

Metro Report Archives

August 2002 Articles

[MTA Report](#)

[Bulletin Board](#)

[Metro Rail Adding an Hour to Late-Night Service, Oct. 20](#) (Aug. 30, 2002) A full hour will be added to the late-night schedules of the last north- and southbound trains between Long Beach Transit Mall and 7th and Metro station on the Metro Blue Line and the last southbound Metro Red Line train from North Hollywood.

[MTA Sets Meetings on Valley's North-South Bus Alternatives](#) (Aug. 30, 2002) MTA has scheduled a series of public meetings to discuss potential alternatives for a north-south high capacity bus transit corridor in the San Fernando Valley.

[September Debut: Three Service Sectors Prepare for the Future](#) (Aug. 29, 2002) One of the first things you have to do when you're starting a new business – or a new MTA service sector – is find out what your customers want.

[Record-Breaking Ridership Trend Continues on Metro Blue Line](#) (Aug. 28, 2002) July was the third consecutive month in which average weekday boardings on the 22-mile line surpassed the 70-thousand mark.

[Scamming the System: DA's Office Takes Aim at Workers' Comp Fraud](#) (Aug. 27, 2002) "Why should you tolerate Worker's Comp scamming by your co-workers?" Deputy District Attorney Tom Higgins challenged a roomful of employees, last Friday, at Central City Division 1.

[Recovering Tourists' Cash Was an Exercise in Teamwork](#) (August 23, 2002) Ramona Escareno, a CCTV observer at the Rail Operations Center, gets very excited when she tells the story of how teamwork helped two tourists recover a \$100 bill they lost in a ticket vending machine.

[City Transit Officials Visit Metro San Fernando Valley](#) (August 23, 2002) Transportation officials and the chief legislative analyst from the City of Los Angeles recently visited Metro San Fernando Valley and toured West Valley Division 8.

[Milestone! Metro Gold Line Gets First Rail Car for Track Testing](#) (Aug. 20, 2002) It was still the dead of night, early Monday, when a big-rig truck with an oversized trailer pulled alongside Metro Gold Line tracks in South Pasadena and began to unload an 89-foot, 49-ton rail car.

[MTA Mechanic Says "Oui" to Articulated Buses](#) (Aug. 16, 2002) Ike Alison, Deputy Executive Officer Richard Hunt and several other MTA employees traveled to France in March to study new articulated buses. The buses, manufactured by a French firm, are currently in use throughout Europe.

[Board to Consider Transit Police Chief, Group Insurance Plans](#) (Aug. 14, 2002) Having cancelled its committee meetings for August, the MTA Board will consider a shorter-than-usual agenda at its monthly meeting, Thursday. Items include the creation of a position for transit police chief and changes in employee group insurance plans.

[A First for LA County: MTA, Munis Launch 'Regional EZPass'](#) (Aug. 13, 2002) With the wave of a "magic wand" over a huge top hat, an explosion of confetti and a hearty cheer, MTA and municipal operators today launched the Regional EZpass, Los Angeles County's first regional transit pass program.

[Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony Opens New Rt. 14 HOV Lanes](#) (Aug. 7, 2002) A 27-mile stretch of carpool lanes on State Route 14 was officially opened, last Friday, at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Lancaster.

[Meet the Artists of Five New Installations on a Metro Art Tour](#) (Aug. 7, 2002) MTA will unveil five new installations in three Metro Rail stations and on board a light-rail train during a Public Art Dedication, Sept. 14. Members of the Metro Art Docent Council will lead tours of the artworks.

[Peering into the Future: Technology Showcase Visits MTA](#) (Aug. 1, 2002) A traveling showcase of state-of-the-art bus technology is on display in front of the East Portal today

and Friday. Some of the equipment being shown currently is being tested in the Metro Bus fleet.

[Senate Earmarks \\$57.5 Million for MTA in FY 2003](#) (Aug. 1, 2002) The MTA's federal funding requests are making their way through Congress, with the Senate Appropriations Committee ear-marking \$57.5 million for the agency in the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

Bulletin Board

- **[Need Accounting Info? Check Out the New Intranet Website](#)** (Aug. 30, 2002)
The Accounting Department's new web pages were posted for the first time, today, on the Intranet.
- **[Customer Information Agents Celebrate Performance Improvements](#)** (August 29, 2002) Although the phones kept ringing throughout, employees in Metro Customer Information did their best, Wednesday, to celebrate the improvements they've made in performance over the past several years.
- **[Teamwork Key to Success at Home and on the Job](#)** (Aug. 28, 2002) Couple will celebrate promotions and wedding anniversary in October.
- **[MTA Mechanics, Operator Place in Regional Bus Rodeo](#)** (Aug. 27, 2002) MTA's competitors in last weekend's Regional Bus Rodeo at Hollywood Park placed just out of reach of the winners – a fact that may give them extra incentive at the APTA International Bus Rodeo, Sept. 21, in Las Vegas.
- **[Metro South Bay Holds Employee Appreciation Barbecue](#)**
- **[Michael Funnys Named Venice Division Transportation Manager](#)** (Aug. 23, 2002) An executive with 20 years' experience in finance, Michael Funnys joined MTA in 1999 and has been responsible for the agency's budgets, financial forecasting and planning.
- **[Venice Division Maintenance Team Earns Top Honors](#)** (August 23, 2002)
Although it was a gloomy and cloudy day at Venice Division 6, last Friday, it was all smiles when General Manager Tracy Daly presented the maintenance team with a trophy and check for \$500.
- **[MTA Twister: General Services to Coordinate Series of HQ Office Moves](#)** (Aug. 22, 2002) Director Brian Soto's General Services team will make a series of office changes throughout MTA's Headquarters building during the next few months.
- **[Managers to be Trained in New Accident Reporting System](#)** (Aug. 22, 2002)
Seeking to improve reporting and analysis of accidents and employee injuries, MTA Corporate Safety has teamed with Risk Management and Metro Operations to develop a streamlined Incident Management Process.
- **[Sun Valley Division 15 Lightens the Load for School Kids](#)** (August 22, 2002) East Valley Division 15 employees are reaching out to the community in a big way – changing the lives of at least 36 children.
- **[Division 15 Maintenance Team](#)** Gets a Grip on Graffiti
- **[No Stranger to Danger:](#)** Metro Bus Operator Gerardo Perez is an Avid Mountain Climber
- **[MTA to Honor Sept. 11 Victims](#)** With Blood Drive
- **[MTA Board Honors](#)** 2002 Rail Rodeo Winners
- **[Metro Bus Operator Ron Chico](#)** Considers Community Involvement Top Priority
- **[MTA's Sudhir Agrawal](#)** Named to Building Code Advisory Board

- [Metro Bus Operator Victor Ortiz](#) says good-bye to MTA after 35 years
- [60 attend APTA-MTA seminar](#) on procurement process.
- [No More Friday 'Grubbies' for MTA Administrative Staff](#) (Aug. 13, 2002) To Deputy CEO John Catoe, casual Fridays at MTA mean "business casual" dress for administrative staff, not "grubbies."
- [The Music Lives On with Metro Operator Mickey LesPron](#) (August 9, 2002) In 1969, Latin music was being revolutionized by Carlos Santana and up-and-coming bands like El Chicano. Metro Red Line Division 20 Operator Michael "Mickey" LesPron, a lead guitarist in the band El Chicano, was a part of it all.
- [College Tuition Reimbursements Going Up for Non-Reps](#) (Aug. 7, 2002) Starting this fall, non-represented employees can expect more support from MTA with increased tuition reimbursements. The revised tuition policy, approved this week by CEO Roger Snoble, also eliminates the annual cap on reimbursements.
- [Two New Holidays for Non-Represented Employees](#) (Aug. 6, 2002) CEO Roger Snoble has approved Friday after Thanksgiving and Veterans' Day, Nov. 11, as annual holidays for non-represented employees. He signed the revised holiday policy, Monday, to take effect immediately.
- [Making the System Work at Division 4](#) (Aug. 6, 2002) Maintaining all 1,600 of MTA's non-revenue vehicles and equipment is not an easy job. But, non-revenue Division 4 gladly takes the challenge.
- [Bus Roadeo Volunteers Honored at Luncheon](#) (Aug. 6, 2002) The 60 employee volunteers who made the 2002 Metro Bus Roadeo a success were honored, last Thursday, at a luncheon at the Regional Rebuild Center.
- [Change Proposed in Group Insurance Plan Contributions](#) (Aug. 2, 2002) Some would pay more and some would pay less, but a proposed change in monthly contribution rates would affect all non-contract and AFSCME employees who are members of MTA group insurance plans.
- [Walter Carmier's Retirement Plan: Fishin', Fishin', and More Fishin'](#) (Aug. 2, 2002) It's been 15 years since Walter Carmier has done any fishing at all - a 10-foot Louisiana catfish was his biggest catch ever - so now the 61-year-old and most senior Arthur Winston Division 5 bus operator plans to make up for lost time.
- [SAVE THE DATE](#) Luau on the Plaza Wednesday!
- [FYI! BofA Will Charge \\$5 to Cash MTA Employees' Paychecks](#) (August 1, 2002)
As a result of a Bank of America policy change effective today, everyone will be charged \$5 to cash checks at Bank of America branches if they don't have a banking relationship with B of A.

[Back to Archives](#)

B of A Will Charge \$5 to Cash MTA Employees' Paychecks

By ALISHA GOMEZ

(August 1, 2002) About 86 percent of MTA employees receive their pay through direct deposit. The other 1,400 to 1,600 employees are paid by check.

Now, as a result of a Bank of America policy change effective today, everyone will be charged \$5 to cash checks at Bank of America branches if they don't have a banking relationship with B of A.

Previously, Bank of America would cash paychecks for MTA employees – and anyone else -- free of charge if the check was drawn on B of A.

MTA contracts Bank of America to transfer payroll funds to B of A branches and to other banks for employees who use direct deposit. The bank also holds MTA payroll funds on deposit for employees who receive paychecks.

A banking relationship

B of A defines a banking relationship as a mortgage, credit card, loan, checking account, savings account, certificate of deposit, an Individual Retirement Account or military bank account with any Bank of America affiliate or subsidiary.

Donna Mills, MTA assistant treasurer, has some suggestions for employees affected by Bank of America's new policy.

"First and foremost, I would recommend people get on direct deposit," says Mills. "Direct deposit is extremely beneficial because you don't have to go to the bank. Your pay is automatically deposited into the account.

"Often, it is put into your account early on payday or done the evening before," she says. "There are no long bank lines and it really is a time-saver for employees."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

What to do if ...

You Don't Have a B of A Account

- **An employee can sign up for direct deposit.** Your paycheck will be automatically deposited into the account or combination of accounts at any bank or banks you choose.
- **Sign up for a B of A MyAccess™ Checking account,** which allows an employee to bank online, at an ATM or by phone. There is no monthly service charge with direct deposit and no minimum balance requirement.

Senate Earmarks \$57.5 Million for MTA in FY 2003

(Aug. 1, 2002) The MTA's federal funding requests are making their way through Congress, with the Senate Appropriations Committee earmarking \$57.5 million for the agency in the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

Although House committees have not yet met to consider MTA funding requests, the Senate funding marks include:

- \$40 million to complete federal funding of the Metro Rail North Hollywood extension;
- \$10 million for the Eastside Light-Rail Project;
- \$5 million for expansion of the Rapid Bus program and to improve bus facilities;
- \$1.75 million to purchase new buses and improve facilities for municipal operators; and \$750,000 for the Reverse Commute/Jobs Access Program.

The MTA has requested a total of \$113.5 million that, in addition to the above, would include spending for preliminary engineering on the proposed Exposition Boulevard light-rail project, money for more Metro Rapid buses and implementation of the Universal Fare System.

