

V Rail Services Director Dave Kubicek, at left, will implement programs to improve service and cut costs. Director of Rail Activation Melvin Clark, center, is devising a way to integrate the Pasadena Gold Line into the current train system. Light Rail MOW and Communications Director Rob Chappell, at right, plans on empowering all employees under his direction to achieve his goal of being the No.1 maintenance operation in transit.



Dave Kubicek



Melvin Clark



Rob Chappell

Three New Metro Rail Directors Get Things Rolling

By CHRISTINA ESPARZA

(June 4, 2002) As newly appointed Director of Rail Activation, Melvin Clark stood in his eight-week-old office at Metro Red Line Division 20 among piles of paper and unopened boxes and joked, "I have a favorite saying around here: 'I'm not from Dallas.'"

Perhaps it is his favorite saying because he is the only one of three new rail directors who did not come from Dallas Area Rapid Transit. And although boxes remain unpacked and a fresh batch of paint is still drying on office walls, the three directors are quickly moving things along to make Metro Rail a force to be reckoned with.

"We will be the Number 1 maintenance operation in transit, I think within a year, year-and-a-half," said Rob Chappell, Light Rail Maintenance of Way and Communications director. "We have a lot of work to do, but it's not just myself, it's a team effort. It's everybody on the team."

Chappell worked at the MTA for eight years prior to taking a job at DART in 1999. His new responsibilities include directing all MOW, rail communications, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA), rail facilities and rail custodial.

"The biggest change I need to do is to start empowering first-level supervisors, start empowering the hourly personnel," Chappell said. "I probably have the best talent pool of hourly staff and supervisor staff of anywhere in the MTA. I plan on empowering at the lowest level as much as I can to make this a team effort, and put our focus back on our customers."

Empowering the staff

Chappell said he plans on empowering his staff by opening up the lines of communications between himself and every single person working in wayside systems. He also is going to start listening and implementing good ideas from his staff.

Change also is on the mind of Dave Kubicek, Director of Rail Services, who is the former Senior Manager at DART and has about 14 years' experience in maintenance and nine years in rail.

"I'm going to start developing different programs to address the cars' needs," he said. "It's our job to make sure that cars are rolling and that we provide a safe and clean car to the public."

Kubicek is planning to implement a formal training program within rail and an engineering support group, which will centralize sector inspectors, mechanics, supervisors and managers so they can share information and gain a better understanding of the train's design and performance.

"You have to understand what's causing the problem and what types of repairs we have to focus in on that will have a long-lasting impact on the fleet, and increase the reliability of the car," Kubicek added. "You can address things short-term to keep cars in revenue service, but by addressing the long-term needs, it increases reliability and reduces the expenses of operating a car."

Communication is key to success

Clark, whose main job, at this point, is integrating the Metro Gold Line with the current rail system, agrees that communication is essential in running a successful rail system.

"One of my biggest goals is to open communications to express the needs of the rail operations group to the rest of the agency," said Clark, who has 21 years' experience in rail and worked as an engineer at a consulting firm that worked on the Metro Blue Line. "They'll know what our needs are and I'll be the point of contact so that there's one voice that speaks for rail."

"The thing I like about the MTA is that there are a lot of challenges here, but the direction from management is to meet those head-on," Clark continued. "We need to work together for a solution that is achievable, cost-effective and safe."

Excited to be back home, Chappell has a promising perspective for the future of rail.

"Now that rail is going to be independent, we have a chance to shine where we maybe not have been able to shine previously," he said. "And we're going to show everybody how we shine."

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