

## Metro Report Archives

### December

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**MTA Chief of Staff [Balian to Join Pasadena](#) Metro Blue Line Staff** (Dec. 7) Chief of Staff Habib Balian will leave the MTA, Thursday, Dec. 9, to join the recently formed Pasadena Metro Blue Line Authority as Chief Administrative Officer.

**MTA to Play Small, but Important Role in Renovation of [El Pueblo Historic Monument](#)** (Dec. 8) Working with the City of Los Angeles, the MTA will play a small, but important role during coming months in the effort to refurbish the historic heart of the city: the 44-acre El Pueblo de Los

Angeles Historic Monument.

**MTA Sets Minor Record by Releasing 8 [CNG Buses to Service in One Day](#)** (Dec. 9) With 61 Metro Buses added into peak hour service just last Sunday, the MTA set a record of sorts on Wednesday by releasing eight new CNGs in one day.

**Transportation [Leadership Academy Grads](#) Suggest Ways to Improve Employee Morale** (Dec. 10) Morale issues were top-of-mind, Friday, among the latest graduates of the 21-member Transportation Leadership Academy.

**MTA Celebrates LA's History, Dedication of [First Millennium Marker](#) on Angels Walk** (Dec. 13) LA's history is coming to life with the installation of millennium markers along Angels Walk, the self-guided walking tour of downtown's Bunker Hill/Historic Core District.

**MTA Files Brief with U.S. Appeals Court Seeking Overturn of [Consent Decree Order](#)** (Dec. 14) The MTA is asking the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to overturn a District Court order that would require the agency to purchase 297 new CNG buses and to put 248 temporary buses into service by Jan. 3, 2000.



**Hey, Santa! Look What MTA Employees did for the [Skid Row Kids](#) at Fred Jordan Mission** (Dec 14) It was a sight that would have impressed even Santa Claus: A mound of 105 bags stuffed with Christmas gifts contributed by MTA employees.

**[Times Expanded for Employees](#) to have Photos Taken for New MTA Badges** (Dec. 14) Haven't had a photo taken for your Year 2000 ID badge? Human Resources is expanding the times when you can face the camera at MTA Headquarters – and no appointments are necessary.

**MTA [Disaster Preparedness Manual](#) Will be Mailed to Employees' Homes** (Dec. 16) Be Prepared! That may be the Boy Scout motto, but the MTA's Office of System Safety and Security believes employees should be ready for any emergency at work and at home.

**Annual [Bus Decorating Contest](#) Brings No Snow But Plenty of Christmas Spirit To MTA** (Dec. 17) The spirit of Christmas roared into MTA headquarters today as a procession of Metro Buses colorfully adorned by MTA operating divisions and students arrived at the Patsaouras Transit Plaza to compete in the annual Christmas bus decorating contest.

**Transit Bus Division Task Force Cites Eight '[Bandit Van](#)' Operators** (Dec. 17) An LAPD Transit Bus Division task force conducted a crackdown on "bandit vans" in an area west of downtown Los Angeles on Thursday and issued citations to eight drivers. It was the second such operation this year by undercover and uniform officers designed to target the illegal trawling for passengers at Metro Bus stops.

**MTA [Reviving Division Advisory Committees](#); Training Employees to Work with Communities** (Dec. 20) With graffiti cleanup on Metro Buses costing \$10 million to \$13 million annually - enough to buy 50 to

60 CNG buses - the MTA is reviving an important element of its Zero Tolerance program: the Division Advisory Committee (DAC).

**No Problems Expected... Extra Staff on Duty Starting Tuesday for Y2K; 'Round-the-Clock Vigil for Critical Systems** (Dec. 27) As many as 200 extra staff members will be on duty New Year's Eve for possible emergency service at MTA Headquarters and the operating divisions as the calendar turns over to the 21st Century.

**401(k) Plan to Offer More Savings; Social Security, SDI Base Going Up** (Dec. 23) Here's an opportunity for employees who are enrolled in the MTA's 401(k) Thrift Plan to salt away a few more bucks toward retirement.

**TV Story Leads to Conviction of Street Seller of Phony Transfers** (Dec. 28) A local TV news investigation proved the undoing recently of a woman convicted of a felony for selling counterfeit MTA transfers. Laura Santos was sentenced to 90 days in County Jail, fined \$200 and given three year's probation.

**LAPD's Pickpocket Detail Nabs Alleged International Criminal** (Dec. 28) An alleged international pickpocket with prior arrests in New York and Chicago was nabbed recently by the LAPD's Transit Bus Division Pickpocket Detail following a three-hour surveillance.

**8 More Bandit Van Operators Unmasked by LAPD Task Force** (Dec. 28) Eight more "bandit van" operators were unmasked and cited earlier this month in the second monthly effort by the LAPD's Transit Bus Division to rid the streets of these illegal vehicles.

**Number 1259 Still Hanging in There As the MTA's Last Methanol Bus** (Dec. 30) She may be the MTA's last methanol bus, but ol' Number 1259 still hits the road from Division 9 every day – the only holdout among 333 methanol buses that has not yet been converted to clean diesel.



**Start Planning for Retirement Now: Attend MTA's Retirement Planning Seminars** (Dec. 30) Whether you've just begun your career or you're close to retiring, it's never too early - or too late - to begin planning for retirement.

**Sheriff's Deputies Make 2,987 Arrests on Metro Bus, Rail Lines in Past 11 Months** (Dec. 30) Statistics compiled by the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau show that, through the end of November, deputies had made a total of 2,987 arrests on the Metro Blue Line, Metro Green Line and on the Metro Bus lines they patrol.

**Man who Killed Metro Bus Patron Convicted of First-Degree Murder** (Dec. 30) A man who shot and killed a passenger on a Metro Bus, Feb. 7, was convicted in Superior Court, Wednesday, of first-degree murder.

**"It's Getting Better on the Bus"** (Dec. 29) It keeps getting better on the bus -- and the MTA's advertising campaign to drive that point home is entering a new, high-visibility phase.

## **MTA Targets Overcrowding, Adds 61 Buses Into Peak Service**

(December 1) The MTA will add 61 buses into peak service throughout Los Angeles County on Sunday, December 5, the second of two major infusions of service into the Metro Bus System this year. The added buses are aimed at reducing the number of standees on Metro Buses to no more than 11, the threshold the MTA agreed to meet by June 30, 2000, under a federal court consent decree to reduce overcrowding on Metro Bus lines.

While the new schedules go into effect Sunday, most of the service changes will take place on Monday, December 6.

Sunday's service addition brings the total number of buses added into peak service this year to 166. In June, the MTA added 66 buses on the Metro Bus System's 20 busiest lines. Earlier in the year, the MTA phased 31 buses into peak service, and in September, seven buses were added into peak service on contracted lines.

The MTA and a coalition of community organizations, including the Bus Riders Union, entered into the Consent Decree in October 1996. The agreement called for a scheduled reduction in the number of standees on Metro Buses through the addition of service.