The agency's funding requests will be considered by House Appropriations committees in September, after which members of the Senate and House committees will negotiate the final funding figures for FY 2003.

[Back to MTA Report](#)

The FTA's traveling bus technology exhibit will be on display at the East Portal today and Friday.



Peering into the Future: Technology Showcase Visits MTA

(Aug. 1, 2002) A traveling showcase of state-of-the-art bus technology is on display in front of the East Portal today and Friday. Some of the equipment being shown currently is being tested in the Metro Bus fleet.

Sponsored by the Federal Transportation Administration and hosted by the MTA, the Advanced Public Transportation System traveling exhibit includes infrared cameras useful in avoiding collisions in foul weather, on-board equipment monitoring systems, collision avoidance systems and red light priority control systems.

The display features a simulated bus driver's station with automatic annunciators that call the stops, security cameras, a data terminal for communications with bus controllers and global positioning, and a passenger counter.

Also on exhibit is a computer-aided dispatching system that helps bus controllers monitor on-street operations and can notify controllers of mechanical problems on the buses, even before the operator is aware of them.



Joe Vicente, the MTA's "Smart Bus" project manager, tries out the bus operator simulator in the FTA traveling exhibit. FTA facilitator John Catron explains the systems.



FTA facilitator John Catron describes vehicle on-board equipment monitoring systems to a group of MTA employees.

PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD

"We brought in this exhibit to demonstrate to employees and passengers what the future bus will look like," says Joe Vicente, assistant director, Information and Technology Services.

Some Metro Buses already are being used to demonstrate automatic annunciators and many have security cameras on board. Vincente says other examples of the equipment on display in the FTA's traveling exhibit

will be tested by the MTA in 2003 and will be in common use on Metro Buses within the next few years.

[Back to MTA Report](#)

- **SAVE THE DATE**
Wednesday, August 7 - Metro Cafe invites you to the Farmer's Market and a "Luau" on the Plaza. Local band Gateway Jam will emcee "limbo" contest.

(August 2, 2002) Employees can purchase tickets in advance to a "Luau" and Farmer's Market at Metro Café. The Luau will be served on the Plaza on Wednesday.

Tickets can be purchased at the cafeteria cash register in advance and on the day of the event.

Live music and fresh produce

The Luau will be served in the Plaza and inside Metro Café during the lunch hours from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Gateway Jam, an R&B/Country Rock band composed of local talent, will rock the Plaza and, rumor has it, will conduct a "limbo" contest. G & G Produce, a local produce company, will sell fresh fruits and vegetables, and cut flowers.

Drawings for prizes

Employees can participate in drawings for a number of items donated by Metro Café, its parent company Sodexho and vendors. No purchase is required; entry forms will be available at the event.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)



- Luau:** Kalua Pig with Pineapple, Broiled Mahi Mahi, Shoyu Chicken, Coconut Rice, Fresh vegetables and roll. Combo plate: \$6. Soda: 25 cents.
- Hamburger** with one side and soft drink: \$4.50.
- BBQ Chicken Sandwich** with one side and soft drink. \$5.

The American Public Transportation Authority Internal Audit Committee and MTA Management Audit Services Department conducted a Contract Audit Seminar, August 1 and 2. With over 60 participants, key principles related to price proposal, Federal Acquisition Regulations, the procurement process and cost accounting principles were discussion topics. Pictured are APTA Internal Audit Committee and MTA officials: Michael Northup (BART), Deborah Harrell (MTA) Samuel Kerns (APTA) and Bill Bernsdorf (MTA). -- from Deborah Harrell



[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Change Proposed in Group Insurance Plan Contributions

(Aug. 2, 2002) Some would pay more and some would pay less, but a proposed change in monthly contribution rates would affect all non-contract and AFSCME employees who are members of MTA group insurance plans.

CEO Roger Snoble is recommending that the MTA Board approve in August a proposal under which the agency would pay 90 percent of the cost of monthly premiums for group insurance plans. Employees would pay the remaining 10 percent.

Currently, MTA pays 90 percent and employees pay 10 percent of the aggregate – rather than the actual – cost of premiums for the medical, vision, mental health and dental plans. Contribution amounts have been set for each plan to encourage participation in the lower-cost plans.

A report to the Board notes that monthly premium rates for MTA group plans are increasing significantly. Rates for Blue Cross plans, for example, jumped more than 24 percent, while Kaiser HMO rates rose 16.3 percent and Delta Dental's PPO plan increased 14.2 percent. Rates for other plans rose between 3 percent and 8.5 percent.

Some increase, some decrease

Under the 90 percent/10 percent plan proposed to the Board, monthly employee contributions to about half of the plans also would rise. Contributions to the others would decrease.

A single employee who belongs to the Blue Cross HMO and formerly made no contribution, for example, now would pay a monthly \$26 premium. MTA's 90 percent contribution would amount to \$221.76. The contribution of an employee on the Kaiser HMO family plan would rise from \$57 to \$66, while MTA's 90 percent contribution would be \$593.15.

But, employee contribution rates for Delta Dental's PPO family plan would fall by \$8, while rates for Dental Health Services and Deltacare family plans would drop by \$5 each.

If approved by the Board, the new rates for group insurance plans would take effect Jan. 1, 2003. The report notes that contributions by AFSCME employees may be affected by the current labor negotiations.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Walter Carmier's Retirement Plan:

PHOTO BY VICTORIA WOODS



Metro Bus Operator Walter Carmier retires after 36 years.

Fishin', Fishin', and More Fishin'

By RICH MORALLO

(Aug. 2, 2002) It's been 15 years since Walter Carmier has done any fishing at all - a 10-foot Louisiana catfish was his biggest catch ever - so now the 61-year-old and most senior Arthur Winston Division 5 bus operator plans to make up for lost time.

"I'm going to retire in Texas and just fish," says Carmier, who adds that driving passengers in Los Angeles for the past 36 years has kept him away from his rod.

Come January, if his retirement plan goes as scheduled, Carmier will make his way to some Houston creek and spend his golden years reeling in fish. "I'll enjoy my retirement, that's for sure, but I'll always have my Metro memories with me."

Memories like the time Carmier waited for a lady to cross the street and catch his Line 18 bus at 6th Street and Western Avenue.

"The lady - she was from the Philippines - thanked me, and said I was the first operator to ever wait for her," Carmier recalls. But, the story didn't end there. "Would you believe every day for the next six months, that lady caught my bus and gave me a Filipino home-cooked dish to thank me?"

Then there was the "gun scare" on Line 212 on Hollywood Boulevard.

'Hands over our heads'

"The police learned that someone on my bus might be carrying a weapon," Carmier remembers. "So, they ordered me to stop the bus and all of us, fifteen passengers and myself, had to exit the bus single-file, backwards, with our hands over our heads."

These days, Carmier keeps busy driving Line 115 from Manchester to Norwalk in the morning and then Line 207 from Western Avenue to Hollywood Boulevard in the afternoon. He also is making plans to send his 12-year-old son and 14-year-old daughter to college.

The years have gone by fast for Carmier. It seems just yesterday when he was 25 years old and newly arrived from Lake Charles, La. He decided to spend a year driving school buses so he could qualify for the MTA in 1966.

"Why did I stay?" he muses 36 years later. "Simple. The MTA treated me nice."

For today's operators, Carmier advises: "Be at work on time; don't tear up the bus; and if you take care of the MTA, the MTA will take care of you."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

From left, Milo Victoria, DEO of Maintenance and Rebuild; Steve Mullaly, Senior Maintenance Instructor; Harold Torres, Equipment Maintenance Supervisor; and Alex Di Nuzzo, Arthur Winston Division 5 Maintenance Manager teamed up to organize thank-you luncheon for Bus Roadeo volunteers. >



PHOTOS BY LISA HUYNH

Bus Roadeo Volunteers Honored at Luncheon

By LISA HUYNH

(Aug. 6, 2002) The 60 employee volunteers who made the 2002 Metro Bus Roadeo a success were honored, last Thursday, at a luncheon at the Regional Rebuild Center.

The volunteers gave up their free time to help set up the Roadeo obstacle courses, competition equipment and exhibits. They also cooked and served food for the hundreds of employees and family members who attended the event in June.

"Everyone from maintenance, to purchasing, to supervisors from various divisions, to administrative staff and to non-MTA employees, all helped out," says Equipment Maintenance Supervisor Harold Torres.

Six of the volunteers were from other bus companies, including Montebello Transit, Foothill Transit and Big Blue Bus. The children of some of the volunteers also helped.

▲ Volunteers enjoyed a lunch of barbeque chicken and ribs, rice and rolls.



"It's amazing the number of people who volunteer year after year," says Milo Victoria, DEO, Maintenance and Rebuild. "It's a lot of hard work and for these people to volunteer their free time. I think that's commendable."

The volunteers were given a great lunch and a watch with the Bus Roadeo logo. Those who helped with the barbeque also received certificates.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Two New Holidays for Non-Represented Employees

(Aug. 6, 2002) Two extra holidays. That's what non-represented employees can expect – before the year is out.

CEO Roger Snoble has approved Friday after Thanksgiving and Veterans' Day, Nov. 11, as annual holidays for non-represented employees. He signed the revised holiday policy, Monday, to take effect immediately.

"Previously, the day after Thanksgiving had been granted as a holiday at the CEO's discretion," says Carolyn Flowers, executive officer, Administration. "The CEO's order codifies it as an annual holiday for non-represented employees."

Veterans' Day also was selected as an annual holiday after employees expressed preference for it during informal surveys, in comments to the CEO HotLine and at Deputy CEO John Catoe's Brown Bag lunches.

"Employees overwhelming said they wanted Veterans' Day," says Flowers. "I believe it's an extension of employee sentiment following Sept. 11 and recognition of veterans and their service to the country. A lot of our employees are veterans."

MTA employees will celebrate Veterans' Day on Nov. 11 unless it falls on a weekend. Employees will be given Friday off if the holiday falls on a Saturday and Monday off if it falls on a Sunday. This year, Nov. 11 is on Monday.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Making the System Work At Non-revenue Division 4

By ALISHA GOMEZ

(Aug. 6, 2002) Maintaining all 1,600 of MTA's non-revenue vehicles and equipment is not an easy job. But, non-revenue Division 4 gladly takes the challenge.

With equipment ranging from trucks, vans and four-door sedans to shop mules and forklifts, the 48 technicians, 10 service attendants and six other staff at Division 4 have their hands full.

Everything from oil changes and windshield-wiper replacements to minor bodywork is done at the division, located in Downey. Division 4 personnel also perform similar work at the RRC, South Park, Rail Division 20 and Metro Bus divisions 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, and 15.

And now, with the Fleet Management System, keeping tabs on maintenance and repairs has become much more efficient.

Specifically designed for non-revenue equipment record keeping, the computer program is a common tool used by Pepsi Cola, New York Transit, Chicago Transit, Chicago USA and others.

In the "Stone Age" days, before the computer-based system was installed, the division used a paper system, in which everything was filled out on forms and then hand-filed, a cause for frequent delays.

Now, the division is more in tune with "Jetson" technology – mechanics open their own work orders, process and finish them. A supervisor then closes out the work order, verifying that the mechanic has done the work.

"This process eliminates a lot of paper work for us," says Pat Astredo, Division 4 Equipment Maintenance supervisor. "We've cut down considerably on the time we spend on record-keeping."

Since using the new system, Division 4 has been able to access a lot more



Mechanic John Spata works on a non-revenue MTA truck at Division 4.

PHOTO: PAT ASTREDO



MTA employee Bob Twardowski brings in a non-revenue vehicle to Division 4 for maintenance.

