

## Metro Report Archives

### December 2000 Articles

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13) The Los Angeles City Council has given the San Fernando Valley Transportation Zone another year of life.

**Hemsing Named Director of Inventory Management in Procurement** (Dec. 13)

**MTA to Offer Patrons Free Rides on Christmas and New Year's Eves** (Dec. 14) For the sixth consecutive year, the MTA will offer free bus and train rides on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

**Carmen Muñoz-Silva Named EEO Manager in HR** (Dec. 14) Carmen Muñoz-Silva, an attorney with many years' experience in employee and labor relations, has been named manager of Equal Employment Opportunity.

**CEO Extends Pay Hike to Non-Rep Employees Hired Jan. 1 - June 30, 2000** (Dec. 14) CEO Julian Burke has extended this year's 2.7 percent pay increase to non-represented employees who were hired between Jan. 1 and June 30, 2000.

**MTA to Provide Ideas for SCAG's 20-Year Transportation Plan** (Dec. 15) The MTA will be taking a close look at the 20-year Regional Transportation Plan issued in draft form, Thursday, by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and will provide its own recommendations for incorporation into the regional plan early next year.

**MTA Archaeologists Make Significant Discovery at Universal City Station** (Dec. 15) Archaeologists hired by the MTA have discovered the remnants of long-forgotten "fast food" restaurants at the Universal City Metro Red Line station. The restaurants were patronized by Universal Studios employees  $\frac{3}{4}$  possibly even movie stars  $\frac{3}{4}$  during the Golden Age of Hollywood.

**Crews Hard at Work on New Plaza-Level Office Space** (Dec. 18) A construction crew is hard at work building rooms on the Plaza level of Headquarters for the Human Resources employment office, Records Management and MTA Security.

**Division 8 Wins Holiday Bus Contest** (Dec. 19) Santa Claus greets parade of holiday buses in Patsaouras Transit Plaza, as Division 8 Chatsworth bus takes the lead in first place followed by Division 18 Carson's second place winning entry.

**'Strike Stories' Contest Winners:** (Dec. 19) Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky announces the winners of the "Strike Stories" essay contest.

**The Burmese Days of Robert Sechler** (Dec. 20)

**MTA Now Says 'Welcome Aboard' in Russian and Thai Languages** (Dec. 20) The MTA has published its "Welcome Aboard" brochure in Russian and Thai – the latest additions to an array of information the agency provides in foreign languages.

**MTA Guarding Metro Rail Patron Safety During State's Power Crisis** (Dec. 21) How has the MTA coped with the region's recent "rolling brownouts" and what would happen to Metro Rail service in a full-scale power blackout?

### **Subway Station Antennas Linked to Nation's Earthquake**

**Monitoring System** (Dec. 21) When the earth moves in Los Angeles, the U.S. Geological Survey wants to know how much. Now, the MTA is helping the scientists find out.

**U.S. Army Salutes MTA** (Dec. 26) When Army Reservist Captain Glenn Sanders, an equipment service supervisor for Metro Clean, was called to service in support of national defense, the MTA was asked to sacrifice the services of a good employee for an extended period of time.

**Caught On Camera, Bus Joy Riders Arrested by LAPD** (Dec. 28) It has all the elements of an action-packed Hollywood thriller. Four youths, posing as MTA employees in orange safety vests, entered the Regional Rebuild Center backlot on the afternoon of Dec. 3 and commandeered an empty bus for a joy ride to Hollywood and back.

**The Year 2000: A Look Back at Major MTA News Stories** (Dec. 29) It's been one of those years. A year many MTA employees will be happy to see fade into the past as they look forward to 2001.

## **Board OKs FIS Upgrade; Calls for 'Quiet Zone' on Pasadena Line**

(Dec. 1) The MTA Board has authorized a \$350,000 upgrade of the agency's Financial Information System that should improve user access while reducing maintenance requirements.

At its December meeting, the Board also directed the staff to work with the Pasadena Blue Line Construction Authority to develop a "quiet zone" along a stretch of track through the Mount Washington area. Supervisor Gloria Molina's motion said the goal is to ensure that grade crossings are safe while minimizing noise at the Southwest Museum station and the Avenue 45 crossing.

The FIS upgrade project will take about five months, during which the Oracle Corp. will install the 11i version of its software. The FIS system includes purchase orders, budget information and expense data, and accounts payable and receivable.

About 1,300 employees use FIS - sometimes 100 are on the system simultaneously. FIS also interfaces with the Maintenance and Material Management System, Construction Cost Management System and other data management programs.

In other business, the Board approved a \$5.5 million settlement of a personal injury lawsuit filed by a woman who was hit by a Metro Bus in August, 1999, as she crossed a street in Chinatown. Miequn Zhu, who was 14 weeks pregnant at the time of the accident, suffered a fractured pelvis and other injuries. Her child, born last February, is quadriplegic, blind and deaf.

The MTA will pay \$4.5 million of the settlement, while its insurance company will pay \$1 million. The case would have gone to trial in January.

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**PARK 'N SAVE**-From left, **Fred Bower** of the Universal City-North Hollywood Chamber of Commerce; **John Vivian** of Save Our Depot; **Ken Banks** of the North Hollywood Forum; **Jim de la Loza**, MTA executive officer, Countywide Planning; **Dennis Mori**, MTA executive officer, Construction, and **Guy Weddington McCreary**, UC-NH Chamber Transportation Committee chairman, review project plans on historic site. PHOTO BY GARY WOSK

## MTA to Add Parking Near NoHo Station

- Project Will Preserve Historic Train Depot

By ED SCANNELL

(Dec. 1) The MTA will begin construction later this month of 218 temporary parking spaces on MTA-owned property located across the street from the Metro Red Line's North Hollywood station.

The MTA and the Community Redevelopment Agency announced their intention to restore a historic building on the 2.67-acre parcel that once served as a train depot.

The temporary parking lot is anticipated to be needed for approximately three to five years, pending the beginning of Bus Rapid Transit service on the Burbank/Chandler Corridor, or when additional parking capacity is generated under joint development plans for the area.

The 218 temporary parking spaces and the 919 existing spaces at the North Hollywood Station will provide a total of 1,137 spaces for Metro Red Line patrons.

### Preserve historic landmark

"The demand for parking at the North Hollywood Station has been high since the Metro Red Line began service to the San Fernando Valley earlier this year," said Jim de la Loza, executive officer, Countywide Planning. "This project will provide additional service to our customers while preserving an historic landmark."

Built by Southern Pacific in 1896, the rail depot also served patrons of the Pacific Electric Railway beginning in 1911. Passenger service on the alignment was discontinued in the early 1950s.

Hendricks Builders Supply Company leased the building from Southern Pacific beginning in January, 1959. In 1991, the MTA purchased the Burbank/Chandler right-of-way, which includes the former train depot. Hendricks continued to lease the building until 1993. Since

then, the building has remained vacant.

"The 1896 depot is an important landmark in the historical development of North Hollywood and the San Fernando Valley," said Guy Weddington McCreary, chairman of the Universal City-North Hollywood Chamber of Commerce transportation committee. "This link between our glorious past and a promising future will now be preserved for posterity."

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## **MTA's Accessibility 'Above and Beyond' Terms in Settlement of Federal Lawsuit**

(Dec. 5) For most of the past two years, the MTA has held its standards for maintenance and operation of wheelchair lifts and other ADA-related devices aboard Metro Buses to a level "above and beyond" that required by federal law.

Most of these practices already were in place, Monday, when the MTA agreed to settlement of a federal class-action lawsuit brought by the ACLU in January, 1998, on behalf of a group of mobility-impaired patrons. The settlement was approved by the Board earlier this year.

"The MTA goes above and beyond what is required by federal law and by the lawsuit settlement - and will continue to do so," said Tony Chavira, the agency's ADA compliance officer. The MTA began tightening up its compliance practices in early 1999. By November, 1999, they had been phased in at all operating divisions.

Among the most important provisions in the settlement reached in U.S. District Court are requirements that buses must be inspected daily and that broken equipment used by mobility-impaired patrons must be repaired within 72 hours.

The accessibility program initiated by the MTA in 1998 includes pre-trip inspections of wheelchair lifts, securement devices and other ADA-related equipment that all bus operators are required to perform before leaving the bus yard.

### **'Zero tolerance' rule**

Chavira said Operations Maintenance had adopted a "zero tolerance" rule in 1999 that keeps any coach with defective accessibility equipment off the streets until it is repaired - a tougher stance than the ADA rule or the settlement provision that allow such a bus to operate for 72 hours before it must be repaired.

At every bus division, Operations Maintenance has established "accessible equipment repair shops," staffed by specially selected and trained mechanics whose job is to repair wheelchair lifts and associated ADA equipment.

The MTA has mandated that its contract bus service companies follow the "zero tolerance" program and maintain accessibility equipment to the same standards. This is important, because the ACLU lawsuit originated as an action against the MTA and Ryder/ATE, Inc., an MTA contract operator who in 1998 provided bus service on Palos Verdes peninsula routes.

Under the terms of the settlement announced Monday, operators whose buses have inoperative accessibility equipment may not pass up mobility-impaired patrons, but are required to stop, explain the problem and call for alternative transportation.

The circumstances under which the MTA must provide alternative transportation to a mobility-impaired patron were expanded in the agreement to ensure that these patrons can reach their destinations in a timely manner. Alternative transportation must be provided within 30 minutes at least 90 percent of the time.

Bus operators face disciplinary action, including possible termination, for failing to stop for mobility-impaired patrons - even if their ADA equipment is inoperable, Chavira said.

### **Alternative transportation**

If the operator is unable to board the patron, he or she must alert Bus Operations Control to the need for alternative transportation. This can include service by a follower bus, by an access transport service, or even by an MTA van equipped with accessible equipment. Such vans, driven by TOSs, are assigned to each shift.

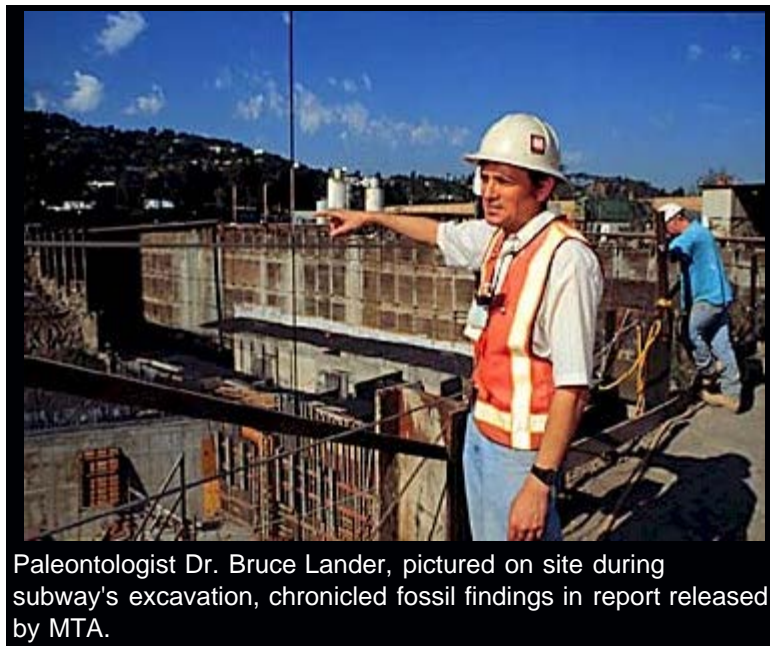
Other elements of the lawsuit settlement include a requirement, to take effect in April, 2001, that the MTA contract a company to monitor compliance with the terms of the agreement. The contractor may use operatives in wheelchairs to spot-check compliance by individual bus operators. This will be an expansion of a program the MTA has operated on its own for the past year or so.

The MTA continues to consult with its own Access Advisory Committee, whose mobility-impaired members provide advice on accessibility issues. The agency also works with Easter Seals which, through a contract with Metro Wheels, provides mobility-impaired volunteers to monitor operator conduct, check ADA equipment and report on ride quality.

"Accessibility service is not new to the MTA," Chavira points out, noting that the agency for many years had the nation's largest fleet of wheelchair accessible buses. In fact, this year marks the 20th anniversary of accessible service provided by the MTA and its predecessor agencies.

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Paleontologist Dr. Bruce Lander, pictured on site during subway's excavation, chronicled fossil findings in report released by MTA.

## Report Shows Ancient Animals Once Roamed Subway's Route

By GARY WOSK

(Dec 6) Tens of thousands of years ago, the climate of Los Angeles was much cooler and wetter than it is today and its landscape teemed with ground sloths, horses, elephants and camels – a virtual kingdom of prehistoric creatures. There were even redwood trees.

