

With 5 Months to Go, Service Sector Development Moving Quickly, Catoe Reports

SERVICE SECTOR SPECIAL REPORT

By BILL HEARD, Editor
(Feb. 7, 2002) With the July 1 opening date for the first two MTA service sectors less than five months off, Deputy CEO John Catoe's presentation during Wednesday's all-staff meeting indicated just how quickly the concept is developing – and how much remains to be done.

>GO TO [metro.net Feb. 6 report: Service Sectors Take Big Step with Naming of 3 General Managers](#)

The announcement that general managers for the first three sectors have been hired, and that two will assume their new jobs this month, underscored the growing reality of the decentralization plan Catoe and CEO Roger Snoble are putting in place. The goal: to improve customer service.

Catoe emphasized that general managers will be given wide latitude to operate their service sectors. This includes working with service sector community councils.

"The intent is to give them a great deal of independence," he said. The measure of a general manager's success would include providing higher quality service, creativity in designing new service, increasing ridership, controlling costs and coordinating with other transit operators.

Staff organization chart

Among the next steps in developing the service sector plan will be finalizing a staff organization chart and preparing next fiscal year's budget to include sector operating costs.

Giving further emphasis to the forward movement was a series of reports by members of the Service Sector Task Force. One by one, they ticked off the progress made in such areas as staff realignment, facilities, finance, schedule and planning and sector governance.

By the middle of this month, Administration chief Carolyn Flowers reported, her Task Force sub-committee will complete a staffing plan for the service sectors and will announce a staff realignment. Each sector will employ between 1,100 and 1,300 staff members, including bus operators and maintenance personnel.

She said Human Resources will identify prospective employees for the sectors and will accept requests for transfer to the sectors in March. The general managers will meet with each employee during April in order to enhance the staff building process.

Employee selection process

The selection process will take into account employees' current jobs, where they live and where they might prefer to work, as well as the rights of represented employees under the MTA's collective bargaining agreements.

Flowers said some jobs might include a combination of responsibilities and that some new positions might be created for the service sectors.

In answer to employee questions, Catoe said, "There is no formal layoff plan," although he acknowledged that some employees already have left the MTA. He said those employees were offered severance

packages, and he indicated that packages could be offered to others since there is a possibility that cutbacks could occur in some areas of the agency.

On other matters, Catoe said:

Operations Central Instruction will be "beefed up" to become a state-of-the art operator and maintenance employee training center. He agreed that the current training facility at El Monte Division 9 is old and the technology dated, but added, "I assure you we will pay a great deal of attention to our training program."

Bus Operations Control responsibilities will be divided among the five service sectors, leaving a smaller BOCC unit at MTA Headquarters. The Gateway building unit will assume systemwide control of buses when the sector control centers shut down overnight.

In addition to permitting local control of sector bus operations, dispersing BOCC operations gives the MTA the option of dispatching all buses from any of six locations in the event of a natural disaster, crisis or terrorist act. "That's a tremendous advantage in a disaster," Catoe said.

Functions remaining at MTA Headquarters will include regional transportation planning, construction and a service planning staff that will concentrate on countywide services. Although some of their functions will be provided in the service sectors, all agency departments will have a centralized presence at MTA Headquarters.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)