

Metro Report Archives

November

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Metro Red Line was Popular With [Hollywood Riders](#) on Halloween (November 2) The Metro Red Line was popular with crowds traveling to Hollywood to celebrate Halloween last Sunday evening.

MTA Testing [High-Tech Fareboxes](#) That Collect Data as well as Fares (November 2) The MTA's Revenue Department expects this week to complete a two-month evaluation of an improved electronic farebox that not only collects passengers' money, but also can provide useful information about Metro Bus ridership.

CEO Restructures [Labor Relations Office](#); MTA to Recruit New Department Head (November 4) CEO Julian Burke has restructured the Labor Relations function. A single Labor Relations Department has been created by moving staff responsible for second-level grievances and for assisting in labor contact negotiations from Transit Operations into the reorganized department.

CTC Approves [Pasadena Rail Funding](#); Burke Cautious on Operating Plans (November 5) The California Transportation Commission approved \$83.2 million in funding, Thursday, for construction of the Pasadena Metro Blue Line, but CEO Julian Burke was cautious in his testimony about whether the MTA would have funding needed to operate the light-rail line.

'[Bandit Vans](#)' Luring MTA, LADOT Riders, LAPD Task Force Targets Illegal Operators (November 5) They don't wear masks and they may not carry guns, but the "bandit vans" that some Metro Bus operators have seen trawling for passengers at MTA and LADOT bus stops recently are stealing just the same.

[Wet Roads](#) Contribute to 3 Bus Accidents Involving Multiple Injuries to Riders, Operators (November 8) Wet roads contributed to a rash of highway accidents in the Los Angeles area early Monday, including at least 18 involving Metro Buses. Three of those accidents resulted in injuries to passengers and operators.

Speakers Praise Division 1's [Place in History](#) as Crowd Celebrates 100th Anniversary (November 8) Old and young, employees and families, politicians and preachers, musicians and dancers – the big crowd on hand, Sunday, at Division 1 all had one thought: the 100th anniversary party was an event to remember.

- Former Streetcar Operator [Anders Looks Back](#) on 40-Year Career
- Statistics and Photos Tell The Tale of [Division 1's 100th](#) Birthday Bash

[Independent Audit Says](#) MTA Properly Spent More Than \$5.7

Billion in Sales Tax Revenues (November 9) An Independent audit has found appropriate the MTA's expenditures of more than \$5.7 billion in funds collected under two half-cent sales taxes.

[Gas Alarm](#) Disrupts Subway Service; Responding Firefighters

Detect No Gas (November 9) A gas alarm at the Metro Red Line's Vermont/Santa Monica station disrupted subway service for about 42 minutes on the Hollywood line Tuesday morning, but responding LA City firefighters found no evidence of gas.

[Public Hearing set Saturday](#) on Changes in Bus Service to

NoHo and for Rapid Bus Project (November 10) The MTA will conduct a hearing in the Board room at 10 a.m., Saturday, Nov. 13, to gather public comment on proposed changes in North Hollywood Metro Bus service and changes related to the Metro Rapid Bus demonstration project.

MTA Sets December Hearing on ADA [Paratransit Plan](#) Update

The MTA will conduct a public hearing at 10 a.m., Wednesday, Dec. 1, in the Board room to receive public comment on the agency's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit Plan Update for 2000.

79-Year-Old Pickpocket Suspect [Arrested Again](#) by LAPD

Officers (November 10) Some people just don't give up and 79-year-old Leonte Somarriba may be one of them. The LAPD Picketpocket Detail arrested Somarriba for the second time in two months, Nov. 3, on a charge of grand theft, pickpocket.



Action Earns Commendation! Operator Faces Down Sweating Crowd to Bring [Wheelchair Passenger](#) on Board (November 11) September 30 was a scorcher in Los Angeles – 95 to 100 degrees on the streets around the Metro Blue Line's Washington Station. Among the waiting passengers was a man in a wheelchair.

MTA Plans to Equip Entire Bus Fleet with [Bike](#)

Racks (November 11) The MTA plans to equip its entire fleet of 2,200 buses with fold-up bicycle racks within a year, according to a report prepared for presentation to the Board's Operations Committee, Nov. 17.

Automated Toilet [Contract Signed](#); First Units Expected in Dec.

2000 (November 12) It's been almost three years in the planning - and there's another year to go - but in December, 2000, Metro riders should be able to flush the first Automated Public Toilets to be installed in Los Angeles.

New Flyer [Back in Gear](#) after Slump in MTA Bus Production

(November 12) Following a month in which New Flyer delivered only two of the 47 new CNG buses it was scheduled to send the MTA, the Minnesota company is taking steps to recover from a slump in production.

Opening of Two Bus Stations Next Spring Will Complete [Harbor Transitway](#) Project

(November 15) When the last two bus stations on the Harbor Transitway open next spring, the 10-year project to build the region's first combination HOV lane and commuter busway will be complete.

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\$8 Million Lost Annually to Fraud? [Counterfeit Transit Passes](#), Revenue Losses Makes Shift to New Fare System More Urgent (November 16) A rising tide of counterfeit transit passes and transfers is giving urgency to the MTA's effort to develop a universal fare system (UFS) and install electronic transfer machines (ETM) aboard Metro Buses.

Plus... LAPD [Detectives Target Phony Pass, Transfer Sellers](#) (November 16) Detectives in the LAPD's Transit Group in recent months have targeted sellers of counterfeit transit passes and transfers, making a number of arrests and confiscating dozens of fake passes.

[Yaroslavsky Motion](#) Seeks Study of Extending Rail Service to Staples Center, Other Venues (November 17) The issue of extending Metro Rail hours to serve the Staples Center and other entertainment venues will come before the Board's Planning and Programming Committee on Thursday.



MTA Responding to [Demand for More Bicycle Spaces at Metro Rail Stations](#)

(November 17) In response to the rising demand for secure bicycle spaces at Metro Rail stations, the MTA will increase by 34 percent the number of bike rack and locker spaces available to commuters who use Metro Rail lines.

Plus... [He Rode in on a Bike, but He Rode Out in a Paddy Wagon](#) (November 17) The

new bike racks and lockers the MTA will install at Metro Rail stations should help ensure against the type of incident reported recently by the LAPD Transit Group, which had been alerted to a series of bike thefts at the stations.

[Metrolink Requests MTA Help](#) [Metrolink Train Collides with Freight in Fullerton, at Least 18 Injured](#) (November 18) A five-car Metrolink train, No. 602, en route to Oceanside from Los Angeles with about 60 passengers onboard collided with cars of a Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight train in Fullerton about 8:17 a.m., today. News reports said 18 people had been injured and that the most serious injury was a broken leg.

Results from [First Quarter FY 2000](#) Show MTA Management Improving (November 18) The MTA is managing itself "the way good private enterprise organizations do," Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky said Wednesday, during a review of the agency's first quarter FY 2000 results.

[Metrolink Accident Provides Real-Life Test for MTA's \[Mobile Communications Center\]\(#\)](#) (November 19) The Metrolink train accident in Fullerton, Thursday, provided a real-life test for the MTA's Mobile Emergency Communications Center – a converted bus equipped to coordinate transit service should the Bus Operation Control Center at Headquarters be disabled.

MTA Must Look at Wide Range of Expenses to Cut Cost of Bus Operations, [Report Says](#) (November 19) If the MTA is to cut the cost of bus operations, a consultant told the Board's Operations committee, Thursday, it must take a hard look at a wide range of expenses

MTA [Revenue Director Diaz](#) Helps Strike New U.S. \$1 Coin in Ceremony at Mint

(November 22) The U.S. Mint will introduce a gold-colored \$1 coin into general circulation next March. One of those chosen to "strike" the first of the new coins in a ceremony at the Philadelphia mint, Nov. 8,



was the MTA's director of Revenue, Agapito Diaz.

Items to Watch... [Board Committees](#) Take Action on Free New Year's Eve Rides, Other Items (November 22) MTA Board committees meeting last week took action on several motions - including one to offer free New Year's Eve rides on Metro Buses and Metro Rail.

[Finance Debuts on MTA's Internet Site](#) with Budget and Investor Information (November 22) Investors interested in MTA bonds, budgets and other financial information now can access it on the Finance Department's new Internet web page.

Appeals Court Gives MTA [Breathing Space](#) on Judge's Order to Add Buses in January (November 23) The U.S. Court of Appeals has issued a temporary stay of a District Court judge's order that would have required the MTA to place an additional 88 buses into service by Jan. 3, 2000.

LAPD Tags Eight [Graffiti Vandals](#) in One Day (November 24) Thursday, Nov. 18, was a bad day for taggers, but a good day for the LAPD's Transit Group. They collared eight graffiti vandals in one day.

[Crime](#) on Metro Bus, Metro Rail Lines Down Dramatically, Sheriff's Dept. Says (November 24) Violent crime was down 47.4 percent and misdemeanor offenses declined 41.4 percent during the first nine months of 1999 on Metro Bus and Metro Rail lines patrolled by the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau.

6 Killed in Line's Worst Accident Metro Rail Crews' All-Out Effort Restores [Metro Blue Line](#) Service



for Monday Rush (November 29) Service on the Metro Blue Line was virtually back to normal for Monday's rush hour, following an all-out effort by Metro Rail maintenance personnel to recover from an accident late Saturday that injured the operator and took the lives of a cab driver and five passengers.