PHOTO: ALISHA GOMEZ

The Future of the System

Every Monday, Division 4 sends out 120 e-mails to the various supervisors and non-revenue vehicle coordinators of 28 cost centers at the different divisions, shops, terminals and facilities to update the vehicle mileage of all non-revenue vehicles and equipment.

But, Equipment Maintenance Supervisor Pat Astredo says the division just bought a new web application for the Fleet Management System program that should be up and running by November.

Once the web site goes live, the 120 supervisors and non-revenue vehicle coordinators will be able to directly input updated data into the Fleet Management System, eliminating the margin of error.

"The more transposing of that data, the more opportunity for mistakes," says Astredo. "This network will keep the process simpler." --Alisha Gomez

information about the non-revenue equipment.

"I can go into the system right now and pull up information on work that was done on any fleet car," says Astredo. "Before, we weren't able to do that."

Astredo takes his hat off to the team of mechanics who took on the project of changing systems and learning the new program from scratch.

"They really took the new system under their wing and made it work," says Astredo. "They came in for two days, trained on it and started using it the next day."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

[BACK](#)



^ Each panel reveals a grid of images.



along WILSHIRE, looking North (from Grand to Mariposa)
by Robbert Flick

A photography installation in a subway station in the heart of L.A.'s venerable Wilshire District, where the mezzanine level of the Wilshire/Normandie Metro Rail Station has been transformed into an exhibition-like space for MTA Metro Art's "Photographic Light Boxes," a revolving exhibit that continues with the installation and year-long exhibit of artist Robbert Flicks' grid of images of the neighborhood above the Metro Rail route served by the Wilshire/Normandie Metro Rail Station.

The exhibit, a series of seven transparencies installed in backlit display cases on the south wall of the mezzanine passageway between the station entrance and the lower boarding platform, continues through July 2003. The new exhibition-like space of the subway station departs from the traditional permanence of public artwork to offer a more finite gallery of changing photography exhibits. Furthermore, the exhibits will be viewed by an average of 3,300 people a day who are not necessarily typical museum-goers or art lovers.

[BACK](#)

[BACK](#)

WAIT JUST A
SECOND...
downloading series
of images

**Chance
Encounters**
by George
Legrady

An installation of computer-generated animations on the theme of passengers passing each other in the public space of the Los Angeles Metro Rail system. The installation is presented on television monitors mounted in various places on the Metro Red Line and Metro Blue Line platforms of the 7th Street/ Metro Center/ Julian Dixon Station from June to December of 2002. The artwork is presented in installments with variations introduced each month.

The first installment combines a sequence of personal names collected from the greater LA area set against 26 backgrounds or visual transitions. The transitions are used as a means to cycle through the sequences of names. Two names are presented together. The top name is alphabetically ordered whereas the bottom name is randomly selected by the computer. The combination of the two names implies a

connection: Are
these two
individuals on the
platform or passing
by each other as
the trains come and
go? Will they meet?

[BACK](#)

[BACK](#)



Pathway to Freedom
by Michael Massenburg and Robin Strayhorn

An installation of five seating benches honoring the life of Rosa Parks and the Watts community at the Metro Blue Line station named in honor of the civil rights leader. Viewing public transportation seating as symbolic of the Rosa Parks historical event, the team created five seating areas out of concrete and ceramic tile that bears images of the life and times of Rosa Parks intertwined with images from the lives of people from Watts.



Detail from bench pictured above reveals ceramic tile images.

[BACK](#)

[BACK](#)

WAIT JUST A SECOND...
downloading series of images



Plantings

by the artist team of
Kipp Kobayashi, Marta Perlas and Noel
Korten

An installation of seating environments on the platform level of the 7th Street/Metro Center/Julian Dixon Metro Rail Station. Three seating areas for transit riders awaiting subway cars at the Metro Red Line Station consist of three-foot-square cubes made of durable lightweight concrete which are arranged to produce a branching 'Y' pattern suggestive of plants and trees. Lighting elements mounted 25 feet above the cubes project a series foliage patterns onto the seating area, giving transit riders the effect of sitting under a tree.

[BACK](#)

[BACK](#)



untitled/ [gel sound]
by Cindy Bernard and Joseph Hammer

A visual and audio installation on board a Metro Blue Line train, Car #127. Sheets of red, green and blue theatrical gels are placed in the windows of one Metro Green Line car and one Metro Blue Line car. The gels transform the exterior landscape beyond, as well as the train interior for those viewing it from the outside. Inside the car, audio speakers emit a subtle low-level sound that blends with the sounds made by the train and its passengers to create a unique composition.

[BACK](#)

Meet the Artists

- Metro Art Docent Council members will lead concurrent art tours featuring the artists of five new installations on Saturday, Sept. 14, from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Metro Art will unveil five new installations in three Metro Rail stations and on board a light-rail train during a Metro Art Tour on Sept. 14. Members of the Metro Art Docent Council will lead concurrent tours of the five installations at each station and on Metro Blue Line Car #127 from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

The installations include a seating area at the Rosa Parks station, a seating area and computer-generated animations that play on television monitors installed at 7th and Metro, an audio-visual presentation installed on board Metro Blue Line car #127 and a photography exhibit at the Wilshire/Normandie station.

All were commissioned as part of the Metro Art program that enhances the 50 Metro Rail stations and Gateway Transit Center with the work of more than 75 artists.

Artists will be stationed at their installation to meet guests and answer questions about the artworks.

The Metro Art Docent Council, which consists of 36 trained volunteer docents, regularly conducts tours of Metro Art and provides commentary that details the public art process from concept to installation.

The 50 Metro Rail stations and Gateway Transit Center feature the work of more than 75 artists commissioned to enhance the 59.4-mile transit system in one of the country's largest and most celebrated public art programs.

Click on images for virtual tour of Metro Art installations pictured below.

Plantings

twelve creatively lit benches by Noel Korten, Kipp Kobayashi and Marta Perlas at 7th Street/ Metro Center/Julian Dixon Metro Rail Station.



Chance Encounters

a video installation by George Legrady at the 7th Street/ Metro Center/ Julian Dixon Metro Rail Station.

untitled [gel/sound]

a color and sound installation on board Metro Blue Line Car # 127 by Cindy Bernard and Joseph Hammer.



along WILSHIRE, looking North (from Grand to Mariposa)

seven backlit photos by Robbert Flick at the Wilshire/Normandie Metro Rail Station.

Pathway to Freedom

five colorful benches by Robin Strayhorn and Michael Massenburg at the Imperial/Wilmington/Rosa Parks Metro Rail Station.



PHOTOGRAPHS: *Chance Encounters*, *Plantings*, *along WILSHIRE* by Gayle Anderson; *Pathway to Freedom* digital images enhanced by Gayle Anderson; *untitled [gel/sound]* by Brent Zerger.

[Back to MTA Report](#)

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony Opens New Rt. 14 HOV Lanes

By ALISHA GOMEZ

(Aug. 7, 2002) A 27-mile stretch of carpool lanes on State Route 14 was officially opened, last Friday, at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Lancaster.

Lancaster Mayor Frank Roberts, MTA Board second vice-chair, cut the ribbon to open the new carpool lane along with Caltrans Chief Deputy Director Tony Harris, Senator Pete Knight of Palmdale, CEO Roger Snoble and Assemblyman George Runner of Lancaster.



Lancaster Mayor Frank Roberts, MTA Board second vice-chair, (third from right) helps cut the ribbon to open the new carpool lane along with Caltrans Chief Deputy Director Tony Harris, Senator Pete Knight of Palmdale, CEO Roger Snoble and Assemblyman George Runner of Lancaster.

"These lanes are a great alternative for commuters and we're going to see a major improvement as they become more functional," Roberts said at the ceremony. "We are still commuting about 60,000 people from the Antelope Valley down to the Southland. The next project will have the HOV lanes go all the way to Antelope Valley."

With the completion of the additional 27 miles, the carpool lanes now reach from the I-5 junction with State Route 14 all the way to Pearblossom Highway in Palmdale. They will be open for mixed-use traffic during off-peak hours.

Helping those who rideshare

"We think taxpayers deserve to use the lanes they paid for," said Runner. "At the same time, we are trying to help those who rideshare and use those lanes during the high-peak times."

State Route 14 is the only freeway in Southern California where all drivers can use the HOV lanes throughout the majority of the day, Runner said.

"The people who have worked on this project have worked very hard, and will continue to do so in order to maintain and operate it," Snoble said. "This is a great facility and it is going to do a lot of good."

"You save a minute for every mile you travel on an HOV lane," Caltrans' Harris said. "We're building a 55-mile network just on State Route 14. That means in one direction you are saving 50 minutes."

[Back to MTA Report](#)

PHOTOS BY ALICIA GOMEZ



Metro Red Line Operator Mickey LesPron is a founding member of the band *El Chicano*. The band has begun to tour once again.

The Music Lives On with Metro Operator Mickey LesPron

By Alisha Gomez

(August 9, 2002) The year was 1969 – Richard Nixon was president, bell-bottom jeans were a hot trend and first-class stamps were only 6 cents. For the first time, Americans watched a man land on the moon without stepping outside of their living rooms.

As for the music scene, groups like *5th Dimension*, *The Archies*, *The Zombies* and *The Foundations* topped the charts with hit singles.

And in California, Latin music was being revolutionized by Carlos Santana and up-and-coming bands like *El Chicano*.

Metro Red Line Division 20 Operator Michael “Mickey” LesPron, a lead guitarist in the band *El Chicano*, was a part of it all.

LesPron formed the band *El Chicano* along with the keyboard player, Bobby Espinosa in 1969. LesPron was only 20 at the time, but from the moment he saw his first guitar, he had found his passion.

First encounter with a guitar

“I was about 12 years old and a friend’s dad brought him a guitar from Mexico,” says LesPron. “He opened up his guitar and I smelled the wood and listened to the sound of the strings and I knew I was going to play the guitar.”

LesPron did learn to play the instrument and became a good enough musician to play professionally with some of the Los Angeles’ best Latin jazz bands for a number of years.

“Some of the members kept playing, but having a family, I opted to get a day gig,” says LesPron.

In 1979 he started his career with what was then RTD, now MTA, as a bus operator.

‘His first band was the *Monotones*. The second was *In Crowd* and the third was *VIP’s*, which became *El Chicano*.’

“I drove buses for 15 years and then in 1995 I transferred to the Metro Blue Line,” says LesPron. From there he went onto the Metro Green Line and finally the Metro Red Line, where he is now.

LesPron was about 17 when he started to play in different



neighborhood groups. By then he had self-taught himself how to play. Later, he eventually took Jazz lessons to learn how to read chord charts and the style.

His first band was the *Monotones*. The second was *In Crowd* and the third was *VIP's*, which became *El Chicano*.

Growing up in San Gabriel, the band members of *El Chicano* pretty much knew each other from their neighborhood.

Their first hit was "Viva Tirado," an instrumental piece. After that hit, they started touring and one of their first main gigs was opening for Jerry Butler at the Apollo Theater.

In the height of the 70's, *El Chicano* toured constantly. They made a name for themselves with two other hits, "Savor a Mi," sung in Spanish and "Tell Her She Is Lovely."

At the top of their game

"We opened for groups like *Earth, Wind and Fire*," says LesPron. "We also opened for *BB King* and *ZZ Top* and we performed at concerts and colleges all throughout the United States."

The band also toured overseas in countries like Singapore, Malaysia Hong Kong, Guatemala, El Salvador and Venezuela.

With a total of 12 albums, nine originals and three greatest hits, *El Chicano* members grew up with groups like *Tierra*, *War*, and *The Midnighters*.

They developed an original sound by experimenting – Latin jazz and rock.

"We started to play Willie Bobo's songs and Tito Puente's songs," says LesPron. "But we transposed them into our version and played them our way, our style, which became the *El Chicano* style."

