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Grand Entrance> Media news outlets took a first look at a new advanced designed "CompoBus" Friday morning at Gateway Transit Plaza. The "CompoBus" is a 45-foot, CNG low-floor coach with contoured windshields and a stylish retro look. It has a lighter-weight, crash-resistant fiberglass composite body that is impervious to rust and corrosion. The two-axel bus will seat 46 passengers, six more passengers than can be seated on a standard 40-foot, low-floor bus. MTA has a contract to buy 100 CompoBuses from NABI. The first 30 units of the order are due to be delivered in May, 2004. The first buses are expected to go into service in June on the Metro Rapid lines.



PHOTO BY GAYLE ANDERSON

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Happy Holidays!

- Metro Rides are Free on Dec. 24 and Dec.31

By JOSÉ UBALDO

MTA will offer free rides on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 on Metro Buses and Metro Rail to boost safety and reduce traffic congestion during the holidays.

On Dec. 24 patrons may ride for free from 9 p.m. until closing on the Metro Rail system, and from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. on the Metro Bus system.

On Dec. 31, New Year's Eve, all Metro Rail lines will operate all night to encourage easy travel to the Rose Parade in Pasadena. However, free rides will only be from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m. Metro Bus rides will be free from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Metro Rail and Metro Buses will operate on Sunday schedules on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, New Year's Day. Both holidays fall on Thursday this year.

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MTA Family Suffers Loss of Child

Johnny Harden, a Metro Café grill chef, and Stacy (Shepherd) Harden, an MTA Customer Relations agent, extend sincere thanks to all employees who expressed condolences following the recent death of their infant son, Donavin.

Funeral services for Donavin Harden will be held at 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, December 3, at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Covina Hills, 21300 Via Verde, Covina.

Born prematurely, Donavin had been hospitalized since his birth four months ago.

He is survived by his parents, his sister Tayana, 6, and grandparents Harold Shepherd, a TCU in MTA Building Services, and Barbara Shepherd, a retired MTA stenographer.

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IN MEMORIAM

A fund has been established for the Harden family at the Northrup Grumman Credit Union on the Plaza level of MTA Headquarters. Employees who wish to make a contribution can make a deposit into account #127835. Cards and letters sent c/o Metro Café will be forwarded to the Hardens.

New Metro Bus, Rail Fares To Take Effect Jan. 1

- Revised Structure Includes New Metro Day Pass, Lower Cash Fare

By ED SCANNELL

MTA will introduce a revised schedule of cash and Metro pass prices beginning Jan. 1, 2004. The schedule includes the introduction of a new Metro Day Pass for unlimited local travel and the lowering of the one-way cash fare on the Metro Bus and Rail System from \$1.35 to \$1.25.

“Despite rising costs for wages, fuel, equipment, security and other operating expenses, it has been more almost nine years since we have raised any of our fares,” said Roger Snoble, MTA CEO. “While raising some fares was unavoidable, we also have simplified our fare structure, introduced additional convenience in the form of the Metro Day Pass and preserved the low fares for seniors, students and the disabled.”

The following is a summary of the new fare structure:

Fare	Regular	Senior/Disabled/Medicare
Base Fare Required for each boarding; Metro-to-Metro transfers and line continuation transfers are discontinued.	\$1.25	\$.45
Tokens Valid for base fare; sold in bags of 10	\$1.10	---
New! Metro Day Pass Good for all day unlimited local travel. Zone charges may apply on some Metro Bus lines.	\$3.00	\$1.50
Weekly Pass	\$14.00	---
Semi-monthly Pass	\$27.00	---
Monthly Pass	\$52.00	\$12.00
New! Metro-to-Muni Transfer Required for transfer to municipal lines. Not valid on Metro Bus and Metro Rail.	\$.25	\$.10
Metro Bus Night Service 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.	\$.75	\$.35
Freeway Express Zone Fares (Now just two zones)		
Zone 1	\$.50 additional	\$.25 additional
Zone 2	\$1.00 additional	\$.50 additional

The following fares remain unchanged:

Fare	Regular	Senior/Disabled/Medicare
Senior Monthly Pass		\$12.00

Freeway Express Stamp	\$15.00 per zone	---
Student Stamp (K-12)	\$20.00	---
College/Vocational Stamp	\$30.00	---
EZ Transit Pass	\$58.00	\$29.00
EZ Premium Stamp	\$15.00 per zone	\$7.50 per zone

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Metro Cheer

- South Bay Metro Bus Operator collects toys for underprivileged children.



Text and Photo by Rich Morallo

For the eighth straight year South Bay Division 18 bus operator Jimi Green is looking for toys to distribute to children in Los Angeles. "I first started helping out with the Stevie Wonder 'House Full of Toys' Concert and KJLH program in 1995," remarked Jimi who wanted to help cheer up youngsters less fortunate than his own. Last year Jimi collected two truckloads of toys from Metro operators. This year the toys will be delivered Saturday, Dec. 20, to drop-off points at KJLH and at the Stevie Wonder concert at the Forum in Inglewood. If you would like to participate, contact Jimi at (323) 807-3033.

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Time Marches On



PHOTO BY RICH MORALLO

Maintenance Service Attendant/Vaulter, Kenneth Sanders, takes a moment to check out the new digital clock at South Bay Division 18. The clock helps Metro Bus operators keep track of time as they prepare to start their runs. Arthur Winston Division 5 plans to install a similar clock.

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Holiday Magic 2003



And a good time was had by all. Clockwise, from left: Sharing a festive table are Matt and Laura Raymond, Diane Corral-Lopez, Roger and Kit Snoble, and John Catoe; deejays spin magic on the dance floor; Edith Goff-Youngblood leads committee's tribute to coordinator Diane Delaney-Talton; visitor Alicia Cornish picks a potential prize from bountiful gift table; Rebecca Lee helps check in long line of guests; retired Div. 1 Operator Ethel Gibson, at center right, shares a good time with husband Leon and visiting relatives Larry and Diane Gibson; under a banner proclaiming "Reunited," CEO Roger Snoble welcomes employees to the holiday cheer; dancers dance the night away; party-goers try their luck at the roulette wheel while, retired Div. 6 Operator Ed Richard, at left, rolls the dice; Diane Delaney-Talton and CEO Roger Snoble welcome arriving guests. At center, committee members take a bow.

The producers! Committee members who produced the gala are: * Diane Delaney-Talton * Rebecca Lee * Kathi Harper * Kenitra McCovery * Demetrius Jones * Kathy Lau * Edith Goff-Youngblood * Kimberlee Vandenakker * Dan Colonello * Lydie Colonello * Gwendolyn Stevens * Jennifer Salamanca * Alicia Rodriguez * Sandra Kelly-Williams *

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Service Changes on 11 Contracted Bus Lines Take Effect Dec. 21

By RICK JAGER

Eleven bus lines operated by private transit carriers under contract to MTA will undergo service modifications effective Sunday, Dec. 21.

The service changes were planned to go into effect on October 26 but were postponed due to the recent labor strike by MTA mechanics. Bus service changes to MTA operated bus lines have been postponed until February of next year.

The following is a list of service changes to contracted bus lines that will be implemented on Sunday, Dec. 21. The changes include service modifications or reductions on underutilized contracted bus lines that require a high public subsidy.

