

Metro Report Archives

December 2001 Articles

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[Chance Encounters](#) with Cops Lead to Merry Christmas for LA Family (Dec. 21, 2001)

Two warm-hearted LAPD officers and their colleagues from the MTA's Transit Group are making sure a Los Angeles family will have a Merry Christmas this year.

Motorola Masterminds Creating 'Brainy' Buses for MTA (Dec. 20, 2001) Within three years, the Metro Bus fleet will be transformed into a motor pool of highly intelligent, quick-thinking coaches capable of spewing forth a steady stream of real-time information to emergency personnel and planners. The result: More efficient service and a safer environment for operators and customers alike.

Free Rides on Metro System on Christmas, New Year's Eves (Dec. 19, 2001) For the seventh consecutive year, the MTA will offer free bus and train rides on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, an ongoing tradition established by the MTA Board to afford merrymakers a safe journey home, reduce traffic congestion and collisions.

Stolen Bus Once a TV 'Star,' Now Awaits Repair at RRC (Dec. 18, 2001) Sad and sagging at the rear, Metro Bus 6589 now sits in a parking lot at the Regional Rebuild Center. But last Friday night, the Division 18 coach was the center attraction in a police drama that occupied more than three hours of local prime-time television.

[MTA on a Mission](#) to be World-Class, Snoble and Catoe Tell Employees (Dec. 11, 2001)

The MTA is on a mission to become a world-class transportation system, CEO Roger Snoble and Deputy CEO John Catoe declared to an SRO all-staff meeting, Monday afternoon. And the service sector concept, they said, is the way to accomplish that goal.

The Challenge: Reorganizing the MTA for More Responsive Customer Service (Dec. 10, 2001) In a Dec. 6 interview with *MTA Report*, CEO Roger Snoble explored the various elements of that challenge, elements that range from a reorganization that would create up to five regional service sectors, to the role of communities in shaping local service, to cooperation with the MTA's unions in developing the service sector concept.

Employees Donate Mountain of Gifts for Skid Row Kids (Dec. 7, 2001) Santa Claus was there. And so was a mountain of toys, games, dolls, teddy bears, blankets, clothing and canned goods – thousands of holiday gifts to make the Skid Row Kids at the Fred Jordan Mission happy.

Fast Track: Service Sector Could Open in July 2002 (Dec. 6, 2001) The MTA's new service sector concept is on a fast track and the first one could be in place to serve the San Fernando Valley by July 2002.

Snoble Discusses Transit Topics on KPCC's 'Talk of the City' (Dec. 6, 2001) In his longest broadcast interview to date, CEO Roger Snoble took to the airwaves, Tuesday, discussing a broad range of MTA-related topics, including the new transit service sector concept.

Senate, House Vote \$22.9 Mill. for MTA Transit Projects (Dec. 5, 2001) The United States Senate, on a 98 to 2 vote Tuesday, joined the House in passing a \$59.6 billion transportation bill that will give the MTA \$22.9 million for transit projects. The measure now goes to President Bush for signature.

To help celebrate the holidays, MTA is giving away colorful token holders with the purchase of a bag of 10 Metro Discount tokens. (Dec. 4, 2001)

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- Good Times and Bad, [Charles Stark Was Steady Hand](#) on Construction's Helm
- [Transient Repays](#) Deputy's Act of Compassion (Dec. 20, 2001) The man who

stepped up to the desk of the Sheriff's station at the Rail Operations Center last Friday was ragged and dirty – apparently a transient. He dragged a crumpled envelope from his pocket and placed it on the counter.

- [Holiday Brunch](#) Serves Record Turn-out.
- **MTA Intern Helps Establish [Memorial Scholarship](#) for 'Cody' Prosser** (Dec. 19, 2001) When Staff Sgt. Brian "Cody" Prosser was given a hero's burial in Arlington Cemetery, Monday, the MTA's Patrick Horton – an intern in Regional Planning – said a silent goodbye to a young man who had been his best friend in high school.
- **[Transportation Leadership Academy](#) Grads Learned to Apply New Skills** (Dec. 18, 2001) "Take what you've learned here and apply it," CEO Roger Snoble advised the members of the Transportation Leadership Academy's December 2001 graduating class. "It won't do any good unless you make it work for you."
- **[ITS 'Elves' Ready](#) for Upgrade of Financial Information System** (Dec. 14, 2001) While elves at the North Pole are stuffing Santa's bag with toys, next week, the computer elves in ITS will be packing some 300 billion bytes of data into the MTA's Financial Information System (FIS).
- [Calendar of LA's Streetcars](#) Available in MTA Library
- [Vendor's Holiday Gifts](#) May Have Pitfalls for MTA Employees
- **JAKE'S ADVENTURES [The Search for a Christmas Tree](#) Becomes a Test of Wills for Herman and Margaret** As young Jake watches his parents squabble over the family Christmas tree, he learns there's something beneath the surface of the quarrel that helps them survive the holidays. Something that can be applied to life, itself.
- [Denise Longley Named DEO](#) in Transit Operations; Will Build Two New Divisions
- [HQ Evacuation](#) was 'Most Well-Executed' Emergency Drill
- And the Trophy goes to [MTA for Right of Way!](#)
- [Temporary Job Became](#) New Career for Lipsky, Who Resigns as Deputy CEO on Dec. 31
- **Holiday Magic:** [Roaring Start to the Season](#)
- **'TIS THE SEASON:** [MTA Security Team's Drawing](#) to Deliver Holiday Cheer to Mission Children.
- **[MTA's Miguel Vazquez](#) Took a Difficult Personal Journey to Find His Musical Soul** (Dec. 5, 2001) Vazquez, 43, is a Revenue Department cash clerk who works at Division 2. But, his avocation is music and he is a conga player and percussionist with one of the area's leading Latin jazz and salsa groups.
- MTA's [Project IMAJINE](#) Wins California Architecture Award

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PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD

Breakfast is served... Metro Café hostess Gladys Gonzalez serves up scrambled eggs, at left, while Mike Stange and Jake Satin-Jacobs, top right, and Susan Chapman and Ed Clifford, bottom right, join an estimated 1,600 MTA employees and family members for the annual Holiday Brunch hosted by the Employee Activities Center. Metro Café manager Bruce Ueno and staff arrived at 5 a.m. to keep the buffet tables flowing with hearty servings of quiche, sausages, apple pancakes, country-style potatoes, scrambled eggs, Christmas cookies, coffee and juice. Having guests for the holidays? Ueno's recipe for success includes 180 quiche pies, more than 100 pounds of decorated cookies, a whopping 1,600 apple pancakes and at least 520 pounds of pasteurized eggs.

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Transit Security's Annual Drawing to Deliver Holiday Cheer to Los Angeles Mission Children.

Ticket holders will vie for a handmade embroidered piecework quilt by artisan Jean Dwyer, a framed "Season's Greetings" cross stitch made by Security Sgt. Herbert Vaughn and a \$50 gift certificate for a honey-baked ham. Proceeds from last year's initial effort topped \$1,000.