5,000 Board [Metro Red Line for Hollywood](#) Christmas Parade (November 29) Santa Claus didn't ride the Metro Red Line to Sunday night's Hollywood Christmas Parade, but a lot of other folks did – perhaps as many as 5,000.

MTA Sets December Hearing on ADA Paratransit Plan Update

By Rick Jager

The MTA will conduct a public hearing at 10 a.m., Wednesday, Dec. 1, in the Board room to receive public comment on the agency's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit Plan Update for 2000.

As a public transit operator, the MTA must ensure that ADA paratransit services are available for persons unable to use regular fixed-route transit service due to their disabilities. ADA paratransit service is provided by Access Services Incorporated (ASI).

In September, 1999, the MTA Board approved a \$43.9 million,

one-year funding agreement with ASI to administer the annual transport of 1.5 million people within a 1,500 square mile service area to provide transportation for persons with disabilities who cannot ride regular public transportation service.

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MTA Testing High-Tech Fareboxes That Collect Data as well as Fares

(November 2) The MTA's Revenue Department expects this week to complete a two-month evaluation of an improved electronic farebox that not only collects passengers' money, but also can provide useful information about Metro Bus ridership.



The electronic farebox is one of several such fareboxes the MTA expects to test as the agency moves toward establishing a Universal Fare System (UFS). Such a system, implemented throughout LA County, would enable transit riders to more easily travel across the region using various transit systems.

The MTA is interested in a new generation of fareboxes that can process and validate paper currency, coins and tokens, while also processing electronic transactions by passengers using magnetic-stripe cards. The farebox also can accept "smart cards," which can process fare transactions without being inserted into a slot. The card is "read" when it is passed near the farebox or card reader.

"This type of farebox could provide financial data and information on passenger loading," said Agapito Diaz, director of Revenue. "It also can give us valuable insights that will allow us to match our riders' needs with the capability of the Metro Bus system."

The two fareboxes currently being tested on Lines 102 and 200 automatically track cash and tokens. The operator uses a key pad installed on the farebox to record the type of pass - monthly, weekly, student, senior, etc. - presented by patrons.

The MTA would like to have a farebox that can download data wirelessly when the bus returns from its run and approaches the division vaulting house. Currently, an MTA employee must connect an electronic cord to the farebox to retrieve the data.

The two fareboxes - upgrades of the those currently used by the MTA - were installed in September on Metro Buses which operate out of Division 2. Part of the evaluation is to assess the interaction between operators and passengers and to look at farebox reliability and service issues.

The MTA's current fareboxes are 11 years old and are increasingly difficult to find replacement parts for.

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Metro Red Line was Popular With Hollywood Riders on Halloween

(November 2) The Metro Red Line was popular with crowds traveling to Hollywood to celebrate Halloween last Sunday evening. Between 6:40 p.m. and 11:30 p.m., more than 4,200 riders boarded the subway going to or from the parade.

With the exception of a couple of minor incidents, such as "Silly String" shooters, the LAPD reported no problems in the subway stations during the evening.

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Metro Rail has Gained 31,000 Riders Per Day Since Hollywood Opening

Metro Red Line was Popular with Hollywood Parade Goers ([See Sidebar](#))

(November 2) Ridership on all Metro Rail lines has gained an average of 31,000 new weekday riders since the opening of the Metro Red Line Vermont/Hollywood segment, June 12.

According to Ashok Kumar, director, Operations Data Analysis, average weekday ridership on all MTA-operated rail lines has jumped from about 110,000 to some 141,000 since June. Average daily ridership on the Metro Red Line, alone, has risen from 38,000 before the Hollywood opening to almost 60,000.

Average weekday ridership on the Metro Blue Line was up from about 52,000 in June to almost 57,000 today. Metro Green Line ridership increased from 22,000 to an average of 24,500 daily.

On Saturdays, average Metro Red Line ridership has reached about 30,000, compared with about 16,000 before the Hollywood opening. Metro Blue Line ridership is up from about 31,000 to about 37,000 and Metro Green Line ridership has risen from about 11,000 to about 12,000.

Average Sunday ridership on the Metro Red Line is now up to about 27,000 from almost 18,000. Metro Blue Line ridership on Sundays has reached about 30,000, up from around 24,000. On the Metro Green Line, average Sunday ridership is almost 10,000, an increase from about 9,000.

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CEO Restructures Labor Relations Office; MTA to Recruit New Department Head

(November 4) CEO Julian Burke has restructured the Labor Relations function. A single Labor Relations Department has been created by moving staff responsible for second-level grievances and for assisting in labor contract negotiations from Transit Operations into the reorganized department. The department will report directly to the Office of the CEO.

In a memo to MTA executive officers, Burke said the move will "provide better focus from the Office of the CEO for contract negotiations and contractual issues...." The change is effective immediately.

The MTA also will begin recruiting for a Chief Labor Relations Officer. Tom Webb, who serves as interim Labor Relations chief, will continue to manage the department until a permanent replacement is found.

Employee Relations, which is responsible for all issues concerning non-represented employees, will continue to report to Ray Inge, executive officer, Human Resources.

Under the revised organization, Rudy Lipscomb, deputy director, Labor Relations, and his seven-member staff will be responsible for negotiation, implementation and interpretation of labor contracts. The staff also will work with the MTA's unions and will train agency managers in contract issues, including the grievance and disciplinary processes. The staff also handles the third level of grievance reviews prior to arbitration.

Ralph Carapia, Labor Relations manager, and his four-member staff will be responsible for the second level of the grievance process, which includes review of grievances filed by contract employees. The group also trains managers and advises management on the grievance processes. Both groups will report to the chief labor relations officer.

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'Bandit Vans' Luring MTA, LADOT Riders, LAPD Task Force Targets Illegal Operators

(November 5) They don't wear masks and they may not carry guns, but the "bandit vans" that some Metro Bus operators have seen trawling for passengers at MTA and LADOT bus stops recently are stealing just the same.

"Bandit vans are non-registered vehicles whose drivers generally are not licensed to operate a bus," explains Dan Ibarra, deputy executive officer, Bus Operations. "Our operators observe them in our bus zones, often blocking the zones and not allowing our buses to service the stop."

Uniformed and plainclothes officers from the LAPD's Transit Bus Division conducted a task force operation, Nov. 3, in the 7th Street and Westlake Avenue area to apprehend bandit van operators. According to Capt. Vance Proctor, the task force made two misdemeanor arrests, issued four citations and impounded two vans.

The illegal vehicles may be vans, station wagons or small 22-passenger buses. The drivers often lure passengers aboard by promising rides for only \$1. According to Ibarra, they frequently tell commuters they will operate off main streets and offer almost door-to-door service.

"The bandit vans inhibit bus traffic and decrease revenues to the MTA," Proctor said. The Transit Bus Division task force will continue to operate at least once a month.

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CTC Approves Pasadena Rail Funding; Burke Cautious on Operating Plans

(November 5) The California Transportation Commission approved \$83.2 million in funding, Thursday, for construction of the Pasadena Metro Blue Line, but CEO Julian Burke was cautious in his testimony about whether the MTA would have funding needed to operate the light-rail line.

Burke presented a full-funding operational plan for the light rail line, cautioning the Commission that, while the plan is reasonable, he could not guarantee that the MTA would be able to operate the line, due to scarce operating revenues and the potential for operating cost increases.

The MTA estimates the cost of operating the line at \$33.6 million in FY 2004, including \$7 million in security costs. Fares are projected to cover \$4.7 million, with the remaining operating costs to be made up by subsidies.

Burke told CTC commissioners meeting in Sacramento that federal congestion mitigation and air quality funds and funding from sales taxes are projected to be available to operate the Pasadena line. But, he said the MTA could experience budget deficits of \$200 million or more due to additional court-ordered Consent Decree service requirements, revenue shortfalls or unanticipated costs.

"The MTA cannot be certain at this time what ultimate outcomes will emerge," he said in prepared testimony. "I believe we reasonably will be able to operate it, but I can't be certain about it."

The 13.6- mile Pasadena Metro Blue Line will have 13 stations and is expected to average 19,000 weekday riders in FY 2004 and 26,000 by FY 2010.

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Event to Remember: Speakers Praise Division 1's Place in History as Crowd Celebrates 100th Anniversary



Division Transportation Manager Jesse Castorena, left, is flanked by retired bus operator Lonnie Anders, MTA Director James Cragin, Transit Operations Executive Officer Tom Conner and Tom LaBonge of Mayor Riordan's Office.

By Bill Heard, Editor

(November 8) Old and young, employees and families, politicians and preachers, musicians and dancers – the big crowd on hand, Sunday, at Division 1 all had one thought: the 100th anniversary party was an event to remember.

Division Transportation Manager Jesse Castorena emphasized that when he began the day's festivities with, "I'd like to wish Division 1 a very happy birthday!"

MTA Director Jim Cragin, whose family has worked in transportation for generations, said, "For the past 100 years, Division 1 has served as the backbone of transit in Los Angeles.

"The modes of transit have changed over the years," Cragin added, "but the service provided by the men and women at Division 1, and at the MTA's other divisions, is as vital to Los Angeles now as it was 100 years ago."