- **Line 58** (Alameda Street) Weekday service frequency will be reduced to 15 minutes during rush hours. The segment of the line operating on Los Angeles Street will be discontinued. Weekend service will be cancelled.
- **Line 130** (Artesia Blvd.) Service between the Cerritos Mall to Fullerton Park and Ride will be discontinued.
- **Line 225/226** (LAX City Bus Center/Aviation Blvd./Palos Verdes/San Pedro) Service from Redondo Beach to LAX on Line 225 will be discontinued. Service on Line 226 will be extended to 8th & Avrell in San Pedro. Line 225 & 226 will be combined to operate during rush hours. Saturday service will be discontinued on both lines.
- **Line 254** (Willowbrook/Huntington Park/City Terrance) The last evening trip in both directions will be discontinued due to low ridership. Sunday service will be cancelled.
- **Line 270** (Monrovia/El Monte/Norwalk) Sunday service will be cancelled.
- **Line 275** (Pico Rivera/Whittier/Santa Fe Springs/Cerritos) Service east of Cerritos Mall will be rerouted via Artesia Blvd., Gridley Road and Valley View Avenue. As part of this change, service along portions of Rosecrans Avenue.
- **Line 608** (Crenshaw Connection) Weekday service will be rescheduled to operate hourly through out the day. Saturday service will be discontinued.
- **Line 625/626** (Aviation Shuttle/Green Line Shuttle) Service on Line 625 will be discontinued from World Way West to Playa del Rey and Westchester. The remainder of the line will be combined with Line 626. Lines combined will operate during weekday rush hours only.
- **Line 646** (City Nightline) This line will be cancelled.

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Input Wanted

- **Proposed Development of a West Los Angeles Transportation Center is Topic of Public Meeting**

By Rick Jager

MTA will hold a public meeting, Dec. 16, to gather input on the development of a proposed West Los Angeles Transportation Center.

The purpose of the transportation center is to provide improved public transit service in the central and western areas of Los Angeles County including large portions of the City of Los Angeles (including the communities of West Adams, Mid-City, South L.A., etc.) and the incorporated cities of Beverly Hills, Culver City, Malibu, Santa Monica and West Hollywood.

The West Los Angeles Transportation Center is proposed as an operations and maintenance facility to support a fleet of as many as 175 clean-fuel compressed natural gas (CNG) coaches.

MTA is in the process of preparing a draft environmental impact report (EIR) on the proposed project that will address environmental topics including traffic and circulation impacts, air quality issues, environmental noise, land use as well as aesthetics.

Following the public meeting, should additional issues arise, MTA will expand the scope of the Draft EIR, as necessary, to accommodate other areas of potential environmental effects.

The new center, proposed to be located on a 4.6-acre site on the east side of Jefferson Boulevard between Rodeo Road and National Boulevard in the City of Los Angeles, will replace an existing bus maintenance facility now located in Venice.

PUBLIC MEETING

DATE: Tuesday, Dec. 16

TIME: 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

LOCATION: Baha'i Center, 5755 Rodeo Road, Los Angeles

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JODY FEERST-LITVAK



Vantage point: at the west property line looking north. New facility will prevent trash dumping on Jefferson Boulevard and vacant street.



Vantage point: at the north property line looking east. New transportation center will be compatible with use of existing adjacent buildings.



Vantage point: at the north property line looking southwest.

The new facility will allow MTA to expand service from a centralized location in response to growing ridership and to do so with new CNG coaches replacing older diesel coaches.

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MTA Board Sets Thursday Meeting – First Since September

(Dec.2, 2003) The MTA Board has scheduled a meeting for 9:30 a.m., Thursday – its first regular monthly meeting since September.

Thirty-eight items, including a closed session to discuss real estate, legal and labor matters, are on the Board's agenda. Among the items are:

Westside/Central Service Sector Council, Item 34. The Board will consider a motion to appoint nine members of the Westside/Central Service Sector Council.

The four members nominated by the City of Los Angeles are Pressley Burroughs and Ruby Sylvestre, community activists in South Los Angeles; Helen Johnson, a public transit activist; and Peter Capone-Newton, a bus and rail patron.

The County of Los Angeles' two nominees are Stephanie Negriff, director of transit services for Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus; and Joyce Perkins, a community activist and former member of MTA's Citizens Advisory Council.

The Westside cities nominees are Carol Gross of Culver City, a member of the City Council; Brad Robinson of Beverly Hills, a real estate executive and Traffic and Parking commissioner; and Ann Semonco of West Hollywood, a transit rider and advocate for the disabled.

New Rail Traction Substations, Item 23. Metro Gold Line trains currently operate on electricity from 10 traction power substations placed along the line. The Board will consider a motion – postponed from September – to buy four more substations and two property sites for a total project cost of \$8.7 million.

With the extra substations, the Metro Gold Line could operate a mix of two- and three-car trains at 10-minute headways. The new substations also would provide redundancy in the event substations were taken off line due to power failures or other causes.

Remanufacture of Rail Grinder, Item 17. The Board will consider a motion authorizing an expenditure of \$1.3 million to remanufacture MTA's rail grinder machine. Originally purchased in 1995, the machine – which has been used to "re-profile" rails on all four Metro Rail lines – is now past its remanufacture date.

If approved by the Board, the rail grinder will be completely disassembled by a contractor and rebuilt, a process that could take up to a year. Remanufacturing will extend the useful life of the machine by at least five years. New rail grinders cost about \$4 million each.

Because MTA's rail grinder is currently out of service, an outside firm has been contracted for a rail-grinding project, starting Wednesday, on a five-mile section of the Metro Gold Line.

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Teams of Sheriff's deputies and fare inspectors kept safety first at Hollywood Christmas Parade.



PHOTOS: LASD LT. MIKE PARKER

Team Effort Kept Subway Crowds Manageable during Hollywood Christmas Parade

By LISA HUYNH

(Dec. 2, 2003) It took a team effort to work crowd control as thousands and thousands of people flooded the Metro Red Line, Sunday evening, to catch a glimpse of the 72nd annual Hollywood Christmas Parade.

Teams of Sheriff's deputies and fare inspectors were on-site to help relieve congestion on the subway platforms at Hollywood/Highland and Hollywood/Vine – the stations that experienced the most crowding.

MTA Revenue personnel offered riders the option of purchasing tickets at three portable fare boxes to help ease the lines of patrons using the ticket vending machines. A four-member MTA Security team was stationed at the ticket area.

Metro Red Line riders traveled to the Hollywood Boulevard stations over a span of a couple of hours, according to Sheriff's Lt. Mike Parker, but when the parade was over, they all wanted to leave at once.

Concentrated efforts

Fortunately, the eastbound parade ended at Hollywood/Highland first, allowing the deputies and fare

The Hollywood Crowd



Metro Red Line riders traveled to the Hollywood Boulevard stations over a span of a couple of hours



When the parade was over, they all wanted to leave at once.

inspectors to concentrate their efforts on clearing that station before they had to shift to Hollywood/Vine.

"We directed people to go down stairwells that would either take them to Union Station or to North Hollywood," depending on their destinations, said Parker. "That caused less confusion and allowed more movement on the platform."

Although the officers sometimes had to hold departing crowds on the mezzanine until the platform below cleared, Parker said he heard no complaints and that everyone cooperated.

"I think the reason we were able to get the system back to normal in about an hour was because of the teamwork and good communication that we had from all personnel," said Parker.

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Sheriff's Search and Rescue canine unit kept track.



Deputies sometimes had to hold departing crowds on the mezzanine until the platform below cleared

Rail Grinding Project Begins, Wednesday, on Metro Gold Line

(Dec. 2, 2003) Metro Rail crews will begin a two-week rail-grinding project, Wednesday, on the Metro Gold Line.

The project is aimed at improving the ride for commuters while reducing the noise from trains along an approximately five-mile section of tracks between Lincoln Heights in Los Angeles and the Glenarm crossing in Pasadena.