The MTA agreed to reduce the number of standees to no more than 15 by December 31, 1997, 11 by June 30, 2000, and nine by June 30, 2002.

Sunday's service addition allows the MTA sufficient time to make adjustments in service, if needed, to reach the June 2000 milestone.

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# December Board Actions

## **New Year's Revelers to get Free Rides; Board Wants Accident Follow-up Report**

(Dec. 2) New Year's Eve revelers can get a free ride on Metro Buses and Metro Rail, compliments of the MTA and a motion approved during the December Board meeting.

The Board also approved a motion by Supervisor Yvonne Burke directing the MTA staff to provide a report within 60 days as a follow-up to last week's Metro Blue Line accident in Compton. The report will cover the status of safety programs and other possible safety efforts, along with projected costs and needed legislation, and a review of other rail properties' experiences with at-grade crossings.

Among the items approved were:

**Free Rides.** The motion by Mayor Richard Riordan offers free rides on New Year's Eve aboard Metro Buses and Metro Rail trains. The free service would begin at 11 a.m., Friday, Dec. 31, and continue until 5 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 1.

All regular Metro Bus lines will provide some level of service to five city-sponsored Millennium sites at Baldwin Hills/Crenshaw Plaza, California Plaza at Grand Avenue, Olvera Street, San Pedro/Los Angeles Harbor and at the Van Nuys Airport.

On Christmas Eve, the MTA also will offer free rides from 9 p.m. until 5 a.m., but Metro Rail service will not be extended past its normal operating hours.

**Extend Rail Service.** The Board approved a motion by Director Zev Yaroslavsky directing 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 action 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 Board authorized 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 Board approved, unanimously, a motion to purchase 550 fold-up bicycle racks to be mounted on Metro Buses. The single-source, \$291,407 contract required 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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## **After a Week's Hard Work by MTA Crews, Metro Blue Line Repairs Near Completion**

(Dec. 3) Metro Blue Line repair crews have been hard at work every night this week repairing damage to rail bed, tracks and overhead power systems caused by the tragic accident, Nov. 27, that killed a taxi driver and five passengers in Compton. They expect to complete the work Sunday night.

"This was the most extensive damage we've suffered in any incident since we started rail," said Ralph de la Cruz, deputy executive officer, Rail Operations. "The repair and restoration work was an incredible professional effort. It was awesome to watch."

### **Railroad Ties Replaced**

During the week, maintenance of way crews have replaced some 56 concrete railroad ties. On Monday, a new foundation was poured for a power pole downed during the accident. A new pole was erected Wednesday night; catenary power wires were strung on Thursday. The wires will be re-tensioned and tested this weekend.

Sunday night, crews will bring in a rail-mounted tamper machine to align the tracks and compact the ballast rocks supporting them.

"We set up a plan at the beginning of the week and we're right on target," said Phil Meyers, director, Facilities Engineering. "We've had to make these repairs and still keep service operating. That's the trick."

### **Staff responded in force**

"Our staff immediately responded to the accident in force," Tom Conner, Transit Operations executive officer, told the Board, Thursday. Noting that both tracks were in operation for the Monday rush hour following the Saturday night accident, he said, "The staff has done a good job in repairing the track and keeping the operation going."

Conner expressed appreciation to the Compton Police Department for maintaining traffic control and providing security for crews working at the accident site. He also noted the special effort crews made to work quietly in consideration of neighbors.

Meyers commended crew members involved in restoring the accident site and "support people who contribute to the overall effort, but may never actually be at the site."

Crew members listed were: Jeff Root, Johnnie Padilla, James Carlton, Charlie Briggs, Doug Jaeger, Art Hernandez, Rick Warren, Manuel Lopez, Ezequiel Cobain, A. Lee Wilson, Tanzeem Rizvi, Tobe Cowden, Rick Monzek, Art Ekbohm, Art Siemens, Ray Torres, Frank Hernandez, Hassan Alkachouri, Steve Norton, Dan Besabella and Gilbert Cabral.

**See previous story [Metro Rail Crews' All-Out Effort Restores Metro Blue Line Service for Monday Rush](#)**

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#### **Private Partnership Project**

### **CNG Fueling Facility Complete at Div.5; Second Unit Ahead of Schedule at Div. 7**

(Dec. 3) The new CNG fueling facility at Division 5 - constructed under a unique design/build partnership with a private company - has been accepted two months ahead of schedule and is now in daily use.

A second design/build CNG facility at Division 7, also under construction by Trillium USA, Inc., of Salt Lake City, should be completed by the end of January, a month ahead of schedule. Construction on both facilities began last May.

#### **Divisions to get new buses**

Fifteen Neoplan CNG buses, on loan from Division 10, have been assigned to Division 5 during the fueling facility's testing phase. In January, the division will receive the first of its new CNG buses - 20 New Flyer high-floor coaches. By the end of 2000, Division 5 is expected to have a 100 percent CNG fleet of 220 buses, about half of those to be low-floor coaches.

At least 215 new NABI CNG buses will be assigned to Division 7. Division 3, meanwhile, will receive 113 New Flyer CNG buses.

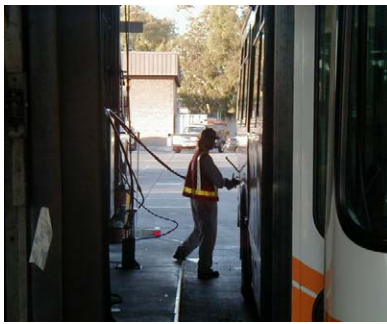
Under the design/build agreement, Trillium is contracted to provide CNG compressors and fuel-island dispensing units for each of the divisions. The MTA has a contract option for construction of CNG facilities at a third division to be selected soon.

#### **MTA to operate units**

Following testing and acceptance of the fueling facilities, they are operated by MTA service attendants and maintained by MTA Maintenance personnel under the supervision of Trillium personnel.

The total cost for the CNG fueling facility project at divisions 5 and 7 will be \$22 million over a 10-year period. The MTA pays Trillium a lease fee of \$91,000 per month for each of the





facilities, plus 12.8 cents per unit of gas pumped. At the end of the 10-year period, the MTA will own the facilities.

The fueling facilities at division 5 and 7 have a capacity of 2,000 cubic feet of natural gas per minute and can fuel an empty bus in four to five minutes, according to a Trillium executive. With insulation and special cooling equipment, the units make less noise than similar facilities - an important consideration for division neighbors.

To ensure that CNG buses can be fueled during a power outage, says Warren Fu, director, Facilities Engineering, the fueling units are powered by internal combustion engines instead of electrical motors.

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## No One Hurt in Plaza Blaze



Photos: Manny Chavez

### Fire, Smoke from DASH Bus Disrupt Plaza Traffic during Morning Rush Hour



in the past five years.

By Bill Heard, Editor  
(Dec. 6, 1999) A fierce blaze in the engine compartment of an LADOT DASH bus caused extensive damage to the vehicle and closed the bus plaza in front of MTA Headquarters for about 40 minutes during the morning rush hour.

