

Metro Report Archives

February 2001 Articles

Angels Flight Cable Snaps; 3 Critically Injured, 11 Transported

(Feb. 1) As many as 14 people were hurt, today, when a cable broke on the Angels Flight Railway causing the two to crash into each other, City New Service reported. Three were reported injured critically, 11 others were transported to area hospitals.

MTA Plans to Expand Division 1 with Space for More Buses, More Parking, CNG Facility (Feb. 1) The MTA is planning a major expansion of its historic Division 1, a project that would permit the bus yard to accommodate 67 more coaches, 120 more employee parking spaces and a CNG pumping facility. The plan will be presented to the Board this month.

Angels Flight Passenger Dies of Injuries Suffered in Cable Car Collision (Feb. 2) MTA Employee was among first on the scene following funicular railway accident.

Long List of Successes Recorded in MTA's Second Quarter

(Feb. 6) The MTA can point to a long list of successes for the October-December quarter of FY-2001, the heads of the agency's major departments reported during Tuesday's second-quarter review.

NoHo Temporary Parking Lot to Open Monday Morning (Feb. 7)

Barely two months after construction began, the MTA will open a temporary parking lot, early Monday, to serve commuters at the Metro Red Line's North Hollywood station.

Second Train Coming (Feb. 9) It was showtime for L.A. County Supervisor and MTA Board Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, MTA Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky, and Managing Director of MTA Systems Safety and Security Paul Lennon at the Vernon Avenue crossing of the Metro Blue Line on Friday, Feb. 9.

Art in Motion: (Feb. 12) Training for new Metro Art docents begins in March. Guests of docent-guided art tours rediscover L.A. through the art and architecture of the Metro Rail stations.

Internet Service Names Metro Art's Web Page 'Site of the Week'

(Feb. 13) MuseumSpot.com, the World Wide Web's portal for information about museums, has named the Metro Art Department's new Internet page "Site of the Week."

MTA Operators Encouraged to Aid Homeless, Mentally Ill (Feb.

14) An LA County team is enlisting the support of Metro Bus and Metro Rail operators to help the homeless and people with mental illnesses who sleep in bus shelters and at subway stations.

Approved by Board, Feb. 22 Board Chair Burke Proposes Renaming 7th/Metro to Honor Dixon (Feb. 15)

Board Chair Yvonne Burke said, Thursday, the 7th and Metro station should be renamed to honor the late U.S. Rep. Julian Dixon, long regarded as the leading supporter in congress of Los Angeles' commuter rail system.

First of 500 [New Buses](#) Roll onto MTA Property (Feb. 16) Eight coaches of a huge new bus order rolled onto MTA property this week – the first of about 500 the agency will receive in calendar 2001.

New Computers Help [Speed Information](#) to Metro Patrons (Feb. 20) Metro riders who call 1-800-COMMUTE are getting information much more quickly these days, thanks to the new faster and smarter computers now in use by Customer Information agents.

MTA Bus Card Campaign Launches [Tax Credit Drive](#) for Low-Income Workers (Feb. 21) The Earned Income tax Credit Campaign, a partnership created in 2000 by the County and City of Los Angeles, the Internal Revenue Service and MTA, has generated more than \$14 million in additional credits and refunds for Los Angeles workers, officials announced today at MTA Headquarters.

ACTION UPDATE, FEB. 22... [Board Approves](#) Bond Sale, New Cars, Service Changes, Other Agenda Items (Feb. 22) In action at its February session, the MTA Board approved a proposed \$270 million bond sale, the purchase of 224 new cars, service changes for Metro Bus lines and a number of other agenda items.

[MTA Rail Station](#) To Be Renamed In Honor Of Rep. Julian Dixon (Feb. 22) One of the MTA's busiest Metro Rail stations will be renamed after the late U.S. Rep. Julian Dixon (D-Culver City), a longtime supporter of public transit projects in Los Angeles, including the Metro Rail and Metro Bus systems. Dixon died Dec. 8 at the age of 66.

Mayor Names [Jeff Walden](#) to Vacant Seat on MTA Board (Feb. 23) Mayor Richard Riordan has appointed Jeffery R. Walden, assistant deputy mayor of the Office of Economic, to fill a vacant seat on the MTA Board.

[Ticket Sales](#) Booming at 3 Newest Subway Stations (Feb. 23) Surprising fact: Almost 30 percent of all tickets sold on the Metro Red Line are bought at the three newest subway stations. During morning rush, it's 42 percent.

UPDATE, FEB. 23 [Overpass Construction](#) to Close Hollywood Freeway Lanes [Due to weather conditions, work is postponed until Sunday, March 4.](#) (Feb. 21) Construction of a new overpass adjacent to the Metro Red Line Universal City station will necessitate the weekend closure of Hollywood (101) Freeway lanes beginning Sunday, Feb. 25.

MTA, [LA Marathon](#) Officials Announce Details of 16th Annual Race (Feb. 27) Transit Operations Chief Tom Conner joined LA Marathon officials at a media event in Hollywood, today, to announce activities that are planned along this year's race route.

Metro Green Line [Maintenance of Way](#) Facility is Design-Build Success Story (Feb. 28) The recently constructed Metro Green Line Maintenance of Way (MOW) Facility is a design-build success story. The project was completed on time and under budget with a minimum of change orders and no claims.

- **Getting to the heart of the matter:** Are you at risk for a stroke or heart disease? One way to find out is at the free ["Good News" seminar](#).

- **[THIS IS A DRILL...](#)** Senior Administrative Analyst Dan Ramirez gives a firsthand account of the emergency evacuation drill at the Regional Rebuild Center on Jan. 17.
- **[Check it Out: ISD is 15th Department to Open Intranet Web Site](#)** (Feb. 8) Metro.net welcomes its 15th departmental web site to the Intranet, today, as the Information Services Department – ISD – becomes the latest to join a growing family of “at-your-fingertips” information resources.
- Juelene Close is Procurement’s **[‘Buyer of the Quarter’](#)**
- **[Accountants](#)** Schedule Financial Education Conference
- **[John Roberts](#) Named Acting Head of Bus Transportation** (Feb. 6) John Roberts, a 27-year transit operations veteran who joined the MTA in 1990, has been named acting deputy executive officer, Bus Transportation. He succeeds Dan Ibarra, who retired in January.
- **[Division 3](#) Maintenance Sets New Record**
- **[Pedestrian bridge](#) on Long Beach Avenue** and 53rd Street is off to a good start.
- **[Cops & Ops](#)** – A series of presentations by Safety and Security, Transit Operations, and the MTA’s law enforcement partners began its fourth round of the bus operating divisions, Feb. 2.
- **[Cops Will Add High-Tech Tools to Anti-Graffiti Effort](#)** (Feb. 2) The MTA’s two law enforcement agencies will be turning to high-tech methods more often in the future to catch graffiti vandals. Graffiti and other vandalism costs the MTA an estimated \$15 million annually.
- **[Vijay Khawani](#) Named Director of Operations Safety, Rail.**
- Operating Division Manager **[A.J. Taylor](#)** to Retire
- LA Marathon Line-Up: **[MTA Runners](#)** on the Go!
- **[DAC Volunteers](#)** Take MTA’s Safety, Vandalism Messages to Area Schools
- Education is Important for **[Promotion](#)**, but Experience also Counts, HR Says
- **[On Tour](#)** with Public Affairs
- **[MORE! Safety First](#)** with Public Affairs
- **[National Highway Institute](#) Conducts Classes on Bridge Inspection at MTA** The MTA’s Engineering and Construction department is hosting a National Highway Institute training course entitled, “The Safety Inspection of In-Service Bridges”.
- **[TURN IT OFF](#)** Employees Urged to Conserve Electricity
- **[PART 1 OF 2](#)** In this two-part series, *MTA Report* describes how

the MTA's Robin Blair and other members of a relief group brought aid to the people of El Salvador, following the January, 2001, earthquake, and to the people of Nicaragua in 1999 following Hurricane Mitch.

- **PART 2 OF 2** The MTA's Robin Blair has been volunteering in poverty-stricken areas for the past 30 years, most recently in El Salvador, following the January earthquake. The conclusion of this two-part series describes his earlier hurricane-relief work in Nicaragua.
- **Carol E. Inge**, a 20-year planning veteran, has been named interim deputy executive officer in Countywide Planning and Development.
- **Leadership Team Outlines Pay-for-Performance Program** (Feb. 22) The pay-for-performance program for non-represented employees moved a step closer, today, with the distribution of a memo outlining how the program will work.
- **Cost of Some Metro Café Items to Rise; Others Being Reduced** (Feb. 22) Food prices are rising...and so is the cost of some items on the Metro Café menu, effective March 5. But wait! Other cafeteria prices will go down.
- **Good News / Bad News at Vascular Health Seminar**
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Jake's Adventures

Aloha Venezia!

A seven-part series of Jake's Adventures that take us to Hawaii and Italy...with plenty of laughs along the way.

- **Part One:** Vacations, how to plan and enjoy them, has our intrepid columnist ruminating about the difference between the sexes.
- **Part Two:** A Bird's Eye View of the Problem.
- **Part Three:** Where are my Peas?
- **Part Four:** Where Can I Board the No. 10 bus?
- **Part Five:** Help! I'm a prisoner on a Stair Master and I can't get off!
- **Part Six:** Does the Last Supper ring a bell?
- **Conclusion:** This Place is for the Birds.

SAVE THE DATE

FACING FUTURE CHALLENGES IN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

AGA presents its annual educational conference February 28.

The Los Angeles Chapter of the Association of Government Accountants (AGA), has scheduled a financial skills conference, Wednesday, Feb. 28. Participants in the conference, which is open to all MTA employees, may earn eight CPE credits. The conference will be held on Wednesday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. at the Hacienda Hotel, 525 N. Sepulveda Blvd., in El Segundo. Registration fee is \$120, which is reimbursable. For more information or to register for the educational conference, call Fifi Burns at 922-9086.



National Highway Institute instructor Bruce Johnson teaches bridge inspection class to cross section of MTA and Public Works employees.



National Highway Institute Conducts Classes on Bridge Inspection at MTA

By GEORGE REDMOND, HRDT Intern
The MTA's Engineering and Construction department is hosting a National Highway Institute training course entitled, "The Safety Inspection of In-Service Bridges". This two week intensive course focuses on teaching the analytical skills necessary to better inspect and trouble-shoot local in-service bridges.

The class has brought together a cross section of MTA and LA Public Works employees whose jobs involve working on or around bridges.

To augment classroom training, the course offers participants an opportunity to receive hands-on training through various instructor-guided inspections, field trips, and site visits to local bridges.

The knowledge and experience gained in the course will better enable participants to perform their job duties and make MTA facilities safer.

At the completion of the 10-day course, participants will receive certification as in-service bridge inspectors.

Attending the course are: Albert Nijland, Awny Malak, Jack Wang, Paras Sharma, Ajith Peiris, Raul Pedroza, Andi Wang, Manfred Aistrich, Robert Burnett, Bobby Vandiver, Pat Lubash, Ed Richardson, Surin Chetnakarnkul and Niall Moynihan and John Harken of LA Public Works.

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PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR: Division 3 Maintenance

PHOTOS (above and bottom left) BY ROOBIK GALOOSIAN

LOST TIME FREE -- It's been four years since any of the MTA's 11 bus and maintenance operating divisions have completed a fiscal year quarter with no lost time due to injuries. But in the final moments of the final quarter of the year 2000, Division 3 Maintenance held their ground and clocked in with a perfect zero. "They are a great example to the entire agency," said Transit Operations Chief Tom Conner. "We're extremely proud of them." And grateful, too. Risk Management presented a plaque to Maintenance Manager Milo Victoria to mark the achievement and transformed the maintenance garage into a banquet hall with a feast fit for kings from Bar-B-Cue King. Conner, Chief Financial Officer Richard Brumbaugh, and Operations DEOs Richard Hunt and John Roberts joined in the celebration. No injuries were reported.



From left, Maintenance Manager Milo Victoria, Transit Operations Chief Tom Conner and DEO Richard Hunt.



Fueling up at Division 3

PHOTO BY LUCILLE VAN DER HEYDEN

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Employees Urged to Conserve Electricity in Gateway Building During State's Power Crisis

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following memo was distributed to Gateway staff on Thursday from Frank Cardenas, Executive Officer, Administration. We think it's well worth repeating.

"As you all know, the State of California is in the midst of an energy crisis. While we here at Gateway receive our electricity from LADWP and therefore will remain largely unaffected by any shortages, MTA as a public agency still should make all reasonable efforts to conserve electric resources.

You can assist in these conservation efforts immediately by taking the following simple actions at the end of your business day:

- Be sure to turn off your PC and any other appliances.
- Turn off your under-cabinet lighting.
- Turn off the lights in your work area (if you have direct access to the switches and others won't be affected).

During the work day, we encourage you to observe the following energy saving practices:

- The new copiers on each floor have power saving features which are automatically activated when the machines have not been used for a period of time. Please do not interrupt this feature. It takes only seconds for the machines to re-power for use.
- If there are lights in your department that can be left off without impairing the quality of the work area (i.e. conference rooms not in use, extra desk lamps, under-cabinet lighting in vacant cubicles), please try leaving them off. Incidentally, the janitorial staff has been asked to proactively shut off lights where practical.