The rail grinding work will be scheduled from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. each weekday until Friday, Dec. 12. No work will be performed on weekends. The project will commence with the southbound tracks in the vicinity of the Southwest Museum station.



Morning and afternoon peak-hour schedules will remain unchanged with trains running at 10-minute intervals. Mid-day intervals will be lengthened from the normal 12 minutes to 20 minutes because trains must be "single-tracked" through the work area.

Although all stations along the line will experience mid-day delays, the Lincoln Heights/Cypress Park, Heritage Square/Arroyo, Southwest Museum, Highland Park and Mission stations will be most affected by the rail project.

Platforms out of service

Platform 2 at the Lincoln Heights and Heritage Square stations will be out of service during the first work period, Dec. 3. Northbound platform 1 will be out of service, Dec. 4, at those stations.

Similar platform closures will be in effect at Mission station during the last few days of the rail project. Metro Rail ambassadors or Sheriff's deputies will be posted at the stations to assist passengers.

"We regret the short notice to our customers and neighbors, but this is a high-noise area due to the many curves in the track and the work needed to be done," said Rob Chappell, deputy executive officer, Metro Rail Operations. "This work wasn't completed before opening the line in July and we had to book a special contractor with limited opportunities to schedule this work."

The Metro Gold Line has a unique rail "profile" that is designed for a smooth ride with a minimum noise level, Chappell said.

Rail grinding required

Rail grinding is required to maintain the proper interface between the rails and the train wheels and to extend the life of both the rails and train wheels. MTA must schedule grinding work on all its rail lines as normal maintenance.

MTA usually performs rail grinding with its own grinding machine, but the agency's machine needs major repairs. A request for \$1.3 million to rebuild the machine will be presented to the MTA Board of Directors at its Dec. 4 meeting.

MTA has taken other measures to reduce wheel and rail noise along the Metro Gold Line. In September, Metro Rail crews began hand-applying a "friction modifier" on a section of tracks north and south of the Southwest Museum station.

The ultra-thin liquid coating reduces friction – and, thus, noise – between train wheels and rails. Since then, two automatic machines have been installed on that section of track to apply the coating.

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The heaviest customer volume is expected along the Metro Gold Line between early evening Wednesday, Dec. 31, and early evening Jan. 1 as untold masses attend the 115th Tournament of Roses parade and Rose Bowl game. The parade, themed "Music, Music, Music," begins at 8 a.m. on New Year's Day. Composer and conductor John Williams leads the parade as the grand marshal.

Volunteers Needed for New Year's Eve Metro Rail Crowd Control

(Dec. 3, 2003) Volunteers are needed for crowd control and to ensure safe boarding for thousands of Tournament of Roses Parade attendees expected to crowd the Metro Rail System New Year's Eve.

"We need your help to ensure a successful transit experience for all of our customers," Chief Executive Officer Roger Snoble wrote in an all-employee memo asking for volunteers.

The heaviest customer volume is expected along the Metro Gold Line between early evening Wednesday, Dec. 31, and early evening Jan. 1.

Sign-ups will begin, this Friday, with preference given to volunteers who worked the Metro Gold Line Grand Opening and were safety trained. Sign-ups will continue through Thursday, Dec. 13, or until all positions are filled.

A minimum time commitment of eight hours is required. Volunteers will receive assignment times between 8 p.m., Dec. 31, and 7 p.m., Jan. 1. Most assignments will begin early in the morning New Year's Day.

Additional assignments at Sierra Madre Villa Station, Jan. 2 and 3 will cover a 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. time period.

A permission form with a supervisor's signature is required to participate. The form will be provided to everyone who signs up and must be completed no later than Monday, Dec. 17.

Volunteer work hours must not conflict with regular work schedules. Volunteers will be asked to attend a 90-minute briefing at the Gateway Plaza.

Volunteer Compensation:

Represented employees will be paid according to their collective bargaining agreement.

Non-represented, nonexempt employees will be paid at time and a half for all hours worked over 40 per week. Non-represented, exempt employees will be paid straight time for all hours worked.

To sign up as a volunteer, employees should call or email the New Year's Hotline at (213) 922-4969 or NewYearsHotline@mta.net.

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Deputies Charge Suspects in 100-Plus Graffiti Incidents

- **\$175,000 Damage**

(Dec. 3, 2003) Sheriff's deputies have filed charges against three teenagers suspected of causing more than \$175,000 in graffiti vandalism damage to Metro Buses and bus stops in downtown Los Angeles, the South Bay and the San Fernando Valley.



Similar to graffiti on items seized from a suspect's home, most of the damage to buses and bus stops was done with acrylic paints, etching tools, slap-on labels and, sometimes, acid wash.

Deputies from the Transit Services Bureau's Special Problems Unit expect to arrest a fourth teenager, Thursday. The 16-year-old South Los Angeles boy is suspected in 10 vandalism incidents with total damages estimated at \$8,800.

Already in custody are a 16-year-old Highland Park boy believed responsible for 109 vandalism incidents and \$130,000 in damages; a 15-year-old South Los Angeles boy linked to 36 incidents and \$36,000 in damages; and an 18-year-old San Fernando Valley male suspected of doing \$8,000 worth of damage.

The vandalism primarily involved damage to seats and windows on buses from Central City Division 1, Arthur Winston Division 5, North Los Angeles Division 3 and Gateway Division 10, but also included bus benches and shelters throughout the area.

Most of the graffiti was done with acrylic paints, etching tools, slap-on labels and, sometimes, acid wash, according to Sheriff's Lt. Mike Herek, who heads law enforcement for bus operations on the east side of the MTA's service area.

Lengthy investigation

The suspects were identified during a lengthy investigation that peaked during the transit strike when deputies combed idle buses for taggers' monikers and looked for vandals' behavior patterns. The investigation next moved to bus stops and then to area schools.

"The deputies talked to school janitors, administrators and school police and asked if they recognized the tags," says Herek. "They know who the taggers are."

If found guilty of vandalism, the suspects could be jailed, fined, or be sentenced to perform community service – often cleaning up graffiti on Metro Buses or at bus stops. Their parents also could be required to pay damages compensation to MTA.

"Graffiti is the MTA's biggest law enforcement priority," says Herek, "and that makes it our biggest priority."

Special Problems Unit deputies involved in the graffiti investigation were Larry Ware, David Hernandez, Mike Shaw, Kiley Hayden, Matt Haire, Mike Rivas.

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Pictured with the Accounting Department's award are, from left, front row, Rene Decena and Josie Nicasio. Back row: Dave Wakeling, Jesse Soto, Richard Brumbaugh, Jim Cudlip and Basil Panas. Not pictured, Perry Blake.



PHOTO: BILL HEARD

3+1 = 4 Awards for MTA's Accounting Department

By VERONICA TORREJÓN

(Dec. 4, 2003) For the fourth year in a row, the MTA Accounting Department was honored with the prestigious Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

"I attribute the award to the hard work, continued growth, technical knowledge and professionalism of the Accounting Department," says Controller Josie Nicasio.

Nicasio and Chief Financial Officer Richard Brumbaugh have made it their goal to receive the certificate every year. The award is the highest recognition in the area of governmental accounting and finance reporting.

Awarded annually by the Government Finance Officers Association, the certificate recognizes government units and public employee retirement systems whose comprehensive annual financial reports achieve the highest standards.

"It's an accomplishment to win one award," says Nicasio, "but to win it consistently is definitely something good for the MTA."

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CEO Roger Snoble introduces prototype transit coach at the "CompoBus" rollout event at the NABI manufacturing plant. Also pictured: MTA Director Frank Roberts, left; and at right, Sen. Richard C. Shelby (R-Ala.)



