

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."

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