This is the fifth CNG bus in the DASH fleet damaged by fire

A witness said the bus operator noticed smoke pouring from the engine compartment as he rounded the north end of Patsaouras Plaza. He jumped out of the bus with a fire extinguisher in hand, but was unable to put out the flames. A dozen LA City firefighters, a ladder truck and pump truck, rushed to the scene and rapidly doused the smoky fire.

#### No injuries in fire

There were no injuries and no one other than the ATE/Ryder contract operator was believed to be aboard the bus, said James Okazaki,



LADOT assistant general manager. A preliminary investigation by personnel from the MTA's Regional Rebuild Center indicated the fire may have involved electrical wiring.

**LA City firefighters worked quickly to beat down flames pouring from the engine compartment of an LADOT DASH bus.**

All incoming buses were held at the foot of the Vignes Street ramp and buses already on the Plaza were rerouted to the El Monte Busway while the area was closed to traffic. The fire was reported at 8:22 a.m. and the Plaza was reopened to traffic by 9:02 a.m.

MTA Transit Operations Supervisor Fausto Brito and Armen Euredjian, acting assistant manager, Vehicle Operations, assisted passengers, who were escorted past the fire scene by security officers, said Tom Jasmin, manager, Bus Operations Control Center.

### **Only soot damage**

The MTA is still evaluating the fire scene for damage, said Brian Soto, Director, General Services, but it appears that, while a light fixture, palm tree and pavers were soot-blackened, there was no permanent damage to adjacent fixtures.

Okazaki said this was the fifth DASH bus damaged in the past five years by fires that appear to have been caused by electrical problems. The vehicle was built by El Dorado National and is powered by a second-generation CNG engine. Some 30 of that model remain in the DASH fleet.

The bus was assigned to DASH Route D, which operates between Patsaouras Plaza and the Metro Blue Line station at Grand Avenue, via Temple and Olive streets.

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## MTA Project Reinvents Jobs Lost in Bakery Fire



The MTA's James Rojas, Transportation Planning manager, poses with members of Homeboy Landscaping at an MTA site near the intersection of Soto and Cesar Chavez in Boyle Heights.

Photos: Gary Wosk

## MTA Hires Homeboys in Training Program for Eastside Properties Beautification Project

**By Jose Ubaldo**

(Dec. 6) The MTA, Proyecto Pastoral and North East Trees began a beautification project today for three MTA Eastside properties as part of a fencing and landscaping training program that will benefit youth-at-risk from the Eastside community.

The project, which will cost \$134,640, is part of the MTA's effort to maintain its Eastside properties while also providing jobs for members of Homeboy Industries, who lost their jobs in an Oct. 29 fire in the Homeboy Bakery.

### Homeboys to provide landscaping



Homeboys ready with their shovels to landscape an MTA property in Boyle Heights.

Fencing and landscaping will be provided by Homeboy Landscaping. North East Trees, a nonprofit organization known for their efforts to plant an urban forest, designed the fencing and landscaping.

"The partnership between Homeboy Landscaping, North East Trees and the MTA signals a renewed commitment to seek alternatives for at-risk youth who wish to redirect their lives," said Father Gregory J. Boyle, director of Proyecto Pastoral, a nonprofit organization that trains and employs at-risk youth from the Eastside community. "Together we will be able to offer hope to young people for whom hope, sometimes, is foreign."

MTA Media Relations reported that the event was covered by TV news crews from KNBC, KTLA, KABC, KCAL, KCOP, KMEX, KVEA and KWHY. An LA Times photographer attended, along with reporters from La Opinion and the Eastern Group Newspapers.

"The MTA needs to maintain its properties but, at the same time, we believe that the labor of Homeboy Industries in the Eastside community has been one of dedication and hard work to rescue and redirect the lives of youths at-risk," said James L. de la Loza, executive officer RTP&D. "That's why Proyecto Pastoral was chosen to do the job".

### **Bakery damaged in fire**

The Homeboy Bakery in Boyle Heights was partially destroyed by a fire, Oct. 29. Most of the machines were spared damage, however, 12 employees lost their jobs just two months before Christmas.

The MTA originally bought its Eastside properties for Metro Red Line construction, which was suspended by the MTA Board in 1998. A study is underway to consider what should be done with the land.

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### **Safety Chief Recommends:**

## **MTA 'Should Strongly Pursue' Installation of Four-Gate Vehicle Barriers at Rail Crossings**

(Dec. 6) The MTA "should strongly pursue" the installation of four-gate vehicle barriers at all gated rail crossings, Paul Lennon, managing director, Safety and Security, told the Board at its December meeting.

The MTA has recently completed testing a rail crossing protection device that might have prevented the Nov. 27 Metro Blue Line accident that killed a taxi driver and five passengers in Compton, he said.

### **Device bars all auto lanes**

In his report to the Board, Lennon said the "four-quadrant" device bars all automobile lanes at a grade crossing and prevents vehicles from driving around the barrier. The crossing protection equipment that currently is the U.S. railroad standard bars only one lane in each direction.

"Staff recommends the MTA strongly pursue the installation of four-quadrant grade crossing protection devices at all gated, protected crossings," Lennon said. Installation of those devices would require state approval and, possibly, legislation.

Officials have determined that the cause of the accident was the failure of the cab driver to obey traffic laws and signals, Lennon said. The train's operator estimated that only six seconds elapsed from the time she noticed the speeding cab until impact.

### **Impossible to stop train**

"The timing...made it impossible for the train to stop," he said, noting that all crossing gates, lights, signals and warning devices were fully operational.

The MTA has undertaken a comprehensive safety education effort along the Metro Blue Line corridor, Lennon reported, along with applying engineering enhancements, increased traffic enforcement by Sheriff's deputies and a successful legislative campaign that gained an increase in rail crossing violation fines from \$104 to \$271.

He also has met with the mayor of Compton to discuss other measures that could be taken by the MTA and the city to prevent future accidents in the area.

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## **MTA Chief of Staff Balian to Join Pasadena Metro Blue Line Staff**

(Dec. 7) Chief of Staff Habib Balian will leave the MTA, Thursday, Dec. 9, to join the recently formed Pasadena Metro Blue Line Authority as Chief Administrative Officer.



In his new position, Balian, 38, will be responsible for the PMBLA's administrative functions, including procurement, media, government and community relations, and real estate. Scheduled to begin his new job, Dec. 15, he will be one of three senior executives reporting to CEO Rick Thorpe.

**Habib Balian**

### **Looking forward**

"There are community issues and budgetary issues I hope will be solved while I'm there," Balian said. "It's a four-year project and management's focus is to build the first 14 miles of rail and get the line up and running within the time and budget allotted."

Balian joined the MTA in November, 1997, as deputy assistant CEO. He was named chief of staff in spring, 1998.

"I wish Habib the best of luck," said CEO Julian Burke. "For someone as dedicated to Pasadena as he is, this new position certainly fits his background and particular interests."