These are among numerous fascinating revelations chronicled in a recently released MTA-funded report authored by paleontologist Bruce Lander. Working with a team of 28 scientists, he discovered more than 2,000 fossils, many of them rare, during construction of the Metro Red Line.

There is even evidence of a great flood in the San Fernando Valley 9,000 years ago that swept away trees, although weather conditions were drier and more extreme than today.

"This is one of the most important projects we've had in terms of providing new information and data to the scientific community," Lander said. "Our data will lead to a number of new publications."

Experts are in the process of reviewing the significant findings described in the report, entitled: "Paleontologic Resource Impact Mitigation Program Final Technical Report of Findings." A copy of the report is available in the MTA Library.

### Advances our knowledge

"This extensive body of work advances our knowledge about our world," said MTA Environmental Compliance Manager Jim Sowell.

Fossil finds discussed in the report include:

- 64 extinct species of marine fish, including 39 new to science,
- The tusk of an Ice Age elephant (possibly a Columbian mammoth),
- Bones and teeth of a towering American mastodon, western camel and ancient longhorn bison,
- Bones of Harlan's ground sloth,

**GO UNDERGROUND**

Visit **Fossil  
Fantastic Gallery**  
at **mta.net's L.A.  
Underground**

Wood and pollen of land plants including incense cedar and coast redwood trees, and

- Birds, shrews, cottontail rabbits, gophers, mice and kangaroo rats.

"Scholars will find this to be an invaluable, complete reference tool," said Sowell. "The MTA went the extra mile in uncovering these materials. The report also demonstrates how many disciplines are involved in a modern paleontological exploration."

### **Colorful photos and maps**

The 300-page report contains colorful fossil photos and maps pinpointing where the fossils were found. It describes the more than 2,000 fossils found primarily at the 11 stations that comprise Segments 2 and 3 of the Metro Red Line.

The report covers a period from about 16.5 million years ago to about 10,000 years ago. Segments 2 and 3 stretch 10.9 miles from Wilshire and Vermont to Lankershim and Chandler in North Hollywood.

"This report summarizes the results of a multi-year mitigation program supported by the MTA since 1987," Lander said. "It demonstrates the benefits of a major construction project to the science of paleontology. Many of the fossil discoveries are scientifically highly important because they represent the first or oldest fossil record of their respective species."

The fossils can be viewed on the MTA's "Los Angeles Underground" website at [www.mta.net](http://www.mta.net). They also are periodically displayed in the MTA library.

Funding for the report was provided by grants to the MTA from the U.S. Department of Transportation Urban Mass Transportation Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the State of California and from local transportation funds.

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## MTA's First Technology and Innovation Forum Showcased New and Exciting Technologies

By RICK JAGER

(Dec. 7) The MTA's first Technology and Innovation Forum showcased new and exciting technologies, including state-of-the-art electronic devices and computer programs as well as an array of electric vehicles that include electric and hybrid cars, scooters and bicycles.

"The advances in technology over the past 10 years have transformed the way we get things done," said Board Chair Yvonne Burke, addressing forum participants. "It's clear to the MTA and its Board that as technology has changed the way we communicate, it is also changing the way we travel."

"We have a requirement to keep our air clean," said Burke. "We're also under federal orders to reduce traffic on our freeways and streets. But, most of all, we need to look at alternative fuels and the only way we're going to get them is to have new transportation technology."

As she spoke, exhibitors from a number of energy-related companies displayed high-tech products on the 3rd floor mezzanine and on the Plaza. These included electric cars, bicycles and scooters.

### Looking at the future

The day-long conference, whose speakers included science fiction author Ray Bradbury, academics and transportation experts, looked at the future of LA County and how the transportation infrastructure may be impacted by new technology and innovations.

"As we look toward the future, there are really no magic bullets in terms of transportation solutions for the region," said James de la Loza, executive officer, Countywide Planning. "It is clear that we are not going to be able to build our way out of congestion. We need to make better use of what we already have, target our resources and use our infrastructure more efficiently."



From the top: **Edison** banners fly in plaza; Marketing's **Joe Simpson** takes off, and science fiction author **Ray Bradbury** addresses the forum. Below, MTA Board Chair and County Supervisor **Yvonne Brathwaite Burke** gets a charge out of her scooter and keeps on going and going....



and going.

Special technical presentations were provided by Ford and General Motors, which now produce hybrid and electric cars. Other companies displayed computer and electronic devices, fuel cells and micro-turbine engines.

Improving efficiency in the current systems is the charge of the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) planning efforts and one of the reasons for Thursday's forum.

The MTA currently is drafting a 25-year Long-Range Transportation Plan as the blueprint for transportation planning and investment in the county. The draft plan should be available to the public in January and will be considered for adoption by the Board next spring.

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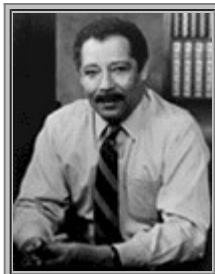


PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD (1&2) AND JOSÉ UBALDO (3,4,5)



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The MTA has set up a temporary Memorial Fund on behalf of Congressman Julian C. Dixon, who died Dec. 8. Employees may make contributions at the MTA Credit Union or at the Government Relations office on the 19th floor. The Dixon family has requested that all contributions be given to the American Heart Association and/or to the American Cancer Society. Contributions will be accepted until close of business on Monday, Dec. 18. For further information, contact Marisa Yeager at 922-2262.

## Rep. Julian Dixon, LA Transit Champion, is Dead



Rep. Julian Dixon

(Dec. 8) Rep. Julian Dixon, long regarded as Congress' leading supporter of Los Angeles' commuter rail system and who represented his West LA district for 22 years, has died.

Dixon died Friday morning in Los Angeles of an apparent heart attack. He recently had told colleagues that he was undergoing minor surgery. He was 66.

"Los Angeles has lost a true giant and a friend with the passing of Congressman Julian Dixon," said CEO Julian Burke. "For decades he led the fight in Congress to secure federal funding for mass transit in the region.

"He had the foresight to realize that Los Angeles needed alternatives to freeways and automobiles if the region were to sustain its economic growth and quality of life in the face of rapid population growth," Burke added. "He championed not only Metro Rail, but also the revamping of bus service for MTA and more than a dozen municipal bus operators in Los Angeles County. His perseverance, leadership and vision will be sorely missed."

### Promoted federal aid

Dixon was the ranking Democrat on the House intelligence committee and a key member of the panel that determines defense spending, a position he used to promote federal aid for communities hit by base closings and other defense cuts.

Dixon graduated from Cal State LA and earned a law degree from Southwestern University. He served in the California Assembly from 1972 until 1978. That year he was elected to the first of 11 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. He won re-election in November with 84 percent of the vote.

He is survived by his wife, Bettye Lee, and a son, Cary Gordon Dixon.

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**'Street Saints'  
Artist to Speak at  
Wednesday  
'Brown-Bagger'**

(Dec. 12) There are 78 streets in Los Angeles named for saints and artist J. Michael Walker has studied every one of them. He also has created artworks that tell the saints' history and their relationship to the streets and the people who live on them.



Poster from All Saints Projects appears at MTA bus stop. PHOTO BY SALLY STEIN

Walker will speak during a "brown bag" lunch from 12 - 1 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 13, in the Board Overflow Room. His address, entitled, "All the Saints of the City of the Angels," is part of the MTA's Pedestrian/Urban Environment Transportation Linkages program.

Large posters of Walker's work have been placed at a number of Metro Bus stops along the "saintly" streets. The project also has been featured on the CBS network's morning news show, on Channel 56's "Casa Martinez," and on KCET's "Life and Times."

For information about the lunch, contact James Rojas at 922-2451 or by e-mail to [rojasj@mta.net](mailto:rojasj@mta.net).

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Willie Jordan announces bountiful holiday cheer for the Fred Jordan Mission's Skid Row Kids in scenes from MTA gift drive.



Above, organizers celebrate success, from left, Willie Jordan, MTA Drive Chair Bessie Rush-Johnson, Human Resources Executive Officer Ray Inge and HR Director Naomi Nightingale, and executive vice president of Fred Jordan Mission.

## Santa Shoulders 5,000 Toys in MTA's Drive for Skid Row Kids

(Dec. 12) Santa Claus struck a rich vein of gifts for the Fred Jordan Mission's Skid Row Kids when he arrived at the MTA Tuesday morning.

An estimated 5,000 new toys and other items donated by MTA employees were piled high on the Plaza. Even the children from the Child Care Center brought gifts to be added to the total.

Two Metro Bus coaches were required to transport all the gifts to the Mission, located not far from 4th and Alameda in Los Angeles. The agency's drive ranks with that of the Disney Company as the Mission's largest, according to Willie Jordan, widow of the late founder.

"I want to thank all employees for their support of this year's Gift Giving Drive," said Drive Chair Bessie Rush-Johnson, who noted that gifts came from employees at Headquarters, the RRC and every operating division. "Without them, we couldn't have done this."

MTA employees and family members will help distribute the gifts to the 12,000 to 15,000 kids who will gather at the Mission on Sunday, Dec. 17, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Each child will receive three gifts - a "major" toy and two lesser ones, Jordan explained.

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PLAZA LEVEL -General Services Supervisor Phyllis Meng, center, explains the floor plan for new Plaza-level offices to Records and Mail Services Manager Bob Sanders and Human Resources Manager Kathi Harper.

## **Vacant Plaza-Level Space to be Developed for Employment, Records and Security Offices**

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Dec. 12) For five years a large space on the ground floor of MTA Headquarters has stood vacant, its interior dark, its picture windows dusty. Now, however, construction crews are developing the space for use by the Human Resources employment office, Records Management and MTA Security.

The build-out, which began Monday, will give the public direct access off Patsaouras Plaza to the employment office and Records Management, says General Services Director Brian Soto. The employment office currently is located on the 4th Floor, while Records Management is on P-1.

Public entry to the employment office will be through a south-facing door just east of the building's main entrance. The Records Management entryway will be directly across from the Child Care Center.

### **Triggers other office moves**

Moving HR's employment offices off the 4th Floor will trigger other office moves within the Headquarters building as departments group their employees together on certain floors, says Soto. Some 1,800 employees currently work in the building.

Soto expects the Plaza-level construction project to be completed by the end of February, with occupancy expected before the end of March.

The contractor will provide such tenant improvements as lighting, plumbing and air conditioning. Crews also will erect walls, hang doors, level some floors and install carpeting. He doesn't expect the work to inconvenience employees or the public.

When the build-out is completed, the employment office will occupy 2,694 square feet. HR's area will include testing and interview rooms,

a customer service counter, employee badge photo room and carrels for completing paperwork.

**Public records access**

Records Management will use 1,088 square feet for offices and a customer service area. Most of the MTA's public records are stored off-site, but can be retrieved upon request.

MTA Security will not have a Plaza entrance, but will use 2,682 square feet of space for its administrative offices. The department currently is located on the 9th Floor.

The building plans originally proposed by Union Station Gateway, a joint venture between the MTA and Catellus that was formed to build the Headquarters, called for the space to be used as a restaurant or retail outlet. Low market demand and other reasons sidetracked that plan, however, and the space was reserved for office use.

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## **Council Votes Extra Year for Valley Transportation Zone**

(Dec. 13) The Los Angeles City Council has given the San Fernando Valley Transportation Zone another year of life.

In a vote, Tuesday, the council extended the joint powers authority by a year. It had been scheduled to go out of business Jan. 1, 2001.

In its vote, the council also asks for \$300,000 from the MTA and SCAG to pay the fees of consultants and attorneys who will be involved in negotiating the transfer of MTA facilities and equipment to a Valley Transportation Zone.

The Zone currently includes the cities of Burbank, Glendale, San Fernando, La Canada-Flintridge, Calabasas, Agoura Hills, Westlake Village and Hidden Hills.

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Dieter Hemsing

## **Hemsing Named Director of Inventory Management in Procurement**

(Dec.13) Dieter Hemsing, a 22-year MTA veteran who came up through the ranks from bus mechanic to management, has been named director of Inventory Management, Logistics, in Procurement.

In his new position, Hemsing, 48, will be responsible for a 170-member staff of storekeepers, clerks, drivers and managers who warehouse and distribute some \$64 million in bus, rail and construction parts and supplies. He will report to Ted Montoya, deputy executive officer, Procurement.

Hemsing began his career as a bus mechanic at Division 7. He was promoted to equipment maintenance supervisor in 1982 and later served as a maintenance manager at various divisions and as Service Operations Director at divisions 10 and 6.

