

GM Jack Gabig's Vision Becomes Reality During SG Valley Sector's First Year

By LISA HUYNH

(August 22, 2003) When the San Gabriel Valley sector was officially launched in July 2002, General Manager Jack Gabig had a vision.

A year later, he looks back at how that vision has become a reality. "We've completed the first year successfully and I'm expecting more achievements this coming year," says Gabig.



Metro San Gabriel Valley General Manager Jack Gabig

To kick off another eventful year, San Gabriel Valley scheduled an open house celebration, Friday afternoon, at the sector headquarters in El Monte.

During the first year of operation, Gabig and his team focused on customer quality of service, improving the condition of the fleet and facilities, and having a strong community outreach program.

Gabig, who was general manager at Montebello Bus Lines for 12 years, knows a lot about leading a team.

"I'm not the one who makes our sector a success, it's my staff and the management teams at divisions 3 and 9," he says. "Simply put, there's a real dedication to improving our service here in San Gabriel Valley."

In an interview with metro.net, Gabig looked back at the sector's first year of operation.

Q. What were the goals that you set for the first year as Sector General Manager?

A. Our first year here in San Gabriel Valley has been a period of foundation building. Most of last year was focused on building the organization, strengthening the team and concentrating on some basic issues. We undertook a major restructuring of our service to meet the needs of the new Metro Gold Line light rail service. We also refocused on basic customer service, on-time performance and cleaner buses.

Q. Looking back at the first year of operation, what has the San Gabriel Valley sector accomplished this past year?

A. We successfully established a very active and determined Governance Council whose members are respected community leaders from San Gabriel Valley and East Los Angeles.

Our single largest accomplishment that required a massive effort over the entire year was implementing the Gold Line/Bus Interface service. Almost all 30 lines were affected by the Gold Line to Pasadena, whether it was creating new schedules, restructuring existing routes or canceling service that duplicated the Gold Line.

Also, our Safety's First program, has had a very successful year. We

introduced effective Local Safety Committees at divisions 3 and 9 that are looking at key safety issues in both Maintenance and Transportation. Through the leadership of these committees, we've reduced employee injuries as well as new Worker's Compensation claims.

Q. What kinds of obstacles did you and your team face as you pulled the sector together?

A. One of the first that comes to mind is a challenge with our budget. Because FY 03 was MTA's first year under the decentralized sector concept, there were some inaccuracies in how the budget for the entire MTA bus operation was allocated to each of the sectors. Also, we had an ambitious Worker's Compensation cost reduction target which we were not able to achieve. However, we've made significant progress in reducing employee injuries and new claims.

We also have a major graffiti problem on some of our lines. It is a challenge to fully implement a zero tolerance policy.



'The thing that gives me the greatest sense of satisfaction is developing a vision and seeing the commitment of my staff to make that vision a reality.'

Personally, however, my biggest challenge is time. There never seems to be enough time in the day to address all the internal issues and needs within the sector operation and also maintain a strong community presence.

Q. In addition to the organizational things, you have made some physical changes at your two divisions -- particularly at Division 9. What may be coming up in the future?

A. We have a very large transportation complex here in El Monte, constructed 30 years ago. The facility is essentially out of capacity, meaning the service has grown to the point where we need additional repair bays, more room for our operators and additional berths at the passenger terminal. Division 9's existing maintenance and transportation buildings need major improvements.

Over the past year we have prepared an ambitious redevelopment plan that we are now calling the 'El Monte Transit Village.' This plan will be presented to the MTA board at the September meeting. It includes a new operating division for 300 buses, a new sector office, an expanded El Monte station, a large housing component of over 500 units, a commercial office complex, and a major retail complex. And to cap it off, we hope to bring in a new Metrolink station nearby.

Q. What do you enjoy most about your job and working with your team?

A. The thing that gives me the greatest sense of satisfaction is

developing a vision and seeing the commitment of my staff to make that vision a reality. I'm very fortunate to have an exceptional team of managers, operators and mechanics here at the sector office and at both operating divisions. They truly are dedicated, hard-working employees and they're doing wonderful work for us.

Q. You have a very active Governance Council, what kind of issues are being addressed or will be addressed in your view?

A. The Governance Council has met a total of five times since April. Soon they will be addressing what is their primary focus in the San Gabriel Valley, which is service quality and service structuring to meet local needs. In an upcoming meeting, the Council will consider some service reductions on low productivity lines and the implementation of a new Rapid Bus service on Soto Street in East Los Angeles next year.

Q. Now that you've begun your second year of operation, what are your goals for next year?

A. The first goal above everything else is our safety program. We will continue focusing on safety with our employees and our patrons. We have some aggressive goals to further reduce accidents, employee injuries and Worker's Compensation costs. In addition, we're continuing a very steady concentration on improving customer service, on-time performance and bus cleanliness.

A hope and a goal of mine is to begin the first phase of our redevelopment plan in El Monte. Although, the large 'El Monte Transit Village' project will take some time to review and develop, we are excited about the future of Metro San Gabriel Valley.

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)