Tickets are \$3 or two for \$5 and can be purchased 24/7 from any Transit Security Officer.



Above, Transit Security Officers J.C. French and Gloria Garcia collect the winning tickets. At left, Senior Security Officer Arthur Grant displays top prize. Drawing will be held at 11:30 a.m. on Dec. 21.

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Employer of the Year-The International Right of Way Association presented its Employer of the Year Award to MTA Real Estate Department on November 27. Selected among public and private organizations who engage up to 20 staff members in right-of-way work, MTA was designated top employer in recognition of its continued support and encouragement to professionals engaged in the acquisition, management, development and disposal of publicly and privately owned rights of way and related real estate properties. And the trophy goes to Real Estate Department staff, foreground, Frances Impert, Real Estate Director Velma Marshall, Lynn Bell; next row, Vic Carlucci, Diane Dominguez, Donna Deverell, Maraleen Brulee; next row, Bob Flynn, BonnieLee Yarbrough, Maria Garcia, John Furby, and back row, Stuart Ondeck, Duncan Robb, Jim Blackman, Mark Moorhusen.

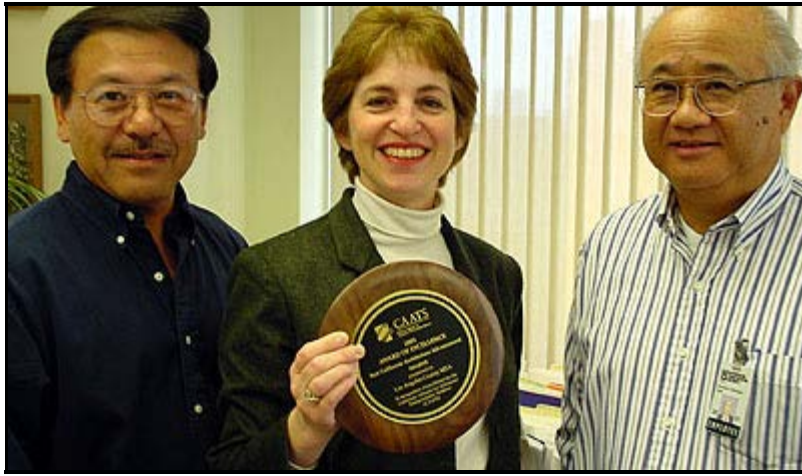
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Holiday Token: To help celebrate the holidays, the MTA is giving away colorful holders with the purchase of a bag of 10 Metro Discount tokens. Here, Greg Berumen of Marketing displays one of 5,000 token holders that will be available while supplies last at the MTA's six Metro customer centers. As part of the holiday promotion, 75,000 "Jingle all the Way!" take-one flyers are being distributed throughout the Metro System. (12/4/01)

PHOTO: GAYLE ANDERSON

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Carol Inge, deputy executive officer, Countywide Planning, holds the Award of Excellence presented to her department recently. With her, from left, are Planning Manager Peter Liu and Ray Maekawa, director, Regional Transportation Planning and Development.

PHOTO: BILL HEARD

Project IMAJINE Wins California Architecture Award

By PETER LIU

(Dec. 4, 2001) The MTA's Project IMAJINE has received the "Best California Architecture Advancement" Award of Excellence.

The award was presented, Nov. 28, at the California Alliance of Advanced Transportation Systems annual meeting in San Francisco. Project IMAJINE (Inter-Modal and Jurisdictional Integrated Network Environment) is conducted by the MTA's Transportation Development and Implementation Department.

Project IMAJINE is the first successful system integration project undertaken by a regional transportation agency in California. It is an important step toward achieving a balanced and integrated transportation system in the county.

Using southeast Los Angeles County as a demonstration site, Project IMAJINE has enhanced the connection between freeways and arterial streets. It also has improved the coordination between paratransit for the disabled and the MTA's fixed-route bus operation.

It accomplished that by integrating Caltrans District 7's advanced freeway operation control system, the MTA Transit Database and the City of South Gate's advanced traffic signal control system and by interfacing with Access Service Inc.

Project IMAJINE is a federally funded Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) project to demonstrate that different modes of transportation can communicate seamlessly, and in real time, through system integration using regional ITS architecture that conforms with the U.S. Department of Transportation's national ITS standards.

The MTA Board approved the "Regional Integration of ITS" project in August 2001 to expand the system integration capabilities developed in Project IMAJINE to other modes of transportation and to a wider geographic area of the county.

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MTA's Miguel Vazquez Took a Personal Journey to Find His Musical Soul

By BILL HEARD, Editor
(Dec. 5, 2001) The MTA's Miguel Vazquez has been on a long and difficult personal journey – a voyage of discovery to find his musical soul.

Vazquez, 43, is a Revenue Department cash clerk who works at Division 2. But, his avocation is music and he is a conga player and percussionist with one of the area's leading Latin jazz and salsa groups.

Venezuelan musician Gilberto Torres, who has worked with Tito Puente, Celia Cruz, Oscar de Leon and other top artists in the salsa world, is the group's leader. With Vazquez on congas, they play regularly at jazz and salsa clubs in the area.

Vazquez has established himself on the region's musical scene – he'll be featured in an ad and profiled in an upcoming article in *Latin Beat* magazine – but his road to success has been rough and marked by years-long absences from his craft.

Born in Los Angeles of Puerto Rican parents, he grew up in Pico Rivera. During his years at El Rancho High, Vazquez played congas and percussion in a Top 40 band.

Fun and joy of music

The group played local park concerts, proms and even some Disneyland shows. He might have pocketed \$120 for a weekend's work, but that wasn't what excited him. "It was more the fun and joy of being around the music and to be able to create something people were enjoying."

Vazquez's involvement with music continued for several years but, eventually, work and family life monopolized his time.

It wasn't until 1989 that his interest was rekindled. A gospel band needed a percussionist, but Vazquez was hesitant. His family responsibilities and his absence of some seven years from the music scene seemed overwhelming.

The band's members were persuasive, however, and eventually he joined.



Miguel Vazquez and his congas are featured in the current issue of *Latin Beat* magazine.



On stage, Vazquez's rhythms are the backbone of the Latin jazz and salsa sound.

"It was like a renewing," Vazquez recalls. "I didn't realize during the time I'd been away from music how much I'd missed it. It was refreshing to have that sound come back again."

But, after two years with the gospel band, Vazquez dropped out of music again, dissatisfied with his progress and his style of playing.



Vazquez pounds out a solid beat during a performance at the Oxnard Salsa Festival.

Then, in the spring of 1995 – about a year after joining the MTA – Vazquez came to a fork in his musical road. Would he be a casual musician playing for his own amusement, or would he get the proper instruction to become a more accomplished drummer?