Born in Hannover, Germany, Hemsing immigrated to California with his parents in the 1950s. While serving in the U.S. Air Force, Hemsing worked as a voice processing specialist for the National Security Agency in Berlin during the Cold War.

Hemsing earned an Associates of Arts Degree in German from Cerritos College. He graduated in 1992 from the University of Phoenix with a bachelor's degree in management and earned a master's degree in business administration in 1999. He also holds a translator's certificate from the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif.

Hemsing lives with his wife, Wanda, in La Habra Heights, and has a son, Nikolaus, 24, who works as a language arts consultant for an education technology company. Hemsing and his wife enjoy world travel, as well as building and restoring cars.

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## MTA to Offer Patrons Free Rides on Christmas and New Year's Eves

By GARY WOSK

(Dec. 14) For the sixth consecutive year, the MTA will offer free bus and train rides on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Patrons may ride free from 9 p.m. until closing on Metro Rail and until 5 a.m. on Christmas Day and New Year's Day on the Metro Bus system.

Metro Rail and the Metro Bus system will operate on a Sunday schedule Christmas Day and New Year's Day, both of which fall on Monday this year.

KLVE (107.5 FM), La Nueva (101.9 FM) and KTNQ (1020 AM) - among Los Angeles' top-rated Spanish language radio stations - are co-sponsors of this year's free rides. The stations will begin airing

announcements each hour beginning Friday, Dec. 15.

The free rides also will be publicized on MTA buses and on Metro Rail ticket vending machines.

"Members of the MTA Board decided to introduce this public service program because they were very concerned about the personal safety of people who will be out and about celebrating the holidays," said Warren Morse, deputy executive officer, Marketing and Customer Relations. "Hopefully, many will be persuaded to leave their car at home and instead use mass transit, lessening the likelihood of accidents, unwanted injuries and even fatalities."

For complete routes and schedule information, the public can call 1-800-COMMUTE or visit the MTA's website, which includes a customized trip planner, at [www.mta.net](http://www.mta.net).

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## **Carmen Muñoz-Silva Named EEO Manager in HR**

(Dec. 14) Carmen Muñoz-Silva, an attorney with many years' experience in employee and labor relations, has been named manager of Equal Employment Opportunity. She reports to Ray Inge, executive officer, Human Resources.

Muñoz-Silva is responsible for ensuring that the MTA complies with federal and state laws regarding harassment and discrimination. Among her duties are providing counsel and coaching to managers in EEO matters, including the agency's affirmative action programs.

In addition, she is charged with making certain that the EEO organization provides all involved parties with an objective, neutral process for thorough investigation of EEO violations.

Her seven-member department also monitors compliance with various EEO policies and offers conciliation services aimed at resolving conflicts among employees or between managers and employees.

### **Counsel and conflict resolution**

Muñoz-Silva most recently worked at Cedars Sinai Medical Center, where she provided employee and labor relations counsel and conflict resolution to a number of departments within the Health System.

She held a similar position at the Parsons Corp. in Pasadena and earlier served 13 years as an attorney and human resources manager at Southern California Edison, where she was responsible for EEO and employee relations. She began her legal career as a staff attorney for the National Labor Relations Bureau.

A native of New York City who grew up in New Jersey, Muñoz-Silva earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish from Fairleigh Dickinson University and a master's in teaching from the university. She taught English as a second language for a time before moving to California. She earned her law degree at Loyola School of Law, Los Angeles.

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## **CEO Extends Pay Hike to Non-Rep Employees Hired Jan. 1 - June 30, 2000**

(Dec. 14) CEO Julian Burke has extended this year's 2.7 percent pay increase to non-represented employees who were hired between Jan. 1 and June 30, 2000.

Under guidelines issued by the Office of the CEO, employees hired during that time period must have completed their initial probationary period in order to be eligible for the raise.

For example, an employee hired June 18, 2000, would be eligible for the pay increase the first day following the successful completion of the probationary period – in this case, on Dec. 19, according to Ray Inge, executive officer, Human Resources.

Employees whose probation was extended, and who have successfully completed their probationary period, also will be eligible for the raise, Inge said.

Employees who were hired July 1, 2000, or later, are not eligible for the pay increase because they were not employed during the 1999-2000 fiscal year, which ended June 30.

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## MTA to Provide Ideas for SCAG's 20-Year Transportation Plan

(Dec. 15) The MTA will be taking a close look at the 20-year Regional Transportation Plan issued in draft form, Thursday, by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and will provide its own recommendations for incorporation into the regional plan early next year.

Read [SCAG Press Release](#): **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FACED WITH A LOOMING TRANSPORTATION CRISIS**

The SCAG plan - CommunityLink21 - estimates that by 2025, the region will generate some 700 million transit trips a year (up from 567 million in 1997), but notes that "...this number still falls far short of what is needed to effectively reduce congestion and vehicle emissions...over the next 20 years."

To address this need, the draft plan envisions dedicated bus transit corridors and new freeway lanes. It suggests expanding Metrolink, increasing facilities at LAX and other airports, and building high-speed Magnetic Levitation (MagLev) rail lines connecting points in Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Orange counties by 2025.

The MTA's Countywide Planning staff expects to complete a set of recommendations for transportation improvements later in December for presentation to the Board in January, said Keith Killough, deputy executive officer, Planning.

"This is part of our continuing collaborative effort to improve transportation," Killough said. "We'll be working closely with SCAG to get the plan adopted. The main thing is to come up with a plan that will entice people to use mass transit and carpools, or to avoid making trips by telecommuting and purchasing goods and services through the Internet."

### **\$110 billion spending plan**

SCAG's plan calls for spending \$110 billion for improvements aimed at easing traffic congestion and meeting the transportation needs of a six-county region that's expected to add seven million new residents and four million new jobs - the equivalent of two Chicagos by 2025.

SCAG acknowledged as "one of the most daunting dilemmas" facing the region is a \$10 billion shortfall in funds needed to maintain the current transportation system and a shortfall of \$40 billion in funding for the improvements outlined in the plan.

The plan recommends a series of initiatives to overcome the funding shortfalls, including a five-cent increase in gasoline taxes in 2005 and a cent per year from 2006 to 2025, extension of sales taxes in San Bernardino, Riverside and Orange counties beyond their "sunset" in 2010 and continuing the governor's plan to provide state funding for local transportation projects.

"Implementation of these funding alternatives would overcome the existing shortfall and allow for approximately \$30 billion in new strategic transportation investments," SCAG said in a news release.

In addition to input from the MTA, the SCAG plan now will be reviewed over the next two months by various committees of the agency, by county transportation commissions and by other participating agencies and the public.



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**December 14, 2000**



## **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FACED WITH A LOOMING TRANSPORTATION CRISIS**

- Overcoming Major Funding Shortfall, Reforming Transit, Meeting Airport Demand Among the Challenges Raised by Southern California Association of Governments' 2001 Draft Regional Transportation Plan

[READ MTA REPORT: MTA to Provide Ideas for SCAG's 20-Year Transportation Plan](#)

**LOS ANGELES-** Citing a series of significant short- and long-term transportation dilemmas confronting the Southland, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) released ***CommunityLink21***, the 2001 Draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update today. Following today's release by SCAG's Regional Council, the Draft RTP Update will now undergo extensive public review and comment over the next several months, during which time a number of the region's daunting regional challenges will be discussed and addressed before SCAG adopts a Final RTP next Spring.

"***CommunityLink21*** presents a transportation blueprint that is flexible enough to meet the unique and diverse needs of Southern California while simultaneously meeting Federal and State requirements," said Lake Forest Councilman Richard Dixon, chair of SCAG's Transportation and Communications Committee that oversaw the Draft Plan's development. "Given the many challenges this plan raises, it is vital that the RTP Update undergo an extensive community review because we need a concerted regional dialogue over how best to proceed with developing our transportation infrastructure over the next 20 years."

***CommunityLink21*** is a comprehensive 20-year action plan for the future of Southern California transportation, analyzing and making recommendations on regional transportation facilities, services and strategies in the region, including mass transportation; roads and highways; ridesharing and other commuter alternatives; airports and seaports; goods movement-related facilities and services (air, truck and rail); bicycle and pedestrian facilities; and Intelligent Transportation Systems and related technologies.

The 2001 Draft RTP looks at all these various regional transportation facilities, services and strategies inclusively, assessing how current modes are performing and identifying new strategic investments to accommodate the forecasted growth in Southern California's population and employment base. By the year 2025, the region is projected to have seven million new residents and four million new jobs, the equivalent of adding two cities the size of Chicago to

## Southern California.

One of the most daunting dilemmas facing Southern California is a multi-billion dollar shortfall in available funding that will be required to develop, and in many cases maintain, needed transportation priorities. Specifically, dwindling gasoline tax revenues, the sunset of sales taxes in San Bernardino, Riverside and Orange Counties by 2010, and other factors will leave the region approximately \$10 billion short of the funds needed to maintain the existing system and institute short-term capital improvements. The funding shortfall under the existing transportation finance system also leaves no resources available for new strategic investments in key transportation priorities.

As a result, **CommunityLink21** recommends a series of transportation funding alternatives to overcome the current system's serious shortfall including: 1) an increase in the gasoline tax by five cents in 2005 and by one cent each year from 2006 to 2025; 2) an extension of sales taxes in San Bernardino, Riverside and Orange Counties beyond 2010 and adoption of a similar revenue measure in Ventura County (Los Angeles County has a permanent sales tax for transportation); 3) the institution of a new revenue mechanism on alternative fuel vehicles; and 4) continuation of Governor Davis' plan to reallocate additional state funds for local transportation projects.

Implementation of these funding alternatives would overcome the existing shortfall and allow for approximately \$30 billion in new strategic transportation investments.

"Southern California needs to consider and institute fundamental reforms to its transportation system's development, maintenance and financing if we hope to sustain the lifestyle we've grown accustomed to during this time of economic prosperity and meet the needs of our ever-growing population," said Los Alamitos Mayor Pro Tem Ronald Bates, president of SCAG.

"What SCAG is proposing for alternative funding strategies is entirely consistent with historical increases in these kinds of revenue sources."

Another issue of major concern is finding regional solutions to managing anticipated air travel and cargo demand. Without developing additional capacity, SCAG's current projections indicate Southern California's airport system will experience a 33 percent shortfall for meeting future air passenger demand and 66 percent shortfall for cargo demand by 2025. The RTP predicts that failure to adequately address and plan for this significant growth would result in major air and ground congestion and could seriously jeopardize Southern California's long-term economy as a national and international trade center.

"The demand on Southern California's airport system is at a breaking point," said Ventura County Supervisor Judy Mikels, former chair of SCAG's Aviation Task Force. "We have the largest regional airport system in the world and demand is growing at a steady pace. Without a comprehensive regional plan to accommodate our growing population and airport demand in a fair and equitable manner, we run a serious risk of impacting Southern California's position as a national and international trade center."

The Draft RTP – along with a related Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) that will be released in January – analyze a variety of

aviation scenarios, including the development of a commercial air facility at the El Toro Marine Air Station, the impact of plans to expand capacity at Los Angeles International Airport, the effect of high-speed rail connections between certain airports, and the extent to which outlying airports in Palmdale, Ontario and the Inland Empire can meet the increasing demand for access to and from the Southern California region.

**CommunityLink21** also identifies systemic problems with the manner in which Southern California's transit systems are currently operated. While some individual transit operators are attracting great numbers of riders, the overall regional transit system is failing to keep up with the demand and attract enough riders to sustain overall operating costs.

More specifically, approximately 20 percent of Southern California's transit operators handle about 60 percent of the region's transit riders. By the year 2025, SCAG estimates that the region will generate approximately 700 million transit trips per year (up from 567 million trips in 1997), but this number still falls far short of what is needed to effectively reduce congestion and vehicle emissions based on the region's expected growth over the next 20 years.

**CommunityLink21** recommends a series of policies and actions designed to increase transit use by improving the regional system's overall efficiency and effectiveness, as well as enhancing the number of transit choices available to commuters. The Draft Plan calls for a significant increase in the capacity of the Metrolink commuter rail system, in addition to the development of dedicated transit corridors in a number of heavily congested areas throughout Southern California. It also recommends development of an intra-regional high-speed transportation system based on Magnetic Levitation (Maglev) technology that connects the region's major population and transportation centers. Finally, the Draft Plan calls for a series of institutional, operational and financial policy reforms to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of Southern California's transit network.