Thank you for doing your part to help MTA conserve energy during this crisis. We welcome any ideas you may have for additional energy conservation measures. Please [e-mail your suggestions](#) to Brian Soto, Director of General Services."

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OFF TO A GOOD START -- Los Angeles Council Member Rita Walters, Ninth District, (right) shares a shovel with local resident Richard Marshall during the groundbreaking ceremony for the pedestrian bridge at Long Beach Avenue and 53rd Street on Feb. 1. The bridge, which will provide an alternative crossing for local residents over the tracks of the Metro Blue Line and Union Pacific Railroad, will take about six months to construct. This project also includes various public improvements such as new curb and gutters, concrete sidewalks, guard rails around bridge columns, and handicapped-accessible curb ramps. Also participating in the event were, from left, James Okazaki with the Department of Transportation, Antonio Watson and Delpha Flad with Council Member Walters' office, and Duane Martin, Manager of Light Rail Operations, MTA Metro Blue Line. -- RICH MORALLO

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Jake's Adventures



**"Let's go to Hawaii."
I said.
"No," Patti replied.
"Hawaii is too expensive
in the winter. Italy is
cheap."**

Are men from Mars, women from Venus? In Jake's view, he's from Hawaii – his wife, Patty, is from...anyplace else! Vacations, how to plan and enjoy them has our intrepid columnist ruminating about the difference between the sexes. Jake sets these thoughts against the background of a Hawaiian episode and the couple's recent vacation to Italy. All guaranteed to tickle the funny bone in this seven-part series of **Jake's Adventures** that we call...

Aloha Venezia!

By Jake Satin-Jacobs

You may have noticed that men and women are different. We have different ideas about how life works and we see the world through different filters.

A man may say that he'd like to go fishing in the mountains. A woman turns it into a camping trip, then a cabin in the woods. The cabin becomes a small hotel, then a resort. Finally, it's a Hyatt near the ocean and the only fish in sight is the stuffed Marlin over the bar.

And the course of discussions between men and women is so odd. Male logic and objectivity butt heads endlessly against female emotion and subjectivity. The result is frequently chaos.

We men slam into a wall of frustration like mayflies on the windshield of a speeding automobile. We find ourselves so intensely without options that we revert to our most childish selves. We become twelve-year-old boys dealing with twelve-year-old girls.

All hairless and naïve

We stand there, all hairless and naïve, holding a handful of harmless worms in our outstretched hands, while the girls in training bras and pink lipstick shriek. It makes no sense to us and so we respond senselessly. We pull their pigtails; we spit; we throw the worms at them.

My wife, Patti, as you may know, is a girl. I am a boy and we approach vacations, as we do most things, from entirely different perspectives. I key in on the "vacate" part of vacation. I want to empty my head and my calendar, pretend that there are no clocks or chores and pay no attention whatever to adjusting the environment, like turning on the heat.

My wife is more inclined toward vacations that emphasize the "ation"

part of the word. She wants education, stimulation and acculturation. When we discuss how to spend our non-work time, she wants to take a flower-arranging course in Tokyo, while I want to drive to the beach. She wants to take a guided tour of Yugoslavian cuisine and I want to take the bus to the beach.

Patti is trying to decide whether it would be more fun to book us for three weeks at a 1-Star hotel in a third world country or at a "cute little highland Bed and Breakfast somewhere north of Glasgow." I, on the other hand, would be happy to spend a few days at the beach.

Our problem is always compounded by the fact that I have no regard whatever for money and, therefore, no concern. I'm not inclined to spend a lot of money, but a vacation is a vacation. If it costs a couple extra bucks, relax. We'll get it paid. If it's too expensive, well, let's just go to the beach.

GO TO [Part Two:](#) "A Bird's Eye View of the Problem"

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Jake's Adventures



Part Two: Hawaii or Italy? A difficult choice since Jake prefers to "vacate" his mind, while Patti prefers the "ation" – as in education, stimulation and acculturation. This installment of "Aloha Venezia" takes us to Hawaii where Jake has a surprise for his none-too-tolerant wife.

Aloha Venezia! A Bird's Eye View of the Problem

By Jake Satin-Jacobs

It was with different orientations, needs, visions and budgetary views that Patti and I began planning our most recent vacation.

We were eating dinner when she asked, "Where should we go for our vacation this year?"

I have memories, strong memories of Hawaii. I feel myself floating in clear water or sitting in the shade of a palm tree or eating macadamia nut pancakes and watching the surf break on the shore at Kona.

Most joyfully, I remember taking my wife to Hanauma Bay to snorkel for the first time. We swam out into chest-high water. I led the way, slowly releasing half a bag of frozen peas into the water around her. She was immediately surrounded by thousands of brightly-colored, small tropical fish. Her hands waved through the swarm and she wore a broad smile. She laughed wildly behind her facemask.

As we came up for air, I anticipated her great joy. But the arm waving was apparently an attempt to get the fish away from her and the laughter, it turned out, was not exactly that. It was screaming.

Horrible and heinous crimes

Patti was frantic. She called me names you wouldn't hear on a rap record, accused me of committing horrible and heinous crimes, putting her very life in jeopardy.

"They're just little reef fish," I told her. "They won't hurt you. This is the joy of snorkeling."

She snorted and muttered and spit intermittently. "Don't you ever," she admonished me. "Don't you ever again..."

"What are you talking about?" I asked. "They're little, bitty tropical fish. You can touch them. Look."

I demonstrated for her, scattering a few more peas and brushing my hands through the school of fish that surrounded me. She started once again with the screaming and the accusations and the threats. Frustrated, I opened the bag of peas, scattered the remainder all around her and watched her flail around as though she had been tossed into a pool of piranhas.

It's one of my fondest memories of Hawaii.

GO TO [Part Three](#): "Where are my peas?"

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Part Three: Perhaps it was the memory of being surrounded by voracious tropical fish in a Hawaiian pea soup that turned Patti's heart against an island vacation. Whatever it was, if she's determined to go to Italy, Jake had better start learning the language.

Aloha Venezia! Where are my Peas?

By Jake Satin-Jacobs

"Let's go to Hawaii." I said.



"No," Patti replied. It was that simple. "Hawaii is too expensive in the winter. Italy is cheap."

"Why do you think it's so expensive in the winter," I asked.

"Everyone wants to go then."

"Why does everyone want to go there in the winter?"

"Because it's warm and beautiful."

I followed with, "And why is Italy so cheap?" And her response was, "Because no one wants to go there in the winter."

I decided to forego the next logical step and cut to the chase. "And no one wants to go there because it is not beautiful and warm." She nodded.

"So, let's go to Italy in the summer."

"It's too expensive."

"Hawaii in the summer?"

"Too hot. We're going to Venice in November."

"Where are my peas?" "I thought, remembering the reef fish.

Quando l'ultimo bus ritorna dalla spiaggia?

When we begin planning a vacation, we have a very precise division of labor. I do not plan. Patti makes all the reservations, spends hours on-line, chatting over the minutia of the trip with fellow travel freaks, buying paper underwear from an on-line travel store and compiling lists of cheap places to eat wherever we go.

My single task during the preparation phase is to learn the language of the country we are going to visit. I don't learn the whole language, of course. There is no subtle discussion, but I prepare for basic communication.

I learn present tense, directions, "How much? Too much." "I'd like the same thing – only cheaper," numbers and – just in case – "What time does the last bus return from the beach?" I was disappointed to find that saying the word "Ciao," did not bring me the same sense of inner

peace as "Aloha."

Well, Patti planned her plan and I learned to "parlare Italiano" like an illiterate, simple-minded native and, in early November, we boarded a plane for Venice.

GO TO> [Part Four:](#)
"Where Can I Board the No. 10 Bus?"

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Part Five: A lengthy flight followed by a chilly water-taxi ride to their hotel brings the first leg of Jake's and Patti's vacation to a close. The two are greeted by Marco, the desk clerk, and retire to rest up for this episode's adventures in the streets of ancient Venice.

Aloha Venezia!

Help! I'm a prisoner on a Stair Master and I can't get off!

By Jake Satin-Jacobs

We had no idea how much we would need our hearty breakfast as we took off on our first walking tour of Venice. The city is known for its canals. But as you begin walking, you come to know it for its stairstep bridges. By noon on the first day, I had already counted 1,500 steps and decided not to torment myself with continued enumeration.

In addition, the streets, which permit no bicycle, car or other vehicular traffic, are frequently too narrow for two adults to pass without bumping shoulders. Walking becomes a sort of dance. Step, step, side, side, step, shuffle, side, side, step. We danced through the opposing traffic for an hour or so and then it began to rain.

Negotiating the streets of Venice in the rain increases the already formidable challenge.

Imagine that a short, stout, older woman with a small dog is walking toward you in a four-foot wide alleyway. She is carrying an umbrella large enough to shade the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the pointy edge of which approaches at throat level. The dance steps must be modified drastically and immediately: Tiptoe, reach, side, side, turn, step, step. Eventually, you must learn that dance, as well as the standard umbrella tilt routine.

The people, they cannot pass

After a day of walking the streets, we returned to the Hotel American for what would become our customary, pre-dinner nap. It was, of course, raining when we lay down to rest. And it was raining when we awoke several hours later to prepare for dinner. November may be the cheapest month in Italy, but it is also the wettest.

As Patti began to dress, a siren sounded. It was not the kind of siren you would expect from a police vehicle or an ambulance. It the kind you would expect during an enemy attack or preceding a class six tornado. It aroused my wife's curiosity and she called Marco at the desk. Patti asked about the reason for the sounding of the siren.

Marco, a little out of breath, responded, "The Grand Canal...it overflows."

"And what does this mean to us?" she asked.

"The people...they cannot pass."

Patti had more questions, but Marco seemed preoccupied. He said only, "I must go. The furniture...they are getting wet."

My wife is not the sort of person to let things go without explanation. She made her way down the three floors toward the lobby, where she found the stairwell jammed with guests. The lobby was a foot deep in water and sewage and hotel employees were scurrying about, piling furniture into little towers.

She returned to inform me that we would not be going out to dinner, at least until the water and sewage receded with the lowering tide. Climbing bridges had made me hungry and I was cranky. We ate and drank everything in the mini-bar. Our first Italian dinner consisted of peanuts, beer, wine and Campari.

GO TO> [Part Six: "Does the Last Supper Ring a Bell?"](#)

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Part Six: A high tide floats all Venice boats and the furniture in Jake's hotel, but not before our vacationing couple learned to negotiate the narrow city streets. In this installment, we learn for whom the bell tolls.

Aloha Venezia! Does the Last Supper ring a bell?

By Jake Satin-Jacobs

Even though it continued to rain, the tide had subsided and the streets of Venice were passable the next morning.



So, in the midst of a downpour, we boarded a vaporetto for San Giorgio Maggiore, a basilica on an island in the lagoon that fronts Saint Mark's Square and which, Patti had assured me, housed the "Last Supper." I sat in the warmest part of the vaporetto wondering what would happen to my paper underwear if it got wet.

We were blown from the vaporetto to the church. Along the way, the first of three umbrellas was permanently turned inside out.

The church was empty and dark. As is customary in some places, it was necessary to toss lire into a machine to generate light to see the artwork. We looked at several thousand lire worth of Renaissance art, before we arrived at the "Last Supper." It turned out to be not DaVinci's, but Tintoretto's version of the same biblical scene.

Mid-viewing, my lire expired and the lights went out. It was just before noon and we decided to take a trip to the top of the bell tower for that precious view, before returning to the center of town.

In the elevator sat a very sullen, gaunt, gray, middle-aged man. He was squinting into a dense German religious text. I spoke to him in cheery Italian. He responded in bored, flat English. I thought of John Carradine.

Slow ride to the summit

I gave Mr. Happy a gazillion or so lire – the equivalent of a dollar – to ferry us to the summit. The ride up was silent and slow. We were deposited unceremoniously at the top, the elevator doors closed behind us and the sullen man headed back down to pick up his next passengers or to resume reading his book.

We stood silently, huddled together, and looked across the lagoon toward the city, buried in the haze in the distance. The cold, wet wind slapped against our faces. I tried to smile, but silently I prayed for warm air and sunshine. I thought of Hawaii. And then it was twelve o'clock and the giant bell ten feet above us began to swing.

Before either of us could react, the clapper struck the side for the first time. Patti jumped as though she had received an electrical shock. The bell continued to chime and I took off running in a circle around the elevator shaft in search of a silent place that did not exist. There was no escape.

Thirty long seconds later, it was over. We were grateful that there was no

special hourly performance, nothing besides the 12 strikes to mark the noon hour.

When the morbid elevator operator returned, he was smiling. Something told me it wasn't the first time he had abandoned his charges to the noontime bells.

GO TO> Conclusion : "This Place is for the Birds"
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Conclusion: Ears ringing from the bells of Venice, Jake and Patti experience the perils of a tourist abroad. In the concluding episode, Jake befriends a gaggle of pigeons...much to his long-suffering wife's disgust.

Aloha Venezia!