### **Biggest regret**

"My biggest regret is not having daily contact with Julian Burke," Balian said. "I've enjoyed working with him, with Allan Lipsky and all the dedicated staff I've come in contact with. They've had to weather a lot of hard times and have gone through, I would hope, the hardest times they'll have to experience."

Prior to joining the MTA, Balian was a deputy to LA County Supervisor Michael Antonovich, with a special focus on transportation issues.

Balian earned a bachelor's degree in international relations from the University of Southern California. He and his wife, Toni, have a son, Frederick, 4.

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Angel's Walk improvements will improve the pedestrian and bus links between El Pueblo and transportation facilities at the Union Station complex.

## MTA to Play Small, but Important Role in Renovation of El Pueblo Historic Monument

By Bill Heard, Editor

(Dec. 8) Working with the City of Los Angeles, the MTA will play a small, but important role during coming months in the effort to refurbish the historic heart of the city: the 44-acre El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument.

Nestled in a park-like setting just across Alameda Street from the Union Station complex, the El Pueblo buildings and the Olvera Street market are attractions that appeal to locals as much as to tourists. City officials hope to showcase it during the Democratic national convention scheduled here next summer.

### Fast-growing center

The El Pueblo site also is adjacent to perhaps the fastest growing transit and business center in the city.

It's on that basis that the MTA Board approved some \$1.7 million in funds through the annual Call for Projects for such transit-related improvements as sidewalks, signage, art and the widening of the Main Street bridge over the Hollywood Freeway to accommodate a user-friendly pedestrian walkway.

"The current bridge is very hostile to pedestrians with noise and exhaust smells from the freeway," says Robin Blair, RTP&D transportation planning manager. He noted that designs for the east side of the bridge, which will be expanded by 35 feet, will have a "dramatic look." Construction could begin in late 2000 or early 2001.

### Element of Angel's Walk

The pedestrian improvements will be a part of the Angel's Walk program sponsored by the city and the MTA. Angel's Walk integrates transportation facilities such as Metro Buses and Metro Rail into adjacent commercial and civic developments. Pedestrians in the Olvera Street area, for example, have access to some 3,500 buses each day in addition to rail transportation at Union Station.

The MTA will benefit from the Olvera Street and Angel's Walk improvements by being able to provide improved aesthetics and a desirable destination to its patrons, taxpayers and the public.

"The idea is to help people move easily from Spring Street to Union Station, from Union Station to China Town and to the Civic Center," Blair explains. "That means improving such things as the bus stops, lighting, landscaping, signage and freeway sound buffering."

### **Renovating historic buildings**

Currently, a \$20 million-plus project financed by the city is under way to renovate the Pico House, a hotel built in 1869-70 by Pio de Jesus Pico, the last governor of Mexican California, and buildings in the adjacent Pico and Garnier block. Planning also has begun on possible improvements to county-owned buildings next to the historic Our Lady Queen of Angels Church, across Main Street from El Pueblo.

El Pueblo was settled in 1781 by pioneers from Mexico, becoming the center of society in Southern California. In the 1920, a campaign was launched to save the crumbling buildings. It was opened as a marketplace in 1930 and was named a state historic park in 1953.

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Photo shows seven of the eight new CNG buses ready for service.

## **MTA Sets Minor Record by Releasing 8 CNG Buses to Service in One Day**

(Dec. 9) With 61 Metro Buses added into peak hour service just last Sunday, the MTA set a record of sorts on Wednesday by releasing eight new CNG coaches for service in one day.

And by Friday, Dec. 10, the Regional Rebuild Center expects that as many as eight more may be released for service in the divisions, according to Fleet Supervisor Lorraine Melendez.

### **Almost no defects**

"Many of these buses are coming in from New Flyer with almost no defects to be corrected," said John Drayton, manager, Vehicle Acquisition. "Where once we would fill several pages listing defects, now we list less than a page and they're minor ones."

The eight buses released Wednesday were given to Division 3, while the eight to be released Friday are earmarked for Division 5, said Melendez.

Division 5, which just opened a new CNG fueling facility, will receive the next 20 new buses to come out of the RRC. After that, the rest of the vehicles in the 223-bus New Flyer order will be split between Divisions 3 and 5, she said.

Thus far in FY 2000, the MTA has placed 166 new and converted buses into service. The added buses are intended to help reduce the number of standees on Metro Bus lines from the current court-imposed limit of 15 to 11 by June 30, 2000.

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## Transportation Leadership Academy Grads Suggest Ways to Improve Employee Morale

Gail Harvey, supervisor, Fare Media Sales, gives a presentation during the Transportation Leadership Academy graduation exercises.

By Bill Heard, Editor

(Dec. 10) Morale issues were top-of-mind, Friday, among the latest graduates of the 21-member Transportation Leadership Academy.

In presentations to an audience that included MTA executive officers, four teams of TLA participants laid out recommendations for specific ways to make a positive impact on employee morale. The teams addressed issues raised in the Morale Report released earlier this year.

### Internal communication

One team recommended an internal communication program to overcome the impact of unfavorable media coverage on employee morale. The members - Michael Funnye, Terry Davis, Linda Hui, Paras Sharma, Hector Rojas and Julie Ellis - also sought ways to increase respect and trust among employees.

The team proposed a "Thumbs Up" program in which that universal hand gesture would symbolize all that's right and positive about the MTA and its employees. The team also recommended publication of a periodic "good news" newsletter about employees.

A second team, whose members were Cynthia Karpman, Mila Asuncion, Regina Lim, Tony Martin and Steve Mullaly, recommended merit-based pay as an effective means of improving job satisfaction and morale. The program would require the support of the executive staff and should be incorporated in annual performance reviews, team members said.

### Operator recovery time

Improving the quality of operator recovery time between runs was the topic of a team consisting of Karl Downs, Ed Smith, George Matejovsky, David Santana and Peter Braster.

Noting that the amount of operator recovery time is set by union contract, the team said the quality of recovery time could be improved if the cleanliness and availability of restroom facilities could be assured.

The team proposed an opinion survey of at least 400 operators on such job satisfaction issues as seats, bus cleanliness, radio communications and employee recognition. A sample survey of 13 operators indicated that the three top job satisfaction issues are seats, security and recovery time.

### Ombudsperson position

The fourth TLA team recommended creation of an "Ombudsperson Position." The team defined an ombudsperson as "a neutral and independent third party who facilitates equitable resolutions to

employee concerns, issues and problems."

They developed the definition following interviews with several ombudsmen in organizations ranging from UCLA to the LAPD.

Research by team members Ralph Carapia, Beverly McWhorter, Gail Hervey, Dan Collonello and Rudy Rey found that every \$1 invested in such a position by an organization would yield \$2 to \$6 in savings in employee litigation costs. It also would help improve employee morale and retention, the team said.

### **Next class in January**

The next Transportation Leadership Academy class is scheduled for orientation in late January. TLA consists of six full-day sessions and two half-day sessions, plus independent study, meetings with mentors, research and a team project. Graduates also are expected to meet with their teams quarterly during the following year to complete their projects.