"In order to provide a strong, viable, and affordable transit system in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Southern California region needs to seriously focus on reforming our current transit service" said Los Angeles City Councilman Hal Bernson, chair of SCAG's Regional Transit Task Force. "Public outreach and dialogue is especially important in this sector due to the generally decentralized nature of transit service in Southern California. The implementation of these reforms will present numerous challenges and require a regional consensus building process."

**CommunityLink21** and the related PEIR will now undergo an extensive two-month period of review and comment, a continuation of ongoing community outreach efforts involving numerous public hearings, workshops and forums throughout Southern California. At the conclusion of this public outreach period and following the incorporation of comments and input, SCAG's Regional Council is scheduled to adopt a final RTP in the Spring of 2001, at which point **CommunityLink21** will be submitted for Federal approval.

# # #

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CIRCA 1920s-Guests arriving at Foster's Cafeteria across from Universal Studios left behind artifacts from "Blue Plate Specials" for MTA archaeologists. PHOTO COURTESY OF GREENWOOD AND ASSOCIATES

## **MTA Archaeologists Make Significant Discovery at Universal City Station**

By GARY WOSK

Archaeologists hired by the MTA have discovered the remnants of long-forgotten "fast food" restaurants at the Universal City Metro Red Line station. The restaurants were patronized by Universal Studios employees  $\frac{3}{4}$  possibly even movie stars  $\frac{3}{4}$  during the Golden Age of Hollywood.

The finds, made last March as construction workers were readying land on the northern half of the station site for a park-'n-ride facility, consist mainly of dishes and silverware.

In addition to plates and cutlery, the artifacts  $\frac{3}{4}$  which number in the hundreds and date back to the 1920s and before  $\frac{3}{4}$  include cups, glasses, sundae dishes, salt and pepper shakers discarded by Foster's Cafeteria and other restaurants. At the time, burying or burning certain types of refuse was allowed because the city had no centralized trash pickup system.

"Generally when restaurants close their doors for good and are razed, nothing is left behind," said lead archaeologist John Foster of Greenwood and Associates. "The discovery of such an extensive array of serving ware and other interesting items was an archaeological jackpot. It opens another window of understanding on what life used to be like in the Southland."

### **'Blue Plate' Specials**

Foster's Cafeteria and several other restaurants believed to have been demolished in the early 1960s appear to have specialized in "Blue Plate" specials, coffee and pastries.

The cache of artifacts was found close to the historical Campo de Cahuenga where Articles of Capitulation were signed in 1847,

effectively ending California hostilities in the war between the United States and Mexico.

"On their way to catch the next train at the Universal Metro Red Line station, people should pause for a moment and try to imagine what life may have been like on the very ground they're standing on decades ago," said Jim Sowell, manager, MTA Environmental Compliance. "It's really quite fascinating."

The new finds are described in a study being prepared by Greenwood and Associates. Highlights include photos of the restaurant artifacts as well as 1920s era aerial views of the area, which lies adjacent to the 101 Freeway and Lankershim Boulevard, across from Universal Studios. There is even a section in the study that focuses on how the area has developed since the 1700s.

The study, which will be published in January, also alludes to several other unidentified restaurants believed to have been built in the 1919-1924 period ¾ shops, gas stations and a onetime "island" community of homes called Orchard Acres that was surrounded by the meandering Los Angeles River.

The Los Angeles County Natural History Museum and San Bernardino County Museum have been contacted by the MTA and Greenwood and Associates about curating the collection.

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## Crews Hard at Work on New Plaza-Level Office Space

(Dec. 18) A construction crew is hard at work building rooms on the Plaza level of Headquarters for the Human Resources employment office, Records Management and MTA Security.

Workmen will begin by extending the floor on the west side of the room to accommodate the 2,694 square foot employment office. The contractor - Earl Corp. of Pasadena - also will install lighting, plumbing and air conditioning, new walls, doors, and carpeting.



Records Management will occupy 1,088 square feet of the new area for customer service, while MTA Security will use 2,682 square feet of space for its administrative offices.

Public entry to the employment office will be through a south-facing door just east of the building's main entrance. The Records Management entryway will be directly across from the Child Care Center.



The construction project is scheduled to be completed by the end of February, with occupancy expected before the end of March. --TEXT AND PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD.



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**Division 8 Wins Holiday Bus Decorating Contest**



Santa Claus greets parade of holiday buses in Patsaouras Transit Plaza, as Division 8 Chatsworth bus takes the lead in first place followed by Division 18 Carson's second place winning entry. TEXT AND PHOTOS BY GAYLE ANDERSON

**HOLIDAY BUS CONTEST PHOTO GALLERY**

CLICK ON IMAGE TO VIEW.



Chatsworth High School students board Division 8's winning entry. Some 120 high school students, who mentored Germain elementary students in the project, decorated the bus.



Second place trophy winner Division 18 Carson bus basks in the plaza sunshine.



Transit chief Tom Conner delivers second place trophy to Sergio Rubalcava, Division 18 Sr. Equipment Maintenance Supervisor. Team was ably assisted by South Gate State Elementary School students.



Maria Reynolds, Asst. Division Transportation Manager, accepts First Place trophy for Division 8 Chatsworth entry.



Interior of Division 18 Carson bus is beginning to look a lot like Christmas.

	Interior of runner-up Division 5 holiday bus is filled with holiday spirit.
	Division 5 Bus Operator Eddie Gil looks like the real deal.
	Division 3 architects and interior designers from Aragon Elementary School, ably assisted by second grade teacher Burt Levine, right, and special ed teacher Mrs. Taylor, center, celebrate prized participation trophy.

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### 'Strike Stories' Contest Winners



**WINNERS' CIRCLE** - Chief Operating Officer **Allan Lipsky**, center, congratulates winners of the "Strike Stories" essay contest, from left, **Yvonne Price**, second place; **Elijah Johnson**, third place; **Patti Jacobs**, first place, and **Lisa Miller**, editor's choice. [Click here](#) to read 'Strike Stories' entries.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** More than 30 employees participated in the "Strike Stories" essay contest. In this memo, Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky announces the winners. The essay contest was sponsored by the Executive Leadership Team.

**December 19**

**To: All Employees**

**From: Allan Lipsky, Chief Operating Officer**

The "Strike Stories" essay contest has come to a successful conclusion and the winners have been selected by a panel of judges.

Let's congratulate the First Place essayist and winner of four tickets to "The Lion King," **Patricia Jacobs**. The Second Place essay was written by **Yvonne Price**, winner of a Holiday Basket from Employee Activities; while the Third Place essayist was Division 15 Metro Bus Operator **Elijah Johnson**, winner of a large box of See's Old-Tyme Candies. In addition, Intranet Editor Bill Heard selected an essay by **Lisa Miller**, a clerk at Division 3, for an "Editor's Choice" award.

I wish to thank all of those who took the time to send in your very personal and often heartwarming stories about your experiences during the strike. I was overwhelmed by the attitude expressed by nearly every writer.

The strike was a difficult time for all of us at the MTA. But, it also gave each of us a new set of challenges with opportunities for new experiences and a greater appreciation of the strength of the MTA when we work together as a team.

Strike Stories were written by both non-represented employees, many of whom worked new assignments, and represented employees who were on strike. Everyone showed a depth of concern for their fellow employees and their families and for our passengers whose lives were impacted by the strike. These stories show that the MTA's strength is really its great team of employees.

Selecting one winner from more than 30 entries was no easy task. In truth, each and every person who managed to make a positive experience out of a very difficult situation is a winner.

I want to thank MTA Librarian Dorothy Gray and her panelists - Rich Morallo, Joyce Chang, Scott Green and Michael Flores - for their work in making the difficult choices to select our "Strike Stories" essay contest winners.

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# STRIKE STORIES



**By Andre Villasenor**  
Environmental Specialist  
Environmental Compliance

**The most incredible thing about graveyard strike duty** was my unforgettable UFO experience. While patrolling the grounds of Division 5 at approximately 3:48 a.m., I looked up at the moonless sky to see hundreds of brilliant lights moving slowly overhead.

At first I thought that the lights were those of an airplane, since they all moved together in unison. But no sooner had I glanced away and looked back at the lights to see that they had suddenly diverged! Half of the lights headed north while the others headed east.

I watched in awe as the lights converged once again before "gliding" in my direction. They came so close to where I was standing, just over 500 feet overhead, that I could see their form and shape. Each of them was long, and rectangular, with circular appendages of some sort dangling from their bottom "chassis."

As they came closer and closer, I could hear the low, rumbling sound of engines. There was smoke wafting out from each of them, strikingly similar to diesel smoke, and as they swooped down, I realized they were MTA buses.

A loudspeaker blasted forth from one them, "Given this interminable strike that you earthlings have decided to invoke, we have abducted your buses and will be putting them to good use on our planet, since Gawd knows when you all are finally going to settle this matter!!"

Suddenly, the phone in the Division 5 office rang, and I was startled awake from my strange dream.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Anton Andersen**

Configuration Management Manager  
Program Control

**My strike duty was just one night** at Division 8, but therein lies the story. All the people in Jeff Christiansen's Program Management Department pulled a minimum because he did a duty roster for the entire department including himself. You can always tell a military background! Some exceptions were made for mothers with small kids and planned vacations.

When we made out the roster I volunteered for weekend night duty at Division 8 in Chatsworth because it would be the easiest for the 86-mile drive from my Rialto home.

My duty night turned out to be the same Sunday I had volunteered to help man an Operation Lifesaver booth at a Santa Ana street fair. I left that in time to have a leisurely dinner before driving to the Division.

I got there about 30 minutes early. The strikers marched in front of my truck for a few minutes before Maria Reynolds let me in. Pat Orr was glad to see me as he had been there for 16 hours. "Sign here for the keys and the TV's upstairs in the Break Room," he said as he hustled home.

I figured my best chance for staying awake was the hard plastic chairs of the Break Room. I made it through the night watching TV and thinking about what might have been in '94 when I trained as a bus driver and in '97 when I trained as a Metro Red Line operator for six weeks.

Teamwork lightened the load for everyone!

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Augusto Lopez**  
Senior Administrative Analyst  
Bus Operations Safety

**During the strike, I was volunteered to work as a "Transit Ambassador."** I reported early in the morning to fulfill my duty.

After almost 11 years of service, this was my second strike experience and both experiences were different. During the 1994 union negotiation, I worked at Division 10 as a service attendant warming up, fueling and blowing-out buses to sustain the limited service provided.

This recent strike, I learned to adapt to cold, warm and hot conditions, not necessarily in that order, at and around the East Portal area of Union Station.

Rush hour commuters wanted to be heard. Whether they were positive or negative, I listened. I knew that they were speaking from the heart. They were frustrated, pressured and angry. I greeted them with respect. Almost apologetic at times. If they seemed lost, I offered help. Occasionally, I received cold responses. One may agree that this strike was educational, resolvable, and worthwhile.

After standing for 5 hours, it was tiring but fulfilling and fun. I know that I have in some way made a difference in people's lives - the public, our dearest customers - by providing assistance and directions to get to the downtown area during rush hour and the UTU union negotiation.

Thanks to the general public - without whom there would be no MTA - for the experience and opportunity to serve.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Benita Lynn Horn**

Sr. Career Development Specialist  
HR Development & Training

**I work in the Human Resources Department.** I was assigned to Customer Relations to answer the 1-800-COMMUTE lines. During the first week-end of the strike, over 8,000 citizens called to ask for alternate bus routes.

I worked in that department for three weeks, and it was one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had. The managers were extremely supportive and my co-workers had positive attitudes – everyone was committed to finding some type of transportation alternative for their customers.

Admittedly, it was an emotional time – sometimes people called to yell at us out of anger or frustration. One day, a single mother called because she needed a route to the babysitter's house, and then a route to work. After 15 minutes of searching, I couldn't find a route for her. She started crying and said that she would be fired if she couldn't get to work. I felt so badly that I almost offered to go and pick her up in my car.

I reluctantly asked a manager for help, even though I knew that part of town had limited service. Without hesitation, my supervisor, Renee, sat down at the computer and started typing. She identified an itinerary involving 6 buses! It would take three hours to get to work, but at least she could get there. That put a smile on my face for the rest of the day.

I am thankful for the opportunity to have helped during a difficult time for MTA and the citizens of Los Angeles.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Cynthia A. Toles**

Scheduling Systems Technician  
Operations Data Analysis

**My idea of avoiding the strike** was to take two weeks vacation, then return to work. Hopefully, everything would be back to normal. Wrong choice. I returned just in time for the strike to begin.

I was assigned to Customer Information. My duties were to help as many people as I could to get from their origination to their destination in an adequate time frame.