Photo courtesy of North American Bus Industries, Inc.

'CompoBus' Debuts in Alabama; Now En Route to California

(Dec. 4, 2003) A prototype transit coach that will become a featured element of the Metro Bus fleet was introduced with much fanfare, Monday, during ceremonies in Anniston, Ala.

CEO Roger Snoble and MTA Director Frank Roberts joined Sen. Richard C. Shelby (R-Ala.), Congressman Mike Rogers (R-3rd.), local officials and company executives for the "CompoBus" rollout event at the NABI manufacturing plant.

The "CompoBus" is a 45-foot, CNG low-floor coach with contoured windshields and a stylish retro look. It has a lighter-weight, crash-resistant fiberglass composite body that is impervious to rust and corrosion.



The "CompoBus" prototype, now en route to California from Alabama, has contoured windshields and a retro look.

The two-axle bus will seat 46 passengers, six more passengers than can be seated on a standard 40-foot, low-floor bus. "There is substantially more interior space than found on current 40-foot models," says Mike Bottone, director, Metro Vehicle Technology.

The prototype will arrive, Dec. 8, at NABI's Upland, Calif., facility for a month of tests by MTA's Universal Fare Systems and ATMS teams, as well as the operations training and maintenance training groups.

MTA has a contract to buy 100 CompoBuses from NABI. The first 30 units of the order are due to be delivered in May, 2004. The first buses are expected to go into service in June on the Metro Rapid lines.

"We see tremendous potential in the CompoBus," says Deputy CEO John Catoe. "We're adding capacity while saving weight, a rare combination in bus manufacturing."

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MTA Hosts Special Transit Safety Training Course

By ADRIENNE S. BLYTHE

(Dec. 4, 2003) Westside Central Senior Safety Specialist Dave Miklic is finally seeing almost 10 months of planning and organization come to fruition. This week, MTA is hosting a four-day training course taught by the Transportation Safety Institute.

TSI is the educational branch of the U.S. Department of Transportation. It offers training to transportation entities around the country. "It is a great way to educate our employees because it is low cost, but very high-quality," says Miklic.

"This course is about transit industrial safety management," he says. There are three instructors: a Senior Associate Instructor for TSI, the Safety Director of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority and the Safety Director from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Miklic says the opportunity to network with other transit agencies is a valuable part of the TSI courses. "We get to exchange ideas, and get new perspectives from all across the country."

The course included 12 participants from MTA. There also were nine individuals from such transit properties as Portland, San Francisco and Sacramento. The participants will get a certificate upon completion and will be able to share what they have learned with others in their agency.

The training course started, Tuesday, and will end on Friday. There are three days of classroom instruction and on the final day participants get the opportunity to apply their knowledge. The course will conclude with a field exercise inspection of the facilities at Division 10.

"There were so many details that I had to work out to coordinate this training course, including hotel accommodations and transportation for the out of town participants," says Miklic. "But it was definitely well worth it."



Participants from MTA and other transit agencies listen to a presentation by Pamela McCombe, Director of Safety for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.



An instructor directs a class of 20 during the TSI training course.



PHOTOS: ADRIENNE BLYTHE

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MTA's Dave Schlesinger Honored for Work with Crisis Victims

By ADRIENNE S. BLYTHE

(Dec. 5 2003) MTA's Dave Schlesinger was among members of Mayor James Hahn's Crisis Response Team who were honored by the City of Los Angeles, recently, for providing on-scene crisis intervention services to victims and families.

Schlesinger, a Metro Green Line rail equipment maintenance supervisor, has been a member of the volunteer team for about two years now.

"I have always had a passion for safety and crisis management, which is the core mission of the team," he says. "After September 11, 2001, I was compelled to do something that would positively impact my community."

His training and experience with the Crisis Response Team (CRT), combined with his previous work as a member of MTA's accident response team, has given Schlesinger the patience and the knowledge to help others through serious and stressful incidents.

Schlesinger says being a member of CRT has helped him grow personally and professionally. "I have more patience with my children now because I know that something may happen at any moment. I also have greater appreciation for my family and my health."

"When I am at work, I am more aware of potential hazards," says Schlesinger. "I have a keen sense of whether or not my work environment is safe, which is one of the most valuable things that has come out of being part of CRT."

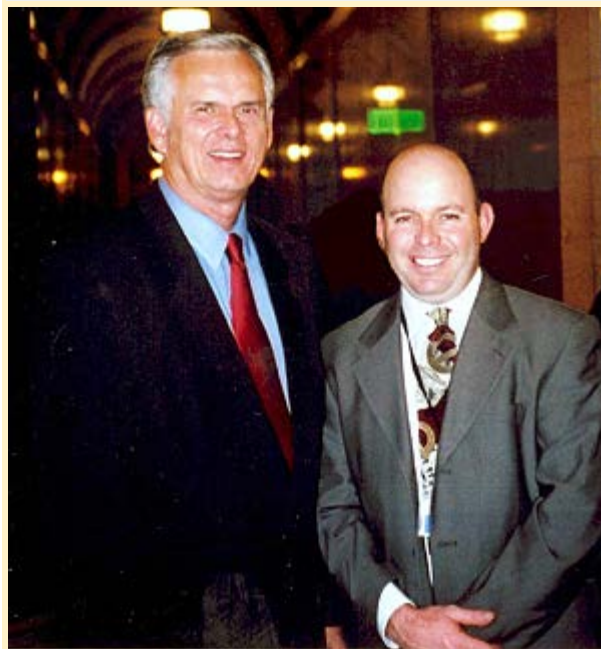
Handling the Calls

Schlesinger has responded to all types of calls. The most common include homicides, such as drive-by shootings, traffic accidents, and suicides.

"The most rewarding calls are always the ones that involve children," he says. "These are usually the hardest as well, especially when they have lost one or both parents, but I try to relate to them using what I have learned from my own children."

CRT is comprised of 80 individuals who are dedicated to helping others. They are on-call 24 hours a day and are alerted, by pager, when there is an incident. The volunteers in the program are activated directly by the City of Los Angeles Police and Fire departments. On average, the team receives 50-60 calls per month.

Mayor Jim Hahn congratulates Metro Green Line rail equipment maintenance supervisor Dave Schlesinger, a member of the Mayor's Crisis Intervention Team that provides on-scene crisis intervention services to victims and families.



CRT Manager Jeff Zimmerman presents honors, shown below, at City Hall ceremony.

As a back-up manager an average of once a month, Schlesinger is responsible for assembling a team within 30 minutes of a call, but this is usually no problem.

"Everyone on the team is great," he says. "Some of the best friends I have are from the team because we share a special bond when we deal with tragic situations together."

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MTA Board Approves Contract Agreement with ATU

- [Westside/Central Service Sector Council, Item 34.](#)
- [Remanufacture of Rail Grinder, Item 17.](#)
- [New Rail Traction Substations, Item 23.](#)

(Dec. 5, 2003) The MTA Board unanimously approved the contract agreement with the ATU, Thursday, but left the health and welfare issue for resolution at a later date.

That issue may be the subject of continued negotiations or could be considered by a three-member arbitration panel made up of a member appointed by MTA, one appointed by ATU and a third neutral member.

Meanwhile, negotiations between MTA and the UTU, representing bus and rail operators, and the TCU, representing clerks and custodians, are continuing.

Westside/Central Service Sector Council, Item 34. The Board approved a motion appointing eight members of the Westside/Central Service Sector Council. A ninth position will be filled by the City of Los Angeles at a later date.

The eight council members are Pressley Burroughs, Helen Johnson, Peter Capone-Newton, Stephanie Negriff, Joyce Perkins, Carol Gross, Brad Robinson and Ann Semonco.