Then 1978 came, and disco rocked the nation, knocking many bands, including *El Chicano*, out of business.

Although by 1979, he was a Metro Bus Operator, LesPron was determined to keep his talents tuned. During that time, he kept playing with club bands to keep with his music and "maintain his chops," as he says.

Continues to groove

"I've never stopped playing," says LesPron. "It was rough. I would play Saturday nights and have to wake up and go to work on Sundays because I

didn't have seniority back then to get weekends off. But now I do."

But the other original member, Bobby Espinosa, kept the name going. After releasing one more recorded album about three years ago, Espinosa asked LesPron back this past April.

Since then, LesPron has been touring on weekends with *El Chicano*, flying to Denver, Albuquerque and Fresno, and playing alongside bands like *War* and *Tierra*.

He continues to play local club dates and private gigs with the Bobby Z Band and appears in concert events with *El Chicano*.

***El Chicano* rocks on**

With LesPron as a member again, the band is getting back to its original sound. And people definitely want to hear them.

"We're going to go for a little bit of the new, but maintain that original sound that reflected the guitar sound of Wes Montgomery, which I grew up listening to," says LesPron.

El Chicano is about to record its first CD since LesPron rejoined the group and they have already done a cable show with Edward James Olmos for a Spanish station.

"The CD is going to be original songs, some shuffled blues and some Latin Jazz songs," says LesPron. They have an upcoming concert Aug. 24 at the Montebello Inn.

When LesPron is not playing with *El Chicano*, he is playing with his club group.

He plans on playing music for the rest of his life and hopefully will retire from MTA in a year.

"My passion is music," says LesPron. "Who knows if it will go somewhere? But at least I'll have fun doing it."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

College Tuition Reimbursements Going Up for Non-Reps

UPDATE: Changes in **highlight**.

(**Aug. 12, 2002**) Thinking about getting a college degree? Want to go for a master's or a doctorate?

Starting this fall, non-represented employees can expect more support from MTA with increased tuition reimbursements. The revised tuition policy, approved this week by CEO Roger Snoble, also eliminates the annual cap on reimbursements.

Non-represented employees enrolled in undergraduate courses now can receive tuition reimbursements for up to **\$275 per credit**.

Those enrolled in graduate courses can expect to receive up to **\$375 per credit** in MTA reimbursements.

Improve chance for promotion

"The new policy allows employees to enhance their skills and improve their chances for promotion," says Carolyn Flowers, executive officer, Administration. "It also supports MTA goals of increasing employee knowledge and employee retention."

A non-represented employee taking a full load of 16 credit hours, for example, now can expect to receive \$4,000 in MTA tuition reimbursements instead of the \$1,755 permitted under the former annual reimbursement cap.

According to HR Policy 8-1, employees may be reimbursed for courses in subjects that are related to MTA business. The degree or certification program must relate to the employee's duties, to the duties of a related position or to a promotional opportunity within MTA.

Tuition reimbursement levels for contract employees remain at \$175 for undergraduate courses and \$325 for graduate courses. Any changes in the plan would be subject to contract negotiations.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

No More Friday 'Grubbies' for MTA Administrative Staff

What to Wear

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Aug. 13, 2002) To Deputy CEO John Catoe, casual Fridays at MTA mean "business casual" dress for administrative staff, not "grubbies."

- [illustrations](#)
- [checklist](#)

In July, Catoe issued a memo entitled "Casual Friday Attire" that reminded employees about the agency's dress code as outlined in [HR Policy 4-4](#).

It is the responsibility of supervisors, he wrote, to ensure that employees adhere to the policy. Should an employee come to work dressed inappropriately, the immediate supervisor must "direct an employee to immediately modify his/her attire..." even if the employee has to be sent home to change.

"This isn't just John's pet peeve," says Catoe. "It's about professionalism. As management, we have the right to expect employees to dress in a certain way. It's something that's required to work at the MTA."

In an interview with *Metro.net*, Catoe discussed the thought behind the memo and the need for employees to dress professionally every day of the week.

***Metro.net*: Why did you issue the memo?**

John Catoe: Let me start by explaining Roger Snoble's vision. He wants the MTA to be seen as the Number One transportation agency in the country. Number One from the aspect of customer service, professionalism, knowledge, quality of service and creativity as we work to improve mobility in the county.

That includes the image of the agency and people's perception of the organization. When we dress a certain way, it gives the perception that we're professionals and that we're business-oriented. This is a professional organization, a place of business where we're in contact with the public and provide service to them. We should dress in a way that demonstrates our respect for them and for ourselves.

We've taken casual Friday way beyond what it should be.

***M-N*: What are examples of acceptable and unacceptable dress?**

J.C.: Unacceptable includes flip-flops, T-shirts, shorts, untucked polo shirts and baggy jeans. That's not business casual dress.

Business casual for men is slacks, nice shirt and a sweater or jacket. It includes khaki or colored slacks like Dockers, a pressed shirt or a polo shirt with a collar. For women, a skirt or nice slacks and a blouse in warm weather, a sweater or jacket when it's cooler. Dressy casual.

***M-N*: Does this apply to administrative staff at sector offices and at operating divisions?**

J.C.: Yes. I expect the same level of professional appearance.

***M-N*: What do you expect of managers and executives?**

J.C.: The standard for them on Fridays is truly business casual dress. No

jeans, no sneakers. The most casual dress for men might be khaki pants and shirt or a polo shirt with collar, hard-sole shoes with socks. A tie isn't necessary.

For women executives and managers, the most casual might be a pantsuit or slacks and blouse with jacket or sweater.

M-N: We've talked about Fridays, what's appropriate dress Monday through Thursday?

J.C.: That's an issue, too. Whether they are executives or administrative staff, men should wear ties and women should wear business dress. They're all professionals.

M-N: Some employees, male and female, go out into the field and may spend at least part of the day at a construction site or other worksite that's not in an office setting.

J.C.: If you're working on a project and you're going out to inspect a construction site, for example, you dress accordingly for the day. But, my observation has been that some of these employees dress like that every day, whether they're going out to a project or not. And, I know that they don't go out to the project every day.

M-N: What's the next step?

J.C.: I believe MTA employees take great pride in their professionalism and service to the traveling public and I expect to see an immediate overall improvement in appearance not only on Fridays, but also during the week. I'm going to hold executive management accountable for maintaining a professional appearance among their staff members.

What to Wear : Illustrations and checklist

Women



Men



What women should wear:

- Slacks, skirts, with coordinating tops.
- A jacket, sweater or over-blouse to "finish" the outfit.

What men should wear:

- Khakis, chinos, or gabardine trousers.
- Shirts with collars (polo-style or button down).

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flat shoes with coordinating trouser socks or hose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sweaters with collared shirts underneath.• Loafers with colored socks.
What women should NOT wear: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leggings or spandex pants.• Casual, athletic or short shorts.• Very short skirts, bare shoulders, tight sweater tops, or any kind of glitter.• Sport team jackets, shirts or any other "logo" clothing (except your own company's logo).• Athletic t-shirts, sweat shirts or sweat pants.• Athletic shoes, thong (flip-flop) sandals.• Hats or caps.	What men should NOT wear: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• T-shirts.• Sport team jackets, shirts or any other "logo" clothing (except your own company's logo).• Sweat shirts and sweat pants, athletic "tube" socks. Running clothes.• Hiking boots, athletic shoes, or sandals.• Hats or caps of any kind.• Shorts

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

With the wave of a "magic wand" over a huge tophat, an explosion of confetti and a hearty cheer, MTA and municipal operators today launched the Regional EZpass, Los Angeles County's first regional transit pass program.

GO TO> [Quotables](#)



PHOTO BY GAYLE ANDERSON

A First for LA County: MTA, Munis Launch 'Regional EZPass'

By ED SCANNELL

(Aug. 13, 2002) With the wave of a "magic wand" over a huge tophat, an explosion of confetti and a hearty cheer, MTA and municipal operators today launched the Regional EZpass, Los Angeles County's first regional transit pass program.

The Gateway Plaza news conference, which drew officials and vehicles from all participating transit agencies, symbolized the significant step the region is taking toward seamless transit service and a Universal Fare System.

Beginning in September, transit riders will have the option of using the monthly Regional EZpass for unlimited travel on the Metro Bus and Metro Rail systems and on the 11 municipal bus systems.

The September Regional EZpass will be available August 25 at most Metro Pass sales outlets and other outlets countywide. Each transit agency, including MTA, also will continue to sell their regular monthly passes.

'A common currency'

"The Regional EZpass will provide riders using two or more of the 12 participating bus and rail systems with a common 'currency' that will simplify their commutes," MTA Board Chairman Hal Bernson said during the media event.



"Riders of multiple systems no longer will be forced to carry extra cash or purchase additional transit passes and we believe the added simplicity will encourage thousands of other commuters to try public transit," he said. "The Regional EZpass also will speed boardings and eliminate the need for transfers and tickets."

The Regional EZpass will be priced at \$58 for a regular monthly pass, \$29 for seniors, and \$29 for the disabled (with appropriate identification including either an MTA Disabled ID card, Medicare card, LACTOA card or DMV

placard).

The Regional EZpass will entitle the pass holder to unlimited local travel on all MTA buses and trains and on the fixed route bus systems of the following municipal transit operators: Culver City Municipal Bus Lines, Foothill Transit, Montebello Bus Lines, Gardena Municipal Bus Lines, Commerce Municipal Bus Lines, Long Beach Transit, Norwalk Transit, Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus, Torrance Transit, Santa Clarita Transit and LADOT.



Operators from MTA and 11 municipal transit systems help launch the new regional pass.

PHOTO BY LISA HUYNH

Serves 31,000 bus stops

The 12 transit systems operate a total of 386 bus lines and serve nearly 31,000 bus stops.

The multi-operator task force that developed the Regional EZpass will encourage the future participation of other local transit providers, Metrolink and other counties.

The cost of the program for fiscal year 2003 will be approximately \$2 million, which will be paid from Proposition A and C local transit sales tax funds.

The Regional EZpass represents the first major phase of a universal fare system (UFS). Within three years, MTA will debut an electronic smart card that will be accepted by the 12 transit providers, Metrolink and paratransit service providers.

[Back to MTA Report](#)



Sudhir Agrawal

MTA's Sudhir Agrawal Named to Building Code Advisory Board

(Aug. 14, 2002) Sudhir Kumar Agrawal, MTA supervising mechanical engineer, recently was appointed a member of the California Building Standards Commission's Code Advisory Board.

As a board member, he will advise the commissioners on code changes and updates in the areas of mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection and energy.

The codes and standards are written for the safety of the public and adopted by all cities throughout California for building design and construction.

Agrawal holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in mechanical engineering and a master's degree in business administration. He has more than 29 year's experience in the field of mechanical engineering.

Agrawal has authored several technical and management papers. He has served as president of the Southern California Chapter of the 800-member American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).

"Sudhir is an MTA in-house expert in many areas, including fire/smoke management, tunnel ventilation, mechanical ventilation, elevators and escalators, plumbing, fire sprinklers, exit hatches, compressed natural gas and industrial facilities," says Nick Brown, director of Systems Integration.

According to LAFD Battalion Chief Mike Littleton and Fire Inspector Joe Gould, "Sudhir is a man of action, supports fire and life safety issues, takes proactive steps and completes the assignments professionally."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Board to Consider Transit Police Chief, Group Insurance Plans

(Aug. 14, 2002) Having cancelled its committee meetings for August, the MTA Board will consider a shorter-than-usual agenda at its monthly meeting, Thursday. Items include the creation of a position for transit police chief and changes in employee group insurance plans.

The MTA security policy adopted by the Board in July gives a transit police chief responsibility for managing contracted security services, including those provided by the LAPD and Sheriff's Department. The Board now must establish a staff position for a transit police chief.