TLA candidates are selected by department executive officers. Interested employees can contact their managers about possible participation in future classes.

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**Unveiling the millennium marker at Angels Walk were LA Councilwoman Rita Walters and Tom La Bonge of Mayor Riordan's office. Looking on with the crowd is, left, Deanna Spector, executive director, Angels Walk LA.**

## **MTA Celebrates LA's History, Dedication of First Millennium Marker on Angels Walk**

By Ed Scannell

(Dec. 13) LA's history is coming to life with the installation of millennium markers along Angels Walk, the self-guided walking tour of downtown's Bunker Hill/Historic Core District.



Jim de la Loza, executive officer, RTP&D, joined elected officials and community leaders at the foot of Angels Flight, Monday, to unveil the first of 30 markers that will be installed along Angels Walk over the next year.

**Representing the MTA were, from left, Robin Blair, Jim de la Loza, former Board member Nick Patsaouras and Diego Cardoso.**

### **Classroom without walls**

Collectively, the 12-foot cylindrical markers will serve as a "classroom

without walls," highlighting the history and significance of downtown locations through the use of historic photographs and text written by Los Angeles Times columnists Patt Morrison and Cecilia Rasmussen.

Angels Walk was launched in 1997 with the support of the MTA to encourage pedestrian exploration of the Bunker Hill/Historic Core District of downtown Los Angeles.

The markers are located adjacent to the public transit system. Each features an area map that shows the proximity of Angels Walk to the Metro Red Line.

### **Funded by LADOT and CRA**

Funded by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation and the

Community Redevelopment Agency, 15 millennium markers will be installed by the end of January, 2000. Fabrication of an additional 15 markers, to be installed on the northern segment of Angels Walk during 2000, was funded by MTA in the 1999 Call for Projects.

Including the marker at Angels Flight, 10 of the first 15 millennium markers have been installed, to date, at locations including Bunker Hill, the Bunker Hill "Spanish" Steps, One Bunker Hill, 333 S. Spring Street, the Los Angeles Central Library, The Regal Biltmore Hotel, the Pacific Center, the Fine Arts Building and Pershing Square.

Future locations will include the Bradbury Building, the Million Dollar Theater & Grand Central Market, Cal Plaza/Water Court, Grand Avenue and the Oviatt Building.

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## **MTA Files Brief with U.S. Appeals Court Seeking Overturn of Consent Decree Order**

(Dec. 14) The MTA is asking the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to overturn a District Court order that would require the agency to purchase 297 new CNG buses and to put 248 temporary buses into service by Jan. 3, 2000.

In a legal brief filed late Monday, the MTA said District Court Judge Terry Hatter erred on three counts in orders issued last September and October. He misinterpreted the Consent Decree, exceeded the federal court's authority and wrongly prevented the MTA from challenging the power of the Special Master, the agency's attorneys argued.

Oral arguments before the Appeals Court by attorneys for the MTA and the Bus Riders Union are expected in early 2000. A decision could come any time after those arguments are completed.

### **Bus lines meeting targets**

Judge Hatter ordered the agency to purchase additional buses to comply with passenger load targets in the Consent Decree. The MTA provided evidence that the 77 bus lines being monitored for compliance meet those targets "almost 98 percent of the measured 20-minute periods during weekday morning rush hours."

"This is not a civil rights case," the brief declares. "...(T)he BRU...may have wanted to impose an ironclad obligation on the MTA to meet the load factor goals every day on every bus route, but that is not the bargain to which the MTA agreed."

"Bus scheduling is complicated under the best of circumstances," the brief says. "...(I)t can go awry due to accidents, bad weather, unusually heavy traffic and other unpredictable difficulties...."

### **MTA can fulfill duties**

The brief also says the Consent Decree allows the MTA to fulfill its statutory duties to those who also use the county's streets, highways, freeways and rail systems. It notes that the District Court did not disagree.

The MTA currently spends some 44 percent of its total capital and operating budget on the bus system, according to the brief. Rail service requires 22 percent of the budget. Highway and other programs use 21 percent and the remainder is spent on debt service. The MTA has said it is not able to identify funding sources for operating the additional buses it was ordered to buy.

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Kids from the MTA's Child Care Center donated gifts.

## Hey, Santa!

### Look What MTA Employees did for the Skid Row Kids at Fred Jordan Mission



(Dec 14) It was a sight that would have impressed even Santa Claus: A mound of 105 bags stuffed with Christmas gifts contributed by MTA employees. One-by-one, Tuesday morning, they were handed aboard a Metro Bus parked in front of MTA Headquarters.

**MTA Gift Drive coordinator Bessie Rush-Johnson, left, with Mrs. Willie Jordan of the Fred Jordan Missions**

"The gifts provided by the MTA are of the best quality," said an elated Willie Jordan, president of the Fred Jordan Missions and wife of the late founder.

"We count on them as the main gifts for the Skid Row Kids."

### 3,500 gifts for kids



The 3,500 balls, dolls, toy cars, electric trains, blankets, games and other gifts collected over the past month by the MTA were rivaled in number only by donations from employees at the Walt Disney Co., Jordan said.

**Ray Inge, executive officer, Human Resources, helps a Fred Jordan Missions employee load gifts on a Metro Bus.**

"The number and quality of gifts has improved every year since we started the Gift Giving Drive in 1996," coordinator Bessie Rush-Johnson agreed. "Everyone who contributed at Headquarters and in the operating divisions this year has been very generous."



Some 12,000 children with their parents are expected at 9 a.m., Sunday, Dec. 19, at the Fred Jordan Mission on Towne Avenue in Los Angeles to receive free gifts collected by MTA and the 70-plus organizations cooperating with the charity this year.

### **Involved with the community**

"We work with the Fred Jordan Missions because the organization is so closely involved with the community," Rush-Johnson said.



As she spoke, children from the MTA's Child Care Center trooped to the Plaza with armloads of toys. Somewhat wistfully, perhaps, they dropped the gifts into bags for the Skid Row Kids. Then, to cheer everyone up, they sang "Jingle Bells" and "Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer."

**A teddy bear donated by a child from the MTA's Child Care Center goes into a bag for the Skid Row Kids.**

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**No Appointment Needed**

## **Times Expanded for Employees to have Photos Taken for New MTA Badges**

(Dec. 14) Haven't had a photo taken for your Year 2000 ID badge? Human Resources is expanding the times when you can face the camera at MTA Headquarters – and no appointments are necessary.

Starting Wednesday, Dec. 15, and continuing through Dec. 23, you can have your photo taken from 10 a.m. until noon and from 1 until 4 p.m. in the Employee Activities Center on the Plaza level of Headquarters.

Human Resources also has arranged for employees to have their photos taken during the weekend at the Regional Rebuild Center, Dec. 18 and 19; at Division 9 on Jan. 8 and 9; Division 15 on Dec. 18 and 19; and Division 18 on Jan. 8 and 9. All sessions are scheduled from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. No appointments are necessary.