CEO Julian Burke had the importance of Division 1 firmly in mind when he told the crowd that, "Historic sites come and go, but this one remains and will continue to remain, in my view, and can only get bigger and better."



Speaking from the heart, Burke said his time as MTA CEO, "...has, indeed, been the most important work...the most challenging work...I have ever done. It's been very important work for me, for you and for all of us."

CEO Julian Burke

Tom Conner, MTA Transit Operations executive officer, said the MTA should "prepare to begin a new millennium" by reflecting on "what it was like in 1899 as people prepared to enter the 20th century. He called Division 1 "a central part" of that history, adding that, "All of you should be proud to be an important part of the transportation history of Los Angeles."

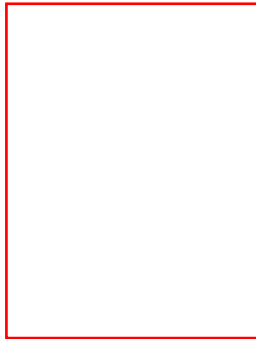
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Statistics Tell The Tale! It Was a 'Heckuva' 100th Birthday Party



Division 1 Manager Jesse Castorena cuts the commemorative cake.

(November 8) Division 1 may be 100 years old, but it knows how to throw a party! Just look at the statistics:



Guests: 500 plus Dignitaries: 7 Volunteers: 30 Dance troupes: 3 Musical groups: 3 Official Proclamations: 2 Saxophones: 4 Clowns: 2 Historic buses: 3 Small balloons: 675 Jumbo balloons: 15 Crepe paper: 1,000 feet Birthday cakes: 5 Chicken: 225 lbs. Ribs: 175 lbs. Carne Azada: 175 lbs Hamburger patties: 600 Frankfurters: 600 Hot links: 400 Cases of soda: 50 Leftovers: 1 case of lettuce, 2 packages of buns



Photos by Bill Heard

Clockwise, from top left, Division 1 Operator **Albert Hinojos** cooks up some fine quesadillas. Division 1 Mechanic **Michael Burke** chops up beef for carne azada. More than 500 guests attended the Division 1 birthday party. Division 1's **Esther Cabison, Pearl Ridgeway** and **Sue Harvey** were among the volunteers preparing and serving food to guests. **Christen Bueras**, 5, daughter of Division 1 operator **Peter Bueras**, has her face painted by **John Sepulveda**, as her brother, **Erik**, 1½, waits his turn. **Tom Conner**, Transit Operations executive officer, honors Division 1 staff.

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Former Streetcar Operator Anders Looks Back on 40-Year MTA Career



By Bill Heard, Editor

(November 8) Lonnie Anders was 25 years old when he first took his place in the operator's seat of a Los Angeles Transit Lines streetcar in July, 1959.

Over the next 40 years, he drove thousands and thousands of miles - on both rails and asphalt - transporting an equal number of passengers for a succession of transit agencies. Last April, he retired from the MTA, but he was back in full uniform and looking sharp to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at Division 1's 100th birthday celebration, Nov. 7.

Anders began his career at the old Division 20 at 11th and Georgia. He was taught to drive an electric streetcar on-the-job by a line instructor. Among other things, he learned the importance of the "deadman's device," which he had to keep depressed with his left foot all times. If the operator lifted his foot off the device, or "if he passed out," Anders says, the car came to an emergency stop.

He drove streetcars for three years on what now are Lines 30 and 31, as well as on Pico, Broadway, 7th and 1st streets, Florence, Pacific, Santa Fe, Rowan and Dozier - all in the downtown area. In those days, passengers ventured to the middle of the street and waited for the streetcar on a small platform or just within the bounds of a painted box.

"It was dangerous, but motorists were more considerate at that time, I think," Anders recalls. "Today, I don't think that would be a very good idea."

Following his streetcar days, Anders was assigned to Division 2 where he was retrained to operate buses.

"It was quite an experience driving streetcars," he said. "I think the public was sad to see the streetcars go."

Forty years is a long time and Anders served as a line instructor for about 30 of those years. What wisdom did he pass along to young operators?

"You must have patience," he says, responding to this reporter's questions with a great deal of the same. "Drive safely, of course, and treat your passengers well."

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Wet Roads Contribute to 3 Bus Accidents Involving Multiple Injuries to Riders, Operators

(November 8) Wet roads contributed to a rash of highway accidents in the Los Angeles area early Monday, including at least 18 involving Metro Buses. Three of those accidents resulted in injuries to passengers and operators.

At 4:39 a.m., a northbound Metro Bus hit a trash truck at Broadway and 22nd Street. A total of 23 people were transported to hospitals. Two, including the bus operator, suffered serious injuries.

At 6:42 a.m., a Line 78 bus collided with a light pole at Huntington and West Drive in San Marino. Seven passengers were injured, including the operator.

Meanwhile, an MTA bus operated by ATE/Ryder on Line 130 in the South Bay was involved in an accident in the southbound lanes of the Harbor Freeway. An ATE/Ryder spokesman said the bus operator lost control of the bus when a car swerved into her lane. Both vehicles were severely damaged and the bus operator was transported to the hospital with internal injuries and two broken legs.

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Gas Alarm Disrupts Subway Service; Responding Firefighters Detect No Gas

(November 9) A gas alarm at the Metro Red Line's Vermont/Santa Monica station disrupted subway service for about 42 minutes on the Hollywood line Tuesday morning, but responding LA City firefighters found no evidence of gas.

The alarm, which sounded at 6:24 a.m., halted service through the Vermont/Santa Monica station while firefighters investigated and walked portions of the tunnels with gas detection equipment. With no subway service between Wilshire/Vermont and Vermont/Sunset, Metro Buses took up the slack.

Service between Union Station and Wilshire/Western was not affected. Trains also provide 10-minute service to stations at Sunset, Western and Vine.

The alarm at Vermont/Santa Monica triggered warning lights and the station's huge exhaust fans. Firefighters detected no gas and no passengers complained of gas smells or ill effects. By 7 a.m., the event had ended and normal service resumed.

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Independent Audit Says MTA Properly Spent More Than \$5.7 Billion in Sales Tax Revenues

By Ed Scannell

(November 9) An Independent audit has found appropriate the MTA's expenditures of more than \$5.7 billion in funds collected under two half-cent sales taxes.

The audit of Proposition A (1980) and Proposition C (1990) revenues and expenditures, conducted by Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio & Associates, was presented, Tuesday, to the Independent Citizens' Advisory and Oversight Committee.

The audit was performed to comply with the 1998 Proposition A, an initiative authored by LA County Supervisor and MTA Board Member Zev Yaroslavsky. The measure, which prohibits further spending of sales tax revenues for subway construction, also established the committee.

"The voters asked us to be accountable for the receipt and expenditures of Proposition A and Proposition C revenues," said Richard Brumbaugh, MTA's chief financial officer. "We are pleased with the audit's finding that the revenues from these two sales taxes were properly expended."

During Tuesday's meeting of the citizens' committee, auditing firm partner Ralph Bazilio noted that the audit examined "in great detail" 845 transactions, which he said was three times as large as the typical audit sample.

The audit firm noted that it was unable to audit the receipt and expenditures of sales tax monies prior to fiscal year 1992 as the result of the MTA's Board-approved records retention policy.

A public hearing on the audit tentatively has been scheduled in January, 2000. The audit of MTA's expenditure of Proposition A and Proposition C sales tax receipts during the current fiscal year will be conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers.

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He's Baaaakk!!

79-Year-Old Pickpocket Suspect Arrested Again by LAPD Officers

(November 10) Some people just don't give up and 79-year-old Leonte Somarriba may be one of them. The LAPD Picketpocket Detail arrested Somarriba for the second time in two months, Nov. 3, on a charge of grand theft, pickpocket.

Pickpocket Detail officers watched Somarriba as he boarded a Line 21 Metro Bus westbound on Wilshire Boulevard. According to the police report, they saw him bump into several patrons as he exited the bus at Vermont Avenue. He then was observed hiding a black wallet in a mailbox on Normandie Avenue.

Officers recovered the wallet, which later was identified by the victim. The victim's bus pass and \$15 was found in Somarriba's shirt pocket, police said. A surveillance camera on the bus provided video that officers said revealed clear photos of Somarriba removing the victim's wallet.

"The added value of the bus surveillance cameras cements the case against Somarriba," said Capt. Vance Proctor, commanding officer, Transit Bus Division.

Pickpocket Detail officers first arrested Somarriba in September, but he was released on probation, even though he had prior arrests for picking pockets.

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Action Earns Commendation

Operator Faces Down Sweating Crowd to Bring Wheelchair Passenger on Board



By Bill Heard, Editor
(November 11) September 30 was a scorching in Los Angeles – 95 to 100 degrees on the streets around the Metro Blue Line's Washington Station.

An accident on the rail line had forced passengers to use Metro Buses and 75 to 100 people were crowded at the bus stop. Among the waiting passengers was a man in a wheelchair. When the first bus pulled up, passengers swarmed in. The bus was packed and the bus operator closed his doors and pulled away, leaving the wheelchair passenger at the bus stop.

MTA Access Committee Chairman Ben Rockwell presents commendation to Operator Jimenez.

Then, along came Jesus Jimenez. The Division 2 operator had seen the loaded bus that preceded him and he saw the man in the wheelchair. But, when he opened his doors, sweating passengers jammed the aisles.

