

MTA's New ADA Administrator Finds Things are Better

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(May 21, 2003) In the five and a half years Chip Hazen was away from MTA, attitudes about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) changed considerably – and for the better.

These days, says the agency's new ADA Compliance Administrator, working with the federal handicap access law is almost second nature for MTA employees.



Chip Hazen is MTA's new ADA compliance administrator.

The attitude is, "It's here, let's do it," and that's completely different from what it used to be," he says.

That's just as well for a transit agency whose bus system serves some 35,000 wheelchair patrons each month. Hazen estimates MTA has 5,000 to 7,000 blind patrons and transports perhaps 50,000 developmentally disabled riders a month.

Three to four percent, or more, of MTA patrons are deaf or have significant hearing loss. Some 5,000 patrons board buses or trains each month with service animals.

Hazen, 52, suffers from spinal stenosis, a condition in which degenerated vertebrae have collapsed on the spinal cord. It's a "hidden handicap" that restricts his mobility and sometimes draws hostile looks from other motorists when he parks in a handicap zone.

Verifying ADA standards

On the job for just over a month, Hazen's immediate concerns include verifying that the Metro Gold Line will meet ADA standards; working on an MTA recruiting project with agencies that provide services to the disabled; and figuring out a better way to track complaints from patrons with disabilities.

Hazen's background serves him well in dealing with the ADA's intricacies. While with MTA as a transportation project manager from 1990 to 1997, he developed, implemented and monitored the agency's ADA compliance.

From November 1997 to April 2003, he worked as a transportation consultant helping clients evaluate their compliance with ADA policies, vehicle and bus stop accessibility. He also conducted ADA sensitivity training for clients' employees.

Previously, he was a transit administrator for the City of Baldwin Park, from 1987 to 1990, and for the City of Burbank from 1985 to 1987. He also administered a transit program for the Braille Institute from 1975 to 1985.

Hazen earned a BA in speech communication from Cal State Fullerton in 1974 and a Master's degree in public administration from the University of La Verne in 1991.

He and his wife, Pam, who teaches blind, multi-handicapped children for the San Bernardino School District, live in La Verne. They have a

married daughter, Dana, 24, and a son, Danny, 20.

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