The police chief would be responsible for maintaining a proactive anti-terrorism program, gathering security intelligence and coordinating data collection. The chief also would be required to work closely with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

Since the MTA Transit Police force was folded into the LAPD and Sheriff's Department in November 1997, the agency has not had a transit police chief. MTA security requirements are managed by the Security and Law Enforcement Department.

Group insurance plans

See metro.net report Aug. 2: [Change proposed in Group Insurance Plans](#)

The Board also will be asked to authorize the CEO to renew medical, dental, life, accidental death and dismemberment and long-term disability group insurance plans for non-contract employees.

Management is asking approval for a proposal under which the agency would pay 90 percent of the cost of monthly premiums for group insurance plans. Employees would pay the remaining 10 percent.

Under the 90 percent/10 percent plan proposed to the Board, monthly employee contributions to about half of the plans also would rise. Contributions to the others would decrease. If approved, the new rates for group insurance plans would take effect Jan. 1, 2003.

In other action:

The Board will be asked to approve a plan to install Automatic Voice Annunciators aboard Metro Buses and to upgrade bus radios for the Advanced Transportation Management System (ATMS). MTA expects to spend up to \$99.6 million to enhance the communications systems aboard its buses.

Articulated buses on Wilshire

The Board will consider certifying the final environmental impact report for the Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit project proposed for the Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor. If approved, the plan would include an articulated bus demonstration and testing program on Wilshire Boulevard.

Under the proposed testing program, MTA would operate 97 new 60-foot articulated, low-floor buses during peak hours. The buses would provide significant additional passenger capacity for the successful Metro Rapid program. Metro Rapid bus shelters at 30 stops would be enlarged to

accommodate the three-door coaches, as well as universal fare technology, seating and other passenger features.

The proposal includes expansion of Gateway Division 10 to support the articulated buses, upgrades to MTA-owned parking lots at the Crenshaw and La Brea Metro Rapid stops and reconstruction of some intersections on Wilshire.

The Board also will consider a motion to complete the Mid-City/Exposition Transit Corridor final environmental impact report and another motion to begin preliminary engineering design for the Mid-City/Exposition Light-Rail Transit Project.

[Back to MTA Report](#)

Metro Bus Operator Victor Ortiz says good-bye to MTA after 35 years

By ALISHA GOMEZ

(August 14, 2002)

Retiring is a big moment in an employee's life – especially if the employee is retiring from San Gabriel Valley Division 9.

Metro Bus Operator Victor Ortiz, a veteran of 35½ years' MTA service, was feted at a party, Aug. 9, hosted by Division Transportation Manager Mace Bethel. After a big lunch, the party continued with cake for everyone and special gifts for Ortiz.



Division 9 Metro Bus Operator Victor Ortiz and his wife, Mona, were all smiles at the division's retirement party. Division 9 Transportation Manager Mace Bethel, at right, gave Operator Victor Ortiz and his wife, Mona, tokens of appreciation, such as the corsage Mona Ortiz wears. PHOTO BY ALISHA GOMEZ

Ortiz was the only one of the four retirees able to attend the event. The other three retirees were Peter Garrits, Miguel Gonzales and Randa Reid. All three have been operators for 23 years.

Sector General Manager Jack Gabig was on hand to congratulate Ortiz.

"I bring congratulations from everyone at Gateway, including Roger Snoble and John Catoe to Victor and his wife, Mona," Gabig said. "We hope you remember us and visit on a regular basis."

"We're sorry to see you leave, but we always have part-time openings and we could use you," Gabig joked.

A time to be merry

For Bethel, it was a time to be merry. "Victor is one of our most senior operators. It's important that we celebrate his success."

Ortiz has no immediate plans, but eventually will visit Cooperstown, Ohio, where the Baseball Hall of Fame is located and where the Heisman Trophies are kept.

"I've never been outside of California, Nevada and Arizona and I really want to see the Hall of Famers," Ortiz said. "I'm very sports-minded."

Ortiz's wife, Mona, was all smiles, wearing a beautiful corsage given to her by the division. "It's a huge accomplishment for my husband," she said. "I am very proud of him. He is a very hard-working father and husband."

Married for 32 years, the Ortizes have four children and five grandchildren.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Honoring Metro Rail operators Tu Phan and Robert Rodriguez are, from left, Board Chairman Hal Bernson, CEO Roger Snoble, Rail General Manager Gerald Francis and Deputy CEO John Catoe.



MTA Board Honors 2002 Rail Roadeo Winners

(Aug. 15, 2002) "Competing against rail operators from across the country and Canada, these two gentlemen showed the nation that we are the best."

With those words, Deputy CEO John Catoe introduced Metro Rail operators Tu Phan and Robert Rodriguez to the MTA Board, Thursday, as winners of the 2002 International Rail Roadeo last June in Baltimore.



Rail General Manager Gerald Francis congratulates Metro Rail operators Tu Phan and Robert Rodriguez.

The Board honored Phan and Rodriguez with commemorative resolutions, presented by Chairman Hal Bernson. The audience joined Board members in a round of applause.

Fifteen-year veteran Phan and Rodriguez, with 13 years' experience, were the first MTA operators ever to win the prestigious rail competition sponsored annually by the American Public Transit Association. They competed against rail operators from 17 other transit properties in the U.S. and Canada.

"We're proud to represent the MTA," Phan said following the Board meeting. "Because we're a new property, the MTA really had not been recognized as a major rail operation. This put us on the map, internationally, as a world-class rail system."

"They may not even realize it, but they're the best of the best," said Rail General Manager Gerald Francis. "They had only a day and a half to learn another property's rules and procedures and their operating system. They worked hard. They were so focused, they didn't even smile for two days."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Division 3 Operator Considers Community Involvement Top Priority

By AMY HOWELL

(August 15, 2002) Giving back to the community he grew up in is top priority for North Los Angeles Division 3 Operator Ron Chico.



North Los Angeles Division 3 Operator Ron Chico at the wheel.

In 1999, he became a coach for the Lincoln Heights Youth Association, an organization that enables about 150, 6- to 13-year-old boys and girls to participate in seasonal football and cheerleading.

"I'd always, always wanted to go back to the neighborhood and give back something, and make it a little bit better for the kids that grew up there," says Chico, a resident of Arcadia.

Raised by his mother, Chico grew up as part of a six-member household.

"There weren't a lot of opportunities, and there aren't a lot of opportunities for the kids there today," he says.

When he was growing up, gangs got along with each other. "Now, they're neighbors, and they're killing each other. It has a very profound effect on the kids there."

Early on during his tenure as a coach, a shooting occurred.

An increasing level of involvement

"There were about seven or eight gun shots, and I was the only one who hit the floor," he recalls, describing the kids he coached as "desensitized" to the violence around them, although he adds, "These are nine- and ten-year-olds telling me, 'Coach, the ghetto sucks.'"

"It's not supposed to be like that," Chico says he told the kids. "You guys aren't supposed to live your lives like, 'When a shooting goes off, you go about your business.' Instead of just coaching, now I was trying to give life experiences to these kids."

At the beginning of this year, Chico became the president of the Lincoln Heights Youth Association.

Other community leaders encouraged Chico to become involved with the Los Angeles Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils.

"It was just so I could make the Youth Association better, and get more kids involved," he says. "We didn't have enough exposure in the community. Not enough people knew about us."

Chico also joined a Lincoln Heights-focused steering committee, eventually becoming its co-vice chairperson. "The steering committee builds the foundation for how our Neighborhood Council is going to be made and who's going to run it—what we think we need to do to run ours and be more successful," he says.

Success of program is two-fold

The success of the Youth Association is equated, in part, with accomplishing

this year's goal of raising \$26,000, which will primarily be used to buy new equipment and uniforms.

Car washes, a Youth Association-sponsored football clinic and a carnival held in June are among the ways money is being raised, as the organization doesn't receive funding from outside sources. Additionally, Chico's networking with community merchants generates some resources for social events held throughout the year.

It's success also is associated with the effect winning games has on the athletes.

"When they win, there is such a look of elation that I love to see," he said, noting that winning isn't everything. Rather, winning games yields a boost in spirit and self-esteem, a drive to achieve more and pride in schoolwork and getting good grades.

Chico would like to expand the Youth Association's sports programs to include baseball, basketball and soccer, so the athletes could be involved for more than one season a year. This also would enable them to travel outside their community, exposing them to other people and ways of life. Funding issues make expansion difficult, though.

"This position as president is probably one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life," Chico said. However, "to have that neighborhood changed for the kids—it's a dream that I'd like to see fulfilled before I die."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

MTA to Honor Sept. 11 Victims With Blood Drive

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Aug. 15, 2002) A pint of blood to honor each of the 2,485 victims of the September 11 terrorist attack. That's the ambitious goal MTA and the American Red Cross have set for next month's blood drive.

Blood collection sites will be set up, Sept. 10, at MTA Headquarters, San Gabriel Valley Division 9 and at South Bay Division 18. Drives will be conducted, Sept. 12, at Central City Division 1, North Los Angeles Division 3 and at Arthur Winston Division 5. Other divisions may be included later.



American Red Cross coordinators Amie Clark, left, and Ronya Waters, right, join Pam Engelke in MTA's blood drive effort to collect 2,485 pints of blood. Engelke suggests that donors choose the name of a Sept. 11 victim to honor with their pint of donated blood.

Information about how to sign up for a specific blood drive location and time will be available next week.

The theme for the September 11 victims memorial blood drive is, "Give for those who've already given."

Pam Engelke, MTA blood drive coordinator, suggests that donors choose the name of a Sept. 11 victim to honor with their pint of donated blood. The names of victims are listed on a CNN web site at www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/memorial.

Collecting a pint of blood to honor each September 11 victim will be a tall order, even for an organization with some 9,000 employees. Last year's blood drive at MTA Headquarters netted 80 pints.

Ask families and friends

"We hope employees who sign up also will ask their families and friends, our business partners in the community, local police and fire fighters to help us make our goal by coming in to give blood," says Engelke.

The region's blood supply is at its lowest ebb in more than 25 years, according to Amie Clark, associate director for American Red Cross blood services in Southern California.

"We have less than three percent of eligible donors in Los Angeles County donating at this time," she says.

The Red Cross must import 60 percent of the blood used to supply 150 hospitals and medical facilities in Southern California. Separated into its different components, one pint of blood can be used to help save the lives of three people.

"This is an outstanding effort by MTA," says Clark. "We don't typically see this type of commitment from an organization as large as MTA."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

MTA Mechanic Says "Out" To Articulated Buses

By ERIC RAPP

(Aug. 16, 2002) For Ike Allison of West Valley Division 8, a trip to France was just part of the job.

Allison, Deputy Executive Officer Richard Hunt and several other MTA representatives traveled to France in March to study new articulated buses. The buses, manufactured by a French firm, are currently in use throughout Europe.



MTA's Ike Allison, white shirt, inspects the undercarriage of a bus during his visit to a French manufacturing company.

MTA is considering the use of the extra-long buses for new Bus Rapid Transit projects as well as for existing bus lines. Because of their size – up to 60 feet long – the articulated buses can carry a greater number of passengers than a standard bus.

Allison, a lead mechanic who has been with MTA for 24 years, says he was impressed with French transit systems. "You don't need a car over there," he says. "Buses and trains go everywhere."

Seeing buses in action

Allison's primary focus while in France, however, was to see articulated buses in operation and close-up in the shop. Several features of the buses particularly stood out for him.

A special computerized guidance system helps the operator come to an exact point at stops, ensuring that there will be no gap between the curb and the bus floor.

The mirrors, Allison says, "almost look like rabbit ears. They give the driver a good rear view without blocking his or her field of vision."