Jimenez, an Operator for 20 years, realized that tempers were short and passengers were anxious for the bus to get moving. Still, there was the man in the wheelchair. "I'm a human being, too," the man shouted.

So, Jimenez got out of his seat, thinking, "I'm going to get him in here, no matter what."

He elbowed his way down the aisle and prepared to take the wheelchair aboard. He moved some passengers aside. Others had to leave the bus. But, he managed to lower the lift and get the wheelchair passenger on the bus and secured.

"It was a tense situation," Jimenez recalled, "But, I told some corny jokes and everyone calmed down."

The operator's persistence in the face of unhappy passengers came to the notice of the MTA's Access Advisory Committee, which presented Jimenez with a Certificate of Appreciation at its Nov. 11 meeting. The certificate praises Jimenez's "extraordinary efforts" to help the wheelchair passenger.

"It's been a pleasure working with all kinds of people and I've enjoyed doing it," Jimenez told the committee. Later, he said, "Just being here has opened my heart more than ever."

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MTA Plans to Equip Entire Bus Fleet with Bike Racks



(November 11) The MTA plans to equip its entire fleet of 2,200 buses with fold-up bicycle racks within a year, according to a report prepared for presentation to the Board's Operations Committee, Nov. 17.

The report, submitted by Transit Operations, Procurement and the Office of the CEO, recommends Board approval of a proposal to buy 550 new bike racks and "assist mirrors" as part of this effort.

The proposal, which will require a two-thirds vote of the Board, would authorize an expenditure of \$291,407 for the racks and mirrors. The new bike racks would be installed beginning in January, if the Board approves, and could take about seven months to complete.

Click here to return to ["More Bike Racks"](#) article.

The Board report says, "The bicycle racks now installed have enhanced the existing bus system through opening up new ridership for the MTA and supporting multi-modal transit efforts." Ridership at Foothill Transit and OCTA increased following bike rack demonstration projects.



Bike racks already have been installed on the fronts of some 1,400 of the MTA's 2,200 buses. New buses are to be delivered from the factory with the bike racks installed.

Meanwhile, operators and mechanics are being trained in the use and maintenance of the racks. MTA Marketing is distributing brochures illustrating how to secure a bike on the racks.

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Automated Toilet Contract Signed; First Units Expected in Dec. 2000



Contract Signing: Frank Cardenas, Administration chief (center), signed the APT contract with Omni Outdoor/STI officials Gary Baiz (L) and Juan Levy (R). Looking on are Augustin Zuniga of the County Counsel's office and Velma Marshall, MTA Real Estate manager.

(November 12) It's been almost three years in the planning - and there's another year to go - but in December, 2000, Metro riders and MTA employees should be able to flush the first Automated Public Toilets (APT) to be installed in Los Angeles.

A contract signed Friday on behalf of the MTA by Frank Cardenas, Administration executive officer, gives Omni Outdoor/STI permission to install APTs at 10 MTA locations and advertising kiosks or billboards at a total of 54 locations at no cost to the MTA.

Five of the APTs are to be installed for use in December, 2000, and the remainder during 2001. The MTA also has the option to order additional toilets beyond the first 10.

- **Artist's rendering of Automated Public Toilet unit as it will appears on the streetscape.**
- **Illustration demonstrates comprehensive safety features.**

In return, the MTA will receive a 10 percent share of all advertising revenues – an estimated \$4 million over 10 years. The agency also will get \$100,000 of free radio time annually for 10 years and free public service ad space on the kiosks and billboards. Not to mention the ability to offer free use of the automated toilets to Metro Bus and Metro Rail riders. The MTA Board has prohibited any charge to the public.

During the next 13 months, the contractor will be contacting various cities to obtain permits to erect the billboards and locate the kiosks. By contract, the company must have received the first 41 permits by Aug. 31, 2000.

In addition to a toilet, the 10-ton APTs will have a sink, mirror and coat hooks. They are automatically washed, disinfected and dried after each use. Electronic sensors, alarms and voice links with a monitoring station will



prevent a person from being caught in the cleaning cycle and will ensure users' safety. A technician will inspect the APTs daily, collect refuse and deal with any graffiti.

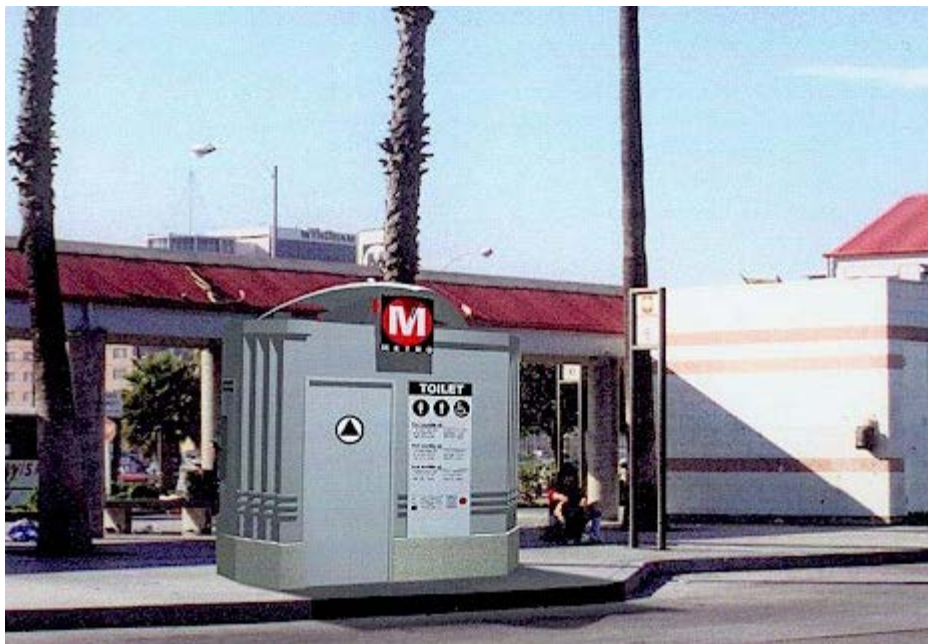
Security officers monitor safety with 2-way audio system, infrared sensors, and emergency call buttons and lights.

All APTs, according to the contractor, will be in 100 percent compliance with ADA regulations. Door sills are at ground level and the units are large enough to accommodate and maneuver a motorized wheelchair. Bars and handholds are installed to assist the disabled. The units also have baby changing tables.

Proposed locations for APTs are 5th and Hill, Wilshire/Vermont, Wilshire/Western and Hollywood/Western; the Metro Blue Line station at Imperial/Wilmington; Metro Green Line stations at Aviation, Norwalk, Long Beach, Lakewood and the Harbor Freeway; the LAX Bus Terminal and at the new Pico/Rimpau Loop bus terminal.

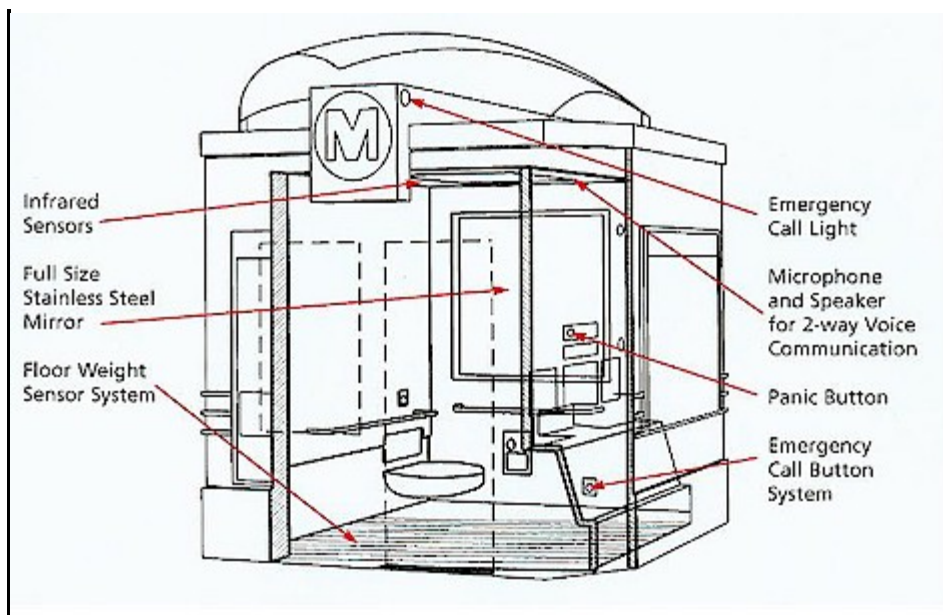
Other potential sites are the Metrolink stations at Northridge and Sylmar/San Fernando and at Metro Bus Terminals 26 and 45.

APT's were developed 18 years ago in France and Italy and currently are in use in many European cities, including Paris, London and Rome. San Francisco has 20 APT's and soon will install another 30. Six are in use in San Jose and one in Palo Alto.



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Artist's rendering of Automated Public Toilet unit, above, and illustration, below, demonstrate comprehensive safety and streetscape features.



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New Flyer Back in Gear after Slump in MTA Bus Production

(November 12) Following a month in which New Flyer delivered only two of the 47 new CNG buses it was scheduled to send the MTA, the Minnesota company is taking steps to recover from a slump in production.

