

Operations Training Director Mark Anderson is plans to make greater use of technology in revamping MTA's bus operator and mechanic training programs.



PHOTO BY BILL HEARD

Big Changes Coming in Bus Operator, Mechanic Training

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Aug. 13, 2003) Big changes are coming in bus operator and mechanic training – and Mark Anderson, MTA's new Director of Operations Training, will be leading the way.

Anderson recently joined MTA's Operations Central Instruction (OCI) after 16 years as head of San Diego Transit's training department. A national award-winning trainer, he has developed bus operator training programs used by hundreds of transit agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

The new training director plans to develop for MTA an innovative "world-class training curriculum" with the best instructors, new training techniques that emphasize the use of technology and a revised training schedule. He expects to achieve that goal within two years.

"We have the resources to do it," says Anderson. "We have the instructors and we have the potential to do some exciting things in training."

Among the training improvements Anderson plans is adding more content – especially on safe driving and customer service – into the training curriculum. He'll bring in two training program design specialists to help develop and implement the new curriculum. Previously, instructors developed the curriculum.

Focus on ADA

PROFILE

Mark Anderson

Born in Guatemala to American parents, Mark Anderson, 41, is the son of a retired coffee plantation owner and missionary, and the youngest of four brothers. Reared in the country's second largest city, Xela, he graduated from high school there and attended the University of Guaremla before moving to the United States in 1983.

In the United States, Anderson completed the Universal Technical Institute in Phoenix and studied instructional design at San Diego State University.

He was hired in the early 1980s by Detroit Diesel as a field service representative to work in Southern California and Mexico. During

One operator training focus will be the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how to provide service to mobility-impaired passengers.

"They are our customers. They rely on us and they have influence in the community," Anderson says. "We need to see these patrons as an opportunity to provide service to a group of very loyal patrons."

An important aspect of Anderson's plans is to train the trainers.

OCI instructors will receive "an incredible amount of training" for certification to teach all 16 operator training subjects. They must become proficient in the use of computers for classroom lectures and student testing, in the use of PowerPoint presentations and other advanced training techniques.

Anderson's plans also call for retraining operating division instructors. "We're trying to create an operations training department that not only is strong, centrally, but that also can support the operating divisions."

Moving maintenance training

Before this year is out, Anderson expects to bring all maintenance training – not just the mechanics' bus driving course – under the OCI wing. The Regional Rebuild Center instruction staff has been conducting maintenance training.

Currently, OCI has 31 approved instructor positions and nine office staff positions. The RRC has three office staff members and 12 positions for maintenance instructors.

MTA's training schedule also will be revised under Anderson's guidance. "We're going to raise our training standards tremendously. Every week we'll look at students' progress."

OCI now offers a six-week course for classes of about 20 bus operator trainees. The trainees start with three weeks of classroom training, followed by two weeks of on-the-road training with a division instructor before returning to OCI for a final week. Graduates then are assigned to a division – not necessarily the same division they trained at.

Under the new procedure, trainees will begin with four weeks in OCI classes. They will have two weeks of on-the-road training at a division and then graduation. Their first assignments should be at the divisions where they were trained.

Considering the overall goal of the training program he envisions, Anderson explains what he believes is the difference between a bus

four years with the company, he also got involved with employee training.

In 1987, Anderson joined San Diego Transit as assistant training manager, but within months was promoted to training department manager.

Over the years, he was responsible for developing a number of bus operator training courses in defensive driving, customer service, dealing with difficult passengers, drug and alcohol regulations, and operator safety.

Three of the better-known courses are "Smart Driving," a defensive driving program; "Have a Nice Day," about dealing with difficult customers; and "Driving Safety Home," an operator safety course.

Anderson is an associate staff member of the Transportation Safety Institute, for which he revised and updated the standard bus operator driving course that is used by most transit agencies in the U.S.

He has won many awards, including Training Professional of the Year, given by the National Transit Institute, as well as awards from other safety organizations.

driver and a bus operator.

"One of the things we do is operate the bus," he says, "but we're really customer service representatives *and* drive the bus."

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