New Rail Traction Substations, Item 23. The Board approved a motion to buy four more traction power substations for the Metro Gold Line, as well as two property sites, for a total project cost of \$8.7 million.

With the extra substations, the Metro Gold Line could operate a mix of two- and three-car trains at 10-minute headways. The new substations also would provide redundancy in the event substations were taken off line due to power failures or other causes.

Remanufacture of Rail Grinder, Item 17. The Board approved a motion authorizing an expenditure of \$1.3 million to remanufacture MTA's rail grinder machine. The machine, which has been used to "re-profile" rails on all four Metro Rail lines, is now past its remanufacture date.

Because MTA's rail grinder is currently out of service, an outside firm has been contracted for a rail-grinding project, starting Wednesday, on a five-mile section of the Metro Gold Line.

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Field Equipment Technicians - Back row from left: Sean Dunning, Steve Mendoza, Dennis Sanford, Herbert Lewis and Juan Gamino. Front row from left: James Badgett, Joe Williams, Winston Buchanan, George Perez, Jose Dagostino and Manny Zaragosa. Not pictured: Tommie Davis and Richard Daniels.



PHOTO BY ADRIENNE S. BLYTHE

Fleet Management and Support Services Host Luncheon to Honor Field Equipment Technicians

By LISA HUYNH

(Dec. 9, 2003) Fleet Management and Support Services held an appreciation luncheon, Friday afternoon, to thank the thirteen Field Equipment Technicians (FET's) for their hard work and dedication in maintaining the buses during the 35-day strike.

"The Field Techs not only worked very long hours, but adjusted their schedule within a short notice," says Equipment Maintenance Manager Hector Rojas. "During the strike, many of them were on a 12-hour schedule with no days off."

These non-contract employees were dispatched to all the bus maintenance divisions to repair and maintain the buses to ensure state of readiness once the strike was over.

"The Field Techs are the backbone of our system," Managing Director of Operations Alex Clifford. "These guys never complained, even though they had to endure shift changes and the cancellation of their vacations. It's incredible the kind of things they've done for MTA."

Simultaneously with the strike, some Field Techs were called upon to escort several buses full of firefighters to the San Diego and Hesperia fires.

The Field Techs' primary job is to repair disabled buses and do quick troubleshooting on the road.

"They've done a lot for us," says Rojas. "Friday's luncheon was to show our appreciation for their hard work. We are deeply honored to have them as part our team."

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Good News, Bad News for Employees at Tax Time

(Dec. 9, 2003) There's good news – and bad news – for MTA employees in this year's tax picture. First, the good news:

Employees who set aside income through the 401(k) Thrift Plan or the 457 Deferred Compensation Plan will be allowed to put more money into these plans in 2004. The cap of \$12,000 has been raised to \$13,000.

You may contribute to both the 401(k) Thrift Plan and the 457 Deferred Compensation Plan for a total deferral of \$26,000.

And, if you're a "baby boomer" and are over age 50 – or will be by December 31, 2004 – you may defer up to a total of \$32,000 in both plans.

There also are "catch-up" provisions in the law that allow additional dollars to be set aside. These can be explained to you by the Pension and Benefits Office at 922-7184.

Social Security and SDI taxes

Now the bad news: The wage base for both Social Security and the State Disability Insurance (SDI) went up this year.

Some employees with salaries over \$87,000 will see a Social Security tax increase of as much as \$55.80 in the maximum amount withheld from each paycheck.

The wage base for SDI was increased from \$56,916 to \$68,829. That, combined with the new California Family Temporary Disability Insurance rate means an increase in state withholding for all employees of \$162.28.

Help is just a click away

But, there's one more piece of good news for employees who use, or want to use, TurboTax 2003 to prepare their federal and state income tax returns. Again this year, employees can download W-2 information directly into TurboTax – a time saver at tax time.

The TurboTax web site information will be on the 2003 W-2 form, or you can look for it at www.probusiness.com/turbotax.

For more information on all these changes, contact the Pension and Benefits Office at 922-7184. For information about the 401(k) or 457 Plan, contact Erick Spencer of ICMA at 866-339-8795 or Orlando Delgado of ICMA at 866-266-7312.

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CEO Roger Snoble welcomes representatives from transit agencies to the TransportMAX Users Group Conference.



MTA hosts TransportMAX Users Group Conference

- TransportMAX, an online digital marketplace for the transit industry, allows buyers to post and receive quotes from vendors electronically.

By Veronica Torrejón and Robert New

(Dec. 9, 2003) Representatives from transit agencies across the country came together for the second TransportMAX Users Group Conference hosted this year by MTA.

Organized by MTA Procurement and Materiel Management Organization, the semi-annual conference attracted about 20 representatives from eight agencies including Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Chicago Transit Authority, and the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District.

"We appreciate the hospitality, we really do," said TransportMAX Users Group Chairman James Zingale. "This has been one of the best meetings we've ever had."

The two-day conference kicked off, Nov. 21, with welcome addresses by CEO Roger Snoble and Lonnie Mitchell executive officer, Procurement and Material Management.



Organizers, from left, are TransportMAX Users Group Chairman James Zingale, Lonnie Mitchell, Executive Officer, Procurement and Materiel Management ; DEO Ted Montoya, procurement; CEO Roger Snoble, Anthony Kouneski, vice president of Member Services for the American Public Transportation Association, and Michael Corcoran, president of TransportMAX.



Ted Montoya leads conference participants Diana Shaw, Bill Seman, Glenda Smith and Cheryl Cavitt on a tour of the Regional Rebuild Center.

Snoble thanked attendees for participating in the conference, which, he said, was an important event for the country's transit industry.

"The Los Angeles MTA is committed to TransportMAX over the long term and we are excited about where we are today," he said. "I look forward to its continued future growth and success. I am glad the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and the TransportMAX Users Group are involved in the process."

e-commerce procurement

TransportMAX, an online digital marketplace for the transit industry, allows buyers to post and receive quotes from vendors electronically. MTA became an active leading member of the TransportMAX Users Group early in 2003 after the agency's procurement and material management team implemented the E-Commerce procurement process.

CEO Roger Snoble opened the conference with a welcoming speech. During his opening remarks, Snoble welcomed the attendees to Los Angeles and thanked them for their attendance at the transit industry event.

"The Los Angeles MTA is committed to TransportMAX over the long term and we are excited about where we are today and look forward to the continued future growth and success," he said. "I am glad that The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and The TransportMAX Users Group are involved in the process."

Snoble also spoke about where the LACMTA is growing in the near as well as long-term time frame with Rapid Bus, the Freeway Services Program and the expanded rail service, specifically the Eastside Project.

Conference highlights included a presentation of TransportMAX III upgrades, discussion of TransportMAX statistics, reports from the transit property users and an informal tour of the MTA Regional Rebuild Center.

Conference participants Glenda Smith and Cheryl Cavitt from San Mateo County Transit District were impressed by the automated storage and retrieval robots that glided around the rebuild center toting heavy parts and machinery like a scene from Star Wars.

"Awesome," Smith said shaking her head in amazement. "That is truly awesome."

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Here they go a-caroling: foreground, from left, Frank Foster, Robert Vasquez; front row, from left, Jeanne Kinsel, Carmelita Romero, Renee Willis, Maria Mariano, Peggie Blackiston, Norma Elston-Adams, Jess Godinez, back row; from left, Frank Sahlem, Robin Blair, Collins Kalu, Joan Wood, Wanda Knight, Brenda Stevenson. See list of [Metro Chorale](#) members



PHOTO BY LISA HUYNH

Carolers Bring Holiday Joy to MTA

By ADRIENNE S. BLYTHE

(Dec. 11, 2003) About nine years ago Carmelita Romero noticed that the holiday season at MTA was missing something: Christmas carolers. So she took it upon herself to change things.