"One of New Flyer's problems was getting parts from suppliers," said John Drayton, director of MTA's Vehicle Acquisition and Technical Support department. "The other issue was personnel. They were understaffed."

However, he said, the company now has shifted more than 100 workers to the production line and has been working seven days a week to complete the MTA's order of 223 buses. As a result, Drayton expects to see New Flyer catch up on production backlogs. The company will incur substantial financial penalties beginning Jan. 1, 2000, for every bus not delivered.

On Friday, North American Bus Industries delivered its "first article" bus to the MTA for 30 days of local testing. The bus then will be returned to NABI to serve as a "reference" for the remaining 214 buses in the current order. The first NABI buses are scheduled to arrive in Los Angeles in late January.

Meanwhile, Detroit Diesel continues to convert a steady 20-plus buses a month from ethanol/methanol to diesel power. Some 255 of the 333 buses have been converted. With the conversion to diesel, the buses are now achieving close to 2,000 miles between service delays.

"Running the ethanol/methanol buses had a devastating impact on the MTA's fleet reliability," said Drayton. "Before we began converting these buses, they only represented about 15 percent of our active fleet, but they required 25 to 30 percent of our maintenance resources to keep them running.

"The conversions have turned these buses into our most reliable performers," he added. Only three of the original 333 ethanol/methanol buses are still operational.

The MTA also is retrofitting the converted diesel buses with new, more reliable wheelchair lifts, and this should further improve fleet reliability, Drayton said.

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Opening of Two Bus Stations Next Spring Will Complete Harbor Transitway Project

(November 15) When the last two bus stations on the Harbor Transitway open next spring, the 10-year project to build the region's first combination HOV lane and commuter busway will be complete.

The Harbor Transitway, which stretches from 37th Street in Los Angeles about 19 miles south to San Pedro, was built to reduce congestion on the I-110 and improve mobility between the harbor area and downtown LA during peak traffic, according to Caltrans.

By 2005, Caltrans expects some 65,000 bus riders to be using the Transitway on an average day. The Transitway features nine commuter stations and eight park and ride lots. The stations, except for the Artesia Transit Center, are located either at roadside or in a center island.

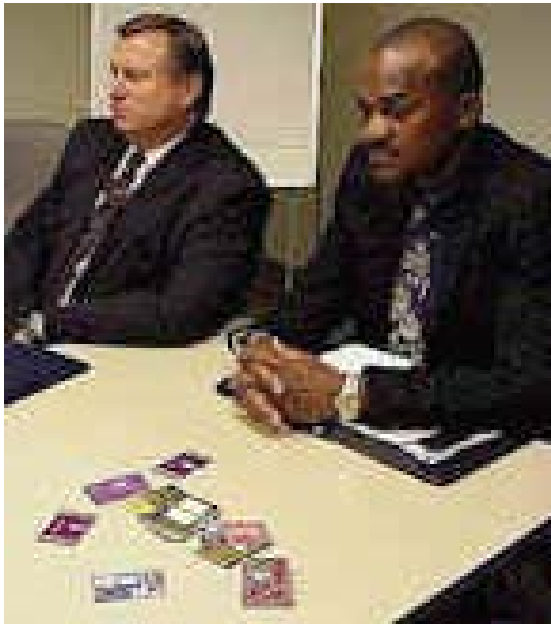
Caltrans, the MTA and LADOT are just concluding a study of ways to extend Transitway bus service through downtown to connect with the El Monte Busway on the San Bernardino Freeway. The alternatives include providing exclusive bus lanes or signal synchronization on certain arterial streets to facilitate the movement of buses through the city.

The project study report and recommendations will be presented to the MTA Board in early 2000 and, if approved, the three agencies will move toward implementing the connection between the two freeways, says Renee Berlin, director, MTA Regional Transportation Planning and Development.

Harbor Transitway stations are located at 37th Street, Slauson and Manchester, at the junction of I-110/105, and at Rosecrans, Artesia, Carson, Pacific Coast Highway and San Pedro.

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LAPD Detectives Target Phony Pass, Transfer Sellers



(November 16) Detectives in the LAPD's Transit Group in recent months have targeted sellers of counterfeit transit passes and transfers, making a number of arrests and confiscating dozens of fake passes.

Street vendors sell monthly passes for \$15 to \$20 each, less than half the \$42 price for a genuine pass, says Detective Tim Gipson.

David Bostwick, MTA Customer Service Sales manager, and LAPD Detective Tim Gipson described efforts to stop the sales and use of fake passes and transfers.

Bogus transfers, as well as some stolen transfer tickets, also are being peddled on the streets of downtown Los Angeles.

"The MTA distributes 650,000-plus transfers each day," says Agapito Diaz, MTA director of Revenue, "but the agency is selling only about 176,000 a day - 27 percent. Some get returned by the bus operators, but it's hard to account for them."

Diaz praised efforts by Transit Operations to control distribution and account for the use of transfers each day at the 11 bus operating divisions. He noted that at one time some 900,000 transfers were being issued daily.

"It's such a labor-intensive, hands-on system, there are opportunities for abuse," he says.

Police have mounted an on-going effort to track down and stamp out phony passes and transfers and to arrest those responsible for the illegal traffic.

Much of the activity is centered in the downtown area. Since 50 percent of all Metro Bus lines are routed through the area and 9 percent of all transit-related crimes take place there, police are focusing enforcement in the central business district.

"Most people know the risks," says LAPD Capt. Sandy Wasson. "We arrest people with counterfeit or stolen passes or transfers on the Metro Red Line and the buses every single day."

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\$8 Million Lost Annually to Fraud?

Counterfeit Transit Passes, Revenue Losses Makes Shift to New Fare System More Urgent



(November 16) A rising tide of counterfeit transit passes and transfers is giving urgency to the MTA's effort to develop a universal fare system (UFS) and install electronic transfer machines (ETM) aboard Metro Buses.

The urgency of shifting from the use of printed passes and pre-printed transfer tickets comes

into sharp focus when the MTA considers the magnitude of fare evasion and its impact on revenues.

Agapito Diaz, MTA director of Revenue, estimates the agency is losing \$4 million to \$8 million annually to counterfeiting fraud and other methods of fare evasion. That's about 2 to 3 percent of the projected \$247.5 million in farebox revenue this fiscal year.

"That's money we could be using to run this organization," he says, noting that major U.S. transit agencies report annual revenue losses of between 2 percent and 8 percent to fare evasion.

On Wednesday, the Board's Operations Committee will hear reports on both the universal fare system and the electronic transfer machines. The MTA has the Board's approval to buy new fare collection equipment for use on Metro Buses and Metro Rail, including 2,500 bus fareboxes. A procurement also is in process to buy 2,400 ETMs for installation on the bus fleet.

The purchase, production and installation of UFS units - fareboxes capable of accepting magnetic-stripe cards as well as cash and tokens - could take more than two years, according to Diaz. ETMs, devices with an electronic keypad that would eliminate the need for pre-printed transfer tickets, could be installed on buses within six months or so, he says.

The new systems would reduce fare evasion significantly, Diaz says, while providing data - such as usage of different types of fare media and passenger loading - that would be useful to the MTA in better meeting customers' needs through service improvements.

More on Counterfeit! [LAPD Detectives](#) Target Phony Pass, Transfer Sellers

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He Rode in on a Bike, but He Rode Out in a Paddy Wagon

(November 17) The new bike racks and lockers the MTA will install at Metro Rail stations should help ensure against the type of incident reported recently by the LAPD Transit Group, which had been alerted to a series of bike thefts at the stations.

During an investigation of bike thefts on the Metro Red Line, LAPD Sgt. Steve Vinson placed his \$450 bike in an unlocked bike rack at the Hollywood/Western station. Officers watched from a nearby surveillance post to see what would happen next.

As Capt. Sandy Wasson relates it: "It didn't take long before a man came riding up on a bike. He compared the two bikes and decided the sergeant's bike was much nicer. He took it from the rack and rode off. That's when he got a big surprise."

Click here to return to ["More Bike Racks"](#) article.

The suspect was apprehended two blocks from the station. Arrested with a set of burglary tools in his backpack, he allegedly admitted to a string of bike thefts. Wasson said the man was selling the bikes to support a drug habit. Bike thefts at rail stations have virtually stopped since the arrest, police said.

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MTA Responding to Demand for More Bicycle Spaces at Metro Rail Stations



Bike rack at the Marine Avenue station on the Metro Green Line. Bike locker can be seen in the background.

(November 17) In response to the rising demand for secure bicycle spaces at Metro Rail stations, the MTA will increase by 34 percent the number of bike rack and locker spaces available to commuters who use Metro Rail lines.

Currently, there are 288 bike rack spaces and 152 bike locker spaces -- a

total of 440 spaces at various Metro Rail stations. By Feb. 1, says Jesse Simon, the transportation planning manager who heads the MTA's Cycle Express program, the agency will have added 110 bike rack spaces and 38 more locker spaces for a total of 588.