The lefty played right-handed

Through a friend, he contacted a well-known musician and teacher. The teacher watched Vazquez play and noticed that, although he was left-handed, he was playing congas right-handed.

"He told me, 'Go with your strong point,'" Vazquez remembers. But, changing hands wasn't easy. "I couldn't play, couldn't get the timing or the rhythm. It was like starting all over again."

His big break came in 1998. Through a connection, he met Gilberto Torres. Torres had a gig lined up in Santa Barbara the very next weekend. Rehearsal was scheduled for that Wednesday night.

"It was horrible; I was intimidated by all those professional musicians," Vazquez remembers. "But, Gilberto told me, 'Don't worry, you're gonna be fine once we're in front of the crowd.' And, sure enough, when the curtains opened, it all fell into place."

Now, although Vazquez has reached a pinnacle on the local Latin jazz scene, his musical journey isn't finished. He wants to dig deeper into the roots of Latin percussion.

And, he credits his family for being with him every step of the way. His son, Michael, who now lives in Denver plays guitar, bass and drums. Matthew, 18, plays guitar and drums. His daughter, Melini, 13, plays piano, as does his wife, Marianne.

"My reason for doing all of this, and the one who gave me the motivation to play, is my wife," says Vazquez, eyes glistening. "She has literally put the song in my heart."

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Senate, House Vote \$22.9 Mill. for MTA Transit Projects

(Dec. 5, 2001) The United States Senate, on a 98 to 2 vote Tuesday, joined the House in passing a \$59.6 billion transportation bill that will give the MTA \$22.9 million for transit projects. The measure now goes to President Bush for signature.

The MTA's portion of the FY 2002 transportation bill includes \$9.3 million in funding for close-out of the Metro Rail North Hollywood segment. Under the federal government's full-funding agreement, the MTA is owed a total of \$49.7 million for the project.

"We hope to gain the balance of the North Hollywood segment funds either through next year's transportation appropriation or through other efforts in working with Congress," said Claudette Moody, director, Government Relations.

This year's transportation bill also includes \$7.5 million for the Eastside light-rail construction project start-up; \$3.5 million for new Metro Bus purchases and \$2 million for "reverse commute job access" transit services.

Among funding for other area projects, the transportation bill includes \$5 million for Alameda Corridor East. That project, currently under construction, will provide rail connections between the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and freight terminals near downtown Los Angeles.

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EDITOR'S NOTE-This is the first in a series of articles about the MTA's new transit services sector concept. Reorganizing agency operations to improve customer service was discussed during CEO Roger Snoble's all-staff meeting shortly after he joined the MTA in October. Deputy CEO John Catoe described the concept in his first interview with *MTA Report*.

Future articles will include an interview with Snoble, while others will describe the planning, development and implementation process and the work of an employee service sector task force. An all-staff meeting to discuss service sectors is scheduled at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 10, in the Board Room.



CEO Roger Snoble and Deputy CEO John Catoe present MTA's new service sector concept to the Valley's Transportation Zone board in Glendale.

Fast Track: Service Sector Could Open in July 2002

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Dec. 6, 2001) The MTA's new service sector concept is on a fast track and the first one could be in place to serve the San Fernando Valley by July 2002.

That was the message CEO Roger Snoble and Deputy CEO John Catoe had for the Valley's Transportation Zone board during a presentation, Dec. 3, in Glendale. It was a message that appeared to gain a favorable reception from Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Los Angeles City Council President Alex Padilla and other board members.

Although Yaroslavsky said the concept "has a lot of promise" and urged the MTA to move ahead "with the utmost speed," the Valley transit zone will continue on a parallel path of development for the time being.

Snoble emphasized during the presentation that sectors will be more responsive to customers' transit needs and will give local officials more control over transportation services. He said as many as four or five sectors are being considered for major portions of the MTA's countywide service area. Rail operations would be a separate sector.

"The cleanest one from our perspective, because of the geography involved, would be the San Fernando Valley," which, Snoble noted, has only two operating divisions – Division 8 and Division 15 – and only a few bus lines that are shared by another division.

Sector concept still evolving



Deputy CEO John Catoe and CEO Roger Snoble speak

Snoble and Catoe have indicated that the sector concept is still evolving as details of its structure, administration and operational aspects are worked out. MTA employees will be heavily involved in this process, with some serving on a task force or its sub-committees and others participating in focus groups to provide ideas about the organization's structure.

Elements of the plan – particularly those relating to community involvement and sector governance – must be approved by the MTA Board.

More:
[Snoble Discusses Transit Topics on KPCC's 'Talk of the City'](#)

before the Valley's
Transportation Zone board.

Under the sector concept, the MTA would have sole responsibility for operating such regional transit services as Metro Rail, Metro Rapid and express bus service. A sector board might contract for shuttle, paratransit, dial-a-ride and other such services.

Sectors would operate as semi-independent units of the MTA, Snoble said, with capabilities similar to a municipal operator. In addition to the staff assigned to bus operations, a sector would have administrative and community outreach employees, service planners and scheduling, security and other support personnel.

"The personnel will be assigned within a sector," Catoe explained. He indicated that union members would retain their seniority rights under the collective bargaining agreements.

Following the meeting in Glendale, Catoe told *MTA Report* that a task force made up of employees representing a number of departments is involved in sector planning.

The result, he said, will be a higher level of transit services that "will make a real difference in this county and, I think, will set a standard for the country."

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Veteran journalist Kitty Felde interviews CEO Roger Snoble on KPCC talk show. PHOTO BY ED SCANNELL

Snoble Discusses Transit Topics on KPCC's 'Talk of the City'

By ED SCANNELL

(Dec. 6, 2001) In his longest broadcast interview to date, CEO Roger Snoble took to the airwaves, Tuesday, discussing a broad range of MTA-related topics, including the new transit service sector concept.

He was interviewed on KPCC's 'Talk of the City' by veteran journalist Kitty Felde.

Snoble said he and Deputy CEO John Catoe want to recreate at the MTA their prior experiences in Dallas, San Diego and Santa Monica.

See also >
["Fast Track: Service Sector Could Open in July 2002"](#)

"We're both from smaller systems where we knew all the operators and mechanics," said Snoble. "We saw the benefits and asked ourselves how we could do this in a large agency."

Snoble said he believes developing a closer working relationship between administrative staff, bus operators and mechanics at a sector level will make the agency more responsive to the concerns of its customers.

"We need people who can react more quickly to what's going on in the street," said Snoble. "It is a quality of service issue. Anything less is not acceptable."

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Employees Donate Mountain of Gifts for Skid Row Kids

(Dec. 7, 2001) Santa Claus was there. And so was a mountain of toys, games, dolls, teddy bears, blankets, clothing and canned goods – thousands of holiday gifts to make the Skid Row Kids at the Fred Jordan Mission happy.

In fact, generous MTA employees donated far more than this year's Gift Giving Drive goal of 6,000 unwrapped gifts. Heaped at the entrance to Headquarters, three buses were required to haul them all to the Mission.