This place is for the birds.



By Jake Satin-Jacobs

Irritated, worn out, wet and nearly deaf, we boarded a vaporetto and headed back to the center of town.

The Piazza San Marco is the pivot point for all tourism in Venice. The piazza is well known for its pigeons. They are the size of roasting hens and very aggressive.

Despite the rain, which continued to fall, though more lightly, the square was full of birds. I found them fascinating, while Patti found them annoying. I bought a packet of corn from one of the vendors in the square and started feeding them.

Patti suggested I stop. I refused. She commanded me to "stop playing with those disgusting ...things." I was in no mood to obey.

"It's fun," I told her as I scattered some corn at my feet. Birds flocked to me like lawyers to a hand-written codicil.

"Stop it!" screamed Patti. "Stop it, they're filthy."

"Nonsense. They're corn-fed, hand-raised Italian pigeons," I replied, putting some corn on my shoulders. "You ought to try it."

"That's disgusting," she screeched.

Flashback to Maui

Suddenly, I was in the water off Maui, peas in hand.

"Here. Try," I said and held out a handful of corn. Patti backed away.

"Get away from me," she warned. My pigeon buddies and I stepped closer and looked into the space just above her head. The rain had stopped and the brilliant blue of the Venetian sky filled the frame.

Everything moved in slow motion as my hand rose and I released a full load of corn into the air above her. I was instantly deserted by my fowl friends, who took flight in the direction of my wide-eyed bride and the kernels floating in the air above her.

She flailed and shrieked and ran from the square, chased by pigeons that had spotted stray bits of corn wedged between her knapsack and her coat.

As I wandered across the piazza in the general direction of my fleeing mate, I thought, "I like Venice."

Joy is not in the place, but in the attitude one brings to the place.

**Jake Satin-Jacobs is a Chief Administrative Analyst
in Transit Operations.**

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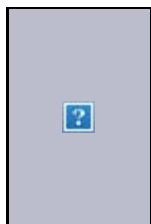
EDITOR'S NOTE: Although metro.net has offered monthly columns by Jake Satin-Jacobs for more than a year, this is the first serialized article we've run. We'd like to know what you think. Please forward your comments to Editor Bill Heard at heardw@mta.net.

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Jake's Adventures

What a Nightmare! Jake did everything right in picking his computer sales team. Interviews, testing, background checks, schmoozing. So, how did it all go so horribly wrong?

The 'Perfect' Manager Selects the 'Perfect' Sales Team



By Jake Satin-Jacobs

Some years ago, fairly early in the computer revolution, I was charged with opening a new computer sales and service facility in San Diego for the Tandy Corporation.

I was as enthusiastic as I could get. It was a new building. I was hiring and training my own staff. The money was good and going to be better. I was determined to do everything right.

I not only interviewed and selected candidates, but I paid to have their personalities tested. I checked their credentials, spoke with their references and even interviewed them in groups with candidates for other positions.

Finally, I had selected the ultimate staff. I had done all my homework. Everyone's personality profile fit his or her position. I was confident that I had a team to beat all teams. I was the perfect manager. I was going to be the best boss with the best staff. I was ready to crack the whip, but I was also caring and concerned.

There were five people on the staff initially.

People liked Ray

I had worked with Ray in a previous job. He was fortyish, about 5-feet, 8-inches tall, 200 pounds of pure, thick muscle, a former boxer with an odd digestive disorder that caused him to regurgitate food for re-chewing like a cud. His breath was not always pleasant, but he always had a mint in his mouth and people liked him.

Ray knew nothing about computers. I wondered at times if he could find the power switch. He had a great twinkle in his eye. He always looked like he was keeping a very funny secret. When he smiled, his teeth filled the room and people believed anything he said.

He was the perfect salesman – all sizzle, no heat. In the three years he worked for me, he sold almost \$2 million worth of computers and never had a return.

Ken was a green, naïve-looking recent college grad. He was very tall and weighed about 120 pounds fully dressed for a severe winter. He was intelligent and articulate and had good potential in sales and management. I liked and trusted him.

During his second year of employment, Ken managed to steal about \$50,000 dollars worth of equipment from me. I think he works in the stock market now.

Richard was a nerd

Richard was our service technician. He was a nerd and said so himself.

But he was, of course, incredibly bright and he understood computers with a sort of intimacy that made the hair on my neck stand up. For Richard, everything could be turned into a pun. His puns were occasionally humorous, but mostly annoying. He could have been a mime.

Marlene was a very pleasant, middle-aged woman whose profile said she had an academic orientation and was attentive to detail. She was quiet and always well-dressed. Marlene was going to work all our school accounts. In the six months she was employed, she sold nothing – not a little – NOTHING.

I had hired Gary to head our training center. He had been in the Air Force for four years, had worked as a programmer for several years. He had a solid training background. Gary was very pleasant and smiled all the time. It should have been a warning sign.

A long weekend in the woods

I arranged for us all to spend a long weekend prior to the actual store opening, up in the mountains, isolated, getting to know one another and the operation.

The first night of our intended three-day stay started well. We all went out to dinner in the town of Idlewyld, then returned to our secluded cabin to drink some wine, talk and generally get to know each other.

Ken had brought his guitar and strummed gently in the background as people began to open up.

Ray talked about his tour in Viet Nam. He made us laugh. We all drank wine. Ken strummed his guitar.

Richard giggled while he told us about his childhood in Montana and what it felt like to move to the big city of San Diego. He made several puns and we all pretended to be amused. We drank more wine. Ken strummed his guitar.

Marlene spoke candidly about the failure of her twenty-five year marriage and her estrangement from her adult children. We empathized and drank a lot more wine and Ken strummed his guitar enthusiastically.

Gary told his story

And then, it was Gary's turn to speak. He thanked us all for being as candid as we had been. It had made him feel more comfortable telling his story. Everyone had drunk a lot of wine and Ken began to play a little Blues riff.

Gary said that, when he was stationed in Alaska, he had decided to go out one day and take a walk in the woods. He had gotten lost and had lost half of each foot to frostbite. He showed us his feet. Someone opened another bottle of wine.

Ken didn't pay much attention. He was plucking the guitar with a vengeance. He was Eric Clapton.

"I wouldn't feel comfortable talking about this with most people," said Gary. "But I tried to kill my first wife and was committed to a mental hospital for about a year."

The last chord Ken struck rang through the otherwise silent room and everyone was suddenly sober. Mouths hung open. No one breathed.

"Actually," said Gary, "I wasn't released from the hospital. I just decided I had been there long enough."

Silence filled the room

Five of us stood silent in the living room of a cabin in the woods, outside Idylwild, surrounded by the darkness of night, with an escaped lunatic.

Gary sensed the discomfort. "I think I'll go for a walk in the woods before I go to sleep," he said. "Anyone want to come along?"

Everyone politely declined and Gary walked off into the night. We all slept with one eye open and we decided to return to San Diego immediately in the morning.

A few days later, I walked into the training room. Gary was playing "Midway" on his computer and didn't know I was there. Midway was a computerized reenactment of the WW II Pacific Theatre battle.

Gary was jumping up and down and screaming, "Tora, Tora, Tora!" Then he struck some keys, made the whistling sound of an incoming round and hollered, "BANZAI!!!"

When I terminated Gary, I had two guys waiting outside my office, just in case. He just smiled broadly and left.

Moral of the story: Hiring is a crapshoot. There is no test for morality. Knowledge and experience can never substitute for good attitude. A smile is a great thing, unless it is permanent and unrelated to the reality that surrounds it. And, most importantly, there is no urine test for sanity.

Jake Satin-Jacobs is a Chief Administrative Analyst in Transit Operations

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Khawani Named Director of Rail Operations Safety

Vijay Khawani has been appointed to the new position of Director of Operations Safety, Rail.

In his new job, Khawani will oversee the activities of directing the development and the implementation of the Rail System Safety Program Plan, Hazard Resolution Program, the annual internal operations and maintenance audit program, CPUC triennial audits, Safety Improvement Program and the Rail Reliability Program.

Khawani has worked with the MTA since 1992 in construction and on operations safety-related projects.

In his previous position as Operations and Maintenance System Safety Manager, Khawani managed the System Safety Program for MTA's new rail start projects and directed the CPUC's Safety Oversight Plan from planning to maintenance.

He also directed innovative measures in an effort to reduce the number of grade-crossing accidents on the Metro Blue Line.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Are you running in this year's LA Marathon? metro.net is interested in your LA Marathon experiences. Bring your medal and race time on Tuesday for a group victory photo. Please e-mail Editor Bill Heard, internally, or at heardw@mta.net or call 922-7479 and leave a message.



TO THE FINISH -- Chariots of Fire-types meet at Gateway Transit Plaza for group karma before running the 16th Annual LA Marathon on Sunday. Raring to go are, back row from left, County Counsel **George Parks**, veteran marathon runner **Everett Wilson**, Sr. Security Officer **Luis Medrano**, and, front row from left, County Counsel **Ron Stamm**, Media Relations staffer **Luis Inzunza** and Freeway Service Patrol aide **Gary Chan**. For the record, here's the run-down on the runners up: **George Parks**, stepping out for his third LA marathon, hikes the 26.2 miles with the LA Marathon Roadrunners walk/run group in under 8 hours. Veteran runner **Everett Wilson**, a MTA auditor in Revenue, has 52 marathons to his considerable credit with a best time of 3:15. By the way, Wilson has run every single LA Marathon since the first one in 1986, a feat he shares with a shrinking but elite corps of some 320 marathoners. Former U.S. Marine **Luis Medrano**, who has finished 14 marathons in fine form, trains with the LA Marathon Roadrunners and runs a clean and mean 4:25er. It will be the eighth LA run for County Counsel **Ron Stamm**, who faithfully trains with the LA Leggers in Santa Monica every single Saturday for months. His best time, including one New York, New York Marathon, is a very cool 3:57. **Luis Inzunza**, who ran last year's LA Rainathon in 5:20, expects better weather will boost his second run around town. Newcomer **Gary Chan** predicts victory in his first marathon ever. --TEXT AND PHOTO BY GAYLE ANDERSON

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Angels Flight Cable Snaps

- **3 Critically Injured
Among 11 Injured
Passengers**

(Feb. 1) As many as 14 people were hurt, today, when a cable broke on the Angels Flight Railway causing the two to crash into each other, City New Service reported. Three were reported injured critically, 11 others were transported to area hospitals with minor injuries or treated at the scene and released.



Photo of Angels Flight taken Dec. 19 by Ed Scannell

The accident was reported to the City Fire Department at about 12:17 p.m. Some 40 firefighters responded to the scene.

Mayor Richard Riordan, who also went to the scene, told reporters the funicular would remain inoperative until the National Transportation Safety Board has conducted an investigation of the accident.

When the cable broke, City News Service reported, one of the cable cars fell down the hill and crashed into the other. A funicular involves counter-balanced cars that operate on parallel tracks via cables.

Angels Flight originally opened Dec. 31, 1901, and was installed on Bunker Hill. Now located at 315 S. Broadway, it was closed between May, 1969, and Feb. 24, 1996, when it was reopened as a tourist attraction.

Reconstruction of the funicular, which was coordinated by the Community Redevelopment Agency, cost some \$4.1 million, of which the MTA contributed \$750,000.

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Division 1 may expand to include five vacant parcels lying directly southwest of the current bus yard at Seventh and Alameda streets.
PHOTO BY JOSÉ UBALDO

MTA Plans to Expand Division 1 with Space for More Buses, More Parking, CNG Facility



(Feb. 1) The MTA is planning a major expansion of its historic Division 1, a project that would permit the bus yard to accommodate 67 more coaches, 120 more employee parking spaces and a CNG pumping facility. The plan will be presented to the Board this month.

The MTA would enlarge Division 1 with the purchase of five vacant parcels lying directly southwest of the current bus yard. The property totals 115,000 square feet.

A report prepared for the Board's Operations committee says, "Additional capacity is needed in the central MTA service area to allow greater flexibility in locating buses and scheduling needed transit service." The report notes that the agency would save some \$1.5 million annually in the cost of "deadheading" buses between the division and their routes.

Minimize operating costs

The division expansion would "...allow the MTA to make service improvements and minimize operating costs," the report says. Transit Operations also is evaluating a possible plan to relocate some or all of Line 720 of the Metro Rapid Bus fleet to the expanded division.

The MTA estimates the division expansion project to cost some \$7.5 million, including land acquisition and construction, according to Gary Spivack, deputy executive officer, Transit Operations.

If the project is approved by the Board, the MTA will make a purchase offer to the owners of the five small parcels later this year. Spivack anticipates that construction could begin in late 2001.

Street closing required

Expanding Division 1 would require closing a portion of the east-west Industrial Street between Alameda and Central Avenue. The street now divides the current bus yard from the proposed expansion site. The street is used by a small number of homeless persons, who have thrown up temporary shelters.

Spivack said the MTA will cooperate with the dozen or more city and county agencies that work with the homeless to find cleaner, healthier environments in which those currently encamped on Industrial Street can live.

"We're going to be sensitive to their needs and treat them with respect. We'll get the right people to work with them," he said.