Transportation was very limited. Keeping in mind that the elderly could not walk for long distances, and because students are easily confused, I would use the computer for bus connections and the Thomas Guide to check walking distances. All effort was given to use one to four buses to set up a trip. It was very hard telling patrons we had no service for the area they were seeking.

One day, I received a call from a guy in Altadena trying to get to LAX. He had been spending \$36.00 a day by cab. I was able to get four buses to connect him to LAX. The patron was impressed and I had a sense of accomplishment that superceded all my failures.

My heart went out to the strikers and I felt their pain, but if I had not been asked to work in Customer Information I would not know how complicated and important this job is. Communications Manager Tom Longsdon, Communications Officer Lola Gagner and the many other supervisors were great in helping us to perform our duties.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Daniel Miller**

Senior Administrative Analyst  
Quality Assurance

**We all know a strike is not a good thing.** But there is the opportunity to learn new skills. In my case, this strike and the 1994 strike proved interesting experiences.

In '94 after a month's training, I drove a bus on the Pacoima to Westwood route. I had never driven a bus and I found the experience enhanced my understanding of Operations.

This year, I experienced day shifts on the Maintenance side for Divisions 8 and 15. Aside from turning on and off all the buses each day, I replaced seat inserts and window guards. Within Quality Assurance where I work, we have discussed how this could be expanded.

I remember several positive actions from striking employees. This year I observed them checking their watches to ensure that waiting vehicles were not unreasonably delayed.

The '94 strike left more memorable experiences in crossing a picket line. I will never forget my first day as a bus operator.

That first morning we temporary bus drivers lined up to exit the division as striking employees engaged in frenzied picket line. I will always remember two comments made to me as I waited to drive across the picket line. One employee was a shop steward who recognized me and one an employee who did not know me.

The shop steward told me to take it easy and to drive the bus safely. The other employee told me to not let the passengers upset me and to be careful in driving the bus.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Donna Finn**

Senior Administrative Analyst  
Systemwide Safety  
Improvements

**It was early Saturday morning.** The strike has just begun. I took my first call in Customer Information. An elderly woman was in a panic because she couldn't get to her cardiologist. She had just been released from the hospital following heart surgery. I spent about an hour with her that Saturday, successfully helping her find a way to her doctors.

My second call was from a man who was incensed that he couldn't get to Hollywood. He vowed he would sue the MTA. "The trouble with the MTA", he insisted, "is that you just don't care about commuters."

For over a month I answered calls in Customer Information, trying to help people all over the city. Many were angry, some were depressed, but the majority of the callers were grateful for any assistance I could provide them.

I never knew what the words "transit dependent" meant before. Many of my customers were utterly without any viable means of transportation. For them, our bus and rail service are their lifelines to the outside world, and our transportation schedules are their bibles to a fuller life. During the strike, with so few buses running and without any rail service, many of them were rendered virtually helpless.

For the first time since I joined the MTA nine years ago, I really felt a connection to the riding public. I now realize how important a service we provide, and that without us, many thousands of our fellow citizens would be left in isolation.

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# STRIKE STORIES



**By Eddie Ponce**

Bus Operator

Division 9

**The recent transit strike gave this bus operator** an opportunity to discover a whole New World. A place where colorful artwork and pictures fill the room and create smiles, laughter and memories for those who pass through.

Such a place exists on MTA property just adjacent to One Gateway Plaza. The Child Development Center.

While the wheels of the bus had stopped rolling, these children, mostly MTA dependents, just kept right on trucking. Oblivious to a labor dispute, these kids' only concern was, "what's for snack?" Their disputes were easily settled with compromise.

The picketers did their part, though, by agreeing to hold noise levels down during the children's naptime, which was very considerate of them.

When not picketing, I would enjoy spending time at the Center. With two daughters attending, it was a perfect opportunity to watch them interact, as well as interact myself.

I listened to little minds just full of wonder. I reminisced about the days of playing with toy buses. How carefree we were as kids.

Most of us carry something over from our childhood. That is to learn to settle our differences and forgive, so we can continue to "play" together nicely.

The staff can take some credit. They are truly incredible teachers who love to teach.

Although it was nice to be "Teacher for a Day," I was glad to be back behind the wheel, listening to stories of people working for their families, as the MTA once again works as a family.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Fe Alcid-Little**

Secretary

Procurement Administration

**I was assigned first shift at Division 3.** The first thing I learned about was transfer tickets.

The Transportation Manager showed me the ABCs of doing this task. It didn't take long to learn. The numbered booklets have to be replaced every day and should be exact and precise for each line, before putting them on slots especially made for this purpose and given to operators before they start their runs.

The sheet of paper the operators read is their Route Sheet. It tells the operators how long their route is, what time they should be at bus stops and the length of their layover. Extra board operators are scheduled daily and have different runs which are posted separately on the Bulletin Board.

We had to do all these tasks every day, even though the operators were on strike.

I also was given the chance to work in Maintenance, turning buses on and off and changing seats. It's horrible, the treatment they get from the public.

This strike taught me the shared professionalism, rapport and camaraderie with employees from different departments and provided a once-in-a-lifetime experience with them.

The transition from one job to another was not difficult. The managers of Division 3 taught us that an enormous job we thought impossible was possible to learn and do. I would certainly do it all over again, but most of all, I am glad to be of help to the MTA when they needed me.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Henry Castaneda**  
Senior Rail Transportation  
Operations Supervisor  
Rail Operations Control

**During the strike I was assigned** to Division 11 as the Assistant Manager.

Each day, I would talk to the operators on the picket line and listen to their concerns. I was very proud of all the operators at Division 11 for the way they conducted themselves and had respect for everyone that passed their way.

The Rail TOSs also did what they could to help the operators with food and other necessities. I was glad to see my operators and friends come back to work. The operators' and rail supervisors' commitment to their duties is the reason the Metro Blue Line shines.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Jason B. Hebert**  
General Clerk  
Fleet Management

**I had only been working here for about four months when the strike hit.**

That Saturday, I walked from my apartment to the Hollywood/Vine Metro Red Line station. When I arrived, I noticed the station was closed and signs informed me that the transit strike had commenced.

During that time, I discovered just how vital we all are to the county. The business of transporting people across this county requires everyone working together as a team.

I would go to eat at a nearby restaurant and I would hear the people there complaining about the buses not working. They would see my MTA ID and would start to complain to me about what was happening. At night, I would watch the news and listen to the updates. I noticed that the news media mainly broadcast one side of the story and I felt that it was unfair.

I have always believed that the best way to solve a conflict is to listen to both sides and come up with a compromise.

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# STRIKE STORIES

**By Jino Canizares**

Systems Engineer

SCADA Systems Engineering

**I see them all the time doing their jobs.** I realized how demanding and sometimes difficult their jobs could get in keeping the stations and facilities safe for patrons and employees during the strike.

During the strike, I and the rest of the SCADA Engineering Department were assigned to ROC to monitor alarms in the Metro Rail systems. The alarms had to be verified and dealt with accordingly. The alarms could vary from an intrusion into restricted areas or dangerous levels of dangerous gases in the system, fire detection alarms, just to mention a few. Most of the time we would be called upon to look into these problems.

When we'd walk to get lunch, we would see only a handful of shoppers at Hahn Plaza, which otherwise was bustling with people. That's the difference public transportation makes here.

It felt weird being at an empty station during rush hour. It felt like being in an episode of "The Twilight Zone." Yet, we were able to see parts of the stations and tunnels not seen by the public, but mostly used by maintenance. We've seen a lot of rooms where various types of equipment are located.

We understood that during a strike when no trains were running, we still had to maintain and preserve the company's assets. I was glad our group was able to help the company in difficult times and my friends and everybody else are back to work. The strike was just an unnecessary hardship for many.

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# STRIKE STORIES

**By John Drayton**

Vehicle Acquisition Manager

Equipment Engineering

**Like the rest of our department**, I was assigned to strike duty that emphasized keeping our idle buses operational.

Since our department's engineers and technical staff were all pretty familiar with buses, most of us expected to pitch in with routine maintenance activities, such as running buses each day to keep batteries charged. Everyone thought this would be a short term assignment, one or two weeks at most. Nobody wanted a strike, and many were apprehensive about the break from our normal responsibilities.

I was assigned to help support Maintenance Manager Mike Bottone at Division 7. Each morning we started up about a third of Division 7's fleet, roughly 70-80 buses, and we let these buses run for about 45 minutes. We got to the point that four of us could "fire off" all of these buses within 20-30 minutes.

After a short coffee break, we'd reverse the process, shutting off engines and turning off battery switches. During shut-down, we'd look for oil or coolant leaks and any other obvious problems.

After my morning shift at Division 7, I'd often drop in at Gateway or RRC to make sure that my other responsibilities were covered too (at least to some extent).

During my weeks at Division 7, I saw a number of Gateway staff who stopped by (or were volunteered) to help with our daily bus starting drill. When the strike finally ended, we were proud that Division 7 reported few problems starting enough buses to make that first day's roll-out.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Lisa A. Holguin**  
Records Clerk  
Records and Mail Services

**An in-depth and personal look at the MTA strike.** A week prior to the strike, a dear friend of mine had just returned to work, following a horrific car accident. Sandy's recovery took over a year.

During her lengthy recovery she no longer had disability income or medical coverage for herself or her family. An extremely difficult and personal decision had to be made. The welfare of her family came first in choosing to work during the stoppage. She endured harassment and discrimination from close acquaintances and coworkers.

I, as others, need to give thanks for my years of employment with the MTA. Many of us may be more fortunate with a two-income household and are able to save for that rainy day.

Let us be grateful for the treasures in life we do have rather than counting those we don't.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Lou Bendijo-Wong**  
Department Systems Analyst  
Customer Relations

### **On September 18, 2000, I plugged in my headset as MTA**

Switchboard Operator for the first time, and calls immediately began rolling in. In front of me were frequently requested telephone numbers that I jotted down during my two hours of training.

Patrons were more concerned about which bus lines were running than when the strike would end. I took 450 calls that day, and never left my chair, except for a few restroom breaks and to take a Tylenol for my headache.

The next day, we were deluged with calls from irate customers asking when the strike would end. As I advised people to listen to the news for strike updates, many got mad and personally blamed me for the strike.

Two calls were most memorable. One was from a 42-year old businessman, who said he would lose his business because of the strike. He began to cry when he told me he was about to file bankruptcy. Another was from a lady who was angry because a previous employee had put her on hold. She repeatedly called back and put me on hold to let me know how it felt.

From this experience, I learned that to be a telephone operator and interface with the public, one must have endless patience. Callers expect you to know everything, even if it does not pertain to the MTA. Our telephone operators provide an excellent service to the public, and I appreciate more than ever their importance to this organization.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Maria Reynolds**

Assistant Division  
Transportation Manager  
Division 8

The strike for me materialized into a 32-day stint of sleepless nights working the night shift and hard-to-rest days with my boys restless to spend time with their Mom.

On the only night I had off, I was so excited to be able to sleep during the hours of darkness that I couldn't sleep a wink! The rest is history!

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Mary Jane West**

Transportation Project Manager  
Countywide Planning and  
Development

**Although I wasn't originally assigned for strike duty,** I wanted to be part of the strike effort. I had visions of filling in a day here or a day there. I was told to fill in for another employee who was assigned to Customer Information on a six-day shift!

When I reported for duty, I was filled with apprehension. I was briefed and given a headset and a Thomas Guide, although I wasn't sure why I needed the Guide. I took a deep breath and took my first call. The calls came one right after the other.

By the end of the first day, my ear hurt from the headset and my right hand hurt from writing down the information, typing it into the computer and thumbing through the Thomas Guide. I learned what the map book was for.

I served six days in Customer Information. I had mixed feelings when I was pulled off. It had become easier each day as I learned which areas had alternate service. I grew accustomed to the "new physical activity". But I gained far more from my experience than I thought.

I gained respect for the supervisors, who worked cheerfully and tirelessly day after day. I gained appreciation for our customers because I got to experience first-hand what they must go through each day and what they are willing to sacrifice to get where they need to go. Most importantly, I gained appreciation for my job. I remain grateful for the experience.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Primo Sumagaysay**  
Facilities Systems Technician  
Facilities Services

**After 17 years with LACMTA**, I have experienced different kinds of strikes. The latest 32-day strike is the worst. While management and the unions were in a fracas, union members were busy picketing in front of every MTA facility, tired and receiving no paycheck.

My first week of picketing at different divisions, I came home with a leg cramp. I tried to find a solution that would relieve my physical problems. As a Facilities Systems Technician, I mustered all my creativity to develop a basic leg massager. I used it and found it relieving.