### **Distribution in January**

The new badges are to be distributed to employees' work locations by Jan. 31 or early February, says Mario Perez-Ceballos, manager, Employment Services. Employees, eligible dependents, retirees and spouses, consultants, temporary staff, Board members and their staff members all should get new photos.

If you're satisfied with your current ID photo, it's not mandatory to have a new one taken. But, Perez-Ceballos notes that the badges also are used as transit passes.

For further information, call 922-7149, 922-7156, 922-7165, 922-7153 or 922-7159.

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### MANUAL LABOR

Members of the team who compiled the new disaster preparedness manual are, from left, Stephanie Kaping, Kathy Murrell, Ralph Sbragia and Pam Engelke.

## MTA Disaster Preparedness Manual Will be Mailed to Employees' Homes

(Dec. 16) Be Prepared! That may be the Boy Scout motto, but the MTA's Office of System Safety and Security believes employees should be ready for any emergency at work and at home.

Starting this weekend, employees will begin receiving in the mail a helpful 54-page safety guide titled *Agency Disaster Awareness and Preparedness Training Manual* - called "ADAPT." A wallet-sized card with 10 earthquake tips will be distributed early next year.

### MTA team prepared manual

A four-member Systems Safety team - Pam Engelke, Valeria Northern, Stephanie Kaping and Ralph Sbragia - prepared the manual, which was issued as one element in the MTA's overall ADAPT emergency services program.

"We want to make sure employees have as much information as possible to prepare for a disaster," says Kathy Murrell, Emergency Services coordinator. "Everyone should review the manual carefully and keep it in a safe, accessible place."

The manual is divided into sections on family and personal disaster preparedness, hazard mitigation and first aid. It includes a page where employees should record such important family records as work locations, phone numbers, children's names and schools and insurance policy numbers.

### List of emergency supplies

The booklet also provides lists of such emergency supplies as medications and first aid supplies, lighting and other equipment, cooking and sanitation supplies, emergency kits and beverages.

As a provider of transportation services, the manual's preface says, the MTA's employees "in times of crisis...may well be called

**upon to provide emergency services not only in Los Angeles County, but in surrounding counties as well."**

**Like other employers, the MTA is required by state law to prepare its employees for emergencies and to provide them with safety information, Murrell said. "We want to make sure they are as prepared at home as they are at work."**

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## **Transit Bus Division Task Force Cites Eight 'Bandit Van' Operators**

(Dec. 17) An LAPD Transit Bus Division task force conducted a crackdown on "bandit vans" in an area west of downtown Los Angeles on Thursday and issued citations to eight drivers. It was the second such operation this year by undercover and uniform officers designed to target the illegal trawling for passengers at Metro Bus stops.

The eight drivers were cited under a section of the Penal Code which prohibits the "sale or offer of transportation" by an "uncertified carrier." The illegal vehicles typically are vans, station wagons or small 22-passenger buses. Violators are often unlicensed and found to be driving unregistered vehicles.

"It's an ongoing problem, and not just an MTA problem," said LAPD Captain Vance Proctor. "We're going to continue to work in traditional ways as well as look for innovative ways to solve it."

"Most of the violations are misdemeanors," added Proctor. "But when the vehicles are not properly registered or are unsafe, we're going to impound them."

The task force approach was generated out of meetings with operators at MTA bus divisions who say the "bandit vans" often block bus zones and prevent Metro Buses from servicing stops. Proctor says the task force will operate on a monthly basis in 2000.

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First place honors in the high school category went to the "Christmas Bus," decorated by students from Chatsworth High School with an assist from Canoga Park Elementary School and personnel from Division 8.

## Annual Bus Decorating Contest Brings No Snow But Plenty of Christmas Spirit To MTA

By Gary Wosk

(Dec. 17) The spirit of Christmas roared into MTA headquarters today as a procession of Metro Buses colorfully adorned by MTA operating divisions and students arrived at the Patsaouras Transit Plaza to compete in the annual Christmas bus decorating contest.



Onlookers, including MTA staff, their children and the public admired the kaleidoscopic landscape, but looking a bit more serious were the judges who remained at the ready with clipboards and pens in hand to critique each bus and declare winners in three categories: elementary, middle and high school.

Parents, not reindeer, arranged transportation for Division 6 Elves.

First place honors in the high school category went to the "Christmas Bus," decorated by students from Chatsworth High School with an assist from Canoga Park Elementary School and personnel from Division 8. Arts Institute of Santa Monica, assisted by Division 6, took top honors in the middle school category. First place in the elementary school category went to Pio Pico Elementary School of Los Angeles which was assisted by Division 5.

"The decorated buses are a symbol of the dedication of MTA staff and our connection with the people we transport," said Tom Conner, executive officer for operations. "This is our way of passing the spirit of the holiday season throughout the communities we serve."

A total of 11 divisions and 10 schools participated in the bus

decorating contest. Following the contest, the Christmas decorated buses went back into regular service accompanied by cheerful staff dressed in festive holiday outfits and supplied with an ample supply of candy to pass out to boarding passengers.

"The bottom line is that it's fun, healthy competition," said MTA Community Relations Project Manager Bill Gay, coordinator of the Christmas and Halloween bus decorating contests. "It gives our employees a chance to share their talents. It's great to see all of our employees in a festive mood. This is a positive atmosphere for them."

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## Zero Tolerance Effort Renewed



### MTA Reviving Division Advisory Committees; Training Employees to Work with Communities

By Bill Heard, Editor

(Dec. 20) With graffiti cleanup on Metro Buses costing \$10 million to \$13 million annually - enough to buy 50 to 60 CNG buses - the MTA is reviving an important element of its Zero Tolerance program: the Division Advisory Committee (DAC).

Zero Tolerance, launched in 1991, is a three-pronged program that emphasizes aggressive maintenance and cleaning of graffiti-scarred buses, law enforcement attention and a strong community outreach program to schools and community organizations. That outreach is accomplished by DAC volunteers.

#### Divisions 1, 3, 5 organized

Currently, DACs have been organized at divisions 1, 3 and 5. Divisions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 15 are targeted next. DAC volunteers are "frontline" employees whose ranks include bus operators and maintenance personnel. They receive training in skills, such as marketing, public affairs and public speaking, that are useful in a community outreach program.

"Our goal by the end of FY 2000 is to organize DACs at all 11 bus divisions, with perhaps 175 volunteers," says Bill Gay, a senior communications officer in Transit Operations and DAC coordinator. "We've been getting excellent reception from rank-and-file employees."

Gay expects some 100 DAC volunteers from divisions 1, 3, 5 and 10 to attend training sessions at 9 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 8. Two, six-hour sessions will be conducted in the Windsor Room, 15th floor, on public speaking and other skills.

#### DAC is important component

Tom Conner, executive officer, Transit Operations, agrees that community outreach by DAC volunteers is "an important component in the overall effort to reach Zero Tolerance."

