

CEO's First All-Staff Meeting



- **Customer Service, Quality, Employee Development Among Snoble's Top Priorities**

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Oct. 2, 2001) "We'll have a fun ride together," the MTA's new chief executive officer, Roger Snoble, assured employees attending his first all-staff meeting.

For more than an hour, Monday, Snoble gave a standing-room-only audience – and others listening in from overflow rooms – insights into the broad themes he considers important at the outset of his administration. He was hired by the Board in June for a four-year term of office.

On the Job



CEO Roger Snoble addresses senior staff meeting...

Moving from behind the podium to engage his audience and speaking without notes, the new CEO illustrated his thoughts with examples from a 36-year career in public transportation. He drew frequent applause for many of his points.

At the top of his list was customer service.



convenes first all-staff meeting...

"Regardless of their backgrounds, we owe (our customers) quality service," he said. "That means that the bus or train is on time; it is clean and presentable; it has a friendly, helpful operator on board; and it gets them where they want to go when they want to get there."

"When you ask what my priorities are, the customer comes first," he said, then added, "Employees are a close second."



and reviews Bus Operations Control Center with Manager Ellis Kyles, above, and TOS Mark Solomon, below.

Linking customer service and quality

Snoble strongly linked customer service and quality throughout his talk, noting that quality of service affects people's transportation choices. "We have to provide excellent service," he emphasized. "Quality counts; quality is important in everything we do."

Snoble expressed high regard for the agency's accomplishments and for the professionalism he has found among MTA



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employees. He wants to make it possible for employees to grow, develop new skills and assume greater responsibilities within the organization.

"I want you to achieve the most you can achieve in your life," he said. "If you can feel good about what you do while you're at work, that's a heck of a lot better than just getting a paycheck."

Although Snoble says he plans to do some things differently and that the MTA can anticipate change with the addition of some new staffers, he assured employees there "will not be wholesale change."

"We'll take a hard look at the situations we're up against," he said. "We'll be reasoned about how we go about solving those problems. Things will evolve and hopefully they'll evolve for the best."

Telling the MTA's story

As an example of change, however, he said the agency would focus on telling the MTA's story through a stronger emphasis on marketing. These efforts could include customer interviews, surveys and focus groups to determine attitudes about the MTA and the public's transportation needs.

The current economic situation is not a good one, he said. Local sales taxes are down and may remain so for the next year, but the MTA must take the long view. "We're going to have to manage around that. We're going to have to be smart. We're going to have to be innovative."

Asked by ATU chief Neil Silver for his opinion about proposed transit zones in the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys, Snoble said those areas want greater control over their transportation system. He said he would look for ways to work through the issue with, possibly, "a whole different scenario of discussions."

"The challenge we have is how to make a big agency operate like, and be as responsive as, a little agency," the CEO said. "You're all invited to help figure out how we can get back to being responsive to our customers."

"This is an agency that's just on the edge of really blossoming," Snoble concluded. The foundation for the MTA's future has been set. "Now, we need to continue to increase quality, because quality brings customers."

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