As the strike went on, I improved my idea, which turned out to be a multi-functional apparatus beneficial to health and relaxation. This was the birth of an invention I called "The Suma."

"The Suma" is a super massager from neck to foot. It can be used as a legs and feet exerciser, reliever and footrest. It also serves as a stand for the multi-purpose table. The device is portable and lightweight.

I conducted usability tests among senior citizens, bus operators, office employees, mechanics and students with affirmative results. "The Suma" can be used for relaxation at the office desk, at home, while studying and at other times.

An application has been submitted to the Patent and Trademark Office. Hopefully, the product will be released to the public next year.

Hence, the 32-day strike was one of the unforgettable moments in my life at MTA. Perhaps, without this strike, my invention would not have been conceived.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Rebecca Lee**  
Administrative Aide  
Human Resources Personnel

**During the strike,** I worked at the employment counter in the Human Resources Department. I learned a lot while I worked there. It takes a lot of patience in dealing with the public, and since we are here to serve the customer, whatever I was feeling, whether I was tired or hungry, I knew that it was important to put my best foot forward and make the customers feel as if they were the most important people in the world.

I also learned that we have so much to be grateful for here at the MTA, having our jobs, and good paying jobs at that.

It was amazing to me that so many people would come in to apply for one position, when I knew there were only a few openings. It was hard at times, because I found myself wanting to help all of them, explaining to them how to fill out an application and making sure they understood the deadlines. I learned I had to have compassion for their situation.

I realized how hard our Employment Services clerks work, but I was unaware of how busy they are. I appreciate all their efforts and I appreciate my job more now as a result of working out of my classification.

Now, I take more time to see if there is anything they need, like relief for lunch, etc. It is so important to be considerate of each other in the work place.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Rick Noone**

Engineer

Construction Management

**I was hired by MTA in July and** was unaware that a labor dispute was brewing. As a new employee, I wanted to create a positive image, so when management put me on a roster for strike duty, I served without objection.

My assignment was the graveyard shift at Division 5. The round-trip from home was 120 miles and this nocturnal journey quickly grew old; by the end of the first week I was experiencing "buyer's remorse."

My strike duty was limited to answering the phone in the maintenance shop and I was the only person in the building. How boring! And lonely! Typically, around 11:45 p.m., Gateway would call to verify that all was well. I began to look forward to that call.

The nights passed very slowly! In Week 3, some excitement occurred when gun fire erupted during a robbery attempt down the street. Happily, no injuries were reported.

When I returned home that morning, there was a phone message that someone would replace me on the graveyard shift and I should report for work at my usual time and place the next Monday. This ordeal would soon end. Thank God!!

A positive aspect of this experience was my observation that Division 5 management and labor recognized that harmony during this difficult period should be maintained. There was mutual cooperation and respect. The union maintained an orderly picket line and management accommodated the pickets with access to drinking water and restroom facilities - "win - win" behavior.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Rubi DePompa**  
Administrative Aide  
Human Resources Personnel

**During the strike, I was deployed at Division 1. I got to experience what mechanic C and service attendants do for a living. I never imagined checking 180 buses in a day looking for graffiti and vandalism. These vandals do quite a bit of damage to MTA property.**

**I learned how to turn on the bus engines and change seats using commercial power drills and hand tools. I actually got on the floor of the buses on my back, wearing goggles to protect my eyes and changed those seats.**

**I cleaned graffiti off the buses. Boy, what a workout!!! I actually got some real grease on my hands and all over my clothes!!! I also had the opportunity to place gravel on oil slick lanes. I never thought I would ever do anything like that, since I work in an office environment.**

**This was quite a challenge for me, seeing how the other side works. They do work hard. And every day, I appreciate them just as much as I appreciate my current position.**

**But that's not all. As soon, as I finished my tour of duty at Division 1, I served as an Employment Services clerk in the HR Employment Office. We served quite a few customers who were looking for jobs. Again, how I appreciate my job and the Employment Services clerks! Now that we're back to business, they serve more people than I did during the strike.**

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Rudy Rey**  
Supervising Engineer  
Engineering Management

**During the strike, I worked at the Traction Power Maintenance** Department at Division 61. It was exciting and challenging because it gave me a rare opportunity to get hands-on maintenance experience on our rail systems.

One day, we responded to an exhaust fan failure alarm at the 7th and Metro Station. This exhaust fan is essential because it prevents the accumulation of flammable methane gas in the station.

As we were replacing the starter, I recalled the TV series "ER." It was like a team of doctors and nurses performing open heart surgery: "remove that wire, take out the contacts, put in the new starter, make sure the wiring is tight...."

The Traction Power personnel were methodical and precise. I was impressed with the teamwork and I knew the "operation" would be a success.

After the starter was replaced, we were disappointed that the fuse still blew. The "ER" team was shaken but did not give up (this was persistence at its finest). We found the shorted wire and successfully fixed the exhaust fan problem.

We did other tasks such as resetting fire alarms, repairing UPS transfer switches and OCS wires, all of which are vital to maintaining safe and reliable rail operation.

I am proud of the teamwork and dedication of the Traction Power Maintenance Department.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Sandra Blanco-Sanchez**  
Employment Analyst  
Human Resources

**My assignment was as a Customer Information Agent.** It was kind of funny to be assigned there because I used to recruit for this position. But to get a sense of what the position entails could not be described on any job announcement. You really have to wear their head phones to appreciate the work involved.

On my first day, the Telephone Information "scoreboard" read 1,280 next to what I thought were calls. It turned out that figure represented the seconds the call had been waiting. I was more at ease after learning that there were 60 calls waiting. While working there, I was able to get a sense of accomplishment seeing the amount go from 60 to 0 calls.

The assignment was rewarding, challenging and at times entertaining. In the short time I worked there, I was given a marriage proposal and accused of being the "other woman".

But the positive memory I have working with the managers. They were fabulous! They were so patient with their "new staff". I can only imagine managing an entire new staff, giving the public limited service. They cheered us on and no matter how many hands were signaling for help, they remained calm and ever so helpful. They really made me feel like an important part of the team.

Without the strike our paths probably would have never crossed and I would not have had the opportunity to work with such a great group of people.

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# STRIKE STORIES

**By Sharon Sterling**

Communications Officer

Customer Relations

**How many hats can I wear in any given day?** This is the question I asked myself the first few hectic days of the MTA strike as the customers echoed, *"Is the strike over yet?."*

September 20 was my first day operating the MTA switchboard (Centrex). I shared this assignment with another colleague and our relief assistants, averaging approximately 700 calls per day. I was prepared with my training manual, headset and a smile on my face, and in the tone of my voice, to assist the customers in any way possible.

Although this is a position in the Customer Relations Department that I supervise, it's completely different on the other side of the fence. I became the responsible person to connect each call to the proper number, to remain calm even when the switchboard is flashing with a call on every line.

As a Centrex rookie, the pressure was minimized by the dialogue between my colleagues and myself. We exchanged ideas and information, particularly to assist with the more challenging situations and irate calls. It was an incredible experience, communicating with people from Europe, reporters, MTA employees, public officials, various businesses and the general public.

In answer to the question at the beginning of this story, I can wear as many hats as it takes to satisfy each and every customer to the best of my abilities. The hat of patience, courtesy, dedication -- whatever it takes to get the job done and achieve customer satisfaction.

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# STRIKE STORIES



**By Tim Mengle**  
Senior Administrative Analyst  
Treasury

**My draft notice arrived on Day Two of the strike. I was told:  
"You're going to Customer Relations. Report to Metro  
Information, Second Floor."**

**When I first heard that I was assigned to Metro Information, my  
mind filled with horrible images of me, chained to a telephone in  
the Gateway dungeon, tormented by screaming patrons stranded  
throughout the county. My fears were unfounded.**

**The Communications Officers (a.k.a. supervisors) were friendly  
and upbeat. While many of the callers were stranded, surprisingly  
few were screaming and hardly any were obscene. They were  
frustrated and angry, yet much more polite than I might have  
been in their situations.**

**My callers spanned the spectrum: seniors, students, disabled,  
tourists, workers, employers, welfare mothers, parolees,  
picketers and people just wanting someone to talk to. As they  
waited for me to fumble through the CCIS system, I dreaded  
seeing three words pop up on the screen: "No Itinerary Found."  
When that happened, the real work began.**

**To the patrons who endured me, thank you for your saintly  
patience. To those of you I was able to help, consider yourselves  
fortunate. To the Communications Officers and my fellow  
draftees, thank you for your support and your smiles. Your  
attitude made the job tolerable, and occasionally, fun.**

**And to the Customer Information Agents, you have no idea how  
relieved I am to have you back. You play a vital role in serving the  
public; let no one convince you otherwise.**

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Tom Meng**  
Contract Administrator  
Procurement

**My assignment during the strike was at Division 15. The Division Manager, was great and really patient with those of us who knew little to nothing about a bus division and how it operates. On strike assignment with me were staff from ITS. We had a great experience working together.**

**We assisted the division manager in any way possible. We learned to start buses and shut them down properly.**

**Since the buses were not operating revenue service during the strike we had the opportunity to do our part. We learned how to change bus seats. The velcro ones were easy but the screwed on seats were difficult and time consuming.**

**With tools brought from home, we set up an assembly line process of changing bus seats. I unscrewed the top screws and since the ITS staff member was smaller, she was able to get under the seat to unscrew the bottom screws.**

**I then removed the old seats and set in place the new ones. We perfected the process and ended up changing out the seats for four buses in one day along with bus start-up and shut-down.**

**During this assignment, I came home every night very tired and with a new appreciation of what happens at a division. I met some great MTA staff members and enjoyed working with everyone during the work stoppage. It was a great experience.**

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Warren Peterson**

Bus Operator

Division 15

**During the strike my eyes** were opened by the following events.

First, my mood changed because of the added stress. This was a catalyst for a breakup with my girl friend. I usually react to this type of event by giving thanks and trying to help somebody else.

So it was that I happened upon two young men from Ohio. They needed shelter and food, so I took them in and helped them get on their feet. They asked for bus schedules to help them get around to find work. I happened upon a bus, parked my car and ran after it. In doing so, I pulled a calf muscle. As a result, I was unable to walk for a week.

During this time, the young men related their bus riding adventures to me. These stories helped me develop an appreciation for the bus passenger's viewpoint. I learned to sympathize with the bus passenger because of the two men I have befriended.

One day, I was doing some gardening work and disturbed a hornet's nest. One stung me and my hand swelled up to the size of a softball. While recovering from that, I accidentally scratched my cornea while sleeping and my eye swelled shut for three days.

That whole scenario took about 30 days, and so it was while I was finally getting well enough to go back to work that I heard that the strike had been settled. I felt that at last I could go back to doing something relatively safe.

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# STRIKE STORIES



**By Waylynn Pitts**

Document Control Assistant  
Records Management

**I work in** Records Management, and share an office with mail services. I was assigned to continue my work and to assist in the mailroom. At first I wasn't the happiest camper, because a strike wasn't a great welcome mat for me. I just started at the MTA on May 30, 2000. The first thing I thought was: "I am still on probation and we're having a strike!"

The first few days were strange, not seeing the people you've been working with for the past few months, but it got easier. I got a chance to work with people I had never seen. The people who had put in record requests, were now coming down to pick up their mail. I was able to place faces with names. I met lots of people and made new friends.

I learned that when something looks bad you have the power to make every situation work out for the best. I came to work knowing there were **jobs** to do, because we now had double duty. I was able to assist the staff and public with their requests, considering many were already in an uproar because of the strike. I helped out in another department and I maintained my work load without getting behind.

I also got a good lesson in teamwork during the strike, because we all made the sacrifice together. I learned that when people work together nothing is impossible, and together all things are possible!

THANKS, MTA, FOR THE LESSON IN TEAMWORK!

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Elijah Johnson**

Bus Operator  
Division 15

**It was still dark outside when I arrived** at the OCI parking lot in El Monte. As I pulled in, I noticed lights and people marching at the intersection of Santa Anita and Ramona.

As I stepped out of the car, I heard a voice saying, "What do we want?" A response from the crowd and another question: "When do we want it?"

The replies and chants were repeated over and over as two groups of bus operators marched from one side of the intersection to the other, passing one another in the middle. Then I realized the grim reality of it all – the strike really had hit the MTA.

I had just completed three weeks of training with my mentor at Division 15. I'm a part-time operator and I never experienced a strike before.

I walked up to a group of operators and listened spellbound as they spoke about strikes they had experienced in the past. When strikers on the line got tired, others would replace them. Channel 2 news was there and did a live report. Everyone on the line tried to get in the picture.