"Under no circumstances do we want to have an unsafe or unsanitary living condition in this area."

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Angels Flight Passenger Dies of Injuries Suffered in Cable Car Collision

- MTA Employee was among first on the scene following funicular railway accident.



Angels Walk marker, foreground, annotates Hill Street entrance to Angels Flight railway.
PHOTO BY ED SCANNELL

By GAYLE ANDERSON, Associate Editor (Feb. 2) Investigations are underway to determine the cause of a collision on the historic Angels Flight railway, Thursday, that fatally injured an elderly man and left seven others injured, two in critical condition.

An MTA employee, Phil Ganezer, witnessed the noontime tragedy, ran to the scene and climbed onto the tracks in an attempt to help the terrified passengers.

Leon Praport, an 83-year-old New Jersey man on vacation in Los Angeles with his wife, died Thursday night at Los Angeles County/USC Medical Center from the trauma, which included head and chest injuries and a broken pelvis. His wife, also in her 80s, remains in critical condition in the hospital's intensive care unit.

Another passenger, a 34-year-old man who was ejected from the lower car by the force of the impact, also is listed in critical condition with head and back injuries. Five more victims suffered minor injuries and were transported to area hospitals.

Early reports that the cable that moves the two cars along the track had snapped were dismissed shortly after investigators from the National Transportation Safety Board arrived on the scene and found the cable intact but tangled.

News reports are now saying the investigation is focusing on the operation of the drum mechanism that spools the cable used to move the cars up and down the tracks.

Eyewitness Account

Ganezer, a MTA Transportation Manager, was having lunch at the Grand Central Market's new outdoor plaza directly across the street from the funicular railway when, out of the corner of his eye, he saw a sudden movement and heard a loud thud.

"The collision had occurred just as the bottom car had gotten to the place where it jogs to the side track so the impact was nearly head-on," said Ganezer. The impact caused the cars to lean at a precarious angle, almost if they were about to derail.

Instinctively, Ganezer rushed across the street to help the passengers trapped inside. He had to climb over a fence to get to the tracks, which were at least ten feet off the ground that he could see through the crossbeams and concrete ties.

"The first thing I saw was a man who had been ejected from the lower car. He had a huge gash bleeding above his left eye. He was

lying forward, suspended over the ties, with his legs over the tracks and his left arm draped over the concrete ties."

'Don't move, it will slide'

As people began gathering at the scene, some were issuing warnings to the terrified passengers: "Don't move or it will slide." Ganezer attempted to help a woman in the lower car and then climbed to the upper car where six frightened passengers remained inside the runaway car.

Rescue workers arriving on the scene secured the area immediately. As Ganezer prepared to exit the tracks, he looked through the ties at the ground 10 feet below.

"The concrete support showed no signs of yielding," he said, " but I was a little afraid of slipping through the ties."

Railway Remains Closed

Angels Flight originally opened Dec. 31, 1901, and was installed on Third and Hill streets to shuttle passengers from the Central Business District up the steep incline to posh Bunker Hill residences. After years of downtown decline, the funicular railway was dismantled in 1969 and put into storage. Angels Flight returned to service on Feb. 24, 1996, when it was reopened as a tourist attraction.

Reconstruction of the funicular, which was coordinated by the Community Redevelopment Agency, cost some \$4.1 million, of which the MTA contributed \$750,000.

Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan announced the railway will remain closed during the investigation and until its safe operation can be guaranteed.

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LAPD Cmdr. Robert Hansohn, left, and Sheriff's Capt. Sylvia Fort lead discussion of graffiti prevention methods at Brown Bag Lunch hosted by Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky, right. PHOTO BY BILL HEARD

Cops Will Add High-Tech Tools to Anti-Graffiti Effort

(Feb. 2) The MTA's two law enforcement agencies will be turning to high-tech methods more often in the future to catch graffiti vandals. Graffiti and other vandalism costs the MTA an estimated \$15 million annually.

LAPD Cmdr. Robert Hansohn and Sheriff's Capt. Sylvia Fort, who spoke at Chief Operating Officer Allan

Lipsky's Brown Bag Lunch, Thursday, described sensors and tiny cameras that can be placed in graffiti-prone areas to scare away vandals or photograph them in the act.

Hansohn noted that the LA City Council has called for an enhanced citywide effort to fight graffiti. He indicated success in that fight will require the cooperation of the City Attorney in regularly prosecuting vandals.

Both the LAPD's Transit Group and the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau have graffiti experts on staff. The LAPD's GHOST anti-vandalism team has made a number of high-profile arrests in the past.

Many Metro Bus coaches already are equipped with video cameras and police have used the images to identify vandals and other criminals. The MTA also conducts an on-going anti-graffiti campaign that includes efforts by operating division personnel who make presentations and lead activities at local schools.

"It seems to us that this is a solvable problem," said Lipsky, "although it will take an enormous effort."

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ON TOUR WITH PUBLIC AFFAIRS
TEXT AND PHOTOS BY RICH MORALLO



First-time subway users from Colfax Elementary School in North Hollywood toured the subway system and visited the east portal at Union Station on Wednesday, January 24.



Stacy Romo, a light duty operator with Division 18, recently presented awards to first-grade winners of the train safety-drawing contest held at Hooper Avenue Elementary School in Los Angeles. After attending safety assemblies on how to

stay safe near trains and tracks, students participate in writing and drawing contests that are conducted to reinforce the safety message on campus.



Members of the Wilshire Retirement Center toured the station and Gateway Plaza Headquarters Feb. 9. Evelyn Green, standing second from right, attended the opening of Union Station in 1939.



Ninth District Council Member Rita Walters talked about various train safety messages during the groundbreaking ceremony for the 53rd Street Pedestrian Bridge Feb. 1.

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'Cops & Ops' Presentations Start Again at Bus Divisions

(Feb. 5) Cops & Ops – a series of presentations by Safety and Security, Transit Operations, and the MTA's law enforcement partners – began its fourth round of the bus operating divisions, Feb. 2.

Launched three years ago by Paul Lennon, managing director, Safety and Security, the Cops & Ops meetings give management an opportunity to discuss operating and police procedures, communications concerns and safety issues.

Employees have a chance to ask questions directly of those responsible for implementing the operational programs and enforcing the law.

"I can't begin to stress how important it is that we continue to have these face-to-face meetings with the operators," Lennon wrote in a memo to participants. "They are our front-line ambassadors and 'point of sales,' customer contact representatives...."

Issues discussed during Friday's Cops & Ops kickoff at Division 1 included police response to bus operator alarms and radio communications. On hand for the presentation were Lennon, Ellis Kyles of the Bus Operations Center, LAPD Capt. Brad Merritt, Sheriff's Capt. Sylvia Fort and Lt. Dave Tellez and others.

Cops & Ops presentations are scheduled Feb. 16 at Division 2; Mar. 2, Division 3; Mar. 16, Arthur Winston Division; Mar. 30, Division 6; April 13, Division 7; April 27, Division 8; May 11, Division 9; May 25, Division 10; and June 8, Division 15.

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LAPD Capt. Brad Merritt responds to questions at Division 1.



John Roberts

John Roberts Named Acting Head of Bus Transportation

(Feb. 6) John Roberts, a 27-year transit operations veteran who joined the MTA in 1990, has been named acting deputy executive officer, Bus Transportation. He succeeds Dan Ibarra, who retired in January.

Previously, Roberts, 46, was a division maintenance superintendent, with responsibility for vehicle maintenance at six divisions. In his 11 years with the MTA, he also served for four years as service operations director at divisions 15 and 9, as equipment maintenance manager for three years at Division 8, and as an equipment maintenance supervisor at divisions 3 and 12.

"I want to focus on bringing transportation and maintenance even closer together," Roberts said. "The two are linked – there's a mutual partnership there."

Prior to joining the MTA, Roberts most recently served as superintendent of operations at the Orange County Transit Authority, directing the operation of a bus division with more than 350 operators.

In his 16 years with OCTA, from his first job as a mechanic, he also held various positions in vehicle maintenance and administration.

A graduate of Pacific Christian College of Fullerton, where he earned a B.S. in management, Roberts also holds an M.S. in organizational management from the University of La Verne. He currently is working on a doctorate in public administration at the University.

Roberts is a native of Lynwood, who grew up in Paramount. He and his wife, Shereé, a pre-school teacher, have three children: Jason, 22, an LA County deputy sheriff; Shawna, 21, a junior; and Chrissy, 19, a sophomore, both at Cal State Long Beach.

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Long List of Successes Recorded in MTA's Second Quarter

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Feb. 6) The MTA can point to a long list of successes for the October-December quarter of FY-2000, the heads of the agency's major departments reported during Tuesday's second-quarter review.

"It's been a tremendous quarter," said Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky. "We're on a roll. Everybody has contributed and we should be proud of the work we've done."

Lipsky had special recognition for Transit Operations, which in December recorded the lowest number of customer complaints in six years – 2.64 per 100,000 boardings. Ops also reduced the vehicle accident rate, while achieving improved bus cleanliness for the sixth quarter in a row.

Countywide Planning came in for its share of praise for completing the first phase of an estimated \$850 million Call for Projects. A recommendation is due to the Board in June. Planning also finished a draft of the Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Ahead of schedule

Lipsky congratulated Engineering and Construction for staying ahead of schedule on a project to extend the Metro Blue Line platforms to accept three rail cars. Completion is expected in June. Construction also finished a Metro Green Line maintenance-of-way building ahead of schedule and \$1 million under budget.

"When we all come together and work as a team, we have these great successes," Lipsky said.

The quarterly review, which was completed in less than an hour, focused on department performance, challenges ahead and action items. Financial performance will be discussed at a later meeting.

Open to all staff members, the quarterly reviews serve as a reminder of department – and even individual – accomplishments and what's planned for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Here are some specifics of departmental reports:

Engineering and Construction

- Completed paving and lighting project at Division 6
- Completed roofing projects at divisions 2 and 4 and a bus washer project at Division 6
- Reached 90 percent completion of a Metro Green Line noise barrier project
- Challenges ahead include installing CNG facilities at bus divisions; completing the Metro Blue Line platform extensions and tail track project at 7th and Metro; completing a radio retrofit in Segment 1 of the Metro Red Line; and acceptance of the P-2000 light-rail cars.

Countywide Planning and Development

- Finalized the 2000 STIP submittal and programmed TEA-21 funds in FTIP

- Completed a stakeholder outreach plan for the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
- Registered 113 employers and 370 Rideshare rewards for the Rideshare 2000 program and enrolled 407 Club Metro participants
- Obtained FTA approval for the draft environmental report on the Eastside corridor

Challenges include obtaining FTA approval to circulate draft environmental studies and reports for the Wilshire and San Fernando Valley corridors; reviewing Call for Projects applications; completing the LRTP; and improving collection of ridership data.

Transit Operations

- Met the bus cleanliness goal with a rating of 7.1 and the rail car cleanliness goal with a rating of 9.1
- Placed 114 new CNG buses in service
- Maintained an on-time pullout standard of more than 99 percent for buses, light- and heavy rail
- Trained 167 new bus operators and promoted all part-time operators to BDOF status
- Implemented pilot lines 58 and 214

Challenges for the months ahead include completion and implementation of new labor contract provisions; P-2000 car acceptance; and kicking off three new bus operator recognition programs.

Support Services

- Customer Relations reduced its call response time by 50 percent to an average of 2 minutes, 13 seconds
- Real Estate reached 55 percent (\$7.9 million) of its annual goal of \$14.5 million in revenues from property sales and leases
- Treasury exceeded its benchmark for investments, reaching 2.85 percent
- Human Resources hired 149 bus operators and filled 123 other vacancies
- Procurement reduced material and supply costs with savings, thus far, of \$375,188

Challenges include continuing to improve the procurement process; implementing a pay-for-performance program; leasing 54 light-rail cars; completion of design specifications for computer wiring at operating divisions; and completing construction of new ground floor office space at Headquarters.

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Accountants Schedule Financial Education Conference

(Feb. 7) The Los Angeles Chapter of the Association of Government Accountants (AGA), has scheduled a financial skills conference, Wednesday, Feb. 28. Participants in the conference, which is open to all MTA employees, may earn eight CPE credits.

AGA serves professionals in the government financial management community by providing quality education, fostering professional development and certification and supporting standards and research to advance government accountability.

For more information or to register for the educational conference, call Fifi Burns at 922-9086.

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Juelene Close is Procurement's 'Buyer of the Quarter'

By RICHARD BACHMAN
(Feb. 7) Procurement's newest "Buyer of the Quarter" honoree was a shocked Juelene Close.

Close was recognized for her commitment and dedication to providing outstanding service to her customers. She maintains and demonstrates a very positive attitude in conducting and developing a good working relationship with internal and external clients for developing acquisition plans, resolving problems and overall customer service support.

Close's responsibilities include all procurements for the Metro Blue Line, assisting the non-Inventory section with the issuance of bids for forklifts, mini-vans and various equipment, and purchase orders for uniforms and miscellaneous items.

The surprised Close thanked everyone for the award, stating that it was through teamwork with the department and her colleagues that she was able to accomplish so much.