Romero, a legal secretary, coordinates MTA's very own group of carolers who will be performing on every floor of the Gateway building – starting today – over the course of the next week.

"I am always trying to recruit people to sing with us," says Romero. "Once I get them to join, they don't want to leave."

There is only one requirement to join the group. "You just have to want to sing," says Romero.

"Christmas just isn't Christmas without carolers."

-- Metro Chorale coordinator Carmelita Romero. (pictured here at right).



PHOTO BY ADRIENNE BLYTHE

Romero enjoys entertaining people and making them smile. "Many people thank us for spreading holiday joy. A few years ago, one lady even says that we helped her get over her depression."

Besides helping others, Romero says that it also benefits those who sing. "It is very relaxing and almost therapeutic. When I hear all of the voices singing together it is very moving."

A group of about 15 carolers will gather by the elevators on each floor. They invite everyone to come listen and sing along with them.

"Christmas just isn't Christmas without carolers," says Romero.

Metro Chorale Members

* Robin Blair * Brenda Stevenson - soloist * Chip Hazen * Collins Kalu * Frank Foster - guitar player * Frank Sahlem - soloist * Gerald Price * Jess Godinez * Karin Hodin * Jeanne Kinsel * Letty Lawenko * Maria Mariano * Mary Lee * Monique Ramos * Norma Elston-Adams * Patricia Clark * Pamela Fairbanks * Peggie Blackiston * DonCosta Seawell - soloist * Thomas Traylor * Robert Vasquez - guitar player * Wanda Knight * Willie Atienza * Renee Willis - conductress * Joan Wood * Kathy Murrell (she no longer works for MTA but still plans to join the caroling on Fridays) * Sylvia Pantoja * George Parks *

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MTA Intern Caroline Forger Wins Scholarship

By ADRIENNE S. BLYTHE

(Dec. 12, 2003) MTA intern Caroline Forger recently was honored as a scholarship winner by the LA Area Chapter of the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS).



Caroline Forger

Forger won the organization's Ava Doner Memorial Scholarship. It was presented during an awards dinner at The Millennium Biltmore Hotel.

An intern with the Westside Area team, Forger works on the Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project. She is also a member of the WTS.

"The WTS is a great organization," says Forger. "It is an honor to be recognized by them."

'Key to effective planning'

Forger moved to LA from New York City this past June. "Working at MTA has really helped me learn more about the city and this is key to effective planning."

She previously worked for the New York City Division of Transportation's Department of City Planning.

"Working at MTA is a great learning experience because it is quite different from New York City," says Forger. "Everything is on a smaller scale here and the concentration on modes of transportation is different."

Forger is currently working on a Master of Arts in Urban Planning at UCLA. She also holds a bachelor's degree in metropolitan studies, urban design and architectural studies from New York University.

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Thumbs up! is the signal given by, from left, CEO Roger Snoble, Board Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky, bridge project manager Scott McConnell and Rapidway project manager Roger Dames.



First of 3 SF Valley Metro Rapidway Bridges is Completed

By RICK JAGER

(Dec. 12, 2003) The first of three key bridges to be built for the San Fernando Valley Metro Rapidway has been completed, MTA officials announced during a news event, today, at the Sepulveda Basin.

The 525-foot bridge, which spans the Los Angeles River, will one day support articulated buses transporting thousands of passengers en route from North Hollywood to Warner Center on a 14-mile dedicated busway.

"This new bridge will...(provide) ...a lifeline to Valley schools, colleges and major business centers," said Board Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky. "This is truly a major milestone that has been achieved towards the completion of this vital project."

The new bridge will accommodate two 15-foot-wide bus lanes on a deck some 32 feet above the river. The bridge was completed on budget and ahead of schedule.



The Los Angeles River bridge is the first of three completed for the San Fernando Valley Metro Rapidway. Below, the first Metro Bus rolls across the newly completed bridge.



'First of its kind'

"This Metro Rapidway project is the first of its kind in Southern California and represents an innovative solution whereby transit buses operate on mostly exclusive guideways unimpeded by surrounding traffic," said CEO Roger Snoble.

The San Fernando Valley Metro Rapidway will connect Warner Center and the North Hollywood Metro Rail Station.

When completed in 2005, Metro Rapid buses will travel one mile on

city streets and 13 miles on an exclusive bus lane constructed in the former railroad right-of-way along portions of Oxnard Street and Victory and Chandler boulevards.

The Rapidway will include 13 stations spaced approximately a mile apart at major activity centers. The stations will feature original art as well as lighting, seating, security cameras, public telephones, bicycle racks and ticket-vending machines.

Operating information

Station signage will display the wait time between buses, along with other operating information.

Park and ride lots will be built at five stations, providing approximately 3,000 new parking spaces. Landscaping will add approximately 5,000 trees, and a bikeway and pedestrian path will be built adjacent to much of the Rapidway.

The San Fernando Valley Metro Rapidway is being built at a cost of \$329.5 million, with an additional \$8.1 million for the bikeway and pedestrian path being built parallel to the Rapidway.

MTA awarded a \$3.8 million contract earlier this year to Fontana-based Brutoco Engineering and Construction for construction of the bridge.

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MTA Donates 6,000 Gifts to Inner City Children

By ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

(Dec. 12, 2003) This Christmas will mark another year that Willie Jordan, co-founder of the Fred Jordan Mission, has watched the economy slow and the number of needy families grow.

But, thanks to the generosity of MTA employees, 6,000 gifts will be distributed to inner city children, this year, during the Mission's annual holiday drive. It was MTA's eighth year to participate in the gift drive.

"MTA is one of our biggest and our best contributors," said Jordan. "To all the employees who gave these gifts, I say 'thank you,' not just for me, but for the thousands of children who will receive these toys."

Along with Santa and little visitors from the MTA Child Development Center, Deputy CEO John Catoe attended Friday's Gift Giving Drive to share a few words about the importance of the event.

"I know these gifts from MTA employees will bring joy to a lot of kids," said Catoe. "There will be a lot of kids smiling and laughing because of their donations."

Although this year's gift giving drive fell short of its goal, Bessie Rush-Johnson, MTA's Gift Giving Task Force coordinator, said the Mission still will have plenty of gifts for the children.

The Task Force received a variety of items, including glow-in-the-dark footballs, remote-controlled cars, coloring books, blankets and pajamas.

"It's just a multitude of gifts," said Rush-Johnson.

For the past three weeks, the Task Force has worked diligently to sort the items into categories according to age and gender.

"It's hard work because you're wrapping and bagging," said Rush-Johnson. "But it pays off."

PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD



Deputy CEO John Catoe and Willy Jordan of the Fred Jordan Mission thanked Gift Giving Coordinator Bessie Rush-Johnson, center, for her efforts during MTA's eighth holiday gift drive.



Even Santa got into the act with Willy Jordan to load MTA's 6,000 gifts onto waiting Metro Buses.

On Sunday, Dec. 21, Task Force members will visit the Mission, bearing gifts as well as money and check donations. The Mission expects to distribute bags of food and presents to about 12,000 people.

"I like that we're giving back to the community," Rush-Johnson said. "I do it because I know it's going to benefit the kids."

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Everyone had a big hug for Santa Claus.



Children from MTA's Child Development Center brought gifts for the Fred Jordan Mission kids.

