

MTA, AFSCME Reach Tentative Agreement, Burke Announces at All-Staff Meeting

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(April 28) The MTA has reached a tentative contract agreement with the leaders of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, CEO Julian Burke announced, Friday, at an all-staff meeting.

Although Burke declined to describe the tentative agreement, he said, "I'm quite happy with the agreement. It's a step forward and I'm proud of it." He said union leaders plan to present the agreement to AFSCME members, May 6.

Some 500 bus and rail transportation and maintenance supervisors and others voted last year for AFSCME representation.



Pay increase for all

To a question about a possible employee pay raise, Burke answered that, although the budget is still in draft form and has not been presented to the Board, "It will contain some pay increase for all of our employees."

Burke began the all-staff meeting on a positive note, declaring that the past months had "become an extremely exciting time for us. Things have changed so much...I now have a different feeling about what's going on." He said the MTA now is focusing on the future instead of dwelling on the past.

As evidence of an upturn in the agency's fortunes, Burke said he will meet with congressional leaders in Washington the first week of May to present the MTA's case for funding. He expects "reasonable success this year, because our credibility with the transportation committee has grown. They recognize that we're on track and are doing good things for this county."

Funding for local projects

He also noted that the upcoming "mini-Call for Projects" will provide funding for local transportation projects. Some of the funding will come from Governor Gray Davis' \$5.2 billion state transportation plan. Included in that plan is \$887 million the MTA can use for buses, light rail and bus rapid transit projects.

Other subjects the CEO touched on during the all-staff meeting included the Long-Range Plan, which he said is "an opportunity for us to develop a new vision" at a time when Los Angeles County is growing.

Asked about his personal plans, Burke - who will turn 73 on July 8 - joked that he has "a great deal of fear about retiring because I'm not sure I'd know what to do with myself." He noted that, although he has no contract with the MTA, he is "quite challenged by the issues" and "certainly is committed to this work."

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