

New Admin Chief Don Ott Learns Jobs from the Inside Out

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 23, 2003) Don Ott, MTA's new executive officer for Administration, has always learned his jobs from the inside out.



Don Ott, Executive Officer,
Administration

That was true when, as a graduate business student, he was the pathology course coordinator at the University of Cincinnati and found himself preparing for autopsies – even laying out human organs – for students in the medical school.

That was true when he joined the SCRTD as an assistant budget analyst in 1986 and began learning the ins and outs of the various departments he was assigned to.

And that was true when he was named Facilities Maintenance manager in 1993 and took over a 70-member crew of plumbers, carpenters, electricians, technicians and maintainers at South Park. And later, when he started a custodial unit at the Metro Rail Division 20 yard to shift work from a contractor to MTA employees.

Good insights

"Those experiences really gave me a lot of very good insights into operations from the facilities standpoint and what the divisions need to be able to operate the service," he says.

Ott's eagerness to adapt and to learn paid off in 2000, when he was appointed director of Facilities Maintenance. He was in charge of some 550 employees who maintained MTA's far-flung bus divisions as well as Metro Rail communications and properties.

Among many other things, he also was responsible for managing public-private partnership contracts for construction and maintenance of CNG fueling stations at most operating divisions and for providing new offices for three of the five service sectors.

Ott continued as Facilities director until this past June 30, when he was named to head MTA Administration, succeeding Carolyn Flowers who is now executive officer for Operations.

Reporting to Chief of Staff Maria Guerra, he now is responsible for Human Resources, for ADA compliance, General Services, Real Estate and Organizational Development and Training. He also provides administrative services for Guerra's staff.

Goals and plans

Ott was pleased to learn when he joined Administration that the executive staff and department heads already had established goals, action plans and key performance indicators and measurement criteria.

"Before I came to Administration, I was impressed," Ott says. "As a customer of Human Resources, for example, I have seen considerable improvement in reducing the time it takes to fill a vacant position."

He intends to ensure that Administration stays "on course" in achieving

its goals. He also plans to fine-tune the department's strategies for achieving those goals.

Ott is a native of Wadsworth, Ohio, a small town near Akron. One of six brothers and sisters, his father is a former county judge and safety manager for the Firestone tire and rubber company. His mother is deceased.

He is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati where he earned degrees in education and French. He enjoys early morning workouts before work, loves travel and is an avid reader.

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