

GM David Armijo Looks Back at SF Valley Sector's First Year

By LISA HUYNH

(July 30, 2003) San Fernando Valley General Manager David Armijo looks back on a year of success and is proud to be part of a growing sector.

Officially launched in July 2002, the San Fernando Valley and San Gabriel Valley sectors were the first of five to open for business. Under MTA's new service concept, the sectors were designed to improve bus service, reliability and customer satisfaction.

To kick off another busy year, San Fernando Valley scheduled an open house celebration, this afternoon, at sector headquarters in Chatsworth. West Valley Division 8 and East Valley Division 15 held parties earlier this month.

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San Fernando Valley
General Manager David
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Division 8, above, and Division 15, below, celebrate the San Fernando Valley service sector's first year of operation.



Looking back on his first year of operation, Armijo believes that rolling out the sector ahead of schedule enabled him to set up goals and objectives early on.

"Making sure that we had a good product on the road was a primary goal because that's what our customers see," he says. "Our buses are cleaner and they just look better."

Armijo wants to build on the success of the first year by making improvements that will positively affect passenger service. In an interview with metro.net, he looked back at the sector's first year.

Q. What comes to mind when you think about this past year?

A. Part of what we did was to establish a foundation. We've done a lot to reduce Worker's Compensation costs; we've improved our on-time performance; and we've improved our maintenance programs. Absences have also been down. I see that the employees are more engaged and excited. I think we're one of the best sectors out there. Both operating divisions 8 and 15 are doing a good job. It's a great place to be.

Q. What are the high points?

A. The fact that we rolled out two weeks ahead of schedule gave us a head start. Our new headquarters was a former golf facility driving range. The facility maintenance team did a good job of modeling the building and getting us in two weeks ahead of time. Our sector has always shown initiative. A lot of creativity came out of this sector like abating the graffiti and coming up with different ideas to reduce cost.

Q. What was most difficult challenge?

A. Being the new kid on the block (coming from the Orange County Transportation Authority), I had to try to pull together people with different styles and build a working team. We had to build trust fairly quickly to make it work. I feel fortunate that I had a good team of highly performing individuals who continue to show ingenuity and initiative.

Q. What roles do the staff and employees play?

A. The employees play a critical role in the success of the sector. They are the ambassadors, especially the operators, mechanics and service attendants. Making sure that we had a good product on the road was a primary goal because that's what our customers see. I think continuity has been key here. We have ultimately the same players since we started a year ago. We've had little or no turn over, although we've had some recent changes of management.

Q. What role does your Governance Council play?

A. The Governance Council is an interesting development because it gives us the opportunity to get some feedback. Many of the people on our Governance Council are our riders, so that gives us an opportunity to see how we're doing. It's a check and balance on our performance. They focus on the service itself.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish in your next year of operation?

A. It'll be easier to build on the success of the first year because we have the team in place. We can start focusing on the things we haven't gotten to in our strategic plan. We're still working on bus cleaning. We've come up with a number of initiatives as far as mitigating graffiti and scratches on bus windows. We're also working on improving on-time performance and preventing bus breakdowns. Just focusing on things that will positively affect service so we can have fewer complaints and problems. And I think that will result in more ridership and more revenue.

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