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TOP BUYER--From left, Executive Officer Lonnie Mitchell, Contract Manager Richard Bachman, Top Buyer Juelene Close and Purchasing Director Ron Dupuis.

NoHo Temporary Parking Lot to Open Monday Morning

(Feb. 7) Barely two months after construction began, the MTA will open a temporary parking lot, early Monday, to serve commuters at the Metro Red Line's North Hollywood station.

See MTA
REPORT
(Dec. 1)

[MTA to
Add
Parking
New
NoHo
Station.](#)

The 2.67-acre lot, across Lankershim Boulevard from the subway station and adjacent to the historic Southern Pacific and Pacific Electric Railway depot, will add 186 parking slots to the existing 915 spaces, for a total of 1,101.

The temporary lot will be officially opened during a brief ceremony at 7:30 a.m. Scheduled to attend are Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, MTA Construction Chief Charles Stark, Transit Operations Chief Tom Conner and Guy Weddington McCreary of the Universal City-North Hollywood Chamber of Commerce.

Since the North Hollywood station opened in June, 2000, the original lot has been jammed almost every weekday by commuters who shun their cars in favor of fast, convenient service to Hollywood, downtown LA and points between.

In addition to constructing the temporary parking lot, the MTA and the Community Redevelopment Agency plan to restore the 105-year-old rail depot for commercial use. At the request of the community, the MTA trimmed back the number of parking spaces from a planned 218 to 186 to preserve an old section of track.

Meanwhile, construction on the 101 Freeway overcrossing adjacent to the Universal City subway station continues. Completion of the project early next fall will add 165 more slots to that station's usually crowded parking lot, bringing the total to 555.

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ISD is 15th Department to Open Intranet Web Site



(Feb. 8) Metro.net welcomes its 15th departmental web site to the Intranet, today, as the Information Services Department – ISD – becomes the latest to join a growing family of “at-your-fingertips” information resources.

As of today, the new web site is listed following Human Resources in the pull-down menu on the right-hand navigation bar at the Intranet home page. Software Engineer David de la Ysla developed the pages and is responsible for maintaining them.

ISD’s goal, as noted on the web site, is to “provide every department...the best service possible. We will handle your information management needs with the utmost diligence and discretion...and provide you...the support you need to do your job quickly and accurately.”

ISD is responsible for developing and implementing all new MTA computer application systems, such as FIS and TOTS. ISD maintains and supports the applications.

“We have many talented employees with a wide range of capabilities,” says Don Stiner, ISD director. “Our job is to help improve the MTA’s operational efficiency by providing the tools departments need to do their jobs better.”

Among the assets on the ISD web pages is an on-line ISD service request form and forms for access to FIS, to the information network, to payroll and others.

Under What’s What, users will find a listing of ISD employees who are responsible for such systems as FIS and for maintaining computer systems that serve the MTA’s departments, including Scheduling and Transportation Maintenance, Procurement, Risk Management, and Countywide Planning among others.

The web site provides information about current ISD projects, several organization charts, photos and information about ISD employees of the quarter and a nomination form.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Senior Administrative Analyst Dan Ramirez gives a firsthand account of the emergency evacuation drill at the Regional Rebuild Center on Jan. 17.

THIS IS A DRILL...



RRC evacuation drill was coordinated by Director Rick Hittinger, center. PHOTO BY DAN RAMIREZ

THIS IS A DRILL...

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY EVACUATION...

LEAVE THE BUILDING IMMEDIATELY AND

MEET AT YOUR DESIGNATED EVACUATION AREA.

By DAN RAMIREZ

(Feb. 9) On January 17, 2001 at 11:01 a.m., the Regional Rebuild Center (RRC) emergency command center sprang into action directing the events of a simulated evacuation of the entire RRC facility.

The evacuation drill was coordinated under the direction of Rick Hittinger in cooperation with Safety Operations staff, RRC Directors and Department Managers.

The necessity of emergency preparedness was not lost on the over 400 RRC employees that participated in the drill after witnessing the electrical fire atop the USG building the previous week.

All RRC employees recognize the importance of a well-coordinated emergency evacuation plan and have participated with business-like enthusiasm in this semi-annual event.

This drill simulated an 8.1 earthquake scenario, including missing and injured personnel and emphasized communication between the command center and the three designated evacuation areas.

The use of hand held two-way radios has proven an effective method of communication to account for all personnel, provide information on injured personnel and to dispatch search teams to retrieve the missing.

After the event, the principal participants convened to review the event and offer suggestions to improve the operation.

The RRC evacuation drills assume a worse-case scenario in which the RRC is cut off from all immediate external support services and must act as a self-reliant group at the outset of a disaster.

To meet this level of emergency preparedness, RRC staff has developed a detailed evacuation plan including an emergency command hierarchy with detailed duties and responsibilities, evacuation routes, and emergency response procedures for various scenarios.

Over 120 RRC personnel have completed the MTA Business Emergency Response Training (BERT), First Aide and CPR classes and can administer triage functions until professional emergency service personnel arrive.

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Second Train Coming

Fibre optic signs warns pedestrians more than one train is approaching a rail crossing.
PHOTOS BY LUIS INZUNZA



MTA Board Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke and MTA Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky demonstrate warning sign for news crews.

(Feb. 9) It was showtime for L.A. County Supervisor and MTA Board Chair Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, MTA Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky, and Managing Director of MTA Systems Safety and Security Paul Lennon at the Vernon Avenue crossing of the Metro Blue Line on Friday.

MTA officials demonstrated a "second train coming" warning sign, a potential addition to the Metro Blue Line safety system. Currently in use and undergoing evaluation, the fibre optic sign warns pedestrians that more than one train is approaching a rail crossing. The sign was designed with input from community members and is intended to serve as an additional deterrent to illegal crossings that sometimes result in serious injury and death.

The second train coming sign, the first of its kind in the nation, is activated when two or more trains are approaching the crossing. It is designed to alert pedestrians who illegally cross an intersection while the crossing gates are still down to be aware of the imminent presence of another train.

The sign's black and yellow graphics include images of a train, a pedestrian, a grade crossing and an arrow placed in the line of sight between the pedestrian and the train. If

the sign is found to be an effective deterrent, the MTA will seek state approval to retrofit additional crossings.

Funded by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration, the concept for the Second Train Coming warning sign was generated by MTA's Office of Systems Safety and Security, MTA Operations, LADOT and outside rail safety experts.

Channels 9, 22, 34, 52, 56 (Japanese) and 62, ECO Television, KFVB and the LA Times covered Friday morning's press event at the Metro Blue Line Vernon Avenue crossing, where reporters witnessed the activation of MTA's "Second Train Coming" warning sign. KFI Radio and Channel 4 inquired about the demonstration later in the day.

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A multimedia event.



Metro Art Docent Susan Zagha, foreground, leads tour at the Metro Red Line Vermont Sunset Station.

PHOTOS BY GAYLE ANDERSON



Art in Motion: Training for new Metro Art docents begins April 21. Guests of docent-guided art tours rediscover L.A. through the art and architecture of the Metro Rail stations.

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(Feb. 12) The Metro Art Docent Council is offering an 11-week training and apprenticeship program to increase its ranks with art and community enthusiasts from the myriad of communities served by Metro Rail.

The apprenticeship program begins April 21 and will meet once a week for four-hour sessions. The training takes the volunteer behind the scenes of the broad range of art in the Metro Rail system and provides insights into the artists who created the artworks and the communities that inspired them.

No experience is necessary to become a Metro Art Docent. The only requirements are an enjoyment of public speaking and the physical stamina to conduct a two-hour walking tour. Docents will have the opportunity to conduct at least 12

tours a year.

MTA employees are encouraged to apply for the program as an outside activity.

What docents do

Since the program's inception in August 1999, the council's 13 docents have led 125 tours of various segments of Metro Rail. "That translates into approximately 3,500 people," said Barbara Lashenick, president of the Metro Art Docent Council.

Metro Art docent Susan Zagha vies for tour assignments among the small band of volunteers who staff the program. "I don't want anybody to miss this. It is a thrill for me to see people rediscover the city where they live or experience the city they're visiting."

Zagha, a native of Argentina who now lives in Hollywood, had never led tours of any sort before becoming a Metro Art docent. She was recruited to the council by Lashenick, who is also a Los Angeles County Museum of Art docent.

"The docents are dedicated, involved individuals who love Los Angeles and who love art," says Lashenick. "Being a Metro Art Docent is an opportunity to be part of something that doesn't exist anywhere else. It's

exciting for docents to get to know their city intimately from the perspective of the arts and then share that knowledge with people here and from around the world. "

Currently, the demand for the popular tours is greater than the number of docents. "We need more docents in order to give the public a greater opportunity to discover and enjoy Metro Rail, " said Lashenick.

Not just another pretty subway

While docent programs are commonly found at museums around the world, the MTA is believed to be the first transit agency to benefit from such a program.

The docents lead groups of fifteen or more on informative two-hour tours of several stations. The tours introduce the individual artists and the concepts behind their wide variety of works, as well as outline the artist selection process and the particular challenges of creating art for public environments. Participants not only learn more about contemporary art but also explore Los Angeles' growing Metro Rail system and the different communities along the way.

The MTA's public art program was described as "one of the most imaginative public art programs in the country" by the *New York Times* and has received extensive international media coverage and several significant design awards. The stations are an extraordinary blend of art, architecture, landscape, and engineering and are the result of the MTA's interdisciplinary approach of adding artists to the traditional mix of architects and engineers.

Passengers on the Blue Line from Long Beach to Downtown and on the Metro Green Line from Norwalk to Redondo Beach view a vast collection of Metro Rail stations transformed by tandem teams of artists and architects into works of art designed to comfort, soothe and sometimes exhilarate the weary traveler. And when the trains seemingly morph into sleek subway cars somewhere under downtown Los Angeles, the experience goes underground through the belly of Hollywood and emerges into a cornucopia of California history in the San Fernando Valley.

For more information on becoming a docent, call Robin Izon, 922.2738 or visit Metro Art on www.mta.net/metroart.

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Getting to the Heart of the Matter

- **Seminar and screening program measures vascular health.**



(Feb 12) Are you at risk for a stroke or heart disease? One way to find out is at the free "Good News" seminar scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 15, in the Windsor Room, 15th floor, during the lunch hour from noon to 1 p.m.

Instructors from Longevity, Inc., will review the symptoms of stroke and heart disease, highlight preventive measures you can take to reduce the risk, and discuss new cures and treatments for vascular disease.

Longevity Inc, in conjunction with the American Heart Association, will provide free seminars to MTA employees and follow-up with a day of low-cost vascular, carotid and body composition screenings, said Kimberlee Vandenakker, Human Resources Work/Life Program coordinator. Two free vascular screenings will be given way at the seminar on Thursday.

To reserve a space for the free seminar, call Vandenakker at 922-4867.

The "good news" is that 80 percent of strokes and heart attacks can be prevented, said Gail O'Connell, a Longevity, Inc., administrator.

Using data from the National Stroke Association and the American Heart Association, Longevity aims to encourage participants to know their risk for vascular disease. "By knowing stroke and heart attack risk factors, people can take charge of their lives," said O'Connell.

Vascular screenings will be offered to MTA employees and family members on the following Thursday, Feb. 22., in the Board Overflow Room. To schedule an appointment for the screenings, which take one hour for all three, call Longevity, Inc., at 1-888-287-5662.

Three types of screening tests are offered:

- **Peripheral Vascular Screening:** Utilizes near infrared technology to detect blockage in the arteries coming from the heart to the upper and lower extremities.
- **Carotid Ultrasound:** Takes images of your arteries to discover any build-up of plaque inside the main arteries of the neck, and
- **Body Composition:** The first FDA-approved Doppler technology test measures the percentages of lean mass, fat and water.

Participants are advised not to consume anything containing caffeine after 7:30 a.m. that day and to wear short sleeves. All three tests are performed for a fee of \$125 or separately for \$15 for the body composition and \$55 for either of the vascular screenings.

The screenings are non-invasive, painless tests performed by a licensed sonographer and technologists, said O'Connell. The technologists will review the results with the patient, who, ultimately, will receive a packet containing a letter to their physician, their test results and a photo of their ultrasound. The tests also will be interpreted by a radiologist.

O'Connell said the screenings are a lifeline to making changes that can save your life. "Doctors won't give these screenings unless you're already

symptomatic," she said. "A lot of people want to know the condition of their arteries. A moderate build-up (of plaque) can be reduced with changes in lifestyle, that doesn't always require surgery," she said.

The seminar and screening program will be offered at Division 5 on April 19 and 26 and at Division 8 on April 28 and May 4.

Longevity, Inc., based in Dana Point for the last 8 years, provides education and low-cost vascular screening to Southern California businesses, government bodies, municipalities and community organizations.

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Internet Service Names Metro Art's Web Page 'Site of the Week'

(Feb. 13) MuseumSpot.com, the World Wide Web's portal for information about museums, has named the Metro Art Department's new Internet page "Site of the Week."



[Click on logo to visit website.](#)

The Internet page will be "showcased among the very best museum sites on the Web," wrote Matt Basham of MuseumSpot, in an e-mail to Maya Emsden, Metro Art director. Basham's web site is designed for art enthusiasts, students and teachers, art curators and others.