The MTA's effort to provide more bike racks and lockers at Metro Rail stations parallels the move to equip the entire Metro Bus fleet with fold-up bicycle racks. The agency is recommending Board approval for the purchase of 550 bus-mounted racks. Racks already have been installed on 1,400 of the 2,200 Metro Buses. ([Click here for story on bus bike racks.](#))

Some Metro Rail stations have had waiting lists for bike space, "but, now we're adjusting to the demand," Simon says. Among stations with the highest demand are Lakewood (22 spaces) and Norwalk (24 spaces) on the Metro Green Line. Lakewood will get 24 more spaces and Norwalk will get 18.

All the new bike racks will have a high-security rating with heavy bars and a lock cage that is bolt-cutter proof. Cyclists will not need to use their own cables or chains to secure their bicycles. Each new locker will hold two bikes in separate locked spaces. (Click here to read more about security: [He Rode In...](#))

Cyclists may use the bike racks on a first-come basis. Rental for locker space is \$10 for three months, \$15 for six months or \$25 a year. To rent a locker space, bikers should contact the MTA's 1-800-COMMUTE information line.

Here's a look at Metro Rail bike racks and locker spaces:

Metro Blue Line		Metro Green Line		Metro Red Line	
BIKE RACKS	62	BIKE RACKS	98	BIKE RACKS	128
adding	32	adding	72	adding	6
LOCKERS	44	LOCKERS	60	LOCKERS	48
adding	16	adding	4	adding	18
TOTAL	154	TOTAL	234	TOTAL	200

GRAND TOTAL: 588 BIKE SPACES

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Yaroslavsky Motion Seeks Study of Extending Rail Service to Staples Center, Other Venues

(November 17) The issue of extending Metro Rail hours to serve the Staples Center and other entertainment venues will come before the Board's Planning and Programming Committee on Thursday.

LA County Supervisor and MTA Director Zev Yaroslavsky has filed a motion that would direct agency staff to report back to the Board in 30 days with a financing and operational plan to provide the service.

The motion also would direct the staff to provide the Board within 60 days a cost and operational plan for extending rail hours and service when the Metro Red Line opens to North Hollywood in mid-2000.

The motion notes that the staff should work with the Staples Center, Music Center, Universal Studios, the Universal Amphitheater, Hollywood Bowl, Trizec-Hahn, which is building an entertainment complex at the Hollywood/Highland station, and other interested parties.

Based on earlier discussions concerning Staples Center, the staff already has begun a study of how best to provide late service to bus and rail patrons attending late-ending events.

Currently, the Metro Blue Line serves Pico station near the Staples Center every 20 minutes throughout the day. The last northbound Metro Blue Line train leaves Pico station at 10:54 p.m., while the last southbound train departs at 11:27 p.m. The northbound train reaches 7th and Metro Center in time to connect with the last east- and westbound trains.

For several weeks following the opening of Staples Center, the MTA provided standby buses for events that ended late. Recently, most sporting events at Staples Center have ended in time for patrons to catch a Metro Blue Line train, MTA schedulers said.

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Metrolink Train Collides with Freight in Fullerton, at Least 18 Injured

- **Metro Buses were dispatched beginning at 2:50 p.m. from Union Station to provide service to Metrolink Orange County line patrons.**

(November 18) A five-car Metrolink train, No. 602, en route to Oceanside from Los Angeles with about 60 passengers onboard collided with cars of a Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight train in Fullerton about 8:17 a.m., today. News reports said 18 people had been injured and that the most serious injury was a broken leg.

Four of the freight cars were reported to be overturned and two others derailed. Firefighters put out a fire caused by a fuel spill from the Metrolink engine and another fire involving contents of the freight train. The cause of the accident, which occurred in an area where four tracks merge into two, is under investigation.

The accident disrupted service for the 5,200 commuters who usually ride Metrolink's Orange County line. The MTA provided emergency bus service from Union Station to Orange via Commerce, Norwalk, Fullerton, and Anaheim. Metrolink scheduled service to Orange County via its San Bernardino line, but officials said commuters could expect to add an hour and 45 minutes to their commute.

A dozen or more ambulances were dispatched to the scene where paramedics treated injured passengers. The injured were transported to local hospitals. The City of Fullerton also dispatched fire trucks and a hazardous materials team to the area.

Metro Buses were dispatched beginning at 2:50 p.m. from Union Station to provide service to Metrolink Orange County line patrons. That service was to continue until at least 6:50 p.m., the normal departure time of the last Metrolink train from Union Station, according to the Bus Operations Control Center.

Although the Orange County line is not currently in operation, all other Metrolink lines are operating. Information on schedules was to be posted Metrolink's web site at www.metrolinktrains.com.

The MTA operated the Metrolink bus bridge from its Mobile Emergency Control Center, which it positioned on Patsaouras Plaza. Senior TOS John Dover and Dispatchers Tom Medlock and Carlos Morales coordinated the buses and operators assigned to the bus bridge.

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Results from First Quarter FY 2000 Show MTA Management Improving

By Bill Heard, Editor

(November 18) The MTA is managing itself "the way good private enterprise organizations do," Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky said Wednesday, during a review of the agency's first quarter FY 2000 results.

In an overview of the July, August and September period, Lipsky said better budget management, quarterly reviews and the requirement for departmental Management Action Plans (MAPs) were important elements in improved management.

Lipsky cited such successes as "a very effective Call for Projects," the development of the Intranet and the "model Internet web site" that includes the new MTA Trip Planner. Action items include completion of capital projects and further improvements to the procurement process.

"Our goal is to stay on budget this year," said Chief Financial Officer Dick Brumbaugh. "We want to hold expenditures to the level approved by the Board last May."

For the first time, the MTA ranked its bus operating divisions based on such factors as actual cost per hour vs. budget costs, on-time pullouts, accident rate and miles between road calls.

First quarter transportation winners and managers were Division 8, Grant Myers; Division 15, Karl Downs; Division 9, Mace Bethel; and Division 5, Dana Coffey. Division maintenance winners and managers were Division 6, Ronald Whitney; Division 7, Mike Bottone; and Division 9, John McBryan.

Tom Conner, Transit Operations executive officer, said the MTA on-time bus pullouts improved during the first quarter to 99.1 percent with 1.6 million revenue service hours. He said 142 new and repowered buses had been placed in service and that training was completed for 213 new operators, 70 operator mentors and 172 mechanics.

In rail operations, Conner said the agency maintained 99.2 percent on-time pullouts in light rail and 99.5 percent in heavy rail.

"They've been able to perform to a higher standard and still meet rollouts," Conner noted. "In the next quarter, we're going to see pullout performance numbers that are the highest and best we've ever achieved at the MTA."

With Jan. 1, 2000, just 43 days away, Administration Executive Officer Frank Cardenas said the Y2K project is "ahead of or on schedule for critical systems." He said the Y2K task force had completed "monumental efforts" to make the Material Management System (MMS) and all five modules of the Vehicle Management System (VMS) Y2K compliant.

"The July, August, September time period was absolutely critical to the success of our Y2K project," Cardenas said.

Another massive project completed on time was the audit of Proposition A and Proposition sales tax revenues required by last year's

voter initiative on subway construction.

"It was a major milestone in establishing the MTA's accountability to the public," said Bill Bernsdorf, managing director, Management Audit Services.

Auditors had to account for some \$5.7 billion in tax revenues over a seven-year period. The effort involved 37 staff members, 4,650 staff hours, 500 boxes of old records and documentation for 845 random financial transactions. Bernsdorf credited Controller Josie Nicasio and her staff, Judith Butler and the Records Management staff, Maritza Torres, Andrew Lee, Harvey Saulter, John McCamy, Dave Champion, Ed Carlos and Pete Cruz.

Other highlights of the quarterly review included:

Administration

- A 21 percent increase in revenues from leases of MTA property.
- The rollout of the "It's getting better on the bus" advertising campaign.

Human Resources

- Completed of sexual harassment training for 736 employees.
- Processed of 6,762 job applications and hiring of 394 new employees, including 236 BDOF bus operators and 25 part-time operators.

Finance

- Processed of 24,917 invoices valued at \$291.6 million.
- Processed 1,284 check requests valued at \$30.6 million.

Risk Management

- Reduced the number of liability claims and associated reserves to a 15-year low, despite an increase in vehicle accidents.

Office of System Safety and Security

- Recorded "zero lost-time accidents" on MTA construction projects for the past five months.
- Completed the third cycle of "cops and ops" meetings at the operating divisions.

Procurement

- Maintained a 98.2 percent annual service rate.
- Reduced the combined backlog of construction contracts by 30 percent.

Construction

- Proceeded with work on the Kaiser entrance at the Metro Red Line Vermont/Sunset station.
- Installed and tested communication cable in new subway tunnels.
- Awarded the LA River Bridge widening contract.

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Metrolink Accident Provides Real-Life Test for MTA's Mobile Communications Center



By Bill Heard, Editor
(November 19) The Metrolink train accident in Fullerton, Thursday, provided a real-life test for the MTA's Mobile Emergency Communications Center – a converted bus equipped to coordinate transit service should the Bus Operation Control Center at Headquarters be disabled.

The MTA's Mobile Emergency Communications Center is a bus converted for use if the Bus Operations Control Center is disabled.

Over the course of four hours, the MTA dispatched 15 trips from Union Station to transport 421 stranded rail commuters to stations along Metrolink's Orange County line. The agency used its 10 "Consent Decree buses" and two others from Division 6 for the bus bridge.