"We did very well this year," said Drive coordinator Bessie Rush-Johnson as she watched volunteers load the gifts onto waiting buses. "Considering the circumstances we're dealing with today, we did wonderfully."

On hand to receive the gifts and to thank employees for their generosity was Willie Jordan, widow of the late founder of the Fred Jordan Mission.

Backbone of the toy drive

"The MTA gives us a big part of the backbone of our toy drive," she said. "These toys will help give a wonderful Christmas to the children in the inner city."

Jordan said the gift drive was expanded this year to include canned goods to answer the need when thousands of Californians were laid off after the terrorist attacks.

"The food is literally flying off our shelves and is going out faster than it is coming in," she said. "Our demand for food is up at least 40 percent."

The gifts will be distributed at the Mission to families of the Skid Row Kids from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 16. Employees and



Santa arrives at Patasouras Plaza, loads gifts onto buses and takes the bus, not a sled, to the Fred Jordan Mission.



PHOTO: GARY MOSK



Above, Willie Jordan and gift drive coordinator Bessie Rush-Johnson and, right, mission director Tom Jordan gets and HR DEO Naomi Nightingale help load more than 6,000 gifts. PHOTOS: BILL HEARD

their families are invited to help hand out gifts, but an employee's child must be at least 16 years old to participate.

Employees interested in participating in the gift distribution can contact Rush-Johnson at 922-2629 for information.

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The hard-working 'Holiday Magic' committee drew a large round of applause.

Holiday Magic

Roaring Start to the Season

GALLERY

(Dec. 10, 2001) The MTA's glittering "Holiday Magic" dinner dance got the season off to a roaring start, Saturday, as several hundred employees and their guests danced the night away in the Wilshire Grand Hotel ballroom.

Deputy CEO John Catoe expressed the agency's best holiday wishes to the festive crowd. Employee Activities Manager Diane Delaney-Talton introduced the dinner dance committee, which received a well-earned round of applause.

With formalities out of the way, the celebration began: a delicious meal, a Las Vegas room for the gamblers in the crowd, and dozens of prizes for those holding lucky tickets. And, of course, music and dancing.



Deputy CEO John Catoe wished employees a Happy Holiday.

GALLERY





Clockwise from top left, Lydie Colonello and husband, Dan, at right, looks over the prizes along with George Lee. Roulette wheel spins, dice roll and dancers rock. Brian Soto was among those trying their luck at the blackjack table. Guests enjoy festive dinner table. PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD



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The Challenge: Reorganizing the MTA for More Responsive Customer Service



MTA CEO Roger Snoble

By BILL HEARD, Editor
(Dec. 10, 2001) "The challenge here in Los Angeles," says CEO Roger Snoble, "is how to make a big agency like this much more responsive to the geographic areas it serves."

In a Dec. 6 interview with *MTA Report*, Snoble explored the various elements of that challenge, elements that range from a reorganization that would create up to five regional service sectors, to the role of communities in shaping local service, to cooperation with the MTA's unions in developing the service sector concept.

He also touched on streamlining the MTA's response to customers and "flattening" the organization by eliminating layers at Headquarters. But, he ruled out employee layoffs or reductions in force as part of his plan.

"In many different areas, we have way more people than we need and that's a complication," he said. "But, I'm not looking at layoffs, per se. I'm looking at how we can trim back with attrition so that we can get leaner over time. That's a lot more efficient and a lot less disruptive."

Snoble also denied that reorganizing into service sectors is merely a cost-cutting plan, although he believes that the change will, ultimately, reduce operating costs.

Our driving force

"Our total effort is aimed at providing excellent transit service to our customers," he said. "That's our driving force now and always will be."

Snoble said he and Deputy CEO John Catoe had discussed "from the very beginning" how the MTA might be reorganized into regional units with on-site, customer-oriented management. They also considered transit zones to be a "draconian" approach that would be unnecessarily destructive to the agency and painful for its employees.

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Creating MTA-operated service sectors seemed to be a better answer. Snoble and Catoe wanted to develop a plan that would keep the MTA intact while satisfying the need for better, more locally responsive service.

With the sector concept in mind, the MTA's service area seemed to naturally divide into four parts: the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, Central Los Angeles and the Southbay. The gateway cities in the south and east sections of the county might comprise a fifth sector.

The CEO acknowledged that having the first service sector up and running by July 2002 is daunting, but he noted that much of the structure already is in place at the operating division level. An employee task force, led by Transit Operations Staff Director Cynthia Gibson, is working out the details.

Decisions at the local level

Snoble said the various sectors might develop differently, depending on circumstances, but he emphasized the need to make service decisions at

the local level. "This has been tried before with regions, I understand, but we really didn't adequately staff those regions to give them the tools they needed."

Among the "tools" Snoble would give a sector's management would be administrative staff, service planners and schedulers, bus dispatchers, accounting, procurement, community relations, security, information systems technicians and Human Resources, which would be responsible for personnel administration and recruiting.

"One of the good ideas that's come out of the employee task force working on the service sector concept is local recruiting," he said. "Why should someone who lives in the Valley come all the way downtown for a job?" He notes that represented employees would retain their seniority and other rights spelled out in labor agreements.

Managing locally, recruiting locally also meld into the CEO's belief that strong community involvement is essential if service sectors are to be responsive to their customers. "You need public input," he said.

Formally, that input would come from operational oversight by a local council, commission or even an area's Council of Governments. The MTA Board will have to adopt a set of policies delegating a certain amount of authority to sub-regional councils.

Close to the action

Informally, sector planners, schedulers and community relations personnel would receive comments from customers. These comments would have much greater impact than they currently do, Snoble believes, because a sector staff would be on-scene, close to the action and better able to respond to local needs and conditions.

The CEO also stressed the importance of cooperating with union leadership as the sector concept continues to be developed. "We want them to be part of the task force. We don't want to do this in a vacuum."

Snoble also was asked whether the MTA can accomplish two major initiatives – a reorganization into service sectors and the new safety program – within the same general time frame.

"Safety is a fundamental part of our business," he said. "To me, part of being a good manager, part of being a good employee is to be safe and to make sure you're not making it unsafe for those around you. That initiative fits right into the quality service initiative."

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Temporary Job Became New Career for Lipsky, Who Resigns as Deputy CEO on Dec. 31

By BILL HEARD, Editor
(Dec. 11, 2001) When he arrived at the MTA in August 1997, Allan Lipsky thought he'd help former CEO Julian Burke get the agency back on a solid financial footing and then be off to another assignment.



Deputy CEO Allan Lipsky

After all, that's how it had gone for the previous 20 years or so of his corporate turnaround career. "I was like a doctor dealing with patients," he says, thinking of his years helping rescue savings and loan institutions and other sick companies. "Either they get better and don't need you anymore, or they die and don't need you anymore."

