

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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