After visiting four cities in eleven days, working from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day, Allison was ready to come home. But despite the long days, he says he "really enjoyed the experience."

[Back to MTA Report](#)



Team USA - MTA visitors to the Hauliez bus manufacturing company in France included, from left, Deputy Executive Officer Richard Hunt, Supervisor Yvonne Burke's Deputy Mike Bohlen, MTA Director Frank Roberts, consultant Adi Arieli, Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky's Deputy Samantha Bricker, and Division 8's Ike Allison.

On top of San Gorgonio - In his second trip to Southern California's highest peak, Metro Bus Operator Gerardo Perez made it to the top in an impressive five hours.



No Stranger to Danger

Metro Bus Operator Gerardo Perez is an Avid Mountain Climber

By LISA HUYNH

(August 16, 2002) Metro Bus Operator Gerardo Perez, 37, is no stranger to danger – he has been an avid mountain climber for quite some time now.

This active operator has scaled the tough terrains of Mt. Whitney, Mt. San Jacinto, Mt. San Gorgonio and Dragon Peak, despite back surgery.

Perez, who is assigned to West Valley Division 8, injured his back two years ago. He recovered for a year and immediately returned to the life he had missed – backpacking through various mountains in California.

He has climbed Mt. Whitney four times – the highest mountain in the contiguous 48 states. Its highest peak is 14,497 feet.

"I love climbing mountains especially in the Eastern Sierra," says Perez. "After working many hours in the city, it's nice to get away from it all. I wish I could do it more often."

Climbed to the peaks

He has climbed the 11,502-foot high Mt. San Gorgonio in San Bernardino. He also has scaled San Jacinto in Palms Springs at 10,834 feet and the 12,995-foot Dragon Peak near Golden Trout Lake on the Sierra crest.

"The most difficult trail to hike is Mt. Whitney because it's 22 miles long and has an elevation of 6,000 feet," says Perez.

Perez plans to climb Mt. San Gorgonio again



Perez had a few more peaks to scale before calling it a day at the beautiful Dragon Peak in the Sierra crest.



on Sunday and Mt. Whitney the following Sunday for the fifth time.

Perez made sure not to look down after making it to the top of a steep peak at Dragon Peak.

"It's such an accomplishment when I make it to the top of each mountain," says Perez. "Tears came down my face the first time I stood on top of Mt. Whitney."

There's no stopping this father of two. His next goal is to climb 18,700-foot El Pico Orizaba, the highest mountain in Mexico.

"Eventually, if I have time, I would like to climb Mt. Aconcagua in Argentina, which is about 23,000 feet."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Before and after photos of the back panel of a bus show the graffiti-resistance of a new material used in an experiment by a maintenance team at Sun Valley Division 15.



Division 15 Maintenance Team Gets a Grip on Graffiti

By ERIC RAPP and LISA HUYNH

(August 20, 2002) Everybody knows that the 'bad kids' sit at the back of the bus. And until recently, Sun Valley Division 15's buses were rolling proof of that.

The back panel of 1995 model Neoplan buses, directly behind the rear bench seats, is especially vulnerable to graffiti. Far from the watchful eye of the operator, easy to etch with a knife or other cutting devices, and with a broad surface for paint or markers, many back panels quickly become covered with tags and other graffiti.

The Maintenance department at Sun Valley Division 15 recently came up with what may be an effective graffiti deterrent that also can improve the appearance of the buses by making marking and etching more difficult.

Mechanic Joe Savatgy found a graffiti-resistant material made of fiberglass with a textured surface that makes etching difficult. It's also easier to remove graffiti made by paint or permanent markers from the new panels than it was on the old panels.

Savatgy worked with mechanics Mark Calinog, Donald Regis and Oscar Gonzalez to create a template from the old panels. The template makes cutting a new panel efficient and precise – enabling the mechanics to quickly and easily replace damaged panels.

Graffiti reduces ridership

"It's important to keep the buses looking clean because the customers feel safer," says Calinog. "The graffiti reduces the number of riders."

MTA spends about \$13 million annually to keep Metro buses clean of graffiti and other types of vandalism. The agency sponsors anti-graffiti public service campaigns and uses juveniles and adult offenders to help clean the buses. Despite these programs and division efforts to remove graffiti, vandalism remains a persistent problem for MTA.

The Division 15 team chose bus No. 4655, a six-year-old coach manufactured by Neoplan, as the experimental bus to be used for installation of the new, graffiti-resistant panel.

It has been at least three weeks and there are no signs of tags or graffiti on the back panel of No. 4655.

Vendors are currently providing quotes for the new panels, but soon enough, the back and side panels of the remaining Neoplan buses at Sun Valley Division 15 will be replaced with the fiberglass material.

"Our customers will really benefit from the improved quality of service provided by the new interior appearance," says Maintenance Manager Jim Pachan.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

MILESTONE



PHOTOS BY JOSÉ UBALDO

Crews prepare one of the first Metro Gold Line cars for offloading onto tracks in South Pasadena. Below, technicians ready the car for transfer to the tracks.

Metro Gold Line Gets First Rail Car for Track Testing

(Aug. 20, 2002) It was still the dead of night, early Monday, when a big-rig truck with an oversized trailer pulled alongside Metro Gold Line tracks in South Pasadena and began to unload an 89-foot, 49-ton rail car.

The delivery marked a significant milestone for the Metro Rail system. The \$2.3 million car is one of six that will be used to test track alignment and the wayside signal system along portions of the 13.7-mile Los Angeles to Pasadena light-rail line.



The line is to begin operation with 26 cars next summer between Union Station and Sierra Madre Villa in East Pasadena. The line is expected to carry some 30,000 riders each day and help alleviate traffic on the Pasadena Freeway.

The Metro Gold Line has a historic precedent. Beginning in 1902, the Pacific Electric Railway operated a "short line" between Los Angeles and Pasadena. It closed in 1951.

[Back to MTA Report](#)

Sun Valley Division 15 Lightens the Load for School Kids

By LISA HUYNH and ERIC RAPP

(August 22, 2002) East Valley Division 15 employees are reaching out to the community in a big way – changing the lives of at least 36 children.

Students at nearby Fenton Avenue Charter School have no lockers, so they have to carry all their books with them at all times. This presents a challenge especially for the younger children, because the books are so heavy.

Transit Operations Supervisor Nita Northington, who coordinated the project, came up with the idea to buy the children rolling backpacks.

Northington says the original plan was to receive enough donations to buy rolling backpacks for 18 children, ages 5 to 12, at about \$55 per backpack.

Employees rose to the occasion

East Valley Division 15 employees, including operators, mechanics and service attendance and sector staff, however, rose to the occasion and raised a total of \$1,980.

"The response was so good that we were able to buy backpacks for 36 kids," says Northington.

On Friday, General Manager David Armijo and Transportation Manager Karl Downs will present the new backpacks to the eager children

The children will be picked up from Fenton Avenue Charter School and driven to East Valley Division 15. The kids will be given a short tour of the division, including a trip through the automatic bus washer, and then be treated to a lunch of pizza, punch and ice cream.

A Metro bus will then take the children back to their school in the late afternoon.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Maintenance Team of the Month - Back row, from left: Bruce Buck, Manuel Guerra, Narendra Desai, Darryl Henderson, Edgar Grazziani and Tracy Daly. Front row: Fausto Flores, Yvonne Collins, and Jeannette Mayo.



PHOTO BY LISA HUYNH

Venice Division Maintenance Team Earns Top Honors

By LISA HUYNH

(August 23, 2002) Although it was a gloomy and cloudy day at Venice Division 6, last Friday, it was all smiles when General Manager Tracy Daly presented the maintenance team with a trophy and check for \$500.

Venice Division 6 won maintenance division of the month for June 2002 and Most Improved Maintenance division for the 4th quarter 2002.

The winner of the "How you Doin'?" program's division of the month was determined based on four performance indicators: on-time pullouts, miles between mechanical failures, attendance and new Workers Compensation claims.

Venice Division 6 Maintenance scored the highest in on-time pullouts, was the fourth highest in miles between mechanical failures at 12,008, ranked highest in attendance and had no Workers Compensation claims for the month of June 2002.

"I have the pleasure of working with an outstanding group of people here at Venice Division 6," says Maintenance Manager Bruce Buck "It's gratifying that we have been recognized for all our hard work."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)



Michael Funnye

Michael Funnye Named Venice Division Transportation Manager

(Aug. 23, 2002) Michael Funnye, MTA's director of budgets, has been named division transportation manager at Venice Division 6, effective Aug. 26.

An executive with 20 years' experience in finance, Funnye's background also includes military transportation. He joined MTA in 1999 and has been responsible for the agency's budgets, financial forecasting and planning.

As a Naval Reserve officer, Funnye is operations officer of a 149-member combat cargo unit. The unit is responsible for handling, transporting and tracking cargo destined for military facilities in the U.S. and aboard. The group also operates and maintains vehicles and warehouse equipment.

"I'll bring these skills with me to Division 6," says Funnye. "I understand the problems of keeping trucks and vehicles rolling and I can apply that knowledge to the people who are responsible for operating and maintaining our buses."

MTA's smallest division, Venice serves four Metro Bus lines with 78 buses, 100 operators and a transportation administrative staff of four.

"The Westside/Central Sector is fortunate to have an individual of his caliber and motivation in this key position," says General Manager Tracy Daly. "Our focus for Division 6 is to be a good neighbor, while providing Metro bus services."

The team is 100 percent behind Michael," she adds. "He'll have an opportunity to learn the bus side of the transportation business from Metro veterans Ron Reedy at Division 7 and Jim Lukens at Division 10."

"I'm looking forward to the challenges and learning a lot from the people at Division 6 and my colleagues Ron and Jim," says Funnye. "They're great people and I'm looking forward to working with them."

Funnye, 46, grew up in Elmsford, N.Y., a town north of New York City near the Tappan Zee Bridge where he worked as a toll taker during college.

He holds a Bachelor's in business administration from Iona College and an MBA in finance from Columbia University. He has a 12-year-old daughter, Evyan, who lives with her mother.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)



PHOTO BY ALISHA GOMEZ

CCTV observer Ramona Escareno often comes to the aid of passengers from her post at the ROC.

don't take more than a \$5 bill.

But after listening to their story and finding out that they were leaving Los Angeles in a couple of days, Escareno set out to return their money as soon as possible.

After taking the call, Escareno called GFI, whose technicians work on the TVMs, and was told that it is possible for a machine to take a large bill.

Escareno next called Beverly McWhorter, senior supervisor, Central Cash Counting in the Revenue Department. McWhorter authorized a roaming technician to inspect the vault at the 7th and Metro station.

\$100 was in the vault

Once the Revenue Department had verified that a \$100 bill was inside the vault, Escareno asked if there was any way to return the money before the tourists went back to Poland.

"Normally, requests for refunds are routed to various departments, from the CCTV observers, Cash Counting and Accounting," says Revenue Collections Manager Marcelo Melicor. "A request for refunds can take five to 10 working days to process."

But, because this was a unique case, Melicor authorized the release and had Revenue Clerk Thomas Johnson deliver the money to the tourists' hotel the next day.

"The tourists were very appreciative of the extra efforts provided by MTA Staff and were very happy," says Melicor. "Ramona was very alert in getting all the vital information concerning the tourists and the ticket vending machine number."

It was teamwork

But it was the teamwork that made it happen.

"We went out of our way in a group effort to get their money back, even though the machine should not have taken the \$100 bill from them," says

Recovering Tourists' Cash was an Exercise in Teamwork

By ALISHA GOMEZ

(August 23, 2002) Ramona Escareno, a CCTV observer at the Rail Operations Center, gets very excited when she tells the story of how teamwork helped two tourists recover a \$100 bill they lost in a ticket vending machine.