MTA Urging Holiday Travelers to 'Fly Metro' to Local Airports

By DAVE SOTERO

(Dec. 16, 2003) In a "Fly Metro" ad campaign aimed at holiday travelers, MTA is urging the use of Metro Bus, Metro Rail and other local transit options as alternatives to the hassles and costs of driving to and parking at LA County airports.

The Automobile Club of Southern California is projecting a 3 percent increase in the number of Southern California residents who will be traveling by car this holiday season.

Los Angeles World Airport authorities expect approximately 2.6 million passengers to pass through LAX between Dec. 19 and Jan. 4. Burbank Airport authorities estimate an average of 17,000 to 19,000 people between Dec. 21 and Dec. 27. Long Beach Airport expects a total of 290,000 passengers for the month of December.

"Many LA travelers are simply unaware that there are alternatives to driving to and from county airports," says CEO Roger Snoble.

Savings is substantial

The cost savings to airport travelers who want to avoid parking fees is substantial. Parking rates at LAX range from \$8 to \$30 per day. Burbank Airport parking fees range from \$4.55 to \$15.45 per day. At Long Beach Airport, daily parking fees range from \$6 to \$15 per day.

MTA operates nine Metro Bus Lines serving LAX and four lines serving Burbank Airport. Long Beach Transit serves Long Beach Airport.

Metro Bus lines serving LAX are Line 42, 220, 111, 117, 220, 232, 315, 439 and 625. Lines serving Burbank Glendale Pasadena Airport are Line 94/394, 163 and 165. Long Beach Transit Line 111 serves Long Beach Airport.

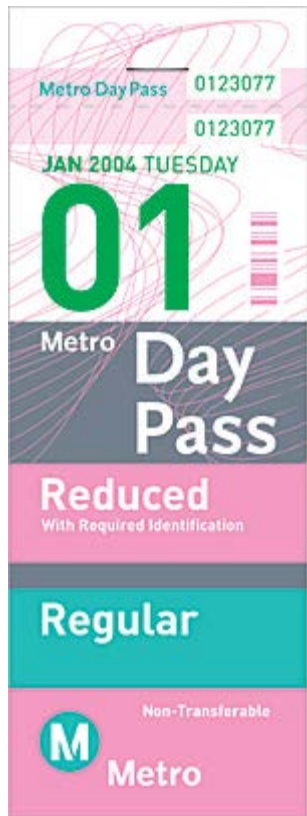
Santa Monica Big Blue Bus and Culver City Bus provide additional local services to LAX. These bus operators will also adhere to a holiday service schedule on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Metrolink trains

Metrolink provides 14 weekday trains from Los Angeles to the Burbank Airport. Another 13 trains travel from Los Angeles to Burbank Station, where passengers can get a free shuttle to the airport.

There are also 10 Metrolink trains coming south on the Ventura County line that stop at the Burbank Airport. Trains will adhere to their normal operating schedules throughout the holiday season, but will not operate Christmas Day and will not stop at the Burbank Airport on New Year's Day.

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MTA Debuts New Metro Day Pass, Lowers Cash Fare on Jan. 1

(Dec. 17, 2003) Beginning Jan. 1, MTA will unveil the Metro Day Pass, a convenient and cost-effective fare medium that allows unlimited rides on the Metro Bus and Rail system.

The Metro Day Pass, which will be good until 3 a.m. the following day, will be sold on Metro buses and at all Metro Rail ticket vending machines.

Also effective Jan. 1, MTA will lower one-way fares to \$1.25 and eliminate 25-cent transfers within the Metro system.

The day pass will benefit cash-paying customers who will be able to ride any Metro Bus or Rail line and make multiple transfers for only \$3. Zone charges will be added to day passes used for freeway express bus service.

Lower senior fares

Seniors, disabled patrons and Medicare recipients will pay only \$1.50 for the Metro Day Pass. The pass also provides a convenient way for vacation and business travelers to visit LA County destinations.

"The new Metro Day Pass is going to be the best value for many of our customers, especially those who pay cash for daily tickets," says CEO Roger Snoble. "What's more, people will now have the flexibility to get on or off the system as their needs require. This is extremely valuable for people with active lifestyles and commute schedules."

For commuters transferring from the Metro system to municipally operated bus lines, a 25-cent transfer fare will be required unless they purchase the EZ Transit Pass.

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Holiday Gifts from MTA Vendors are Off-Limits

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Dec. 17, 2003) So, what do you want for a holiday gift? That's not a question MTA employees want to hear from those who do business with the agency.

Most employees may be aware that accepting gifts from vendors and contractors is verboten – if the gift is valued at more than \$10. Even so, it's surprising what some employees have turned over to MTA's Ethics and Lobby Registration Department.

Lakers leather jackets. A crystal vase. A pair of Dr. Seuss lava lamps. Obviously over the top and beyond the \$10 limit.

But an ordinary box of candy or a basket of fruit? Why can't the recipient just share that with other employees and, in effect, parcel out the cost among the group?

Sharing doesn't count

"Even if the employee chooses to share a gift," says Chief Ethics Officer Karen Gorman, "the full amount of the gift is still attributable to the individual who accepts it."

MTA's Code of Conduct permits employees to accept gifts from a single contractor of no more than \$10 value in a given month and no more than \$50 total for a calendar year. Employees are forbidden to accept gifts of any value whatsoever from an individual or company bidding on an MTA contract.

Some departments, such as Procurement, have general policies forbidding employees from accepting any gifts from outside sources.

Under MTA's Code of Conduct, employees who receive gifts that exceed the dollar value limit must either return the gift or give the gift to the Ethics Department to donate to a charity within 30 days.

Some items exempt

Some items are exempt from the definition of "gifts" under the law. The Ethics Office helps employees determine the value of gifts and whether any exemption applies.

Employees who receive gifts should contact the Ethics Office at 922-2900. There's more information on the department's Intranet web site at <http://intranet1/dept/ethics/default.htm>. Copies of the Code of Conduct are available from the Ethics Office and may be accessed as a pdf file at <http://intranet1/dept/ethics/codes/Policies/codeofconduct.pdf>.

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Rose Queen Megan Chinen and her court will ride the Metro Gold Line on Friday.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TOURNAMENT OF ROSES

Rose Queen to Promote Metro Gold Line Service for New Year's

(Dec. 17, 2003) MTA will mark the return of commuter rail service to the Tournament of Roses Parade for the first time in more than 50 years, Friday, when the 2004 Rose Queen embarks for a ride.

Rose Queen Megan Chinen and her court will make the journey on the Metro Gold Line to demonstrate how thousands of parade visitors can avoid traffic and parking snarls during this year's festivities.

The Rose Queen and princesses will be accompanied by the media on the round trip from Memorial Park station to Sierra Madre Villa station. The route is one many Rose Parade viewers and Rose Bowl Game patrons are expected to take beginning New Year's Eve.

Metro trains will run all night long, Dec. 31, and will be free from 9 p.m. until 2 a.m., Jan. 1.

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Sheriff's Deputy Susan Vodrazka and her K-9 counterpart, Hero, regularly patrol the Metro Rail system.



PHOTO BY GAYLE ANDERSON

Hero to the Rescue

By VERONICA TORREJÓN

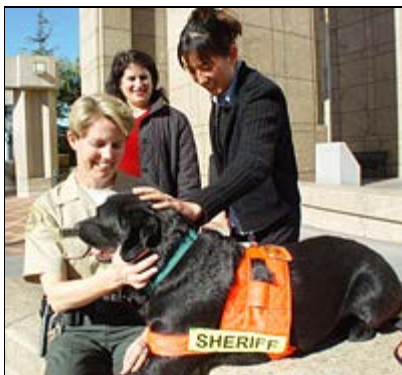
(Dec. 18, 2003) The world could use more heroes. Just ask MTA's newest dynamic duo, Sheriff's Deputy Susan Vodrazka and her K-9 counterpart, appropriately named -- Hero.

