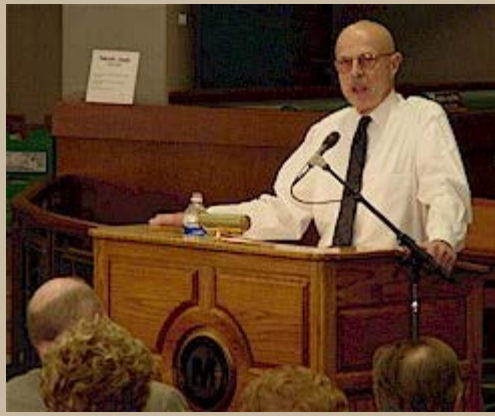


**Burke Declares in
Staff Meeting:**

**MTA in
'Better Position
Today'
for Transition to
New CEO**



By BILL HEARD, Editor

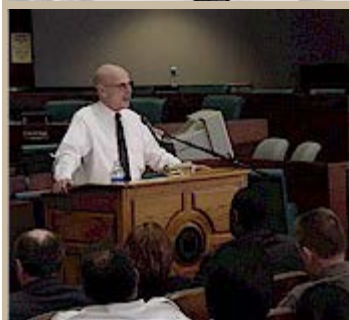
(Jan. 30) The MTA "is in a much better position today to have a change in its CEO than it has ever been," Julian Burke declared, Tuesday, in his first all-staff meeting of the year.

Burke announced earlier this month that he plans to leave what he described during the meeting as "this wonderful job" sometime in 2001. He said, however, that the idea of retirement for someone who has been totally absorbed in his work throughout a long life is difficult to contemplate.



The CEO told a packed Board room, and others listening in from offices and conference rooms, that the Board of Directors had given him responsibility for finding his replacement.

"I think that's good. I think I can bring something to the process," he said. "We ought to be able to get through it in a meaningful way and find someone who is a seasoned manager."



Burke said the Executive Leadership Team – whose members are the chief operating officer, chief financial officer, county counsel and the heads of Transit Operations, Construction and Countywide Planning – will help facilitate the transition to a new CEO.

This group of senior executives considers most of the issues that cut across departmental boundaries and develops recommendations for the CEO. Burke expects the ELT to play a "very meaningful" role during the transition to a new chief executive officer.



CEO Julian Burke fields
questions at all-staff meeting.
Bottom photo, CEO calls

Focus in 2001

Among the issues the CEO expects to focus on in 2001 are labor relations and proposed transit zones in the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys.

Burke said he hopes to "improve our

upon Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky, at right.

PHOTOS BY GAYLE ANDERSON

conversations" with the MTA's unions and he mentioned a recent lunch with UTU Chief James Williams, during which the two exchanged ideas.

On the transit zone issue, he said the Board wants to understand why the MTA's operating costs are higher than those of other regional transit agencies. He said a comparison of MTA operating costs with other agencies of its size found that MTA costs "were at the high end.

Burke indicated that much more thought needs to be put into formation of transit zones and that employees "don't need to be fretful about it until we understand it better." He was reluctant to put a time frame on creation of the zones, adding, "if it happens at all, it won't be soon...and if it happens at all, it will be right."

Pay-for-performance

Turning to the current proposal for a non-contract Performance-Based Compensation system, Burke called himself "a reluctant dragon" who was concerned about whether such a system was appropriate for a public agency and whether it could be implemented by managers without favoritism.

"It will take some training of our managers. It will take a lot of change in the documentation that we've historically used to measure performance," he said. "I have come to the conclusion that it certainly should be possible to have such a program if it is carefully done."

Noting that the original proposal was put forward by the Morale Task Force, the CEO also called on a group of employees who had circulated a petition to send a delegation to meet with him and Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky to discuss the pay-for-performance plan.

"We're trying to do a program that works and that you have confidence in," he said. "Why would we want to have any kind of compensation program that was not substantially acceptable and desirable and thought of with confidence by employees?"

Looking back at 2000

Looking back at the year 2000, Burke picked out the opening of the North Hollywood segment of the Metro Red Line as a notable achievement, along with the start of Metro Rapid Bus service. The MTA also began a project – expected to be completed this summer – to extend the Metro Blue Line platforms to accommodate a third rail car.

He cited improvements in the quality of bus service and "increases in bus service for the first time in six years." He noted that 350 new buses were added to the fleet in 2000 and that some 500 more are expected in 2001.

"We continue to be in substantial compliance with the Consent Decree," Burke said. He was optimistic that the MTA would gain relief from the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in its quest to better define the intent of the Consent Decree.

The CEO outlined a "huge procurement" that will bring "smart bus" features to the Metro Bus fleet. These include a GPS satellite system

that will monitor bus movements, a passenger counting system, an automatic voice system to announce bus stops and a fare collection system that will be compatible with those of municipal operators.

"This will bring us closer, I believe, to the point where we will have a seamless fare collection system on all the transit systems in the county," Burke said.

He noted that both the light-rail line proposed for the Eastside and the busway proposed for the Burbank-Chandler right of way in the Valley are in the preliminary engineering phase. And he said the MTA's corridor studies have gained support at the county, state and federal levels.

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