

Metro Bus operators from various divisions gather to acquaint themselves with the Universal Fare System.



PHOTOS BY ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

## Bus Operators Work On Making Fare Boxes Fair

By ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

(March 14, 2003) A group of Metro Bus operators drawn from all operating divisions was given an opportunity, recently, to critique new farebox technology that will enable passengers to pay for their bus fare with a tap of an electronic "SmartCard."

The Universal Fare System (UFS), a regional program that will be implemented at MTA next year and eventually by municipal operators, will incorporate the use of a wallet-sized SmartCard at the fare box.

"All of our bus operators are encouraging simplifying our fare structure," said UFS Project Manager Jane Matsumoto. "They feel that using paper transfers is one of the biggest hurdles they have to overcome on a daily basis."

Following a meeting at Operations Central Instruction (OCI) – which became a forum for the operators to address an assortment of UFS concerns – several models of the new fare boxes were presented for trial runs.

"Since last October, operators have participated in the long-range fare box design process," said Matsumoto. "The UFS project team believes the operators are most familiar with functional needs in the equipment they will be using daily, and can help provide insight on how patrons interface with our transit system."

Metro Bus operators Paul Inocencio from San Gabriel Valley Division 9 and Thomas Scott from Crossroads Depot Division 2 evaluate the functionality and design of the new fare box.

### Operators played critical role

The bus operators, who have played a critical role in the design of the machinery, familiarized themselves with the device, provided by Cubic Transportation Systems, Inc. They tested the machines using both SmartCards and currency.



The UFS equipment includes fare inspection devices that are integral to the fare collection system. These new devices are expected to

increase efficiency and customer convenience by introducing "seamless transportation" to riders and potentially to reduce the amount of cash and paper media.

Other elements of the UFS system are rail ticket vending machines, validators, and sales office terminals for retailers and others selling MTA's fare media.

Overall, the introduction of the UFS was well received.

"It's a lot easier to relate to when you've got it in your hand," said Operator John Linton of West Hollywood Division 7. "Once people see how [the system] works, they will probably really appreciate it."

Several other operators shared Linton's enthusiasm.

"I think it will be a good thing," said Operator Paul Inocencio of San Gabriel Valley Division 9. "If we can avoid transfers and eventually most everyone has a SmartCard, I think it would be ideal."

### **Anticipated the installation**

Operator Thomas Scott of Crossroads Depot Division 2, a 16-year veteran of MTA, said he has anticipated the installation of UFS for some time.

"We have had to work with a system that has been outdated for several years," he said.

Scott thinks the UFS concept not only will prove convenient for patrons, but for bus operators as well.

"Basically, I love it," he said. "What I like about it is that when I get ready to get off my shift, I can press three buttons and it allows me to let the next driver come on."

Although bus operators look forward to the start of UFS, some stress the importance of releasing public service announcements to educate passengers on the new fare box.

"We have to put a media blitz out there and let them know how to use it because it's got to be explained," said Operator James Grumbach of East Valley Division 15. "It's got so many different aspects to it."

The aspects he highlighted were how to purchase and use electronic transfers and monthly passes with SmartCards.

"I really look forward to getting the public informed," Grumbach said.

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