But for Lipsky, who will leave his post as a deputy CEO, Dec. 31, the MTA assignment turned out to be very different – and much more personally rewarding than he had anticipated. "One of the reasons I've stayed so long is that there hasn't been a single day that I haven't learned something new."

CEO Roger Snoble has worked closely with Lipsky since he joined the MTA in October. "Allan has made a valuable contribution to the MTA, not only by strengthening our financial position, but also by improving our business practices. He's helped make the transition to new agency leadership seamless."

For the first two years, Lipsky labored alongside Burke to breathe financial life back into the MTA. Projects were cancelled or put on hold. They reduced and reorganized the agency staff.

Restoring core businesses

During this period, however, the agency also began restoring its core businesses. The MTA initiated a massive investment in its Metro Bus system and completed a major segment of the Metro Rail system.

"Allan was a key factor in our successful opening of the Metro Red Line Segment 3 North Hollywood Extension, ahead of time and under budget," says Dennis Mori, Metro Construction subway project manager. "He believed that we could do it, and his confidence and support encouraged the members of the team to remain motivated and focused on the finish line. We all owe Allan a great amount of thanks for his leadership."

The agency's efforts toward fiscal recovery also succeeded, Lipsky says, and were helped along by a strong economy and a growth in revenues from sales taxes.

"By early 2000," he recalls, "the MTA was financially stable and we could look again at new projects, because we knew we were going to have money to spend on them."

New projects to replace the cancelled Pasadena Blue Line were identified: light-rail lines for the Eastside and the Exposition corridor, a busway project in the San Fernando Valley.

Building again was gratifying

"The opportunity to start building again was one I didn't expect," Lipsky says. "It was really very gratifying."

In addition to stabilizing the agency financially, he ticks off as accomplishments the financing of new transportation corridor projects, the Metro Rapid program and improvements to the bus operation.

Richard Hunt, deputy executive officer, bus maintenance, who served as interim Transit Operations chief, credited Lipsky as "the driving force behind the accelerated bus purchase program."

"He helped shepherd it through the Board approval process," Hunt said. "It has been great working with him and we'll miss him."

Lipsky is quick to credit the staff – "a lot of very talented and very smart people" – for accomplishments during his time at the MTA. "Every time we've asked them to give us something new, efficient and highly-productive, they've given it to us."

Salute to the Board

Lipsky also salutes MTA Board members whose "knowledge of how to get things done in a public environment" was key to moving the agency forward. "They didn't always adopt our recommendations," he says, "but they always gave them fair consideration."

For the past three months, Lipsky has devoted much of his time to managing the transition to new agency leadership under Snoble and Deputy CEO John Catoe.

"Their personal success in the transportation industry is something the MTA hasn't previously had in its top leadership," says Lipsky. "That brings a tremendous element of respect and credibility to the agency."

Although he expects to work on some special assignments for the agency in the early part of the new year, Lipsky plans to spend time with his wife, Marilyn, and visiting with the families of their five children. He'll also be on the lookout for a new corporate turnaround opportunity – "whatever looks interesting and challenging."

But, the MTA – his first occasion to work in the public sector – will remain dear to his heart. "This job has been a gift to me at this point in my life," he says. "I'll always have a love for this agency."

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Deputy CEO John Catoe explains service sector concept at all-staff meeting.

MTA on a Mission to be World-Class, Snoble and Catoe Tell Employees

By BILL HEARD, Editor
(Dec. 11, 2001) The MTA is on a mission to become a world-class transportation system, CEO Roger Snoble and Deputy CEO John Catoe declared to an SRO all-staff meeting, Monday afternoon. And the service sector concept, they said, is the way to accomplish that goal.

The MTA can be more responsive to customers and to the community when responsibility and accountability are placed at the local level, Catoe explained. Reorganizing into service sectors also should foster an improvement in service quality and allow employees to be more

creative in shaping and operating service.

"Keep in mind as we go through this that it is a work in progress," said Snoble, noting that the proposal is not revolutionary. "This is a gleam in our eye and we need to do everything we can do to make it successful."

Catoe said plans are being laid for four or five service sectors in major regions of the MTA's service area. He identified them as the San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, Central Los Angeles, the Southbay and the Gateway Cities in the southeast part of the county.

Starting with the opening of the first service sector next July, Catoe said he hopes to "roll out all five within a year." Meanwhile, he said, the recruiting process for sector general managers would proceed and would be open to both internal and external candidates.

'Vision and dream'

The deputy CEO said it's his "vision and dream" that one day MTA employees will be praised as working for an agency whose transportation system is admired by the public. "I think we will get there by being committed to excellence and providing good service," he said.

Catoe, who was general manager of Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus before joining the MTA, compared the proposed structure of a service sector to that of a municipal operator. Although the sectors would operate semi-independently, the MTA would continue to own all services and facilities.

A sector, headed by a general manager, would include "all the personnel resources needed to run a bus agency."

Among the employees Catoe singled out as possibly shifting from MTA Headquarters to a sector included some from customer relations, public affairs, Human Resources recruiting, security and service planning and scheduling.

A sector also could incorporate two or three operating divisions that would be responsible for a total of 500 to 600 buses deployed on local

routes, called Tier Two lines. It would have "broad control" over bus routing, scheduling, service mix and frequency. In some cases, a sector might operate an inter-regional – Tier One – bus line.

System-wide service standards

The MTA also would establish system-wide service standards and would operate Metro Rail, Metro Rapid and express bus – Tier One – lines. The agency would continue to be responsible for countywide planning, construction, and general administration, among other regional functions.

Employees from different departments within the agency have been named to a task force that is developing an organizational framework for the sectors, Catoe said. Members are interviewing employees and conducting focus groups to solicit ideas.

He also noted that sub-committees of the task force will be formed to develop details on such specifics as sector budgets, human resources, planning, scheduling, governance, facilities and computer network services.

"I guarantee you we'll make some mistakes," Catoe said, "but we'll have many successes as we go through this process."

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Floor warden Ralph Sbragia, MTA Safety Compliance Inspector, directs 10th floor to assembly point at Terminal 31.

HQ Evacuation was 'Most Well-Executed' Emergency Drill

(Dec. 12, 2001) By the hundreds, employees poured out of MTA Headquarters, Tuesday morning, in what one fire department expert said was "the most organized, most well-executed" emergency drill he's seen in a high-rise building.

In about 15 minutes from the time emergency gongs were sounded, the last of some 1,500 employees had evacuated the building in an orderly manner and was headed for an assembly point across the Vignes/Cesar Chavez intersection at Terminal 31.

They were shepherded by floor wardens in bright blue helmets and vests. LAPD and MTA Security officers, augmented by Transportation Operations Supervisors, blocked traffic and kept the crowd moving safely.

"It was an excellent drill, the most organized, most well-executed I've seen," said LA City Fire Inspector Joe Gould, who once was assigned to the department's high-rise unit and has witnessed several such drills. "Employee participation was as thorough as I've ever seen."