The Metro Art web page, which was first posted in January, can be found on the right-hand navigation bar at www.mta.net. It provides general information about Metro Art programs and tours.

"Our new web page enables people from all over the world to get information about the MTA's art programs," says Emsden. In recent days, she has received e-mails from Australia and New Zealand, Japan, Germany and elsewhere inquiring about the programs.

Webmaster Joe Simpson designed the new Metro Art web page, working with public arts officers Alan Nakagawa and Laurie Garris.

On the web page, a user will find descriptions and background information on the artists and artworks at Metro Rail and Metrolink stations. The site provides information about such programs as Poetry in Motion, the Metro Bus Young Artists Program and the Division 3 Mural. There's also a link to information about the Docent Tour program.

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MTA Operators Encouraged to Aid Homeless, Mentally Ill

(Feb. 14) An LA County team is enlisting the support of Metro Bus and Metro Rail operators to help the homeless and people with mental illnesses who sleep in bus shelters and at subway stations.

The county's Mental Evaluation Team (MET) began operations in December and has since assisted almost 100 homeless persons, according to a report given, Wednesday, to the MTA Board's Operations committee.

County Supervisor and MTA Director Michael Antonovich proposed creation of the MET in 1999 as a means to "provide resources for individuals...(who)...sleep on bus benches and in our subway areas." The Board of Supervisors provided \$200,000 in funding.

"Supervisor Antonovich wanted to do something to see that these individuals were treated and cared for," said Paul Lennon, managing director, MTA Safety and Security.

'Eyes' of the MET program

"Our bus and rail operators can be the 'eyes' of the MET program and notify the control centers when they see a homeless person who may need help," he added. "There is help available and our operators can be a part of providing it."

Sheriff's Deputy Craig McClelland and Linda Boyd of the county Mental Health Department are the team members assigned to the MTA. Beginning last June, the team visited operating divisions and the bus and rail operations centers, and familiarized themselves with bus and rail routes.

The team also trained operations staff and members of the law enforcement units under contract to the MTA. Training included methods for dealing with the homeless and mentally ill and how to contact the MET for assistance.

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Update: Feb. 22 Board Chair Burke Proposes Renaming 7th/Metro Station to Honor Julian Dixon



**U.S. Rep.
Julian Dixon**

(Feb. 22) Approved by the Board of Directors.

(Feb. 15) Board Chair Yvonne Burke said, Thursday, the 7th and Metro station should be renamed to honor the late U.S. Rep. Julian Dixon, long regarded as the leading supporter in congress of Los Angeles' commuter rail system.

The Executive Management committee gave unanimous approval to Burke's motion to rename the station the "Seventh/Metro Center Julian Dixon Metro Rail station."

As a hub for the Metro Red Line and Metro Blue Line, the station serves more than 60,000 passengers each weekday.

Burke's motion calls for a plaque to be placed in a prominent location at the station to describe Dixon's contributions to public transit. She expects the full Board to approve her motion at the Feb. 22 meeting.

'Our voice in Washington'

"Congressman Dixon was our voice in Washington," Burke told MTA Report. "He fought when no one else would to make sure we were fully funded. He has been identified with Los Angeles County transportation."

Burke said she is recommending the 7th and Metro Station because "that station brings together two important rail lines, both of which he was key in assisting us with funding."

She said Dixon also helped provide funds for revamping Metro Bus service and for more than a dozen municipal bus operators.

Dixon, who represented his West LA district for 22 years, died Dec. 8, 2000, at age 66. He was the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence committee.

Burke praised the late congressman as a leader who "saw beyond the borders of his own district and beyond the next election."

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ON TOUR WITH PUBLIC AFFAIRS

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY RICH MORALLO



Students, parents and teachers from Wildwood School in Los Angeles explored all three Metro Rail lines and took a break at the Metro Red Line MacArthur Park Station Feb. 14. At Union Station they received information on how to stay safe near train tracks.

Train safety volunteer Randy McBurnett talked to students at Lovelia Flournoy Elementary School near the 103rd Street Metro Blue Line Station on being careful around tracks and trains Feb. 14.



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First of 500 New Buses Roll onto MTA Property

(Feb. 16) Eight coaches of a huge new bus order rolled onto MTA property this week – the first of about 500 the agency will receive in calendar 2001.

The eight low-floor, CNG coaches were built by New Flyer, which is under contract to provide a total of 223 buses this year. Within the next 30 days, the company expects to ramp-up production to 10 to 15 coaches per week.

Meanwhile, North American Bus Industries is nearing completion on the first coaches in a 215-bus order. The first buses are expected to arrive at the MTA in early March. By early April, NABI should be delivering buses at a rate of 10 to 15 per week.

NABI also is under contract to build an additional 370 buses for delivery beginning this fall. By year's end, the agency will have received a total of approximately 500 new buses from the two companies. The remainder of the NABI order is expected in 2002.

'Significant impact on our fleet'

"The new buses have had a significant impact on our fleet and on the quality of our service," says John Drayton, manager, Vehicle Acquisition.

One sidelight of the influx of new buses is its impact on the Arthur Winston Division. Like most other divisions, it has operated buses made by several manufacturers. But, sometime later this year, 100 percent of the division's buses will be New Flyers.

"Our goal in Fleet Management is to have no more than two – and preferably only one – type of bus operating out of each division," says Drayton.

Of the 222 buses assigned to the Arthur Winston Division, 172 currently are New Flyers. Drayton expects to allot up to 50 more New Flyers to the division this year as replacements for its older buses.

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Longevity Inc. instructor Ben Turpin signs up MTA employees for onsite vascular screenings at "Good News" seminar hosted by Human Resources Feb. 15.

GOOD NEWS / BAD NEWS -- The bad news is being at risk of a heart attack or stroke. The good news? Just knowing what to do -- before or after the actual event -- can save your life. Longevity, Inc. delivered the good news in an information seminar on vascular health on Feb. 15. Some 48 employees signed up for the follow-up screening program on Feb. 22. Although the appointments are completely filled on that day, employees who missed the first round are invited to attend the seminar and screening program at Division 5 on April 19 and 26, which is already half full, and at Division 8 on April 28 and May 4. To schedule an appointment for the screenings, which take one hour for all three, call Longevity, Inc., at 1-888-287-5662.

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New Computers Help Speed Information to Metro Patrons

(Feb. 20) Metro riders who call 1-800-COMMUTE are getting information much more quickly these days, thanks to the new faster and smarter computers now in use by Customer Information agents.

With the new computers, Customer Information agents are able to answer calls sooner and provide callers with detailed itineraries faster, says Tom Longsdon, manager, Metro Information.

The average time a patron waits to speak with an agent has dropped from about five-and-a-half minutes a year ago to just over two minutes today. This also has made life more pleasant for both patrons and agents.

"Clearly, the customers are happier when they reach us because they haven't been waiting as long," Longsdon says.

More responsive computers also have trimmed 35 second off the length of an average call. That's a savings of 68 staff hours per day, given the 7,000 daily calls coming in to Customer Information.

"This enables us to handle more incoming calls with the same number of agents," notes Longsdon.

Retrieve information faster

The new computers retrieve information faster from the main frame. They also can store up to 10 itineraries at a time, allowing an agent to give a patron multiple travel options more quickly.

The effect of the new technology also has benefited the Customer Information agents, Longsdon says. "They now have some downtime between calls to take a deep breath. They almost always had calls in cue before."

Several additional enhancements should be added before the fiscal year ends in June. Customer Information computers will provide agents with regional maps on-screen. The computers also should have plot maps of Metro Rail and Metrolink stations, along with real-time transit system updates such as route detours.

Customer Information has 108 full-time and part-time agents and 86 work stations. A maximum of 70 agents are on staff during the day. Agents provide information on Metro lines, as well as for all municipal bus lines and Metrolink. The highest call volume is between 12:30 and 2:30 p.m.

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Faster computers speed up service in Customer Information.

MTA Bus Card Campaign Launches Tax Credit Drive for Low-Income Workers

The Earned Income tax Credit Campaign, a partnership created in 2000 by the County and City of Los Angeles, the Internal Revenue Service and MTA, has generated more than \$14 million in additional credits and refunds for Los Angeles workers, officials announced today at MTA Headquarters.

The announcement preceded the unveiling of a new bus card campaign to launch the tax credit drive for 2001 and to help get the word out to low-to-middle income families and to very low-income individuals.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a federal tax credit that allows qualified families who worked full- or part-time during 2000 and earned less than \$31,152 to receive a tax refund credit of up to \$3,888.

"The Earned Income Tax Credit is the nation's most effective anti-poverty program and a way to put thousands of dollars back into the hands of working families," said Mayor Richard Riordan.

The Earned Income Tax Credit may be retroactive for up to three years, so workers who qualified in previous years, but did not take the credit, may receive a refund by filing an original or amended tax return.

Workers who did not have to file because of low income also may qualify for a refund.

For information and assistance, individuals may call the Earned Income Tax Credit hotline at (800) 601-5552. Forms and assistance are also available on-line at www.eitc-la.com.

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What is the Earned Income Tax Credit?

The EITC is a tax credit for people who work, but don't earn high incomes. If You qualify, you could pay less federal tax or no tax--even get a tax refund. To qualify, you must meet certain rules and file a tax return, even if you don't owe any tax or didn't earn enough money to require filing a tax return.



Update, Feb. 23: Due to weather conditions, work on the Hollywood Freeway overpass has been postponed until Sunday, March 4.

Overpass Construction to Close Hollywood Freeway Lanes

By RICK JAGER

Construction of a new overpass adjacent to the Metro Red Line Universal City station will necessitate the weekend closure of Hollywood (101) Freeway lanes beginning Sunday, Feb. 25.

Work involving the construction of a new overpass at Ventura Boulevard will include the placement of steel girders during three consecutive weekends. Brutuco will perform the work under contract to MTA.

The northbound lanes of the Hollywood Freeway will be closed to traffic from 2 a.m. to 8 a.m. on Sunday, Feb. 25, as well as the following weekend during the same time period on March 4.

On March 11, all southbound lanes of the Hollywood Freeway will be closed for similar construction work. The closure will occur between 1 a.m. and 9 a.m.

Construction of the new freeway overpass and ramps when completed later this year will improve access to the Universal City Metro Rail Station and enhance overall traffic flow in the Universal City, Studio City and surrounding communities.

The construction work and freeway closures are being reformed during the late night and early morning hours on the weekend to avoid impacting rush hour traffic along the Hollywood Freeway.

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Feb. 21, 2001

To: All Non-Represented Employees
Fm: Executive Leadership Team
Subj: Performance Appraisal Plan
cc: Julian Burke

Following the OCEO's memorandum of February 16, 2001, informing you of the MTA Board of Directors' approval of the Performance-Based Compensation Program (PBC) for non-represented employees effective July 01, 2001, the following is provided.

The purpose of the PBC Program is to recognize and reward employee performance. The program directly responds to the Employee Morale Report, which recommended that a program be implemented for rewarding individual work performance.

For the current fiscal year (FY-01), the existing five-tier performance appraisal instrument (without any changes) will be used for the year-end evaluations (June 30, 2001). Effective July 1, 2001, a basic salary increase will be provided to each non-represented employee who receives a rating of Effective, Commendable or Exceptional. Also, effective July 1, 2001, non-represented employees who receive a rating of Commendable or Exceptional will receive a performance based salary increase in addition to the basic salary increase. The amount of the basic increase, and the amount of funding allocated for the performance based salary increases, will be established through the FY02 budget process. The actual percentage performance based salary increases will be based on the rating category of the employee (i.e., Commendable or Exceptional), the departmental distribution of the performance ratings, and the amount of funding budgeted for performance-based increases. Employees rated Needs Improvement who improve to Effective or higher by mid-year will be eligible to receive the basic increase effective January 1, 2002. All basic increases will become a part of the employee's base salary. Performance based increases will only become a part of the employee's base if the employee is not already above the salary range for his or her position. However, a salary grade survey will be completed by June 2001 and the salary ranges will be adjusted, if appropriate.

A Performance Appraisal Ad Hoc Committee designated by Executive Management is charged with developing a new/revised performance appraisal instrument to be effective July 2001, (FY-02). The new Performance Appraisal Process will have three phases: 1) Performance Planning Session, 2) Mid-Year Review, and 3) Year-End Review. The new Performance Appraisal instrument will maintain a five-tier rating system. Performance objectives must be established for every non-represented employee.

The Performance Appraisal Ad Hoc Committee will establish the FY02 instrument by defining the rating descriptions, establishing performance factors, establishing performance objectives and measurements, and streamlining the instrument.

Once the performance appraisal instrument has been revised, training will be

provided to all non-represented managers/supervisors and Information Forums will be scheduled for all non-represented staff. HRD&T will be convening two (2) performance appraisal-training sessions for those supervisors/managers who never received initial training on the current instrument. The classes will convene on March 14, 2001 and April 20, 2001; please call ext. 27113 to register.

The foundation of this program is based on fair and objective communication with each employee. Supervisors and managers will be responsible for the overall success of this program and will be accountable to their Executive Officers.

