



Deputy CEO
John Catoe

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Catoe Sees Urgent Need for Two New Divisions

Considers Shift to Regional Operations

By BILL HEARD, Editor
(Oct. 23, 2001) The MTA needs to open two more operating divisions – and quick, says John Catoe, deputy CEO and head of Transit Operations. “We’re maxed out.”

In an Oct. 19 interview with MTA Report, Catoe outlined the MTA’s urgent requirement for more space for Metro Buses. He also discussed his goals for Transit Operations, including a shift to regional operations, more focus on customers and quality service, greater cooperation with municipal operators and partnership with the MTA’s unions.

Currently, the MTA operates bus service out of 11 divisions – three in the downtown area and another, Division 3, on its northern edge. Division 12 in Long Beach remains closed and Catoe doesn’t foresee reopening it. “It’s in the wrong place,” he says.

“We need the new divisions in the core part of the City of Los Angeles,” he explains. “As we add additional Rapid Buses and as we expand our services, we’ll have to have places to store and maintain additional vehicles.”

One new division, Catoe says, would operate a mixture of Rapid Buses and regular bus service. The other would be required for regular bus operations.

Process begins in next six months

The MTA doesn’t currently own land for the two new divisions, but Catoe says the process to buy the land, gain the necessary environmental approvals and schedule construction will begin in the next six months.

“We have to expedite the process,” he says, noting that ridership is increasing. “We’re behind the ball right now and we need to catch up.” As of September, Metro Buses had recorded some 94.5 million boardings this year, up from 89.3 million in September 2000.

During the interview, Catoe said Transit Operations plans to shift to regional operations – a concept it attempted several years ago, but didn’t take far enough. The concept might include MTA regions encompassing the Valley, the Westside, Downtown, the South Bay and other areas.

“We’re talking about setting each region up like a municipal operator,” says Catoe, former head of Santa Monica’s Big Blue Bus. “You’d have planning, budgeting, operations, maintenance, scheduling, administrative support and community outreach.”

The deputy CEO regards MTA-operated regions as competition for proposed transit zones. “I want to demonstrate...that we can beat any private-sector agency in providing services,” he says.

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