Some 1,500 employees evacuated Gateway Headquarters in about 15 minutes.

All departments cooperated

"It went very well," agreed General Services Director Brian Soto, whose department set up the drill. "All the departments cooperated together. That really helped."

There were lessons to be learned from the drill, officials said. Communications among floor wardens will be improved and employees may need reminders about the importance of a quick, orderly evacuation.

Some employees, for example, carried coffee cups – a spill and slipping hazard on stairs – and others took along personal belongings, including wheeled briefcases.

"Think of the consequences to other employees," cautions Gould. "An airline case can take up as much space as a small person and can become an obstruction. In an emergency, just get out of the building and be thankful you got out with your life."

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Denise Longley Named DEO in Transit Operations; Will Build Two New Divisions

(Dec. 12, 2001) Denise Longley has been named deputy executive officer for Strategic Development of Facilities -- Operations. Her premier function: Implementing two new operating divisions.



Denise Longley

A former construction manager in Metro Construction, Longley also will be looking at ways to further streamline the capital projects process and will assist in the development of long-range plans for MTA facilities, including those for the new service sectors. The director of Facilities Maintenance and his staff will report to her.

In an October interview with *MTA Report*, Deputy CEO John Catoe said MTA divisions are overcrowded. The agency needs two new divisions in the core of the city, he said, for operation and maintenance of coaches assigned to Rapid Bus service and to general fleet expansion.

"Denise has the perfect background to lead the effort to expand and improve our operations facilities," said Catoe. "Her extensive experience in construction management will be particularly valuable during the planning and construction of the two new operating divisions."

Longley has been meeting with the MTA's real estate, planning and environmental staffs to begin to look at ways of expediting the process.

Looking at property

"We're already looking into acquiring property," she says, "but we still have environmental processes to go through prior to negotiating with property owners."

For the past 15 years, Longley's specialty has been overseeing and managing construction of buildings, Metro Blue Line and Metro Red Line stations, bridges and other facilities. Having worked as a resident engineer and project manager for DMJM (Daniel, Mann, Johnson and Mandenhall), she was assigned to the MTA in 1992 as a construction manager on the North Hollywood Extension.

In 1995, Longley joined the MTA as a construction manager, retaining her assignment on the Metro Rail project. She was responsible for managing construction of the North Hollywood and Universal City stations and for support of the Hollywood/Highland station construction, as well as the Los Angeles River bridge-widening project.

She worked with project teams that included engineering, procurement, legal and operations to bring the North Hollywood Extension project in on-time and under-budget.

A native of Wisconsin, Longley grew up in Oconomowoc, a suburb of Milwaukee. She is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, where she earned a B.S. degree in construction management. She and her husband, Hal, a senior computer security specialist at Long Beach Memorial Hospital, enjoy trips to Mammoth for the scenery and downhill skiing.

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Stolen Bus, Once a TV 'Star,' Now Awaits Repair at RRC

(Dec. 18, 2001) Sad and sagging at the rear, Metro Bus 6589 now sits in a parking lot at the Regional Rebuild Center. But last Friday night, the Division 18 coach was the center attraction in a police drama that occupied more than three hours of local prime-time television.

PHOTOS BY LUIS INZUNZA

The incident began just after 7:30 p.m., when veteran Operator Joe Spears stepped out of his Line 119 bus at the Hawthorne layover, secured the coach and headed to the restroom.

According to police, Jose Luis Hernandez, 22, of Lynwood, boarded the bus, started it and drove off. When Spears discovered the bus was missing, he alerted the Bus Operations Control Center, which notified police – and the search was on.

Police helicopters, even news choppers, crisscrossed the skies looking for the wayward bus. It finally was spotted on the eastbound San Bernardino Freeway. When traffic blocked its movement, CHP officers placed a spike strip beneath the left rear wheel, hoping to disable the bus.

But, the suspect was determined and when traffic moved again, off he went – police in hot pursuit. The two-hour chase – illuminated by sparks as the bus frame dragged along the pavement – continued onto the 605 Freeway and then onto the 91 Freeway where it finally came to a halt just before the junction with the Santa Ana Freeway.



Photo shows damage to wheel well.

Drove without losing control

"I was amazed," says Tom Jasmin, BOCC superintendent, who responded to the incident in an MTA vehicle and was following police cars. "He must have known something about driving a big vehicle because, even with the left rear tires out, he was able to make the turn from the 605 onto the 90 without losing control."

While the suspect continued to occupy the stalled bus, Jasmin – along with Deputy Executive Officer John Roberts and Maintenance Superintendent Rick Hittinger – worked with the Fullerton Police Department SWAT team on ways to enter the bus.

At 10:50 p.m., following verbal instructions from police, the suspect jumped out the front door of the bus and lay on the ground while officers cuffed him.

"It was a team effort," Jasmin says. "The main thing is that they got the person out without injuring him or an officer or doing any further damage to the bus."

A preliminary inspection of the coach, which is still a crime scene and is surrounded by police tape, indicates it didn't sustain extensive damage.

According to Harold Peterson and Gary Eller of the RRC's Equipment Maintenance department, there was no damage to the CNG tanks, but the suspension, tire rims, frame and wheelwell were damaged. Repairs will begin when police release the bus probably later this week.

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Brian "Cody" Prosser is pictured here on his wedding day.

MTA Intern Helps Establish Memorial Scholarship for 'Cody' Prosser

(Dec. 19, 2001) When Staff Sgt. Brian "Cody" Prosser was given a hero's burial in Arlington Cemetery, Monday, the MTA's Patrick Horton – an intern in Regional Planning – said a silent goodbye to a young man who had been his best friend in high school.

Prosser, 28, a member of the Army's Green Beret Special Forces, was one of the first American soldiers to die in Afghanistan. He was killed by U.S. friendly fire, Dec. 5, while defending a village during an onslaught by Taliban forces.

As the first California casualty in the U.S. war against terrorism, Prosser was honored last week at a memorial service in his hometown of Frazier Park, a community in the Tejon Pass north of Los Angeles. Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante led a delegation of state officials at the ceremony.

Now, Prosser's friend Patrick Horton is working with the National Veterans Foundation (NVF) to establish a memorial scholarship in the soldier's name. Prior to his internship at the MTA, Horton was an NVF intern.

"We're looking for contributions from people who want to donate to an American hero," says Horton, who also attended the Frazier Park service. "He died saving men, women and children of that village."



Patrick Horton
(MTA ID photo)

Befriended a shy teenager

Horton remembers Prosser as a popular athlete who befriended a shy teenager and made him feel welcome at Maricopa High School.

"Everyday, we'd ride the bus together from Frazier Park to Maricopa High," Horton recalls. "We ate lunch together and got to know each other very well. Even if you didn't play football, you rated in his book."

Following graduation, Horton went to college, graduating from Loyola Marymount University with a B.A. in history before moving on to graduate school at UCLA. Prosser enlisted in the Army to train in the Special Forces.