"I was so happy," says Escareno. "I didn't want to them to go back home and have to wait for a refund."

And home was a very long way for two tourists from Poland. When she first received the call from them, she was surprised. The TVMs normally

ROC Central Control Facilities Manager Hector Guerrero.

Melicor gives credit to the great working relationship between the CCTV Observers and the Revenue Collections staff. "I am proud to manage a group of employees who not only perform their assigned tasks, but go out of their way to assist our customers."

For Escareno, the situation really hit home. "We've got this big flyer about team effort hanging in the building. And this is a perfect example of it."

[Back to MTA Report](#)

City Transit Officials Visit Metro San Fernando Valley

By ERIC RAPP

(August 23, 2002)

Transportation officials and the chief legislative analyst from the City of Los Angeles recently visited Metro San Fernando Valley and toured West Valley Division 8.

For the transportation planners, it was a chance to see a working Metro division up close and get a feel for how the new sector will be more responsive to the community.

Maria Souza-Rountree, chief legislative analyst, said, "We haven't been here before. It's nice to see how things work."

Los Angeles transportation planners Michael F. Davies, Chun-Ming Yen, and Phillip M. Aker met with General Manager David Armijo to discuss transportation in the San Fernando Valley.

"The meeting was a way of learning about what each organization is doing with transit service in the Valley," says Armijo, "and to determine if there are ways we can partner together to leverage our collective resources to provide better transportation for Valley transit riders."

[Back to MTA Report](#)



Los Angeles officials, from left, are Chun-Ming Yen, transportation planning associate; Michael Davies, supervising transportation planner; Maria Souza-Rountree, legislative analyst; and Phillip Aker, supervising transportation planner. From Metro San Fernando Valley, Communications Manager Marta Maestas and General Manager David Armijo.

Scamming the System

- **DA's Office Takes Aim at Workers' Comp Fraud**

(Aug. 27, 2002) "Why should you tolerate Worker's Comp scamming by your co-workers?" Deputy District Attorney Tom Higgins challenged a roomful of employees, last Friday, at Central City Division 1.

"Why, when they're taking money out of our pockets as employees and taxpayers, do we tolerate it and look the other way?" he asked.



Deputy District Attorney Tom Higgins asks his Division 1 audience to help fight Workers' Comp fraud.

In the more than two dozen talks he is scheduled to make to MTA employees, Higgins is explaining the consequences of getting caught making fraudulent claims: possible jail time, loss of job, being stigmatized as a felon, shaming your family with the publicity of being prosecuted.

As the deputy in charge of the District Attorney's Workers' Compensation Fraud Division, Higgins leads a team of 12 lawyers and eight investigators who target what he calls "scammers." To catch them, the group will use hard-nosed detective work that can include record checks, search warrants, videotape and surveillance on – and off – the job.

MTA now spends \$60 million a year on Workers' Compensation claims – \$6,500 per employee – nearly 10 percent of the hourly cost of operating a Metro bus. The agency's costs are six times more per employee than in Washington, D.C., and 10 times higher than costs in New York City.

Hand-in-hand with safety

The effort to directly reach as many employees as possible with the anti-fraud message is one of the ways MTA hopes to lower the cost of injury claims.

Educating employees about Workers' Comp fraud goes hand-in-hand, however, with the Safety's First program to prevent employee injuries, reduce safety-related incidences and make the workplace safer.

That program includes the focused attention of management on injury reporting, investigation and correction of safety hazards, safety training for every MTA employee, local safety committees, on-going safety education, new streamlined injury reporting procedures and faster care for those injured on the job.

The rise in Workers' Comp costs can be blamed on a number of factors that include rising medical costs and fraud. In the past three years, while employees filed some 6,000 injury claims only 16 were referred to the DA's office for investigation.

Los Angeles County, with 95,000 employees, had only four claims prosecuted for fraud, he says. "When people started paying attention, there was a four-fold increase in the number of cases referred to us in seven months."

Most employees are honest

Still, Higgins believes most employees are honest. He cited the example of an MTA employee who told him about a doctor who tried to persuade her to inflate her injuries.

"She was offended," he said. "When a doctor or lawyer tries to talk an employee into going from legitimate injuries to fraudulent claims, we're very interested because they're also doing that with other employees."

From his observation, Higgins believes MTA management "is trying to work with employees in a productive, positive manner. I think they're sincere and honest in what they're trying to do and I'm hopeful it succeeds."

But, he says employees and management will have to work together to defeat Workers' Comp scamming. "Tolerance of fraud is something people can reverse, but there's got to be a will to do it."

"Employees have to say, 'Enough is enough,'" says Higgins. "It's every single employee's responsibility, in whatever way, to make that change happen."

[Back to MTA Report](#)

MTA Mechanics, Operator Place in Regional Bus Rodeo

Photos by Ira Camp

(Aug. 27, 2002) MTA's competitors in last weekend's Regional Bus Rodeo at Hollywood Park placed just out of reach of the winners – a fact that may give them extra incentive at the APTA International Bus Rodeo, Sept. 21, in Las Vegas.

South Bay Division 18's team of mechanics Javier Soria, Mina Ros and Luke Logan placed second in the maintenance event, only 103 points behind the Orange County Transit Authority's team.

The MTA mechanics bested teams from OMNI Trans, Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus, Foothill Transit, Golden Empire Transit and Montebello Transit.

North Los Angeles Division 3 Operator Daniel Keosababian, who will carry MTA's banner in Las Vegas, placed fifth in last Saturday's event, coming within 37 points of the winner, Felix Teston of Golden Empire Transit.



Metro Bus Operator Dan Keosababian adjust his mirror before the start of his run in the Regional Bus Rodeo.



MTA maintenance team Javier Soria, Mina Ros and Luke Logan work the brake board during the regional competition.

Dohn Ryder of Riverside Transit was second, Rick Alvarez of OMNI Trans was third and Tim Giroux of Big Blue Bus placed fourth.

Other competitors, in order, were Culver City Bus, OCTA, Torrance Transit, Long Beach Transit, National City Transit, Montebello Bus Lines, Foothill Transit and Norwalk Transit.

Supporting MTA's competitors during the event were sector general managers Jack Gabig and Dana Coffey, Deputy Executive Officer Richard Hunt, Division 18 Maintenance Manager Ken Matsuno, Division 3 Transportation Manager Dan Frawley and Division 18 Acting Transportation Manager Cindy Karpman.

The objective of the Regional Bus Rodeo is to give the operators and maintenance teams who will represent their transit agencies an opportunity to gain experience competing against each other in preparation for the international event.

Additional information about the 2002 Regional Bus Rodeo, including final score tallies is available on the Internet at www.scrbr.com.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Metro South Bay Holds Employee Appreciation Barbecue

By ALISHA GOMEZ

(August 27, 2002) South Bay Division 18 threw a big fiesta, last week, in honor of their employees.

The Employee Appreciation Barbecue was the first for Division 18's Transportation Manager Cindy Karpman.

"The barbecue was inspired by the employees' performance," Karpman said. "I want to show that management and the union appreciate them."

Operator William Marshall provided disc jockey services for the event, playing tunes to create an enjoyable atmosphere.

"I'm having a wonderful time," he said. "This was an excellent idea."

"It's a teamwork type of thing," Karpman said. "Everybody works really well here so I just wanted to thank everybody."

Operator Jimi Starr Greene, UTU shop steward, said the employees really deserved this barbecue.

"The operators are very work-conscious," Greene said. "They really come out here and do what they are supposed to do. I think it is important that we show them a little recognition."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

Photos by Alisha Gomez



Transit Operations Supervisor Debbie VanderPioeg and Operator Angelique Green promote safety while serving food.



South Bay Division 18 Transportation Manager Cindy Karpman takes a minute to pose with Dispatchers/Operators Ruth Villalpando and Charlene Carr.



Operators William Marshall and Angelique Green enjoy the rewards. Marshall also provided music for the festivities.



From left, Mechanics Johnny Rodriguez, Clyde Brawley and Al Concepcion work the grills.

Record-Breaking Ridership Trend Continues on Metro Blue Line

By ED SCANNELL

The Metro Blue Line's record-breaking run continued in July 2002 as average weekday boardings soared to 73,115.

July was the third consecutive month in which average weekday boardings on the 22-mile line surpassed the 70,000 mark.

Average weekday boardings for July on the 20-mile Metro Green Line reached 30,211. Average weekday boardings on the 17.4-mile Metro Red Line hit 136,902.

The 59.4-mile Metro Rail system will expand by another 13.7 miles in mid-2003 with the opening of the Metro Gold Line to Pasadena. A six-mile extension of the Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles is on track to open in 2008.

[Back to MTA Report](#)

Quotables...

MTA Board Chairman Hal Bernson --

"Since we opened it in July 1990, the Metro Blue Line has been an extremely attractive travel alternative for people who commute between downtown Los Angeles and Long Beach. Less than a year ago we responded to the line's growing popularity and added a third car to half of our peak hour trains and, no surprise, the additional capacity has lured more riders."

Los Angeles County Supervisor Don

Knabe -- "The Metro Blue Line has successfully linked Long Beach and Los Angeles and demonstrates the growing need for public transportation. This increase proves the strength of our growing mass transit network in Los Angeles County."

Teamwork Proves Successful at Home and on the Job

PHOTO BY ALISHA GOMEZ

- Couple will celebrate promotions to assistant transportation managers *and* 24th wedding anniversary in October.

By ALISHA GOMEZ

(August 28, 2002) Husband and wife team, Odell and Margo Ross, have a lot to celebrate.

In July, both were promoted to assistant transportation managers – Odell Ross at Arthur Winston Division 5 and Margo Ross at Crossroads Depot Division 2.



Odell and Margo Ross will celebrate recent promotions to assistant transportation managers and their 24th wedding anniversary in October.

Neither had any idea this would happen.

"We were really surprised," says Margo. "We haven't had a chance to celebrate the promotions because we've been so busy."

Odell has been with MTA for 24 years. Margo has 22 years with the agency. Both were operators before becoming transportation operation supervisors.

"I was elated that she was promoted and that I got the opportunity also," says Odell. "At this point in our lives, we want to be successful and hopefully an inspiration to operators throughout the division."

"It was exciting," says Margo. "I was glad he was promoted because he's worked really hard, has learned a lot and knows a lot."

Both plan on promoting safety, opening lines of communication between everyone and sharing their knowledge with others since their backgrounds and work experience help them relate to employees.

The couple plans to go to Las Vegas to celebrate their 24th wedding anniversary on Oct. 25.

The Rosses have four children: Jason, 24, who works for a hospital; Blanche, 20, who attends Cal State Fullerton; Duell, 19, who attends USC; and Jabez, 17, a senior in high school.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

■ Honored for their performance as Customer Information agents were, from left front, Oring Liev, Nicole Chietan, Ida Moody and Adriana Corona. Back row: Chief Communications Officer Matt Raymond, Communications Manager Tom Longsdon and Deputy Executive Officer Warren Morse.



PHOTO BY BILL HEARD

Customer Information Agents Celebrate Performance Improvements

(August 29, 2002) Although the phones kept ringing throughout, employees in Metro Customer Information did their best, Wednesday, to celebrate the improvements they've made in performance over the past several years.

Through improved training, dedication to the job and the influx of new technology, the 98-member group has succeeded in significantly reducing the average time a customer now waits to speak with a Customer Information agent.

The agents handle some 8,000 to 9,000 calls during the department's 15-hour weekday service period. They serve about 4,500 to 5,000 customers each weekend day.

"They've reduced average customer wait times from 5 minutes in FY 2000 to 3.5 minutes in FY 2001 to only 2 minutes in FY 2002," says Communications Manager Tom Longsdon. "They're just doing a bang-up job!"