I stood there totally immersed in the sounds, observing the activities of individuals in small and large groups discussing a common theme. What impressed me most was seeing the camaraderie between different races of people.

MTA lives up to its code of diversity in its workforce and I believe the strike made that bond even tighter.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Lisa Miller**

General Clerk III  
Division 3, Bus Maintenance

**My experience with the strike** was an experience of faith. My husband and I both work for the Authority and we're in the same union - TCU. Although our union did not call the strike, we obeyed the request of our union to honor UTU's picket lines.

Foreseeing the strike approaching, we found it difficult to prepare, financially speaking, (especially having a large, blended family with children and having just bought a house) cash, to say the least, was very scarce.

As the deadlines approached, we watched the news as a family, while we still hoped that an agreement could be reached with the UTU and the Authority.

During the strike we stayed fixed on the TV news, the newspapers, and the Internet, searching to find some glimmer of hope for a resolution.

The 32-day strike lasted 32 days longer than I had hoped, but through it all family and friends were there for us. We learned to appreciate the simple things in life, while our children learned a hands-on lesson in sacrificing and having faith.

As we met our union brothers and sisters at the picket lines, food banks, division food distributions and meetings, we learned that we are of many diverse cultures, nationalities and walks of life. But, during hard times we are not really different at all.

I felt close to co-workers who before the strike I hardly knew. Moreover, I learned that the term, "*people in your peer group*," carried a lot of weight.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Patricia Jacobs**

Chief Administrative Analyst  
Management Audit Services

**My strike experience was threefold:** as unofficial transportation provider, department work assignment organizer, and as a person assigned to strike duty.

The first day of the strike, I noticed two women at a bus stop. I explained in a combination of English and terrible Spanish that the bus would not come. They explained that they were stranded. Despite warning bells in my head about picking up strangers, I gave them a ride. My weekend was spent picking up strangers at bus stops and delivering them to their destinations. They were always extremely grateful and I was once again cognizant of the vital service we provide to the community.

As department strike coordinator, I couldn't ask others to do work I wasn't willing to do myself. So, I spent more than a week in divisions answering phones, sorting papers, starting buses and staring at security monitors. This was easy compared to scheduling our staff to provide strike coverage in a variety locations during strange work hours. For many, these assignments were difficult, even intimidating. Despite their initial misgivings, they met the challenge. In short, they were wonderful.

I've always heard that the most difficult circumstances can bring out the best and the worst in people. I continually saw the best. I'm extremely grateful that our department met the challenge without overly burdening our staff, without sending people great distances from their homes, without causing childcare problems and without putting people in situations that would interfere with their families and their health.

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## STRIKE STORIES



**By Yvonne Price**  
Senior Administrative Analyst  
ITS Administration

**During the recent 32-day strike at the MTA,** I worked the 6 a.m. shift at Telephone Information for about three weeks. What a job!

Route searches are computerized and knowledgeable supervisors were always at hand to help. Thomas Guide books were not obsolete, though, and, soon enough, formerly unknown areas of Los Angeles became a lot less mysterious.

The many sincere 'thank you's' doled out by concerned customers were always bright spots, but I found myself truly tired at the end of every working day. The Telephone Agents I'd previously met were pleasant and friendly - and now I know these are must-have qualities, in relentless abundance, for anyone working this closely with our customers.

The other transit carriers covering similar MTA bus and train service areas were lifesavers for many customers. After about a week, a disproportionately large number of calls emerged from the "blind spots" where only MTA offered general service or connections - now no longer available. Some trips were difficult or impossible and it was very tough to disappoint a customer.

My favorite caller was an undaunted high school student, whose early morning trip could not be completed without taking four buses in three hours, walking over ten blocks and still arriving one hour late for class. "I can do it," he insisted. "I have to."

This determined spirit exemplified the outlook of many customers and the positive staff effort in Telephone Information during the strike.

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## MTA Now Says 'Welcome Aboard' in Russian and Thai Languages

(Dec. 20) The MTA has published its "Welcome Aboard" brochure in Russian and Thai – the latest additions to an array of information the agency provides in foreign languages.

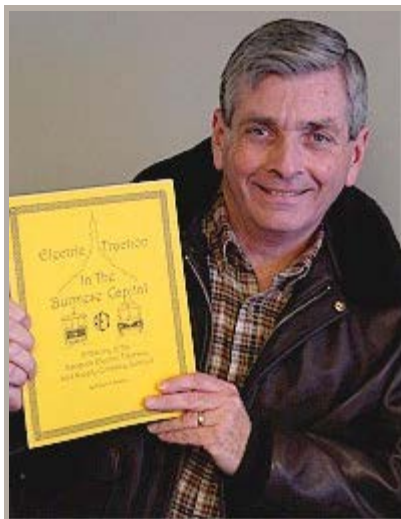
The new brochures, which will be available in early January at community organizations that serve Russian and Thai residents, cover fares, passes and tokens, safety tips, disabled services and more. Five

thousand each of the brochures were printed.

The "Welcome Aboard" pamphlets pair Russian and Armenian, Thai and Cambodian, Chinese and Korean, and English and Spanish.

While foreign-language brochures are distributed to community centers, the more heavily used English/Spanish versions are placed on Metro Buses, in MTA Customer Service Centers, at the Visitor and Convention Bureau and at visitor centers in downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood, according to Barbara Burns of Marketing, project officer for the brochures.

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When MTA contract administrator Robert Sechler was just a teenager, he moved with his parents to Burma, a Southeast Asian country sandwiched between India and Thailand. Sechler recently recounted his adventures and his interest in the Rangoon Electric Tramway in a book entitled, "Electric Traction in the Burmese Capital."

## The Burmese Days of Robert Sechler

By GAYLE ANDERSON,  
Associate Editor  
Burma, officially named Myanmar, is about the size of Texas. A developing, agrarian country now ruled by a military regime, it is an isolated stronghold where the Internet is illegal, terrorism is expected and journalists are restricted.

Like many former British colonies, the Southeast Asian country of Burma bears the emblem of an exotic empire and high adventure.

Yet, the one thing that intrigued the teenaged Robert Sechler upon arriving in the Burmese capital of Rangoon in the heat of his high school days in 1958 was the vanquished electric trolley system that had sketched the face of the city in the books he had devoured about his soon-to-be home.

As the son of a university professor turned diplomat and an art teacher, he would prepare for a new living situation with research of little-known facts about the city. Already a self-proclaimed "transit buff," young Sechler was sold on the prospect by descriptions of an electric tramway that once had raced round the capital.

The prospect was short-lived. Rangoon's trolleys and tracks had been devastated in World War II and replaced with what an United States Information Service employee called "strange buses."

Forty years later, Robert Sechler, now a senior contract administrator at MTA, has published a book on the tramway and brought its heady days back to life in his detailed account of the determined little railway.

In his book, "Electric Traction in the Burmese Capital," Sechler writes with an anticipated thrill of discovery: "In the street's center were substantial silver metal pylons of a kind easily recognized by student of electric traction. And flanking these poles, peering out of asphalt paving, were shiny rails."

Thus begins the saga detailed in the slim paperback volume. Sechler takes his reader on a transportation odyssey across the face of Asia and pages of history to tell the story of the Rangoon Electric Tramway and Supply Company, Ltd. From its start in the 1880's as a steam tramway, its electrification, modernization and the program of replacement by trolleybuses, Sechler reveals what happened to it, and

**describes the remarkable vehicles which replaced it.**

**Truly a labor of love, Sechler kept his book alive through a series of personal eras, which included college, military service, marriage and family, and a career in transportation.**

**He published a "rough version" of the material in 1981, where it was eagerly devoured by the transit faithful in London and the United States, and feedback from Burmese transit employees. This new information has been incorporated into the second edition released this year.**

***Electric Transit in the Burmese Capital* can be purchased for \$12 plus shipping costs. Contact Robert Sechler, 922-7334, 16th Floor Gateway, or at (714) 995-9387.**

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## **MTA Guarding Metro Rail Patron Safety During State's Power Crisis**

By BILL HEARD, Editor  
(Dec. 21) How has the MTA coped with the region's recent "rolling brownouts" and what would happen to Metro Rail service in a full-scale power blackout?

Will power shortages strand Metro Rail patrons along portions of the Metro Blue Line and Metro Green Line corridors?

Those are the questions facing the agency during a season in which chilly weather and other problems have sometimes strained the Southland's electrical power grid to the breaking point. On Dec. 19, for example, the state imposed a Stage 2 alert when a power plant failure disrupted electrical transmissions.

Southern California Edison, which supplies most of the electricity for the MTA's light-rail lines, frequently must buy power from out-of-state companies to bolster the local supply. The MTA has a flat-rate contract with Edison, but the utility can pass along the higher costs when the demand for power is high.

On more than one occasion recently, power disruptions have occurred along portions of the Metro Blue Line and Metro Green Line corridors. Rail Operations Center personnel scrambled to manage the power distribution from electric sub-stations in unaffected areas to keep the trains moving.

### **MTA asks for a warning**

With the possibility that serious power shortages could become more frequent, the MTA asked Edison to give Metro Rail warning before traction power is reduced or totally cut off.

"We would like at least 10 minutes' warning so that we can move all our trains to the nearest stations and avoid stranding our passengers," explains Ralph de la Cruz, deputy executive officer, Rail Operations. "Edison has agreed to provide that warning."

De la Cruz and his Metro Rail managers also have worked out procedures for sustaining rail traction power during brownouts.

Electricity, for example, can be fed into a low-power area from sub-stations on either side of the affected section of track. Sub-station maintenance is being scheduled to avoid having consecutive sub-stations off-line during a power crunch so that electricity could be fed to brownout areas.

### **Seeking a higher priority**

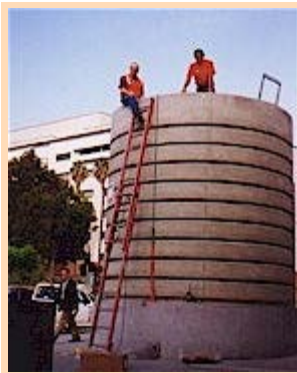
The MTA is one of several California transit agencies concerned about the low priority given rail operations during power crises. They believe power must be made available as a passenger safety measure and to keep essential transportation moving during regional emergencies.

"Right now, hospitals, police and fire stations, prisons and military

facilities have top priority for emergency power," says de la Cruz. "Rail transit isn't even on the list. We've been advised to lobby the state Public Utilities Commission to be added to the priority list."

Meanwhile, Governor Davis, the Legislature, the PUC and federal energy agencies, as well as the state's utility companies, are struggling to find answers to the electricity crisis. As of this writing, however, there are no firm solutions on the horizon.

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MTA Senior Engineer Andy Bennett, left, and John Galetzka, USGS Network Coordinator for the Southern California Integrated GPS Network, begin installation of antenna device, shown below, atop the Civic Center elevator structure.



## Subway Station Antennas Linked to Nation's Earthquake Monitoring System

(Dec. 21) When the earth moves in Los Angeles, the U.S. Geological Survey wants to know how much. Now, the MTA is helping the scientists find out.

Recently installed atop the elevator structure at the Metro Red Line's Civic Center station is an ultra-sensitive radio antenna that picks up signals from the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) system. A second GPS antenna will be installed in January above the elevator at the Westlake/MacArthur Park station.

The solar-powered GPS system can measure earth movements as small as three millimeters a day. By constantly monitoring the position of the antennas, USGS can determine surface movement along earthquake faults.

"The subway elevators are ideal," says Anderson Bennett of the MTA's Engineering Management Department, who is coordinating the project with USGS. "They are solid concrete and have foundations that extend over 80 feet into the earth."

The GPS antennas installed at the two subway stations will be part of an integrated network of installations throughout Southern California,

Bennett says. The USGS field office is based at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory on the CalTech campus in Pasadena.

By monitoring very small movements in the earth's crust, scientists may one day be able to predict where earthquakes are likely to occur.

For more on the GPS antennas and earth movement monitoring, visit the USGS website at [www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov) and JPL site at CalTech at <http://pasadena.wr.usgs.gov/scign/>

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**YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW--**U. S. Army Major Dave Morland, left, commends MTA for supporting the extended call to duty of Metro Clean supervisor, Reservist Capt. Glenn Sanders. Pictured are, from left, Morland, Sanders, Metro Clean Manager Pete Serdienis, and Quality Assurance Superintendent Mike Stange. PHOTO BY BILL HEARD

## **U.S. Army Salutes MTA for Employer Support of Reservist Called to Duty**

By GAYLE ANDERSON, Associate Editor

(Dec. 26) When Army Reservist Captain Glenn Sanders, an equipment service supervisor for Metro Clean, was called to service last April in support of national defense, the MTA was asked to sacrifice the services of a good employee for an extended period of time.