"This is the first time we've ever used the MECC for an actual operation," said Tom Jasmin, BOCC manager and incident commander. "It was a godsend. It showed us we can communicate with our buses - even operating outside our service area - without going through the main control center."

TOS Tom Medlock and TOS Carlos Morales directed the Orange County bus bridge from the MECC.

The MTA's response to the Metrolink accident came as Jasmin's group was

attempting to ready the MECC for possible emergency service Dec. 31. "Until yesterday, I wouldn't commit to its being functional," he said. "But this response shows that our people have come together and the MECC will work if needed on New Year's Eve."

John Dover, the acting senior transit operations supervisor who was in charge of the MECC during the bus bridge echoed Jasmin's confidence and noted, "This was the first time ever for a bus bridge on the Orange County line."

Click here to read one [commuter's appreciation](#) letter.

Working in the MECC, TOS Tom Medlock and TOS Carlos Morales communicated with the 10 Consent Decree buses, giving instructions and directions via hand-held radios. When it was necessary to

communicate with the two Division 6 buses, whose operators weren't provided hand-held units, they contacted TOS Francisco Chavez in the BOCC.

TOS Annie Jones at Terminal 31, adjacent to the Regional Rebuild Center, dispatched buses to the Plaza, where they were met by TOS John Escher and TOS Russ Modell. Escher and Modell made sure two buses were always available on the Plaza for Metrolink passengers and provided directions to the operators.

During the emergency response, the MECC team realized that the MTA doesn't have a bus route worked out for Metrolink's Oceanside line. "We'll develop one now," says Dover, "in case we ever have to make that run."

Operators assigned to the Metrolink bus bridge were J.L. Gonzalez and A.T. Craig, Division 1; M. Gonzales and R.R. De La Fuente, Division 2; I.E. Pollack, W.T. Lim and I. Gutierrez, Division 5; K. Lakey, Division 6; D.L. Gresham and K.N. Smith, Division 7; R.M. Fresnedo and D.N. Hickson, Division 10.

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MTA Must Look at Wide Range of Expenses to Cut Cost of Bus Operations, Report Says

(November 19) If the MTA is to cut the cost of bus operations, a consultant told the Board's Operations committee, Thursday, it must take a hard look at a wide range of expenses that include staffing, wages, cost of materials and supplies, and workers compensation.

Last June, the Board directed the MTA to develop aggressive strategies and an implementation plan to reduce projected FY 2000 revenue service costs of \$105.54 to at least \$102 this fiscal year and to \$90 per revenue service hour by the end of FY 2001.

The first quarter FY 2000 review indicates that the MTA can achieve savings in this year's budget that would lower the cost per revenue service hour to \$103.77. But the report says the MTA still must achieve savings of at least \$11.5 million to reach the \$102 per service hour target for this fiscal year.

In a report to the Operations committee, consultant Christina Altmayer said national transit data from FY 1998 showed the MTA's revenue service hour costs to be about seven percent higher than similar transit agencies in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Houston and elsewhere.

The "transportation function," she said, is about 58 percent of revenue service hour costs at the MTA. Vehicle maintenance comprises about 23 percent. Achieving cost reductions in those areas would involve operators' and mechanics' salaries and wages, fringe benefits, materials and supplies.

Altmayer said the MTA has made progress in cutting administrative staffing and services through annual cost reductions averaging about nine percent. She recommended that the agency continue to look at administrative costs, as well as at the cost of workers compensation, as a source of further savings.

The report discussed the differences in operating costs for the MTA, which also has regional planning and construction responsibilities, and small municipal agencies which only operate small transit fleets.

The report notes, for example, that the MTA is a technology leader, funds expanded police services and plays a prominent role in air quality improvement through its alternative fuel policy – all of which add administrative and operational costs that most small transit agencies don't experience.

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Items to Watch

Board Committees Take Action on Free New Year's Eve Rides, Other Items

(November 22) MTA Board committees meeting last week took action on several motions - including one to offer free New Year's Eve rides on Metro Buses and Metro Rail. These and other items will come before the full Board at its next meeting, Dec. 2.

Board items to watch in December include:

Free Rides. The Executive Management committee approved a motion by Mayor Richard Riordan to offer free rides New Year's Eve on Metro Buses and Metro Rail. The free service would begin at 11 a.m., Friday, Dec. 31, and continue until 5 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 1.

Extend Rail Service. The Planning and Programming Committee approved and sent forward for full Board action a motion by Director Zev Yaroslavsky. The motion directs the MTA to provide in 30 days a financing and operational plan to immediately extend rail hours to serve the Staples Center and Music Center.

The motion also directs the staff to provide within 60 days a cost and operational plan to extend rail service when the Metro Red Line opens to North Hollywood in mid-2000.

Radio System. The Operations Committee approved a motion authorizing the CEO to contract for consulting and technical support of the Advanced Transportation Management System (ATMS). The ATMS will replace the existing Transit Radio system (TRS), which is obsolete and does not meet the MTA's operational needs.

ATMS is expected to improve communications between Metro Buses and the Bus Operations Control Center, provide real time information on bus location, improve safety, quality and fleet management. It also will be capable of integrating with the Universal Fare and be compatible with existing operational systems.

Bicycle Racks. The Operations Committee also approved a motion to purchase 550 fold-up bicycle racks to be mounted on Metro Buses. The single-source, \$291,407 contract will require a two-thirds vote of the full Board.

Bike racks already are mounted on 1,400 of the MTA's 2,200 buses. If approved, the additional 550 racks will be installed beginning in January – a possible seven-month project. The agency is aiming at equipping 100 percent of the fleet with bike racks. All new buses delivered from the factory will come equipped with bike racks.

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Finance Debuts on MTA's Internet Site with Budget and Investor Information

(November 22) Investors interested in MTA bonds, budgets and other financial information now can access it on the Finance Department's new Internet web page. The Finance web page can be found at www.mta.net.

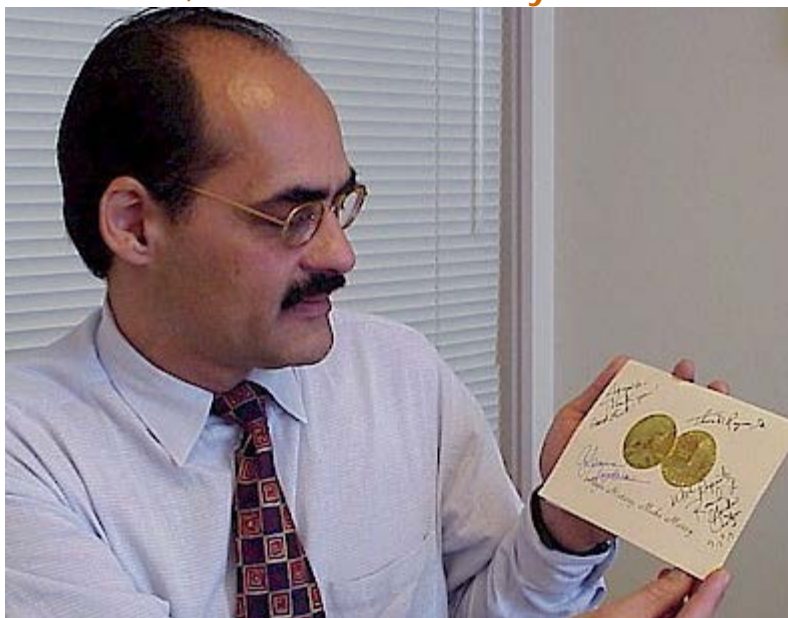
The web page includes information about the MTA's debt and investment policies and programs, bond issues and annual reports. Users can access budgets for FY 1999 and FY 2000. Information for the new web page is provided by Accounting, Management and Budget, Revenue and Treasury.

Web site users can link to a form and request a budget book or receive annual financial reports and official statements for the MTA's various bond issues.

The Finance Department home page lists staff members and provides links to such organizations as the Federal Transit Authority, California Transportation Commission, City and County of Los Angeles and the California Municipal Treasurer's Association.

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MTA Revenue Director Diaz Helps Strike New U.S. \$1 Coin in Ceremony at Mint



Revenue Director Agapito Diaz with his invitation to attend a ceremony at the U.S. Mint introducing the new U.S. dollar coin.

(November 22) The U.S. Mint will introduce a gold-colored \$1 coin into general circulation next March. One of those chosen to "strike" the first of the new coins in a ceremony at the Philadelphia mint, Nov. 18, was the MTA's director of Revenue, Agapito Diaz.



Diaz's invitation includes signatures of Glenna Goodacre, whose likeness of Sacagawea is on one side of the new coin, and Tom Rogers, whose sculpture of an eagle is on the reverse.

Diaz, who serves as vice-

chairman of APTA's fare collection committee, has worked with the Mint and the U.S. Treasury Department on the design of the new coin and also on the designs for the new \$5 and \$10 bills, expected to be issued in late 2000.

The production of the dollar coin was marked by an elaborate ceremony attended by U.S. Treasurer Mary Ellen Withrow and Philip N. Diehl, director of the Mint. Withrow introduced the new coin, whose obverse side features a likeness of Sacagawea, the 15-year-old Shoshone interpreter who, with her husband and child, accompanied the Lewis and Clark expedition in the early 1800s.