Four agents were honored

Four Customer Information agents were honored for their attendance, productivity and for the commendations they have received from customers.

Agents Oring Liev, Nicole Chietan, Ida Moody and Adriana Corona were congratulated by Chief Communications Officer Matt Raymond and Deputy Executive Officer Warren Morse.

"They're on the front line and are the MTA employees many of our customers interface with first," says Raymond, describing the role of Customer Information agents. "They're critical to the success of our operations."

Morse cited the dedication of agents who are "here every day and who provide a high level of courteous, thoughtful service to our customers that's the same at the end of the day as it was at the beginning of the day. They need to be able to make each customer feel as if they're the most important call of the day."

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

September Debut



Dana Coffey



Tracy Daly



Rich Rogers

Three Service Sectors Prepare for the Future

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Aug. 29, 2002) One of the first things you have to do when you're starting a new business – or a new MTA service sector – is find out what your customers want.

That's what the general managers of the three new sectors coming on line Sept. 1 – Metro Gateway Cities, Metro Westside/Central and Metro South Bay – are in the process of doing.

"Everyone has been extremely receptive," says Gateway Cities General Manager Rich Rogers of his meetings with community and civic leaders. "One of the keys to our success is to be responsive to their needs."

Currently, Rogers' service development team is riding bus lines in the Gateway Cities sector, checking schedules and stops. "We're looking at this from a reliability, load factor and safety standpoint," he says. "It's our goal to have, within a month or two, an initial assessment of each line."

General Manager Tracy Daly of Metro Westside/Central has met with representatives of local transit agencies and has meetings scheduled with officials in West Hollywood, Santa Monica, Beverly Hills and other cities.

"On the Westside, we'll also target certain focus groups of customers for our transit planning," says Daly.

Meetings with officials

General Manager Dana Coffey of Metro South Bay has been meeting with the Council of Governments in her area, with community groups, and has meetings set with other local officials.

"We've been going out into the community to meet people," she says. "We were with the members of ACORN in Watts recently to discuss extending service in that area." ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) is a highly visible organization in the community.

Another important part of organizing a service sector is building teamwork among the employees who must work together to serve the public.

"We're working more as a team together," says Daly. "We're trying to find the common threads and issues we need to be looking at over the coming year."

All three general managers have conducted meetings with their division

managers and staffs, and with transportation and maintenance employees to gather ideas for improving operations and providing better service.

"My topics for discussion have included bus cleanliness, graffiti, operators' uniforms and appearance, attitudes and customer service," says Coffey. "Those are some of the things that have been key targets for me."

Employees have a say

"It's important for employees to have a say in what we do," says Rogers. "Our performance standards, our expectations, have been raised significantly. The key is to make sure all employees know what those expectations are and that we are working toward a common goal."

All three general managers are planning sector kick-off events for employees at their operating divisions.

In addition to shaping up service and building their teams, the three general managers also have been lining up office space for the sector staffs.

Daly plans to move the Westside/Central staff into new offices on the 4th floor of MTA Headquarters beginning Sept. 30. Rogers has finalized plans for a new Gateway Cities sector office at Division 4 in Downey. And Coffey has located a building in Torrance near the intersection of I-405 and I-110 that would be suitable for the South Bay sector offices.

But, they also aren't forgetting the working conditions at the operating divisions. They'll be looking at the physical condition and cleanliness of buildings and shops, and even at seemingly small – but important things – like new carpet or paint or updated kitchen equipment.

And safety remains a focus of the general managers. Daly's staff, for example, has targeted Metro Rapid Bus Line 720 for an accident reduction program. "We'll try to keep employees pumped up about being accident-free and taking pride in that."

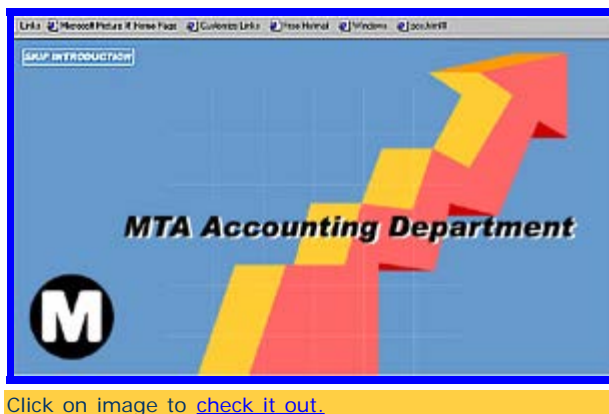
Coffey agrees: "Our number one product is service and our practice always is safety."

[Back to MTA Report](#)

Need Accounting Info? Check out the New Intranet Website

(Aug. 30, 2002) Want to know when you'll get paid next? Need a check request form or information about travel expense reports?

You'll find those things and much, much more on the Accounting Department's new web pages, which were posted for the first time, today, on the Intranet. The pages can be accessed from the drop-down menu in the right-hand column of the metro.net home page.



"Our main intent is customer service and to provide timely information," says Controller Jose Nicasio. "The web site will serve to promote better understanding of the Accounting Department and its processes, our workflow, procedures and guidelines."

From the Accounting Department home page, users will find such topics as accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, project accounting, general ledger and systems and financial reporting.

There also are links to the accounting calendar, forms, procedures and guidelines, the Bill Payment Scorecard and FAQs. The pages also have e-mail links to the personnel in charge of the various sections.

The Accounting Department web pages were designed by MTA's Creative Services Department.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)

MTA Sets Meetings on Valley's North-South Bus Alternatives

By ED SCANNELL

(Aug. 30, 2002) MTA has scheduled a series of public meetings to discuss potential alternatives for a north-south high capacity bus transit corridor in the San Fernando Valley.

Attendees will learn about the San Fernando Valley North-South Transit Corridor Study now underway and will be invited to give input on the alternatives currently under consideration as well as to suggest other alternatives.

The open houses are scheduled Monday, Sept. 9 from 5 p.m. – 8 p.m. in the Northridge Medical Hospital; on Tuesday, Sept. 10 from 5 p.m. – 8 p.m. in the North Hollywood Recreation Center; and on Thursday, Sept. 12 from 5 p.m. – 8 p.m. at the City of San Fernando's Recreation Park.

The San Fernando Valley North-South Transit Corridor Study is currently looking at 13 preliminary alternatives to provide high capacity north-south bus transit service that would best connect with both the San Fernando Valley East-West Metro Rapid Transitway and the Ventura Boulevard Metro Rapid Bus line.

"The feedback we get from the public will be invaluable as we narrow down and prioritize these alternatives for further study," said Jim de la Loza, MTA executive officer for countywide planning and development. "Our goal is to fill a pressing need for efficient north-south service to key San Fernando Valley destinations including the future east-west busway and the Metro Rapid bus line on Ventura Boulevard."

Alternatives being considered

The alternatives under consideration include high capacity service on corridors including: the rail right-of-way adjacent to Canoga Ave., Glenoaks Ave. to Vineland Ave., Lankershim Blvd., Reseda Blvd., Sepulveda Blvd., Topanga Canyon Blvd., Van Nuys Blvd., Vineland Ave./San Fernando Rd., Woodley Ave./Rinaldi St. Other alternatives include a new Metro Rapid Bus line and service from the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink station to Westwood via the 405 freeway.

In developing the alternatives, the study factored in employment density, population density, areas of high transit usage, land use condition and population under 15 and over 64.

Upon approval of a project by the MTA Board in early 2003, funding for implementation would include \$100 million earmarked in Governor Gray Davis' Transportation Congestion Relief Program, approved by the state legislature two years ago, supplemented by local sales tax dollars.

[Back to MTA Report](#)

Passengers board the subway to North Hollywood at Universal City. Beginning Oct. 20, the last train from Union Station to North Hollywood will leave at 12:17 a.m. The last train from North Hollywood to Union Station will leave at 12:55 a.m.

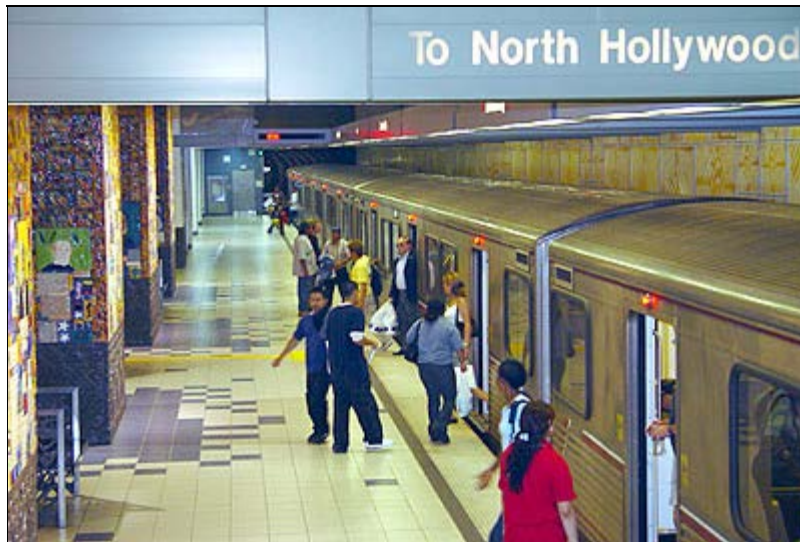


PHOTO BY LUIS INZUNZA

Metro Rail Adding an Hour to Late-Night Service, Oct. 20

(Aug. 30, 2002) The Metro Rail system will add up to an hour to its late-night service beginning Sunday, Oct. 20.

A full hour will be added to the late-night schedules of the last north- and southbound trains between Long Beach Transit Mall and 7th and Metro station on the Metro Blue Line and the last southbound Metro Red Line train from North Hollywood.

The last east- and westbound Metro Red Line runs between Union Station and Wilshire/Western will leave 40 minutes later than currently scheduled.

The last eastbound Metro Green Line train will leave 20 minutes later from Marine/Redondo station, while the westbound train from Norwalk will operate 10 minutes later.

Other trains on all lines actually have later runs, but none makes the full end-to-end trip.

"We've been getting requests to expand service to the Staples Center and Hollywood for people attending events that run past our closing time," says Jess Diaz, director of Rail Operations. "We'll add a round trip or two on each line to serve those people."

Here are the specific last-run times for all rail lines beginning Oct. 20:

- **Metro Blue Line:** Last train from Long Beach Transit Mall to depart at 11:21 p.m. Last train from 7th and Metro departs at 12:45 a.m.
- **Metro Red Line – North Hollywood:** Last train from Union Station to North Hollywood will leave at 12:17 a.m. Last train from North Hollywood to Union Station will leave at 12:55 a.m.
- **Metro Red Line – Wilshire/Western:** Last train from Union Station to Wilshire/Western to depart at 12:27 a.m. Last train from Wilshire/Western to Union Station to depart at 12:42 a.m.

- **Metro Green Line:** Last train from Marine/Redondo station to Norwalk will leave at 12:55 a.m. Last train from Norwalk to Marine/Redondo station will leave at 1:34 a.m.
[Back to MTA Report](#)

ON THE JOB



Members of MTA's Accounting Department recently participated in a teambuilding retreat. Taking time out for a photo were, front row, from left, Teresa Robbins (Team 3 Spirit Award), Susan Cariasa (Team 1 Spirit Award), Josie Nicasio (Controller), Dotti Kesinger (Team 5 Spirit Award), Ellen Yi and Sonny Cabrales (AP, FY02 Q4 Safety Award). Second row, from left, Edwin Guevarra (Team 4 Spirit Award), Jesse Soto (Team 2 Spirit Award), Perry Blake (FY02 Q4 Employee of the Quarter), Jane Mohsin and Rene Decena (AP, FY02 Q4 Safety Award). (8/30/02)

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)