Conner says law enforcement efforts are paying off with the arrest by LAPD and Sheriff's deputies of an increasing number of vandals. LAPD officers recently arrested and charged eight vandals in one day.

The MTA also is attempting to engineer buses to make graffiti prevention and removal more effective and efficient, he says. This includes switching to use of velcro-backed seat inserts that can be removed and replaced quickly and using easier-to-clean plastic seats in the back of the bus.

#### Vandals turned to internal graffiti



In its earlier Zero Tolerance effort, when the MTA virtually eliminated external graffiti on its buses, vandals began marking seats and etching windows. The cost of replacing the 20 to 24 passenger windows typically runs \$6,400. The MTA Board has just authorized \$2.5 million for the purchase of 389 bus window kit assemblies.



"Spending money for graffiti cleanup is a wasted resource," Gary Spivack, director, Operations Support Services, says.

"Every time some kid defaces a window, it reaches into your pocket as either a bus patron or a taxpayer."

Through the revitalization of the DAC program, the MTA hopes to reach the people who can restore pride in the bus system as an integral part of the community and who can influence the next generation to treat the mass transit system as a valuable community resource.

### **Mission has three elements**

The three elements of the DAC mission are school outreach and education, community clean-ups and parent education.

By sending DAC volunteers into the schools, the MTA hopes to reach impressionable children with messages on self-esteem, personal responsibility and respect and ownership of public property.

DAC members also work with schools, community groups and businesses to hold community clean-ups. Many DAC volunteers spend dozens of personal hours on such projects.

### **Identifying anti-social signs**

At Parent Education Seminars, DAC members provide information on how to identify anti-social signs in children's behavior and appearance. The seminars stress the importance of parent-child communications and teaching kids personal responsibility.

Throughout all these efforts, the costs of graffiti vandalism, including the legal and financial costs to the vandals and their families, is highlighted.

"There has been a groundswell of support," says DAC Coordinator Gay. "A lot of our employees, who already have skills like public speaking, want to get involved. We're empowering our employees to help us develop strategies to go out in the community, work with the residents and mitigate issues."

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## **401(k) Plan to Offer More Savings; Social Security, SDI Base Going Up**

(Dec. 23) Here's an opportunity for employees who are enrolled in the MTA's 401(k) Thrift Plan to salt away a few more bucks toward retirement.

As of Jan. 1, 2000, you'll be allowed to defer up to \$10,500 annually from your salary. The current cap is \$10,000. The \$8,000 cap for the 457 deferred compensation plan remains the same.

## **Social Security, SDI going up**

As of Jan. 1, the wage bases for Social Security and State Disability Insurance (SDI) are going up. This means that some employees will experience increased deductions for these two taxes, even though the tax rate percentages will remain the same. Deductions for Medicare remain unchanged.

The wage base for Social Security will jump from \$72,600 to \$76,200. At a tax rate of .062 percent, that's an increase of \$223.20 in the maximum that can be withheld at that salary level from an employee's paycheck.

If ratified by the California Legislature, the proposed wage base for SDI will increase from \$31,767 to \$46,327. At a tax rate of .005 percent, the increase is \$72.80 in the amount that can be withheld at that salary level from an employee's pay.

## **Some need new W-4s**

The Payroll Department is reminding employees who currently are claiming to be "exempt" from withholding taxes that they must file a new Form W-4 by Feb. 15, 2000 to maintain their "exempt" status. Failure to file an updated form will result in the employee being taxed as a single person with zero withholding.

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## **Extra Staff on Duty Starting Tuesday for Y2K; 'Round-the-Clock Vigil for Critical Systems**

While no Y2K problems are anticipated, employees are reminded that if they hear or see media reports of serious incidents, they should call a special MTA hotline that is activated in any major emergency:

**213.680.1531**. There will be instructions on when and where to report to work.

By Bill Heard, Editor

(Dec. 27) As many as 200 extra staff members and MTA policing partners will be on duty New Year's Eve for possible emergency service at MTA Headquarters and the operating divisions as the calendar turns over to the 21st Century.

Although no major Y2K problems are anticipated, the agency is gearing up beginning Tuesday morning, Dec. 28, with 24-hour coverage for such mission-critical systems as the computer network, Vehicle Maintenance System, Materials Maintenance System, Human Resources, FIS, payroll, Rail Incident Management System and the Transit Radio System.

### **Emergency Council set**

On Friday - New Year's Eve - the MTA's Emergency Management Center will be activated following the model of the Standardized Emergency Management System. The MTA Emergency Management Council (EMC) will oversee plans for activation of the MTA's emergency response plan. The Council consists of the Office of the CEO, County Counsel, the managing directors of Safety and Security and Risk Management, and the Emergency Operations Center manager. Tom Conner, executive officer, Transit Operations, will be the Incident Commander.

The agency also will have heightened law enforcement and security presence, extra staff in the Bus Operations Control Center and in the Rail Operations Center, ITS programmers and systems managers, additional General Services personnel in the Headquarters building, and extra bus operators and transit operations supervisors. The MTA will coordinate activities with city and county emergency centers.

"I'm confident," says Don Stiner, Y2K project manager. "We don't see anything that would cause a major disruption." His staff and others throughout the agency have worked for months to ensure that mission-critical systems are Y2K compliant.

### **Double the owl service**

On New Year's Eve, Transit Operations will add 81 buses - double the normal owl service - for patrons attending millennium events. The buses also could be used as bus bridges in the unlikely event of a disruption in rail service.

Free Metro Bus service will begin at 11 a.m., Friday, and continue until 5 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 1. Free Metro Rail service also begins at 11 a.m., Friday, and will continue until at least 2 a.m., Saturday.

Other New Year's security measures include:

- Restricting entrance to MTA Headquarters to employees and others whose names are included on a special duty roster.
- A ban on automobile traffic on Patsaouras Plaza from noon, Friday, until noon, Monday, Jan. 3.
- Stationing rail transit operations supervisors at rail stations to manually operate the system, if required.
- Positioning the Mobile Emergency Center at Headquarters in the event of problems in the operations dispatch centers.

### **Soup, sandwiches and coffee**

For those on overnight duty at Headquarters New Year's Eve, life will be spare. The cafeteria will offer a limited menu of soup, sandwiches, coffee and soft drinks. Staff parking will be limited to the P-4 level in order to reserve levels P-1, P-2 and P-3 for the public. Staff should enter through the Cesar Chavez entrance and be prepared to show the identification badge.

For the rest of us, Y2K Project Manager Stiner says only, "Power down your computer when you leave work on Thursday. And don't panic. If the lights go out at your house, it'll be because someone hit a power pole...not because of a Y2K problem."

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## **LAPD's Pickpocket Detail Nabs Alleged International Criminal**

(Dec. 28) An alleged international pickpocket with prior arrests in New York and Chicago was nabbed recently by the LAPD's Transit Bus Division Pickpocket Detail following a three-hour surveillance.

