



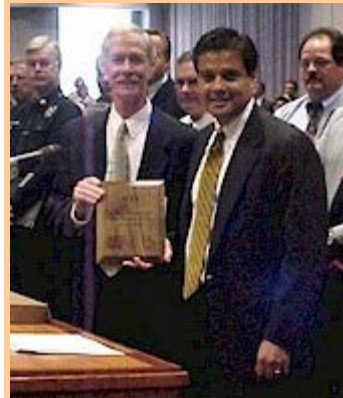
During Thursday's Board meeting, Transit Chief Tom Conner (center right) presented representatives of MTA departments and other agencies involved in the DNC event. They are LAPD captains Vance Proctor and Sandy Wasson, Sheriff's Lt. Dave Tellez; LAFD Battalion Chief Mike Littleton, Sgt. Herbert Vaughan of MTA Security, Don Baumgartner of Bus Operations, Jesse Diaz of Rail Operations, George Karbowski of Equipment Engineering, Henry Casteneda of Transportation Field Command Post, Emergency Services Coordinator Kathy Murrell, Jody Feerst Litvak of Government Relations, Marc Littman of Media Relations, Revenue Director Agapito Diaz, David Sutton and Tom Longsdon of Marketing and Customer Relations, Rita Malone and Duane Martin of Rail Operations, and Martha Butler of Operations Planning and Scheduling. PHOTO BY BILL HEARD

Advance Planning Ensured LA's Metro System Ran Smoothly during Convention

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Aug. 24) Not only did the Metro system operate safely and efficiently throughout the four days of the Democratic National Convention, but the Metro Red Line became one of the few places in Los Angeles where delegates and demonstrators were able to talk without a fence between them.

"Delegates and demonstrators riding the subway to Universal City for entertainment at night would discuss the issues," said Transit Operations Chief Tom Conner. "It may have been the only time they sat face to face."



Michael Jimenez of the Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau presents a certificate to Transit Chief Tom Conner for the MTA's work during the DNC. PHOTO BY RICK JAGER

The MTA assigned 100 buses, 138 operators and mechanics to provide delegate transportation during the convention. And with only minor glitches, such as Secret Service credentials that were misplaced for a spell, the operation came off without a hitch, according to Dan Ibarra, deputy executive officer, Bus Operations.

Walking with the demonstrators

"Our people rose to the occasion and did an outstanding job," said Ibarra. Meanwhile, regular Metro Bus service experienced no disruptions or cancellations, despite major downtown street closures. As a precaution, for example, uniformed MTA road supervisors sometimes walked along with demonstrators and reported street blockages to Bus Operations Control.

"We had very few problems," said Richard Hunt, deputy executive officer, Bus Maintenance. "Everyone pulled together and showed what professionals they are."

The lack of major operational problems on Metro Rail and Metro Bus lines during the Democratic National Convention was due in great part to advance contingency planning by many departments within the MTA and to the agency's liaison efforts with the LAPD, Sheriff's Department, the city and county fire departments and others involved with the transit system.

Conner noted that as a result of planning for two major events over the past 12 months - Y2K and the DNC - the MTA now has an emergency management team that is experienced in the organization and communications structure needed to respond to emergencies.

In remarks at Thursday's Board meeting, Conner also praised members of the UTU, ATU, TCU and AFSCME for the "strong support and cooperation of our key labor union partners...."

Better impression of the system

"We learned that, while it's important to plan for what could go wrong, the real challenge is to keep our systems running smoothly and safely," said Conner. "A lot of delegates went away from Los Angeles with a better impression of the system and of what we're capable of in providing transportation."

MTA Security Chief Paul Lennon cited joint event planning by the MTA and its law enforcement contingents and the smooth implementation of the plan during the convention as a major reason for the multi-agency accomplishment.

Despite early concerns that demonstrators might target the Metro Blue Line, whose Pico station stands within sight of the Staples Center, the MTA insisted on keeping the line open both for the convenience of delegates and for the sake of its daily commuters.

"Pico station was ground zero," said Lennon. Because of detours and the possibility of street demonstrations, shuttling Metro Blue Line passengers onto buses at Pico was not a viable alternative. He said neither the MTA nor the police could have guaranteed that bus shuttle passengers would reach their destinations in a timely fashion.

Point of focus

"When our law enforcement agencies saw that we were committed to keeping Pico station open, they became committed," said Lennon. "This provided them a point of focus and led to real cohesion among the MTA, the LAPD, the LASD and the city and county fire departments."

Law enforcement and municipal managers from Washington, D.C., Boston, New York City and Philadelphia have contacted Lennon to ask for information about the planning, logistics, deployment of police and tactics involved in protecting the transit system and the City of Los Angeles.

They also complimented the police, fire and transit operations on their success. And the officials weren't the only ones praising the operation of the transit system during the convention.

"Some of the most experienced transit riders - delegates from New York City - had positive comments about our rail system: how clean it looked and how well it ran," said Conner. "That's a great compliment from the most informed potential critics of the system."

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