(October 28) To the pickpocket, it must have seemed easy pickings – the backpacks of school kids boarding a Metro Bus at the corner of 3rd Street and Vermont Avenue.

But, observing from a distance were members of the LAPD's Pickpocket Detail. They watched the suspect remove articles from several victim's backpacks as they stepped onto the bus. The officers knew just what to do.

An undercover officer dropped her wallet into the outside pocket of a backpack, shouldered the bag and lined up for the bus. The suspect "immediately opened the backpack and removed the wallet," according to the police report.

Officers arrested a 40-year-old male suspect and booked him for Grand Theft - Person.

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Board Reaffirms \$30 Mill. for Playa Vista; Dreamworks/SKG No Longer a Factor

UPDATE

(October 28) The MTA Board reaffirmed its commitment, Thursday, to provide \$30 million in funding for improvements to streets serving the Playa Vista Development in Marina del Rey. The Board also removed a requirement funds be withheld unless the Dreamworks/SKG film production company located in the development.

Use of the money was thrown into confusion earlier this year when Dreamworks/SKG, owned by Hollywood moguls Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen, pulled out of the Playa Vista development. Plans for an office park, commercial development and residences have moved forward, however.

A total of \$30 million had been set aside for improvements on Rt. 1 and Rt. 90 which serve the development area in Marina del Rey. The allocation of funds, however, was contingent upon Dreamworks/SKG studios moving to the site. Caltrans already has committed to provide \$15.1 million in Phase 1 improvements on those roads. An additional \$14.9 million for Phase 2 improvement also is proposed.

The Board discussed three motions relating to future of the Playa Vista funding at its Thursday meeting, but approved the motion by Mayor Richard Riordan and Supervisor Don Knabe.

A motion by Supervisor Gloria Molina included a provision to remove the Dreamworks/SKG requirement, but included a motion that would have required the MTA staff to present a report within 30 days on whether the \$14.9 million the MTA had planned to provide for Phase 2 could be used, instead, for bus purchases, the MTA's Alameda Corridor East contribution or for projects proposed in the 1999 Call for Projects.

A third motion, by Director James Cragin, would have reprogrammed whatever now remains of the original \$30 million into the 1999 Call for Projects, while providing enough money to close out the Caltrans projects on Rt. 1 and Rt. 90.

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Lawsuit on Behalf of Former SCRTD Employees Hits Another Snag; Class-Action Status Denied

(October 28) The lawsuit filed against the MTA on behalf of former SCRTD employees hit another snag, Thursday, when a Superior Court judge denied the plaintiff's motion to certify it as a class action.

The decision by Judge Fumiko Wasserman means that - if the ruling withstands a possible appeal - the lawsuit would continue only on behalf of a single plaintiff, Robert Torres.

In a conference with attorneys representing the SCRTD employees and the MTA, Judge Wasserman suggested that the dispute be referred to mediation. That process must be completed by Jan. 28, 2000, she said, and the results reported to her at a status conference scheduled for Feb. 4, 2000.

In denying the motion to certify the class action, the judge cited a case that provides legal standards for class-action lawsuits. To qualify as a class action, there must be a recognizable class of individuals who have a well-defined community of interest. Common questions of law or fact must predominate. The individual who represents the class must have claims that are typical of others in the class. He or she also must be able to adequately represent the class.

In a statement released Thursday, the MTA's attorneys said, "Judge Wasserman's decision indicates that she believes that legal requirements for a class action were not met. She has continued to rule in the MTA's favor since taking the case in March, 1998. Her rulings clearly support our contention that this case has no merit."

The lawsuit seeks essentially the same employment benefits for former SCRTD employees as those received by former LACTC employees since the merger in April, 1993. This includes reimbursement for Social Security and for State Disability Insurance taxes.

The plaintiff also is asking for retirement benefits equal in cost to those provided to former LACTC employees since the merger. The suit requests a new classification/compensation study to eliminate alleged inequities in pay scales.

The lawsuit has endured a lengthy series of hearings and delays since it was filed three years ago. Two judges withdrew because of possible conflicts of interest. The suit encountered a year's delay before it was assigned to Judge Wasserman, who conducted her first hearing on March 16, 1998. Since that time, she has reduced the number of causes of action from nine to one.

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Y2K Project on Schedule with 64 Days Remaining in 1999

(October 28) With just 64 days remaining before the crystal ball drops in Times Square, the MTA's Year 2000 Project remains on schedule, although some mission-critical systems still are being worked on.

A report to the MTA Board this month notes that - as of September 30 - computer application systems, such as FIS, MMS and VMS, are now 95 percent compliant. Of the 150 systems originally identified, only nine require further work and all but one of the mission-critical systems - TOTS - were Y2K complaint. The remaining mission-critical systems are to be completed by November.

Of the 59 rail systems, only 12 still were still non-compliant, although solutions were being developed. The mission-critical radio system, TRACS and the rail telephone system remained non-compliant.

The MTA's Y2K contractor has completed about 85 percent of its inventory of the 177 embedded chips that are essential to the operation of vital equipment. Validation and verification of the chips in Metro Blue Line and Metro Green Line equipment has been completed. Work now is under way on the Metro Red Line and at the Headquarters Building.

Work still needs to be done to ensure that the agency's supply chain will function properly in the new year. A total of 4,946 MTA vendors were contacted and 1,451 of those reported they are Y2K compliant. Ninety percent of vendors deemed critical MTA suppliers, however, reported being in compliance.

The primary purpose of the Y2K Project is to ensure that the MTA's electrical and electronic systems will support the agency's business operations and mission-critical functions, provide a high degree of public and employee safety, and keep buses and trains in service on Jan. 1, 2000 and beyond.

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Photos and video by Ed Scannell

Division 8 Wins Contest for Best Halloween Decorations



(October 29) More than the usual number of ghosts, goblins and ghouls gathered on Patsaouras Plaza, Friday, to screech and howl that their division's bus was the best decorated. But, Division 8, whose bus featured a blood-chilling array of horror scenes, won the MTA's annual Halloween Bus Decorating contest.

Judges chose the Division 15 bus for second-place honors and the Division 5 bus for third place. Also entering decorated coaches were divisions 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 15 and 18. Last year's winner, Division 7, declined to enter this year.



The exterior of the Division 8 bus was decorated by senior art students at Chatsworth High School. Interior decorations were provided by Girl Scouts from Dearborn Elementary School. The Division 8 bus will participate in the Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration on Olvera Street in Los Angeles, Nov. 2.

Barbara Maycott, Division 15.

"It's masterful, interesting, and it's fun" said CEO Julian Burke as he stepped down from inspecting the interior of the Division 8 bus. "Obviously, a lot of work went into these buses. I was told by the art teacher at Chatsworth High that this is the best experience her students have had all year."

All divisions entering buses teamed up with students from local schools or with youngsters from community organizations to create the Halloween-themed buses.

"This is a good way for the divisions to get involved with school kids

for a fun event," said Dan Ibarra, deputy executive officer, Bus Operations. "This paints the MTA in a positive light, knocks down some walls in the community and puts a human face on the agency."

The Halloween contest drew media coverage by Channel 22, Channel 62, Eastern Group Publications, KFWB Radio and the LA Times.

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