Officers first spotted Vitaliano Huertas, 59, a native of Columbia, riding a Metro Bus near Wilshire and Vermont. They tracked him as he boarded other MTA and DASH buses and the Metro Red Line where he allegedly attempted to pick several patrons' pockets.

### **Gave a fictitious name**

Undercover officers moved in on Huertas and arrested him when he allegedly lifted the wallet of a patron on Line 207. The suspect gave police a fictitious name during booking, but fingerprints revealed his true identity.

Officers said the man told them he had been trained as a child to pick pockets. Huertas was charged with Grand Theft - Person. He also was wanted on a \$50,000 LAX Police Department warrant. Detective John Simmons is handling the follow-up investigation.

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## **8 More Bandit Van Operators Unmasked by LAPD Task Force**

(Dec. 28) Eight more "bandit van" operators were unmasked and cited earlier this month in the second monthly effort by the LAPD's Transit Bus Division to rid the streets of these illegal vehicles.

A task force of five undercover officers and 10 uniformed officers targeted an area bounded by Witner/Union and Bonnie Brae/Harbor Freeway.

The eight bandit van operators were cited for illegally selling or offering transportation, parking in bus zones, and operating a transit service without permits with unsafe vehicles and unlicensed drivers.

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## **TV Story Leads to Conviction of Street Seller of Phony Transfers**

(Dec. 28) A local TV news investigation proved the undoing recently of a woman convicted of a felony for selling counterfeit MTA transfers. Laura Santos was sentenced to 90 days in County Jail, fined \$200 and given three year's probation.

The LAPD's Transit Group Revenue Protection Detail had recognized Santos from the KTTV, Channel 11, story as a known street dealer in phony transfers.

### **Felony filing unusual**

"The felony filing is unusual," said Cmdr. Garrett Zimmon of the LAPD Transit Group. "It was a felony due to the thorough investigation by the Revenue Protection detail. The officers really did a great job on this case."

During their investigation, undercover officers reported purchasing counterfeit transfers from her and watching as she used a punch to validate the transfers.

Following her arrest, Santos was booked for felony counterfeiting, forging or altering fare media. She has been prohibited by the court from possessing any form of MTA fare media that is not purchased legally. She also is subject to search at any time by police.

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## **New Billboards Will Proclaim...**

### **"It's Getting Better on the Bus"**

(Dec. 29) It keeps getting better on the bus -- and the MTA's advertising campaign to drive that point home is entering a new, high-visibility phase.

Beginning in January, 236 billboards will spring up throughout LA County proclaiming the four key points of the "It's Getting Better on the Bus" campaign - "More New Buses," "More Service," "More Reliability" and "More Security."

### **Locations will change**

The array includes 4 giant "painted bulletins" that will change locations each month from now until April, as well as 180 billboards in English and 52 billboards in Spanish.

The billboards reinforce newspaper ads and exterior bus ads that have been appearing since October. In addition, materials that specifically promote new service, such as Line 305, which begins January 30th, will have a similar look to the overall "It's Getting Better on the Bus" campaign.

### **Morale Report a factor**

One of the factors behind the campaign's origin was the Employee Morale Report, which revealed that employees felt positive advertising could help to counteract attacks on MTA by the media.

"We see this as a campaign that will continue to grow as our bus service continues to improve," says Warren Morse, deputy executive officer, Marketing & Customer Relations.

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## **Sheriff's Deputies Make 2,987 Arrests on Metro Bus, Rail Lines in Past 11 Months**

(Dec. 30) Statistics compiled by the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau show that, through the end of November, deputies had made a total of 2,987 arrests on the Metro Blue Line, Metro Green Line and on the Metro Bus lines they patrol.

The statistics indicate incidents of vandalism on the two light-rail lines were trending up in October and November from a fairly steady rate of incidents from June through September.

### **Quality of life violations**

Deputies issued 16,541 citations for "quality of life" violations on the rail lines and 3,158 citations on Metro Bus lines, most for vehicle code violations. Patrons reported a total of 831 crimes.

Deputies also cited 9,359 motorists for traffic violations along the Metro Blue Line where illegal crossings by drivers trying to beat the trains have been a constant problem.

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## **Man who Killed Metro Bus Patron Convicted of First-Degree Murder**

(Dec. 30) A man who shot and killed a passenger on a Metro Bus, Feb. 7, was convicted in Superior Court, Wednesday, of first-degree murder.

Byron Dwayne Cuff, 25, now faces a minimum 50-years-to-life prison sentence when he returns to court, Jan. 12.

### **Passenger stared at him**

The shooting occurred when Cuff became upset that passenger Paul Edward Johnson, 26, was staring at him. Johnson was shot several times as passengers were disembarking from the bus.

According to the Associated Press, the jury deliberated less than a day before reaching a verdict.

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## Number 1259 Still Hanging in There As the MTA's Last Methanol Bus

(Dec. 30) She may be the MTA's last methanol bus, but ol' Number 1259 still hits the road from Division 9 every day – the only holdout among 333 methanol buses that has not yet been converted to clean diesel.

"Yep, she's still hanging in there," says Rich Famighetti, senior maintenance supervisor at Division 9. "She's running pretty good. Everything just kinda fell into place and she's still working."

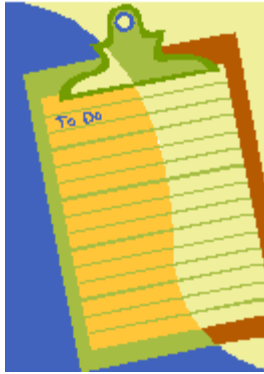
### 275 buses converted

To date, 275 former methanol buses have been changed over to clean diesel and are back in service. Fifty-seven buses are in the conversion process, according to Mike Singer, fleet manager.

So, what's the fate of Number 1259? "We're going to run it until it fails," says Richard Hunt, deputy executive officer, Bus Maintenance. "Then, it'll be converted to clean diesel like the rest."

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## Start Planning for Retirement Now: Attend MTA's Retirement Planning Seminars



(Dec. 30) Whether you've just begun your career or you're close to retiring, it's never too early - or too late - to begin planning for retirement.

Beginning Tuesday, Jan. 11, the MTA will resume its popular Retirement Planning Seminars. A total of 21 seminar sessions will be conducted at the Headquarters building through Saturday, March 25.

### Learn money management

The seminars are designed to help employees and family members understand the concepts and practices of wise money management and make informed financial decisions about retirement. Participants will learn how to increase current income, develop an investment strategy, reduce taxes and create an estate plan.

Employees pay only \$25 of the \$65 seminar tuition and spouses or partners may attend the 10-hour course for free. Attendees receive a 150-page workbook and may request a free financial plan and consultation.

### Weeknights and Saturdays

The seminars will be held in the Gateway Plaza Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Headquarters, on three consecutive Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Sessions are scheduled from 6:30 until 9 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Participants must attend four weeknight sessions or three Saturday sessions to complete the course.

For information about the Retirement Planning Seminars, or to register for the course, e-mail [Ed Myatt of Human Resources Benefits](#) or send to Mail Stop 99-4-2, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

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