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Update: Feb. 22 Board Approves Bond Sale, New Cars, Service Changes, Other Agenda Items

(Feb. 22) In action at its February session, the MTA Board approved a proposed \$270 million bond sale, the purchase of 224 new cars, service changes for Metro Bus lines and a number of other agenda items.

The \$270 million bond sale will provide funds to retire about \$55 million in short-term loans the MTA negotiated last June. The sale also will refinance some \$200 million in bonds at an immediate savings of \$30 million and a future savings of about \$2.4 million per year. **Item 20 was approved by the Board.**

The 224 new cars the MTA plans to buy would be replacements for high-mileage cars purchased in 1988 through 1992. For the \$3.688 million expenditure, the agency would receive 207 four-door, mid-size sedans for general use and another 17 sedans for use by security officers. **Item 11 was approved by the Board.**

The MTA currently operates more than 985 non-revenue vehicles, of which 685 are five or more years old. This item will go before the Operations Committee on Wednesday.

Proposed service changes

Item 30 was approved by the Board with an amendment. The Board directed the Operations Committee to further consider the proposed cancellation of Line 497. The Board also asked for a report in six months on the effectiveness of the ordered line changes. The Board approved service changes on a total of 34 lines, including increasing service on the Harbor Transitway Line 445. The agency is recommending cancellation of Line 402 to Pasadena, Line 436 Venice Boulevard freeway express, Line 466 to Downey, Norwalk and La Mirada and the Line 497 express from Montclair and Pomona to Los Angeles.

Other items approved by the Board include:

Report on UTU and ATU Contract Implementation, Item 7: In a separate action, Feb. 22, the Board approved Item 35 giving formal approval to labor contracts with the UTU, ATU and TCU. Both the Board and the unions' members already had ratified the contracts. A report on the UTU and ATU contracts indicates that several cost-saving measures have been implemented. The savings were realized through changes in work rules, scheduling and manpower planning. More savings are expected in coming years.

The report notes that, under the new UTU contract, the number of 4/10 assignments for bus operators increased from 45 to 100, beginning in December. Operators bidding for the 4/10 shifts averaged 13.5 years' seniority, compared with an average of 9.5 years' seniority for all full-time operators. No operators were required to accept 4/10 assignments, the report said.

Expansion of Division 1, Item 12: Approved by the Board with amendments that direct the staff to report back in 60 days about the possibility of joint development in the area and about how the MTA could prevent noise and bus traffic from disturbing Division 1 neighbors. The Board approved the

See metro.net Feb 1:
[MTA Plans to Expand Division 1...](#)

purchase of five parcels adjacent to Division 1, totaling 115,000 square feet. Expansion of the division will provide space for 67 more coaches, 120 more employee parking spaces and a CNG pumping facility.

Universal Fare System Consultants, Item 14: Approved by the Board. The CEO was authorized to sign a three-year, \$4.5 million contract with Booz-Allen & Hamilton of McLean, Va., to assist in implementing the Universal Fare System project.

For the past decade, the MTA has been developing a countywide "universal" fare system that would provide integrated automatic fare collection and centralized data processing. Such a system would link the MTA's fare collection system with those of municipal and other transit agencies in the region.

Route 10 HOV Project, Item 28: Approved by the Board. The Board approved an additional \$5.5 million in funding for construction of high-occupancy lanes on Route 10 between Baldwin Avenue and Rt. 605. The additional funding will cover a project shortfall.

Transportation Corridor Preliminary Engineering, Item 31: Approved by the Board. The Board approved an additional \$16.4 million to fund accelerated preliminary engineering for the Eastside, Mid-City/Wilshire and San Fernando Valley East-West Transit Corridors.

The staff also requested \$5.94 million to complete five "major investment studies" in the transportation corridors, a required step to receive federal funding.

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**U.S. Rep.
Julian Dixon**

MTA Rail Station to Be Renamed in Honor of Rep. Julian Dixon

By GARY WOSK

(Feb. 22) One of the MTA's busiest Metro Rail stations will be renamed after the late U.S. Rep. Julian Dixon (D-Culver City), a longtime supporter of public transit projects in Los Angeles, including the Metro Rail and Metro Bus systems. Dixon died Dec. 8 at the age of 66.

The 7th and Metro station, junction of the Metro Red Line and Metro Blue Line, now will be known as the Seventh/Metro Center/Julian Dixon Metro Rail station, following today's unanimous approval by the MTA Board of Directors. The MTA also will honor Dixon by placing a plaque at the station in a prominent location.

MTA Board Chair and Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke proposed the name change last week at the MTA's Executive Management meeting by introducing a motion that also was unanimously passed.

The motion read in part: "Los Angeles County, transportation services, and this agency suffered a great loss with the passing of Congressman Julian Dixon. Serving in the Congress for 22 years, he saw beyond the borders of his own district and beyond the next election."

"He knew that Los Angeles County needed alternatives to freeways and automobiles," the motion said. "He was 'The Voice' of Los Angeles County transportation in Washington. He led the effort to secure federal funding for Metro Rail and, together with the late Tom Bradley and Kenny Hahn, put together the combination of federal, state and local funding that established this critical component of Los Angeles' mass transit system."

"But he wasn't only a champion of rail," the motion continued. "Congressman Dixon also helped secure funding to revamp MTA's bus service and provide funding for more than a dozen municipal bus operators in Los Angeles County..."

Burke said she recommended the 7th and Metro Station because "that station brings together two important rail lines, both of which Dixon was key in assisting us with funding."

"Congressman Dixon was our voice in Washington," said Burke. "He fought when no one else would to make sure we were fully funded. He has been identified with Los Angeles County transportation."

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Cost of Some Metro Café Items to Rise; Others Being Reduced

(Feb. 22) Food prices are rising...and so is the cost of some items on the Metro Café menu, effective March 5. But wait! Other cafeteria prices will go down.

Of 131 food items offered for sale in the cafeteria, 26 will see price increases averaging five percent. The price of eight others will be reduced an average of nine percent. The most recent price increase occurred last March.

Among the menu items whose price will rise are sodas, 10 cents; burgers, 15 cents; French fries, 10 cents; salad and deli bar items, 2 cents an ounce; and soup, 15 cents.

Among the items whose price will be reduced are Starbucks 12 oz. coffee, 5 cents; cold cereal, 5 cents; croissant, 10 cents; tortillas, 15 cents; bottled frappuccino, 20 cents; and bottled water, 10 cents.

According to General Services, Metro Café pricing is still comparable to or lower than cafeterias at other public agencies in the area. Service includes featured food items, combo dishes and such promotions as the Breakfast Club that offers a free breakfast for every 10 purchased.

Sodexo Marriott recently beat out three other companies who submitted proposals to operate the cafeteria and food service at the Regional Rebuild Center. An MTA evaluation committee gave Sodexo the highest scores.

Employees can submit comments and suggestions for improvement to Metro Café manager, Bruce Ueno, at 922-6330 or by e-mail to MTACafe@aol.com.

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Leadership Team Outlines Pay-for-Performance Program

(Feb. 22) The pay-for-performance program for non-represented employees moved a step closer, today, with the distribution of a memo outlining how the program will work.

Noting that the "...foundation of this program is based on fair and objective communication with each employee," the memo issued by the Executive Leadership Team said supervisors and managers will be responsible for and accountable for the program's success.

The purpose of the pay-for-performance program "is to recognize and reward employee performance," the memo says. It was developed in response to the Morale Report.

Non-represented employees who receive a rating of "Effective" on this fiscal year's evaluations can expect to receive a basic salary increase. Those who rate Commendable or Exceptional also will receive a performance-based pay hike.

Cash amounts will vary

The actual cash amount received by those who merit a performance-based pay hike will depend upon whether they rated Commendable or Exceptional, on how much is budgeted for the program and on how departments distribute the ratings.

The performance-based pay raise will become a permanent part of an employee's salary base, if that salary isn't already above the salary range. Human Resources will complete a new salary grade survey in June and will adjust salary ranges, if appropriate.

In the meantime, an employee committee appointed by executive management is revising the performance appraisal form. The new appraisal process will have three phases: a performance planning session, a mid-year review and a year-end review. It will take effect in July for use by managers during FY 2002.

Human Resources will provide training on the current appraisal form in March and April for those who supervise or manage non-represented employees. Training on the revised form will be scheduled at a later date.

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READ
Performance-Based Compensation Program Memo
Feb. 16
Performance Appraisal Plan Memo
Feb. 21

February 16, 2001

To: All Non-Represented MTA Staff

**Fm: Julian Burke, Chief Executive Officer
Allan Lipsky, Chief Operating Officer**

Subj: Performance-Based Compensation Program

As most of you know the MTA Board of Directors approved a Performance Based Compensation Program (PBC) for non-represented employees effective July 1, 2001. The plan presented to the Board included the same general salary increase which we are planning to budget for FY2002. The PBC program will provide us with additional money to reward employees based on their performance.

Based on suggestions from employees and managers we have agreed to continue using the existing five-tier performance appraisal instrument for year-end evaluations (June 30, 2001). Employees who are rated Commendable and Exceptional will receive additional performance based compensation.

A revised performance appraisal instrument is being developed for the new fiscal year so there will be adequate time for training in its use.

We recognize that to achieve the plan's goal evaluations must be fair and objective. The Office of the CEO and all of the Executive Officers are committed to that principle.

Human Resources will be distributing additional information on the PBC plan within the next few days.

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Ticket Sales Booming at 3 Newest Subway Stations

(Feb. 23) Surprising fact: Almost 30 percent of all tickets sold on the Metro Red Line are bought at the three newest subway stations. During morning rush, it's 42 percent.

Response: The Revenue Department is installing five new ticket vending machines (TVM) in those stations – two each at North Hollywood and Universal City and one at Hollywood/Highland.

In December, 2000, 27 percent of the 379,348 patrons who used TVMs bought tickets at the Segment 3 stations. In January, the figure rose to 28 percent.

During the 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. period, TVMs at North Hollywood sold 31 percent of all tickets purchased during morning peak hours – 829 of 2,460 tickets.

Spectrum of reasons

"Extending the Metro Red Line into the Valley has opened a whole spectrum of reasons for people to use the subway," says Agapito Diaz, Revenue director. "Now, they can ride it for appointments or business downtown, or to entertainment in Hollywood."

The three newest stations are attracting a mix of tourists and day-trippers, along with regular commuters. The occasional riders are finding the subway to be "an affordable option," Diaz says.

There are eight TVMs at North Hollywood, eight at Universal City and five at Hollywood/Highland. The 16 subway stations have a total of 99 TVMs.

Near the end of March, Revenue will install change-making machines at the North Hollywood and Universal City stations as a pilot program. The machines, which will give \$1 "Sacajawea" coins in change, will accept up to a \$20 bill.

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Mayor Names Jeff Walden to Vacant Seat on MTA Board

(Feb. 23) Mayor Richard Riordan has appointed Jeffery R. Walden, assistant deputy mayor of the Office of Economic Development, to fill a vacant seat on the MTA Board.

Jeff Walden succeeds Jaime de la Vega as a Board member. The remaining two members appointed by the mayor are Los Angeles Council Member Hal Bernson and Jose Legaspi.

"Jeff has a proven track record managing complex economic development programs; an effort I want the MTA to pursue," said Riordan. "He is highly regarded for his abilities and possesses the leadership to successfully fill this important seat on the MTA Board."

Jeff Walden, a Los Angeles resident, has held various management positions within the Mayor's Office of Economic Development.

As assistant deputy mayor and director, he manages the LA Business Team. Walden was part of the team that helped create the Genesis LA program, which offers funding for the redevelopment of abandoned and blighted properties through public-private partnerships.

Walden also prepares and presents the team's budget and quarterly and annual reports to the mayor and the City Council. He serves as a key spokesperson for marketing Los Angeles to businesses nationwide.

Previously, Walden served as executive director for the California Business Revitalization Center and as director of the Building Inspector Program for the Department of Building and Safety. He worked for that department for 15 years. He holds a BA in Business Administration from Cal State Los Angeles.

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Jeffery R. Walden, assistant deputy mayor of the Office of Economic Development, was appointed to MTA Board by Mayor Richard Riordan.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In this two-part series, *MTA Report* describes how the MTA's Robin Blair and other members of a relief group brought aid to the people of El Salvador, following the January, 2001, earthquake, and to the people of Nicaragua in 1999 following Hurricane Mitch.



A child in El Salvador stands amidst the rubble of his home left devastated by an earthquake.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBIN BLAIR

MTA's Robin Blair Helps Bring Aid to Devastated Areas of El Salvador, Nicaragua

• Part 1 of 2

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Feb. 26) Early last month, a devastating earthquake rocked El Salvador. Thousands of people were without food or shelter. Homes and businesses were destroyed. Relief organizations worldwide mobilized support for the devastated country.



Robin Blair

One of those who responded to the overwhelming need was Robin Blair, 46, an MTA transportation planning manager.

Blair has been volunteering in poverty-stricken areas off and on over the past 30 years. He has a background in economics and has studied the environmental consequences of economic policy in the third world.

