

Metro Rail Operators Win at International Rail Rodeo!

By ERIC RAPP

(June 11, 2002) For the first time since it began Metro Rail service almost 12 years ago, an MTA team has won the American Public Transit Association's International Rail Rodeo operator's competition.

Metro Red Line operators Tu Phan and Robert Rodriguez bested operators from 16 other transit properties during competition last week in Baltimore to bring home the top prize. Operators from Toronto and Baltimore placed second and third.

The MTA's team of rail maintenance specialists – Ronnie Burt, Juan Ruvalcaba and Eric Petersen – also made a good showing, finishing seventh in the fierce competition.

When operators' and maintenance specialists' scores were combined, the MTA placed third, overall, in the international event. All of the MTA's representatives "absolutely did an outstanding job," says Jess Diaz, director of Rail Operations.

"We went to Baltimore as a team," says Rodriguez. "We went not only for ourselves but we were there to represent all the rail employees of LACMTA."

"Our challenge was to take our Red Line training and skills and to apply them to the heavy rail system of Maryland MTA," says Phan. "We share this first-place win with our friends and co-workers."

One of the biggest challenges for the MTA team was operating unfamiliar equipment, according to Diaz.

Although Baltimore has a heavy rail system similar to the Metro Red Line, the vehicles come from a different manufacturer and operate different from the rail cars Phan and Rodriguez are used to.

After three days of classes and over-the-rails practice with the unfamiliar equipment, the MTA team was ready to go. "They're a dedicated crew," says Diaz. "They focused on their goal and got there."

TOP OPS



Metro Red Line operators Tu Phan, right, and Robert Rodriguez out maneuvered operators from 16 other transit agencies in international competition.

Below, the MTA's team of rail maintenance specialists – from left, Eric Petersen, Ronnie Burt, and Juan Ruvalcaba – also made a good showing. PHOTOS: GAYLE ANDERSON



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