"Cody was a model guy and we knew he was due for great things," says Horton. "When I heard he had died, I felt I should do something and a scholarship seemed to be appropriate because fewer than 50 percent of Maricopa High kids go on to college."

Tax-deductible contributions can be addressed to: The National

Veterans' Foundation, Cody Prosser Memorial Scholarship, 9841 Airport Blvd. #414, Los Angeles, CA 90045. For more information, call toll-free 1-888-777-4443 or visit www.nvf.org.

The NVF was formed to provide the best resources available on a national scale to veterans of all wars, from World War II to the present. It coordinates access to social services, counsels veterans and provides rehabilitation assistance for such illnesses as post-traumatic stress disorder.

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Free Rides on Metro System on Christmas, New Year's Eves

By GARY WOSK

(Dec. 19, 2001) For the seventh consecutive year, the MTA will offer free bus and train rides on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, an ongoing tradition established by the MTA Board to afford merrymakers a safe journey home, reduce traffic congestion and collisions.

Patrons may ride for free from 9 p.m. until closing — generally around midnight — on the Metro Rail system, and from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. on the Metro Bus system.

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

KLOVE (107.5 FM), La Nueva (101.9 FM) and Recuerdo (103.9 FM and 1020 AM) are co-sponsors of this year's free rides and will publicize the promotion on-air.

The free rides offer also is being publicized on MTA buses and on Metro Rail trains.

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Santa can ride the Metro system free after 9 p.m.



Brainy Metro Bus of tomorrow will ride into the L.A. sunset equipped with an integrated wireless communications system called the Advanced Transportation Management System.

Motorola Masterminds Creating 'Brainy' Buses for MTA

By GARY WOSK

(Dec. 20, 2001) Within three years, the Metro Bus fleet will be transformed into a motor pool of highly intelligent, quick-thinking coaches capable of spewing forth a steady stream of real-time information to emergency personnel and planners. The result: More efficient service and a safer environment for operators and customers alike.

Motorola, Inc., has been assigned the task of overseeing the installation aboard Metro Buses of an integrated wireless communications system called the Advanced Transportation Management System (ATMS).

The components are:

- (Voice and Data Radio System) Bus operators will be able to communicate much more quickly with MTA dispatchers and receive faster roadside assistance by having the option of using a voice or data radio. The latter tool includes a driver control module with numerical keys representing numerous categories of emergencies.
- (Automatic Vehicle Locator) MTA dispatchers and law enforcement officials will be guided to the exact location of a bus in distress with the aid of global positioning satellites. Locations will be displayed on dispatch center monitors.
- (Automatic Passenger Counter) MTA planners will be able to make immediate short- and long-term service adjustments by analyzing information recorded by on-board infrared beam sensors about passengers loads and ridership patterns. The information will be relayed to an on-board processor and then downloaded at day's end.
- (Video Surveillance System) Bus operators will be able to see activity on the exterior of a bus by looking at a monitor that will show live images transmitted by outside cameras. A hard drive will store 72 hours of images, including those of inside cameras, until downloaded on a central processor.
- (Computer Aided Dispatch) An immediate priority response to any type of emergency on board an MTA bus. The device will streamline data collection and provide faster construction and updates of the database.
- The MTA also is evaluating an option to install a Voice Annunciation System and Vehicle Health Monitoring System.
- The Voice Annunciation System, triggered by global positioning

satellites would activate bilingual, computerized voices that will greet customers, announce all stops and make safety messages.

- The Vehicle Health Monitoring System will allow mechanics to perform much better preventive maintenance and will reduce MTA costs by reviewing engine report cards generated by a separate on-board computer.

"The Advanced Transportation Management System will provide the MTA with a sophisticated new 21st century tool to help operate and manage the bus fleet," said Deputy CEO John Catoe.

"ATMS offers the potential for the MTA to realize service improvements, increased efficiency, reduced operating costs and enhanced safety by providing the agency with more comprehensive, accurate and detailed data for routine analysis," he said.

The MTA Board awarded a \$72 million contract to Motorola in November. The company will be responsible for installing and overseeing the start-up and testing, as well as managing the system.

Motorola has teamed with Orbital Science Corp. as the sub-contractor. The MTA, in conjunction with TM TechSystems Inc, has developed the technical specification, which details the implementation approach.

"LACMTA has designed one of the most advanced transportation management systems in the world," said Rick Neal, Motorola vice president. "Motorola has implemented many of the largest and most complex communication systems that exist today."

First in the United States

The MTA will become the first transit agency in the United States to sport such a comprehensive fleet of "Smart Buses" (another name for ATMS).

These buses will begin traversing the streets and highways of LA County within three years, about the same time the MTA expects to unveil its new "Universal Fare System" (UFS) featuring "Smart Cards."

The plastic, wallet-sized Smart Cards, embedded with computer chips, will interface with the MTA's ATMS and could eventually eliminate the need for cash, tokens and coins as the method of payment in a seamless public transit system.

"The overall mission of the MTA bus system is to ensure Los Angeles bus riders a safe, efficient mode of transportation throughout the greater Los Angeles region," Catoe said. "To accomplish this mission into the 21st century, ATMS must provide a reliable, flexible and expandable communication service to meet the needs of controllers, bus operators, road supervisors, riders and management."

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Transient Repays Deputy's Act of Compassion

(Dec. 20, 2001) The man who stepped up to the desk of the Sheriff's station at the Rail Operations Center last Friday was ragged and dirty – apparently a transient. He dragged a crumpled envelope from his pocket and placed it on the counter.

When clerk Shannon Barber cautiously approached, the man mumbled, "Just give it to the sergeant." Which sergeant, she asked.

"Just give it to the sergeant," the man growled, turned on his heel and walked away.

With all the concern about anthrax, Barber was reluctant to touch the suspicious envelope. She alerted Sheriff's Sgt. Ann Ramirez, whose duties include serving on the MTA's risk assessment team.

Ramirez slipped on rubber gloves, then tipped the envelope back and forth in an effort to determine its contents. Dimly, she could see lined paper inside, so she cut open the envelope.

Out fluttered two one-dollar bills and a crudely written note addressed to Sgt. Louis Nunez.

"I am returning the money you gave me for train fare," the note read. "I know you probably have forgotten, but I remember and I'm very grateful. May God bless you and your family. Merry Xmas, sir." It was signed, "Jamal Welch."

The note brought tears to the eyes of those who had witnessed the tense drama, according to Ramirez. She called Nunez's act of compassion to the stranger "...a demonstration of the caliber of personnel employed here."

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LAPD Officers Edward Moreno and Diane Reyes, left, along with Sgt. Eric Windham are responsible for bringing the holiday spirit, this year, to a Los Angeles family.