He participated in recovery efforts following Hurricane Mitch's devastation of Nicaragua in 1998. Blair has built houses in Mexico and has worked with a group that built a school in Ghana, Africa. He works through two church-related organizations, Iglesia de Cristo and Mission para Cristo.

Blair originally had been scheduled to travel to Nicaragua to participate in relief efforts when the earthquake struck El Salvador. It was to be his fourth humanitarian trip to Central America in two years.

Arriving in Nicaragua, Jan. 18, he and several friends commandeered a truck and loaded it with supplies. They set out the next day for El Salvador. What normally would have been a six-hour drive became a 10-hour ordeal as they were forced repeatedly to detour into the mountains to avoid bridges destroyed by the earthquake.

Blair and his support group were assigned to assess the extent of damage and the medical, housing and nutrition needs of people in the small town of Santa Elena near the capital city, San Salvador.

'You guys are in bad shape'

They also distributed the food and supplies they had loaded in Nicaragua. "The worst thing you can do is to jump out of your truck, look around and say, 'Yeah, you guys are in bad shape,' then get back in your truck and drive off," he says.

Among the most important items the group distributed were drugs for the respiratory illnesses that strike people who live in the open air when their homes are destroyed.

Blair was relieved that he had not arrived empty handed. "We brought several hundred pounds of respiratory drugs, freeze-dried foods, 20 gallons of water in five-gallon jugs and about 500 pounds of pasta."

How do you make sense of things in such chaotic situations?

"If you don't know anyone there," he explains, "it's fairly easy to put the whole situation in numbers – this many people died, this many structures fell. But, once you become involved in people's lives, the personal price you pay is huge."

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Since his return from El Salvador in January, Blair has been working to fill another 40-foot shipping container with building materials, tools and other supplies. Shipment is scheduled in March. Employees who would like to contribute canned or packaged foods, clothing, tools, building supplies and other goods for El Salvador relief may contact Robin Blair at 922-3074.

[GO TO>PART 2:](#) In 1999, Blair made three trips to Nicaragua to assist in relief efforts following Hurricane Mitch.

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Carol Inge Named Interim DEO in Countywide Planning



Carol Inge

(Feb. 26) Carol E. Inge, a 20-year planning veteran, has been named interim deputy executive officer in Countywide Planning and Development.

In this post, Inge will be responsible for the activities of a department that plans and implements improvements for rail and busway, bicycle, pedestrian, highway and arterial transportation. Current projects include studies in the three major transportation corridors and the high-occupancy vehicle program.

Previously, she was director for rail, busway and bikeway planning and station area development. Among other activities, she led a team of 11 program managers to plan fixed guideway transit projects, develop the MTA's countywide bicycle program and negotiate public/private development ventures on MTA property.

Inge joined the SCRTD in 1987 as a joint development specialist. In 1990, she joined the LACTC as a transportation planning manager. She was named director of the Westside Area Team in 1993.

A native of North Hollywood, Inge earned a BA in sociology from Wellesley College in 1975 and a master's in planning at UCLA in 1977. She is married to Jack Kurihara, director of business development at UCLA Medical Center. The couple has two children: Alex, 9 and Emma, 5.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Are you running in this year's LA Marathon? Metro.net is interested in your experiences before, during and after the race. Please e-mail Editor Bill Heard, internally, or at heardw@mta.net or call 922-7479 and leave a message.



LA Marathon Executive Vice-president Marie Patrick and MTA Transit Chief Tom Conner at Hollywood press conference.
PHOTO BY JOSÉ UBALDO

MTA, LA Marathon Officials Announce Details of 16th Annual Race

(Feb. 27) Transit Operations Chief Tom Conner joined LA Marathon officials at a media event in Hollywood, today, to announce activities that are planned along this year's race route.

Up to a million spectators are expected to watch the 26-mile race on Sunday, March 4, as runners wind their way through the Central City area. The 16th annual race begins at 6th and Figueroa and finishes at 5th and Flower in front of the Central Library.

"In past years, Metro Rail has played a key role in getting LA Marathon enthusiasts to various locations along the race route," said Conner. "This year, with the expansion of the Metro Red Line to North Hollywood, it will be that much easier for people to get to

and from the actual race."

Thousands of brochures in English and Spanish, each containing a map, have been placed on Metro Buses and Metro Rail trains to notify passengers of temporary service changes and detours on Sunday between 4:40 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The race will affect 59 Metro Bus lines in the downtown LA, Hollywood and mid-Wilshire areas.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The MTA's Robin Blair has been volunteering in poverty-stricken areas for the past 30 years, most recently in El Salvador, following the January earthquake. The conclusion of this two-part series describes his earlier hurricane-relief work in Nicaragua.

MTA's Robin Blair Helps 'Make a Difference' to the People of El Salvador, Nicaragua

• Part 2 of 2



Robin Blair, left, helps unload medical supplies in Nicaragua.



Relief workers use tarps to build temporary shelters.



Contributions from MTA employees helped purchase cows for food cooperative.

By BILL HEARD, Editor (Feb. 27) "I want to make a difference in the world we live in," says Robin Blair. "To put back more than we take out."

The natural disasters that have wreaked havoc in Central America in recent years gave the MTA transportation planning manager an opportunity to do just that.

After Hurricane Mitch left its trail of destruction across Nicaragua in November, 1998, Blair traveled to Nicaragua to help assess conditions and determine the needs of homeless and jobless residents in an area near the capital city of Managua.

The work resulted in shipments of food, tools, medicines and materials needed to rebuild the hurricane-destroyed areas.

Bought four cows

"We needed to make sure people were being fed, to see that they got medical services and housing," says Blair. "With the help of some of the people here at the MTA, we even bought four cows and set up a cooperative in an area where people were suffering from malnutrition."

In Nicaragua, he and others also helped local residents form farming cooperatives and obtain no-interest loans. They helped install water systems and start small businesses.

They worked with other volunteers who provided medical services.

After a couple of weeks, Blair was back home, but he had big plans. He managed to obtain a 40-foot shipping container, and he persuaded the people at a church-affiliated school in Covina where he is a board member to help fill it.

By June, 1999, the container was crammed with building supplies, tools,

clothing, medicines, canned goods and packaged foods. The group even wangled 25 bicycles and a couple of trucks. Again, Blair set out for Nicaragua.

Officials cast a baleful eye

On the docks of Managua, officials cast a baleful eye at the container. Although the supplies were desperately needed, they were cautious.

Did the group plan to sell the goods? That might hurt local merchants whose businesses were just beginning to recover from the hurricane. Give them away? Again, merchants might be hurt, and there was the black market to be concerned about.

Give-aways also might cause riots among the poor. "We had to keep rotating the locations of our distribution points because people recognized the container," he remembers.

Eventually, however, all the goods were distributed and Blair and the container returned home. And again, he began to fill the container with contributions, many of which would come from MTA employees. They were distributed in Nicaragua in December, 1999.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Since his return from El Salvador in January, Blair has been working to fill another 40-foot shipping container with building materials, tools and other supplies. Shipment is scheduled in March. Employees who would like to contribute canned or packaged foods, clothing, tools, building supplies and other goods for El Salvador relief may contact Robin Blair at 922-3074.

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TOP ACHIEVERS Division 3 Transportation receives transit trophy. From left, Acting DEO of Bus Transportation John Roberts, Transit Operations Supervisor Fredia Sanderlin, Transportation Manager Dan Frawley, Transit Chief Tom Conner and Bus Operator Ben Ethridge.

Transit Operations Aims 'How You Doin'?' Performance Program at Bus, Rail Divisions

(Feb. 27) "How you doin'?" is more than just a casual greeting in Transit Operations these days. It's the department's newest performance awareness and incentive awards program.

Transit Operations Chief Tom Conner expects the program to increase awareness of bus and rail performance among frontline employees. It's also an opportunity to improve communication - top to bottom - and to encourage ideas from frontline employees.

"I want everyone to feel that they are part of something and that they contribute individually and as a team," said Conner. "'How you doin'?' personalizes our goals for every frontline person. I'm proud of our accomplishments. Everyone should have that same positive feeling."

For the program's kickoff, Tuesday morning, Conner traveled to three operating divisions to present traveling trophies to the top achievers for January. They are Division 3 Transportation, Division 6 Maintenance and the Metro Green Line.

Awards for top performers

Awards of \$500 each will go to the transportation and maintenance division and to the Metro Rail line that post the best quarterly performances. Units that achieve the highest scores for the year will win \$1,000 each.

The unit showing the greatest improvement for the year also will receive \$500. The money is to be used for recreation or improvements to employee common areas.

Conner will present traveling trophies to the transportation and maintenance division and rail line that performed at the highest level during the previous month.

"How you doin'?" also includes actual cash awards for individuals who submit valuable suggestions. Up to eight \$100 awards may be presented each month to employees whose suggestions are implemented by Transit Operations.

To boost performance awareness, Transit Operations will install large banners at the divisions. Each month, managers will post charts showing the unit's performance in various areas. They'll list the goal, the 12-month performance, how performance can be improved and the unit's ranking against others.

Employees also can check the banners for other important news and information about the program.

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MOW WOW!

Members of the MOW facility construction team are Al Nijland, seated, and from left, Bob Babbitt, Dave Compton and Rick Noone. Not pictured are Linda Bybee, Frank Foster and Joe Wright.

Metro Green Line Maintenance of Way Facility is Design-Build Success Story

By STEFANIE SPIKELL

(Feb. 28) The recently constructed Metro Green Line Maintenance of Way (MOW) Facility is a design-build success story. The project was completed on time and under budget with a minimum of change orders and no claims.

"What a success this was for our first design-build effort," said Joel Sandberg, deputy executive officer, Engineering. "We budgeted \$5.4 million and completed the project for \$3.9 million. I credit the exceptional team work for the success of the project."

The maintenance of way facility is located at 1680 East Imperial Highway and includes a 23,500-square foot storage building on a 65,000-square foot site. The building houses a parts storage area with an automated parts carousel and three maintenance shop areas, office, and employee convenience areas.

The MTA project team consisted of Al Nijland, Engineering; Frank Foster, Contracting; Bob Babbitt, Third-Party Coordination; David Compton, Construction; Lynda Bybee, Public Affairs; Rick Noone, office engineer; and Joe Wright, construction inspector.

A strong commitment

According to Nijland, senior engineer for the project, there was a strong commitment to timely review by the contractor and the MTA

design review team.

"By allowing the contractor to continue its design efforts while intermediate submittals were being reviewed, we were able to start construction exactly on schedule," said Nijland. "This level of partnership continued throughout the construction phase and really paid off in the end."

Babbitt, who led the coordination efforts with outside agencies, said "This project had all the makings of a very difficult one. With the new facility being located on property belonging to Caltrans and its proximity to a community childcare center in a residential area, we were concerned about opposition."

The MTA construction management staff and the contractor were proactive in communicating construction concerns with the multiple agencies, utilities and neighbors impacted by the activity. The staff addressed potential conflicts at an early stage and reached solutions in cooperation with interested parties.

Good performance specs

"Earl Corporation is a seasoned design-build company and we benefited from their expertise," said Compton, the resident engineer. "Our engineers wrote a good performance specification and the company just took it from there."

He noted that the project's cost growth was contained at five percent, considered very low for the industry.

"We are extremely proud of the outstanding commitment of the team that helped prevent claims," Compton said. "Everyone had the right attitude from the beginning and since this was our first design-build project, worked extra hard to make it a success."

"The new facility is now a welcome part of the neighborhood and the construction phase a pleasant memory for all participants," said Babbitt, the third-party coordinator.

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Education is Important for Promotion, but... Experience also Counts, HR Says



By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Feb. 28) Interested in that new job posting? Want a promotion? Human Resources is reviewing the minimum education and job experience you'll need to qualify for entry-level positions in a number of departments.

Early results of the review seem to show that the minimum education required for certain entry-level administrative positions has been too stringent, according to Naomi Nightingale, HR director. HR will seek a balance of education and relevant experience in future postings for those positions.

HR also is studying whether relevant experience can be substituted for education in some entry-level positions that typically require college degrees.

Employees who want to advance their careers at the MTA, however, will find that at certain levels college degrees and other formal education will be key requirements – just as college graduates must acquire work experience in order to advance.

Supplement work experience

"We will look at their years of experience and the relevance to the job requirements," said Nightingale. "But, employees in any job classification must know that at some point they're going to have to supplement their work experience with formal education or professional development."

This is important, she emphasized, not only for the individual, but also for the MTA. "How can the agency stay competitive if employees aren't going to take classes or increase their skills and knowledge?"

The need to re-evaluate the MTA's education vs. experience job requirements became apparent recently when job openings for administrative analyst had to be reposted.

Managers were requesting candidates who were capable of handling broader tasks rather than performing support functions as before, Nightingale said. It became apparent, however, that raising the job qualifications without taking an employee's experience into account not only was unfair to the individual, but also could deprive the department of a valuable employee.

At the same time, HR realized that modifying the minimum qualifications of entry-level positions, as well as substituting relevant experience for education, could give employees an opportunity to gain experience while they attend college or seek other professional development opportunities.

"We want employees to understand that, if they're interested in promotional opportunities, they'll have to contribute to their career development," said Nightingale.

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