

Catoe Outlines Sector Plan for Chatsworth Crew

- **General Manager Due in February**

By BILL HEARD, Editor
(Jan. 8, 2002) By the first week of February, Deputy CEO John Catoe told employees during a visit to Chatsworth Division 8 on Jan. 4, he hopes to have hired a general manager for the San Fernando Valley service sector.

The new sector executive, who will operate out of a Chatsworth office beginning July 1, will be responsible for operations at nearby Chatsworth and at Sunland Division 15. He or she will lead a staff that will include administration, Human Resources recruiting, service planning and scheduling, customer relations, public affairs and security.

Catoe plans to hire the sector executive early, because, "I want the general manager to get to know you and the people who are making the transition out here to provide administrative support."

During a visit in which he talked for more than an hour and a half with maintenance and transportation employees, Catoe also addressed working conditions (he intends to improve them), managers ("I'm looking for good leaders.") and using employee names instead of badge numbers over division intercoms (he'll change the practice).

Throughout his presentations and in follow-up Q & A sessions, Catoe discussed the measures he will take to ensure that the MTA can provide quality service. These included focusing much of the agency's efforts on transit operations, placing management closer to daily operations and giving employees the resources they need to perform efficiently and effectively.

Intent is to improve quality

"The intent of service sectors is not to save money because, initially, it will cost more," he said. "The intent is to improve the quality of service. There will be savings and, as we save dollars, they will be funneled back into additional services."

Henry Najera, body shop leadman, said Chatsworth is "maintained with pride" because employees want to avoid the creation of a transit zone in the Valley. "We'll put more effort into it to save our jobs."

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Chatsworth Division 8 maintenance personnel, above, review sector plan with Deputy CEO John Catoe, pictured below.



Catoe led discussions with both maintenance and transportation employees in separate sessions and also addressed working conditions.



Of Catoe's message, he said, "It sounds promising and has some backing to it. If we keep the zones out, that's better for the MTA."

Efficiency often hampered

Employee efficiency is often hampered by poor working conditions at the operating divisions, Catoe said. Such conditions affect the MTA's ability to provide quality transit services.

"If we're going to be the best transit operation in the country – and we have that ability – I want you to be the sharpest, the most courteous operators," he said. "But, before I can ask that, I have to improve your working conditions."

In choosing service sector general executives and other managers, Catoe emphasized the need for leadership skills. "Leaders respect other individuals and see people for who they are. Managers are focused on the task, while leaders provide inspiration and direction."

Admitting that the use of badge numbers instead of names to summon employees at the divisions is a "pet peeve," Catoe said he'll "dictate" a change in sign-in sheets to reflect the use of names over badge numbers.

"We want to personalize our operations more because, when you do that, you have better relationships and the whole operation will improve," he said.

On other topics, the deputy CEO said:

Each service sector will be responsible for controlling its own buses with dispatch centers located within the sector. During an emergency, however, area-wide control of all bus operations will revert to the Bus Operations Control Center at MTA Headquarters.

Transit Operations has too few schedule checkers and transportation operations supervisors (TOS) on the street. There will be opportunities for employees to promote up to scheduler and TOS and other jobs involved with operations services.

Service sectors will be implemented within current budgets. Cuts will be made in non-operational areas to support the sector concept. Some vacant positions will not be filled in order to save money.

Although people may apply for jobs in the service sector nearest to their homes, represented employees will retain their right under the bargaining agreements to bid for jobs anywhere in the Metro system.

"We have all the potential of becoming a great organization," Catoe said, noting that management must treat employees fairly, provide leadership and resources. "But, it's got to come from you, too. We need to work together to achieve that."

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