But like a good soldier, the MTA did not hesitate to perform its patriotic duty, even though it cost the Metro Clean operation the loss of a supervisor for nearly five months.

The United States Army returned the salute on Dec. 20 by presenting a certificate of appreciation to MTA for employer support of the National Guard and Reserve.

For 139 days, Capt. Sanders held down the fort at the Army Reserve Center in Sherman Oaks helping with the massive logistics of the training and operations for three Kosovo missions, five annual trainings, and two missions supporting active duty forces in Washington.

Although a field artillery officer, Sanders filled in as the assistant operations and planning officer, a key position desperately needed at the short-staffed center to keep the Army Reserve battalion ready to support the nation's peace-keeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia as well as train for future operations.

In presenting the certificate on Dec. 20, U.S. Army Major Dave Moreland, commander of the 420th Movement Control Battalion, said the honors are given in appreciation of employers who allow reservists to contribute to national defense for an extended period of



time. Accepting for the MTA were Quality Assurance Superintendent Mike Stange and Stops & Zones Manager Pete Serdienis.

Back on the job, Sanders deploys up to 72 community service workers a day to clean bus stops, buses, terminals, and inactive rail right-of-ways throughout Los Angeles County.

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## **Caught On Camera, Bus 'Joy Riders' Arrested by LAPD**

By GAYLE ANDERSON, Associate Editor

(Dec. 28) It has all the elements of an action-packed Hollywood thriller. Four youths, posing as MTA employees in orange safety vests, entered the Regional Rebuild Center backlot on the afternoon of Dec. 3 and commandeered an empty bus for a joy ride to Hollywood and back.

What could have been a sequel to "Speed," the 1994 movie in which a city bus was hijacked, turned out to be a crime spree caught on tape by the MTA's on-board camera system. The suspects, later identified as one male and two female juveniles and one adult male, were rounded up by LAPD in little more than a week.

The "Excellent Adventure" began with a practice run around the rear of the lot that ended in a collision with a parked bus. The collision, which resulted in an estimated \$22,000 in damages, did little to deter the determined pirates. They simply hopped aboard another coach and set out for Hollywood.

The youths drove the big Metro Bus off the lot and onto city streets where the adventure escalated into a successful heist. Still undetected, the youths returned the bus without incident to the RRC and vanished into the night.

### **Film at 11**

The MTA's on-board camera system started a relay response among LAPD divisions and MTA Security. A crime report, documented with photographs, fingerprints and images from the on-board camera system, developed into a dragnet to ensnare the youths.

On Dec. 10, MTA Security — armed with images from the videotape — recognized one of the suspects in the vicinity of Gateway Transit Plaza and detained him for questioning by police. He was booked and released to the care of his grandparents.

Two other suspects, identified by the first suspect, were rounded up on the following two days and booked.

The case against the three juveniles was filed at Eastlake Juvenile Court on Dec. 15. The fourth suspect, identified as an adult, was arrested Dec. 18 and charged with one felony and two misdemeanor counts.

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## The Year 2000: A Look Back at Major MTA News Stories

(Dec. 29) It's been one of those years. A year many MTA employees will be happy to see fade into the past as they look forward to 2001.

Two major news stories vied for attention during the year: the opening of the Metro Red Line's North Hollywood segment and the 32-day transit strike. Beyond those events, we read about Y2K - which fizzled - the acquisition of more buses, the beginning of construction of the Pasadena Blue Line and the completion of the Harbor Transitway.

The following list of the year's big MTA stories notes other events that caught our attention. For a complete listing of all stories from the year 2000, please check the Intranet's Archives pages.

### January

**Y2K Bug Fails to Hatch at MTA; All [Systems 'Go'](#) for Year 2000** (Jan. 3) "Quiet" hardly begins to describe New Year's Eve in the MTA's Emergency Operations Center. To say that nothing - nothing Y2K-related, anyway - interrupted a perfectly tranquil evening, pretty much says it all.

### February

**MTA Unveils [Proposed Transit Alternatives](#) For Mid-City/Westside, Eastside, SF Valley Corridors** (Feb. 4) MTA transportation planners and consultants today unveiled a series of 21 potential alternatives and recommendations to improve transit mobility in three key corridors of Los Angeles County. The alternatives were discussed at a special Board workshop.

### March

**'[Best of the Best](#)' Metro Bus Operators Honored for Perfect Safety Records, Outstanding Customer Relations** (March 6) An amazing 45 of the MTA's 4,200 bus operators hailed as unsung heroes for logging five years without accidents, customer complaints or workplace injuries.

**MTA Completes Alcohol to [Clean-Air Diesel Conversion](#)** (March 13) After more than a year-and-a-half of intense labor, the MTA has completed the conversion of its 333 alcohol-fueled buses to clean-air diesel power --on budget and ahead of schedule.

### April

**Governor's \$5.2 Billion [Transportation Plan](#) Has \$887 Million for MTA Buses, Rail, Rapid Bus** (April 6) With the North Hollywood subway station as a backdrop, Gov. Gray Davis today announced a \$5.2 billion transportation plan he said would provide \$887 million to the MTA for buses, light rail and bus rapid transit projects.

**[CPCU Approves Device](#) 'Four-Quad' Rail Crossing Gates Prevent Vehicle Vs. Train Accidents** (April 18) The rail crossing at 124th Street in Willowbrook had always been one of the more dangerous on the Metro Blue Line. Three fatalities and at least five serious vehicle vs. train accidents had occurred there over the years.

## May

**[Board Authorizes Purchase of 370 CNG Buses; Delivery to Begin by End of FY 2002](#)** (May 25) The MTA Board today voted to authorize CEO Julian Burke to purchase 370 additional compressed natural gas buses. The buses are scheduled to begin arriving by the end of FY 2002.

## June

**[Rollout of MTA's 1,000th CNG Bus Called a 'Milestone for Transit Users'](#)** (June 2) Calling it a "milestone for transit users," Board Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke announced the MTA's 1,000th CNG bus during Friday morning ceremonies. And, with TV cameras rolling, the big white and gold coach burst through a huge banner to welcoming applause at the Arthur Winston Division.

**[Groundbreaking Ceremonies to Mark Start of LA-to-Pasadena Light-Rail Construction](#)** (June 8) A groundbreaking ceremony Friday morning in Chinatown will mark the beginning of construction of a 13.7-mile light-rail line that will run from LA's Union Station to Sierra Madre Villa in East Pasadena.

**[Crews Extending Metro Blue Line Platforms at 19 Stations](#)** (June 19) Construction work is under way to extend passenger platforms at the Metro Blue Line's Grand Avenue station and Washington station – the first of 19 that will be lengthened over the next 14 months to accommodate longer trains.

**[600 VIPs, Guests and Media Welcome Metro Red Line to San Fernando Valley](#)** (June 23) More than 600 guests and perhaps 60 reporters and photographers turned out on a sunny Friday morning to welcome the Metro Red Line to the San Fernando Valley.

**[NoHo Opening Weekend Sets Record in Ridership as MTA Chalks up Handful of Achievements](#)** (June 26) What a weekend! The North Hollywood segment opens with a record 500,000 boardings over two days of celebration that - for the first time - got Valley residents excited about the Metro Red Line.

## July

**['Red Car' Debut on Metro Blue Line Marks 10th Anniversary of Metro Rail](#)** (July 14) With the sound of a familiar "e-tone" horn announcing its departure, a modern-day Pacific Electric "Red Car" took its first passengers on a nostalgic ride following ceremonies marking the 10th anniversary of Metro Rail.

**[MTA, Kaiser Open Subway Entrance to Hospital at Vermont/Sunset](#)** (July 25) The MTA and Kaiser-Permanente on Monday opened the Kaiser-Permanente Portal at the Metro Red Line's Vermont/Sunset station. The new entrance that will offer better, easier access to Kaiser's medical facilities located at the northwest corner of Sunset and Vermont.

## August

**[MTA, ACLU Reach Agreement in Suit by Mobility-Impaired Patrons](#)** (August 11) The MTA Board of Directors has approved a proposed settlement of a lawsuit brought against the agency by the ACLU on behalf of a class of mobility-impaired passengers.

**[Senior Staff Completes Work on Morale Report Recommendations](#)** (Aug. 21) After more than a year's effort, the MTA's senior staff has completed its work on the 90 recommendations presented in August, 1999, by the Employee

Morale Task Force. Copies of the 44-page document will be available in the MTA Library by noon, Tuesday, Aug. 22.

**Advance Planning Ensured [LA's Metro System](#) Ran Smoothly during Convention** (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.

**[Board Items to Watch: Board Gives Go-Ahead to Public Toilet Plan; Assures Cities Concerned about Ad Structures](#)** (Aug. 24) After lengthy discussion and public comment, the MTA Board gave the go-ahead, Thursday, to a plan to place up to 10 Automated Public Toilets at Metro System locations. The toilets will be provided by a firm that also will place as many as 54 advertising structures on MTA properties.

## September

**Operator Evelyn Davis Witnesses [Miracle on 7th Street: A Baby Boy](#)** (Sept. 12) Operator Evelyn Davis set out on her first Line 20 run Tuesday morning thinking it would be just another day. But, at 7:30 a.m. at the corner of 7th and Hill streets, she witnessed the miracle of birth and held a vital new life in her hands. Suddenly, the day turned from ordinary to extraordinary.

**MTA Activates [Strike Contingency Plan](#); Negotiators Working to Avert Walkout** (Sept. 14) The MTA activated its Strike Contingency Plan as of noon, today. With barely 12 hours to go before a possible work stoppage, employees with strike contingency duty were directed to report to their strike work assignments, some of which begin as early as 11 p.m., Thursday.

## October

**Negotiators [Back at Work](#) after Governor Signs SB-1101** (Oct. 2) Counterproposal to counterproposal, negotiators for the MTA and UTU got down to business Monday afternoon following two face-to-face sessions, Sunday. Mayor Richard Riordan - who met with both sides over the weekend - was back at the Pasadena Hilton, today, to see the continuation of bargaining talks.

**First-Ever [Strategic Business Plan](#) Maps Three-Year Path for MTA** (Oct. 9) "Where do you think you are going," asks the illustration on the cover of a booklet now making the rounds of MTA management. It's a good question to ask of an agency that is publishing its first-ever strategic business plan.

**MTA, UTU Hammer Out [Tentative Agreement](#) to End 32-Day Strike** (Oct. 17) After struggling almost around the clock since Friday, MTA and UTU negotiators hammered out a tentative contract agreement, early Tuesday, that is expected to bring a swift end to the 32-day-old strike.

**[Favorable Vote Reflects Operators' Desire to Return to Work](#)** (Oct. 18) Some Metro Bus operators were said to be so anxious to return to work, they went to the LA Convention Center Tuesday evening, dropped their ballots into the box, then headed for their divisions.

**[President Signs Bill with \\$60 Million in Transportation Funds for MTA](#)** (Oct. 26) President Clinton has signed HR-4475 - the Transportation Appropriations Bill - a measure that includes \$60 million in federal funding for the MTA.

## November

**Retro 2.7% [Pay Raise](#) Due, Nov. 17, by Separate Check** (Nov. 1) CEO Julian Burke announced Wednesday that the retroactive 2.7 percent pay raise for non-contract employees will be paid by separate check on the Nov. 17 payday.

**Ribbon-Cutting Signifies Opening of Last Two [Transitway Bus Stations](#)** (Nov 17) MTA and Caltrans officials marked the expansion of express Metro bus service on the Harbor Transitway during a ribbon-cutting ceremony, today, at the newly opened Pacific Coast Highway bus station.

## December

**[MTA to Add Parking](#) Near NoHo Station; Will Preserve Historic Train Depot** (Dec. 1) The MTA will begin construction later this month of 218 temporary parking spaces on MTA-owned property located across the street from the Metro Red Line's North Hollywood station.

**[Santa Shoulders](#) 5,000 Toys in MTA's Drive for Skid Row Kids** (Dec. 12) Santa Claus struck a rich vein of gifts for the Fred Jordan Mission's Skid Row Kids when he arrived at the MTA Tuesday morning.

**Vacant [Plaza-Level Space](#) to be Developed for Employment, Records and Security Offices** (Dec. 12) For five years a large space on the ground floor of MTA Headquarters has stood vacant, its interior dark, its picture windows dusty. Now, however, construction crews are developing the space for use by the Human Resources employment office, Records Management and MTA Security.

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