Chance Encounters with Cops Lead to Merry Christmas for LA Family

By BILL HEARD, Editor
(Dec. 21, 2001) Two warm-hearted LAPD officers and their colleagues from the MTA's Transit Group are making sure a Los Angeles family will have a Merry Christmas this year.

It all began with a chance encounter, last October, when officers Diane Reyes

and Edward Moreno noticed two young boys hanging around the Union Station mezzanine on a school day.

The younger of the two started crying when the officers questioned them, but Reyes and Moreno were able to learn that the boys – 11-year-old Gavin and 12-year-old Star Arvizo – were on their way with their 15-year-old sister, Davellin, to visit their mother. She was having surgery that day at Kaiser Hospital in Hollywood.

The officers' hearts immediately went out to the kids and, with their lieutenant's permission, they piled the youngsters into a squad car and drove to the hospital.

En route, Gavin revealed to the officers that he is in remission from cancer. The previous March, doctors had removed a 16-pound tumor, his spleen and a kidney – and he proudly showed them the scar to prove it.

In the following weeks, Reyes and Moreno often exchanged greetings with the Arvizo children as they rode the Metro Red Line. Gavin and Star attend a magnet school in Hollywood and Davellin is a student at Hollywood High.

Another chance encounter

Then, another chance encounter. One day last week, Officer Reyes noticed a woman making her way on crutches through a station. It was Janet Arvizo, the children's mother. Unemployed, she was on her way to a job interview.

Over the weekend, Reyes and Moreno – who have children of their own – decided they had to do something for the Arvizos. On Thursday, they dropped by the family's apartment to find a Christmas tree that had been donated by the LAPD's Hollenbeck Division officers, but no ornaments. And no gifts.

The officers bought a stock of ornaments with their own money, then talked to their sergeant, Eric Windham, about further help for the family.

So, at roll call this morning, Windham asked his troops to look into their hearts and their pockets for the Arvizos. They did, and out came some \$200.

It was enough to buy some gifts for the kids...and a little left over for a holiday dinner. The MTA also contributed school supplies for the

youngsters.

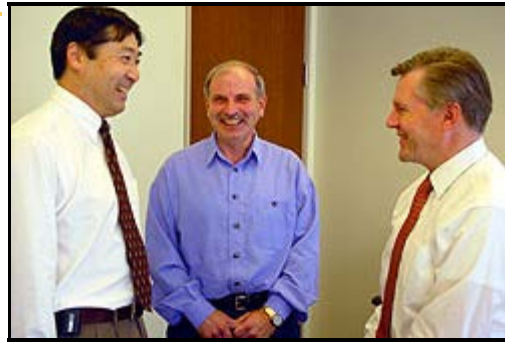
The Arvizos will have a Merry Christmas this year. Thanks somewhat to good luck. But, thanks mostly to the efforts of two LAPD officers with big hearts.

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Good Times and Bad, Charles Stark was Steady Hand on Construction's Helm

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Dec. 21, 2001) Through good times and bad for the past 10 years, Charles Stark has been a steady hand at the helm of major phases of the MTA's monumental subway construction project and, since 1997, as executive officer of Metro Construction.



Retiring Metro Construction chief Charles Stark, right, talks with deputy executive officers Dennis Mori, left, and Henry Fuks.

Now, Stark plans to retire from the agency at the end of December. First, he'll relax and get his bearings, then take a look around the nation for a management opportunity in a large rail project.

Known as an unflappable leader with a reserved demeanor and wry wit, the 52-year-old executive often was the calm center during controversies that beset the MTA at certain points of the rail construction program.

"Julian Burke and I always regarded Charles as a highly effective manager," says Deputy CEO Allan Lipsky. "He took over the most troubled element of the agency and turned it around. It was an amazing accomplishment that culminated in the successful completion of Segment 3 on-budget and ahead of schedule. He was a key figure in our effort to get the agency back on a solid foundation."



Charles Stark

Headed an 880-member team

Stark joined the MTA in September 1991 to head the 880-member team responsible for Metro Red Line Segment 1 – the tunnels and stations between Union Station and MacArthur Park. A \$1.45 billion project, it was the largest he had managed since directing the \$375 million purchase of commuter rail cars for the Long Island and Metro North commuter rail lines in New York.

"My job was to get the Segment 1 team aligned and working together and to get the system open," he recalls.

The opening date had been pushed back to September 1993. Tunnels had been completed, but track, signals and system work remained. Despite the magnitude of the task, Segment 1 opened – not in September – but in January 1993, eight months early and \$32 million under budget.

Even before Segment 1 was completed, Stark and his engineering team already had plunged into the early stages of Segment 3, the North Hollywood Extension.

The project, considered a difficult engineering challenge, involved digging one set of tunnels through soft, sandy ground from North Hollywood to Universal City. A second set of tunnels started from Universal City and was dug through the solid rock of the Santa Monica Mountains to Hollywood.

Most problematic portion

While work on Segment 3 progressed, Stark also was given responsibility for overseeing completion of Segment 2 – the stretch of tunnels that encompasses

subway stations between Wilshire/Vermont and Hollywood/Highland. Because of the surface settlement and the sinkhole that drew media attention, it also was the most problematic portion of the subway project.

Stark looks back on those days with regret, but points out that the lessons learned, "...heightened sensitivity and put everyone on notice that, on Segment 3, there was no room for error."

And, indeed, although the two-phase Segment 3 tunneling project posed substantial engineering challenges, the project was completed on-time, under budget and without encountering the sorts of problems that had plagued Segment 2.

The North Hollywood Extension opened to great fanfare and popular acclaim in June 2000. More than a quarter-million people rode the Metro Red Line on opening weekend and ridership immediately jumped from 82,000 to 120,000 daily boardings. Today, average daily ridership exceeds 130,000.

Stark cites as accomplishments improvements made in cost consciousness and the performance of Metro Construction and its contractors. One specific he particularly points to is a dramatic increase in safety awareness at MTA construction sites.

A rigorous safety program

In 1998, well before the MTA began its recent push to improve on-the-job safety, he brought in the duPont team to institute a rigorous safety program for construction contractors and their workers, as well as for Metro Construction employees.

"As a result of this new safety awareness," Stark says, "our safety numbers became very good – much better than the national average."

As he prepares to leave the MTA, Metro Construction is in the planning stages for the Eastside light-rail extension. That line will connect the newly named Metro Gold Line from Pasadena with a line from Union Station, through East LA to First and Lorena. The route will include a two-mile long tunnel starting at the LA River.

And what's next after that? "I think the future of rail in Los Angeles is an ever-increasing system," Stark predicts. He sees an Exposition line that will extend to the ocean, a Metro Green Line that will take passengers directly to the center of LAX and will connect to the Southbay cities, as well as rail service on other rights-of-way owned by the MTA.

"Los Angeles' rail system is now number seven in the nation in terms of ridership and will go to number six when the Pasadena line opens," Stark says. "We're up there now with the major rail transit systems in the nation. That's a magnificent achievement in only 11 years."

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