When his turn came during the event, Diaz pressed a button on a stamping machine to strike a new coin. Using tweezers, a technician handed it to him so he would be the first to touch it. After a quick

photo, the coin was placed in an envelope. It will be sent to Diaz in January, when the coins become legal tender.

As a result of input from the transit industry and others, the new \$1 coin will be accepted by coin-operated machines in use today. The coins, which contain no gold, are made from an alloy of manganese, brass and copper and have an electronic signature that will be recognized by MTA fareboxes and ticket vending machines.

"We had budgeted hundreds of thousands of dollars to retrofit MTA equipment to accept the new dollar coin," says Diaz. "Now, that's an investment we don't have to make."

To ensure the success of the coin, the Mint will launch a \$40 million advertising program that will include a promotion involving 10 million boxes of Cheerios. A Sacagawea coin will be placed in every 2,000th box and a certificate for 100 of the coins will be placed in every 4,400th box.

Mint officials estimate that demand for Sacagawea coins will total \$100 million in the first year. The Mint produced \$847.5 million Susan B. Anthony dollars in 1979 and 1980, when production was halted, but the coin was not well received by the public.

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Appeals Court Gives MTA Breathing Space on Judge's Order to Add Buses in January

(November 23) The U.S. Court of Appeals has issued a temporary stay of a District Court judge's order that would have required the MTA to place an additional 88 buses into service by Jan. 3, 2000.

In September, U.S. District Judge Terry Hatter ordered the MTA to buy 297 new CNG buses and to place 248 buses in temporary service by Oct. 23. Hatter later modified the order, setting a date of Jan. 3 for the temporary buses.

The Board voted at its September meeting to purchase the 297 buses. Since the MTA already had planned to place 160 buses in service by December, that meant the agency would have to put 88 more buses on the street by Jan. 3. Meanwhile, the MTA appealed Judge Hatter's order, arguing that it already was in substantial compliance with passenger load standards and that it did not have the funds to operate extra buses.

In a memo to Board members, Monday, CEO Julian Burke said the MTA will continue with its plans to buy the 297 buses.

"We will not, however, implement service of an additional 88 buses in January," he said, unless the Appeals Court denies the MTA's appeal. "You will recall we have not identified the operating funds...."

By Appeals Court order, the MTA must file a legal brief stating its arguments by Dec. 13. A reply from the plaintiffs, the Bus Riders Union, is due by Jan. 10, 2000, with an answer due from the MTA 14 days later. No date has been set for oral arguments, which will be made before a three-judge Appeals Court panel.

"By no means is the MTA backing off our commitment to overhaul the Metro Bus fleet and expand service," an MTA spokesman told the media.

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Crime on Metro Bus, Metro Rail Lines Down Dramatically, Sheriff's Dept. Says

(November 24) Violent crime was down 47.4 percent and misdemeanor offenses declined 41.4 percent during the first nine months of 1999 on Metro Bus and Metro Rail lines patrolled by the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau.

"As impressive as these percentages are," says Sheriff's Capt. Marc Klugman, "they don't tell the whole story. Crime on the MTA's transit systems was very low to begin with." The statistics compared the first nine months of 1999 against the same period in 1998.

The sharp drop in crimes reported by the Transit Services Bureau can be highlighted against a recent FBI survey that showed a 10 percent decline in serious crimes nationwide and a 9 percent decrease in Los Angeles, where incidents of robbery, assault and burglary were down from previous years.

With millions of transit riders during in the first nine months of 1999, the Transit Services Bureau reported fewer than half the number of assaults - 60 - than the 128 that were reported during the same period in 1998.

The Sheriff's Department reported that during the first nine months of 1999, field activity grew to 91,000 calls and observations from the 80,000 reported during the same period of 1998. Field activity encompasses all varieties of law enforcement activity deputies are involved in.

In the January to September period, Bureau statistics show that misdemeanors dropped from 656 in 1998 to 350 in 1999. There were five burglaries and 51 stolen cars this year, up from 45 in the same 1998 period. There were 47 robberies, compared with 57 last year. Arrests jumped from 2,165 during that period in 1998 to 3,052 in 1999.

"As percentages of the millions of passengers served by the MTA, the crime statistics are exceptionally low," Klugman says. "The system is very safe."

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Gotcha!

LAPD Tags Eight Graffiti Vandals in One Day

(November 24) Thursday, Nov. 18, was a bad day for taggers, but a good day for the LAPD's Transit Group. They collared eight graffiti vandals in one day.

At noon, LAPD Officers Ramon Martinez, Todd Waymire, Evan Guevarra and Detective Larry Barr arrested two juveniles who allegedly were identified as taggers from video taken by a surveillance camera aboard a Metro Bus, Nov. 3.

Both boys admitted to the vandalism, police said. They were booked and released to their parents.

Around 3 p.m. the same day, Officers Kevin Huff, Dwight Nolan, Guadalupe Alaniz and Anthony Acosta were conducting bus boardings on Line 60, when they saw six kids allegedly tagging and etching graffiti on the interior of a bus.

The six were immediately arrested for vandalism, booked and later released to their parents.

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Metro Rail crews worked through the night following Saturday's tragic accident to restore service on the Metro Blue Line. Photos: Bob Ogus

6 Killed in Line's Worst Accident

Metro Rail Crews' All-Out Effort Restores Metro Blue Line Service for Monday Rush

By Bill Heard, Editor

(November 29) Service on the Metro Blue Line was virtually back to normal for Monday's rush hour, following an all-out effort by Metro Rail maintenance personnel to recover from an accident late Saturday that injured the operator and took the lives of a cab driver and five passengers.

Trains ran on both north- and southbound tracks, Monday, but were observing a 10 mph speed restriction through the accident site. The slowdown was ordered to avoid stress on the overhead wires and rail ties until both can be fully repaired.



The accident happened at 11 p.m., Saturday, when a train, with no passengers aboard, was southbound through Compton at 55 mph en route to the Metro Blue Line yard.

Metro Rail crews and law enforcement officers gathered at the accident scene.

Witnesses said the cab, with a driver and five passengers, was driving southbound on Willowbrook Avenue. The cab suddenly turned left at Greenleaf Avenue and, bypassing the lowered crossing gate, attempted to cross the tracks ahead of the train.

The force of the collision derailed the train and split the cab in half. All

six passengers were pronounced dead at the scene. The Metro Blue Line operator, Donnette Burks, suffered minor injuries and was transported to Harbor General Hospital. She was released Sunday and is recuperating at home. Burks joined the MTA in 1991 as a Metro Bus operator and has been a train operator since March, 1999.

"The operator did everything she could to stop the train," said Paul Lennon, managing director, MTA Safety and Security. Noting that the crossing gate at the intersection was closed and that the bells and lights were working, he said, "With the efforts the MTA has put into education, law enforcement, engineering and legislation, it still requires the person crossing the tracks to obey the law."

It was the worst accident in the Metro Blue Line's nine-year history. There have been 10 fatalities involving automobiles and pedestrians this year and a total of 53 since the light-rail line opened in 1990.



In less than an hour following the accident, Metro Rail crews were at the scene and beginning the cleanup and repair operation.

Rail Maintenance Specialists Alex Apodaca and Amir Tahvildaran handle downed power lines atop the damaged train.

The train was partially derailed and its pantograph damaged, a power pole was sheered off at its base, traction power lines were sagging and 52 concrete railroad ties were damaged. The rails were not damaged.

"It was like a war zone with wreckage strewn everywhere," said Jack Eich, Rail Equipment Maintenance supervisor. "In 27 years on the job, this accident was the worst I've ever seen."



Despite the devastation, a vehicle maintenance crew under Rail Equipment Maintenance Manager Bob Ogus set to work with special hydraulic jack equipment to lift the train back onto the tracks.

The damaged train waits to be re-railed and towed back to the Metro Blue Line yard. Broken catenary power wire dangles in the foreground.

The car's wheel assembly and undercarriage were severely damaged, but the crew was able to tow it back to the yard.

Teams from MTA Quality Assurance and Rail Equipment Engineering later inspected the vehicle to determine the extent of the damage and what repairs will be required.

Beginning about noon, Sunday, a Wayside Systems crew removed the broken power pole and replaced a short section of overhead wire. The sagging wires were re-tensioned. Eight broken concrete ties were replaced Sunday night and other damaged ties will be replaced as the week continues.

"Considering the amount of damage," said Transit Operations chief Tom Conner after a visit to the accident scene, "it is a real tribute to the team's dedication and skill that they were able to restore partial service by Sunday afternoon and both track by early Monday morning."

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5,000 Board Metro Red Line for Hollywood Christmas Parade

November 29--**Santa Claus didn't ride the Metro Red Line to Sunday night's Hollywood Christmas Parade, but a lot of other folks did – perhaps as many as 5,000.**

According to the MTA Revenue Department, receipts for tokens and cash on the Metro Red Line, Sunday, were up 29 percent over the previous Sunday to a total of \$10,235.

Festive parade-goers and "children of all ages" crowded aboard the trains. They emerged at Hollywood and Vine, a major venue along the two-mile parade route. Metro Rail personnel and LAPD Transit Group officers were on hand to control the crowds and provide assistance.

The parade boosted a Sunday subway ridership that reached an average of 25,400 in October, an increase of more than 10,000 since October, 1998. The Vermont/Hollywood line opened June 12, 1999.

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