"She's the greatest, smartest dog on the planet," says Vodrazka, a 13-year department veteran and member of the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau.

Trained as a search and rescue team for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Hero and Vodrazka are fully prepared to heed the call should an emergency situation arise.

When not in training, Vodrazka and Hero, a 22-month-old black Labrador Retriever, patrol the rail lines ensuring a safe and fun ride for all passengers.

Hero often draws the affections of passers-by. Here, Marisa Yeager and Kimberly Yu of Government Relations give Hero a lunchtime pat on the head.



Guest appearances

Sometime soon, they hope to start making guest appearances at safety-related functions and school events.

Like her mythical namesake whose epic love story ended in the tragic death of her lover, Leander, Hero is legendary among children who often rush to greet her when they spot her on trains, or patrolling the stations.

"Oh yeah, she's popular with the kids," Vodrazka says. "And highly social."

She also has the distinction of being the only fully trained search and

rescue dog in the unit. Her predecessor, Buffy, is the personal pet of Sheriff's Lt. Mike Herek. Buffy, who enjoys a largely ceremonial role in the department, occasionally takes shifts patrolling the rail lines with Hero.

"They're friends," Vodrazka says.

Solid-gold heart

Far from the tough looking attack dogs featured in police dramas, Hero has a solid-gold heart, silky-soft black fur and warm brown eyes that could melt steel.

And if a natural or man-made disaster should strike, she just might be the one to save the day. Trained to find human survivors in the rubble of collapsed buildings, Hero can signal emergency personnel by barking for 30 seconds.

Like many search and rescue dogs born post Sept. 11, Hero was given a name befitting a dog of her profession.

"I keep telling her one day she's going to earn it," Vodrazka said. "Then again, in the best case scenario she would never have to."

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Ch. 36 to Air Video Tour of Area Attractions Via Subway

- "L.A. in a Day Via Metro Red Line" will air on Channel 36, today, at 11:30 a.m., 9:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m., and on Saturday, Dec. 20, at 6:30 p.m.

(Dec. 18, 2003) Tune in to LA Channel 36, beginning today, for "L.A. in a Day Via Metro Red Line," a video tour of many of the area's most popular and interesting destinations.

The program, a co-production of MTA and city-owned Channel 36, features attractions that are in walking distance of the subway.

Among the destinations explored by hosts Jeff Cole and Heather Hopper are the Hollywood & Highland retail and entertainment complex at Hollywood/Highland station; Grand Central Market at Pershing Square station; Universal CityWalk at Universal City station; and Olvera Street at Union Station.

"L.A. in a Day Via Metro Red Line" will air on Channel 36, today, at 11:30 a.m., 9:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m., and on Saturday, Dec. 20, at 6:30 p.m. The show will also be made available to other cable stations throughout Los Angeles County.

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Editor's Note: (Dec. 18, 2003) The following joint statement was released, today, by MTA Board Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky, CEO Roger Snoble and UTU General Chairman James A. Williams.

MTA, Bus and Rail Operators Reach Tentative Contract Agreement

Tentative agreement has been reached on a new three-year labor contract between the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the United Transportation Union, which represents 5,000 bus and rail operators.

Terms of the settlement are being withheld pending a ratification meeting for the Union's members. Subject to Union ratification, the MTA Board will consider approval of the contract at its January Board meeting.

In a joint statement, MTA Board Chairman Zev Yaroslavsky, CEO Roger Snoble and UTU General Chairman James A. Williams said, "We are delighted that we have been able to reach an agreement which is equitable to both parties. This is a fair agreement for the employees, for the MTA and above all, for our 500,000 customers who depend on our public transit system."

Negotiations reached their final stages in the last month. MTA negotiators, Chairman Yaroslavsky and Board member Antonio Villaraigosa and UTU General Chairman James Williams presided over the successful discussions.

MTA Board member Antonio Villaraigosa said, "This agreement ensures that bus and rail service will continue without interruption for the transit dependent people of our region."

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CalPers Members Can Buy Additional Years Toward Retirement

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Dec. 19, 2003) Non-contract employees, AFSCME and Teamsters members who also are members of the CalPERS retirement system – and who have at least five years of service credits – will be able to buy up to five additional years toward retirement beginning Jan. 1, 2004.

Called Additional Retirement Service Credit – or “Air Time” – the new program was enabled through recent state legislation, AB-719. All CalPERS members, statewide, are eligible to participate in the program.

Under an agreement with CalPers approved by the PTSC Board, Friday, eligible employees may purchase the additional service years through payroll deductions with pre-tax dollars. The cost of the Additional Retirement Service Credit program is borne by employees who decide to participate, not by MTA.

As of Jan. 1, CalPERS will accept members’ requests for estimates of the cost to purchase service years. The cost – and the benefit to the member – will vary, depending upon the age and years of service a member has.

Whole-year increments

Eligible employees will be able to purchase additional service years in whole-year increments of one to five years. Because it will be a one-time election, CalPERS members won’t be permitted, for example, to purchase two years and sometime later elect to purchase another three.

Although the program is open only to active employees, an employee who purchases extra service years can continue making payments after retirement. Payments made after retirement would be deducted from the employee’s pension benefit on an after-tax basis.

With more than a half-million public employees enrolled in CalPERS, it may take some time to process the high number of expected requests for cost calculations.

More information on-line

For more information about the Additional Retirement Service Credit program, go to the CalPERS web site at <http://www.calpers.ca.gov/>. An article about the program is available via the link entitled “New! Additional Retirement Service Credit Option (Air Time).”

Frequently asked questions about the program may be found at <http://www.calpers.ca.gov/servicecredit/airtimefaqs.htm>.

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Account Executive Yvonne Price and Employee Activities Manager Diane Delaney-Talton show two of the illustrations on the new Metro calendar and posters.



PHOTO BY BILL HEARD

New Metro Posters, Calendar Feature Stunning Illustrations

By YVONNE PRICE

(Dec. 19, 2003) Beginning in January and continuing for several months, a stunning series of 14 illustrated posters featuring Metro service and work projects will be placed in Metro Rail cars and stations.

The posters will provide the public with a wider perspective on the numerous services and projects undertaken by Metro. The posters and a 2004 calendar were developed by MTA's Design Studio.

On each poster, riders will enjoy a scenic view of a Metro service or project by artists Paul Rogers, Laura Smith or Neal Aspinall, along with interesting facts or a brief description.

MTA expects the posters to be so popular that an extra supply has been ordered for people who would like to purchase one or more poster or the whole set.

Posters now available

The posters are now available in Employee Activities, located on the Plaza level of MTA Headquarters.

The 2004 Metro Calendar, which showcases the same beautiful illustrations also is available in Employee Activities.

Each month, the calendar displays another reminder of the wide variety of Metro transportation services and projects that serve the public. The calendar is suitable for desk display or at home. They also make great gifts.

Metro Works posters are priced at \$8 each, two for \$12, or the full set of 14 posters for \$35. Metro calendars are \$6 each or one free with a purchase of \$20 or more at Employee Activities.

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Rose Queen Megan Chinen and the Royal Court of the 2004 Tournament of Roses join Metro Rail General Manager Gerald Francis at the Memorial Park Station of the Metro Gold Line to promote ridership for New Year's Day festivities. Visitors can ride all day with the new \$3 Metro Day Pass. In addition, rides are free Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 on all Metro buses and Metro Rail. 2004 Royal Court Princesses: Stephanie Barnes, Laura Stassel, Christina Mills, Natalie Matsumoto, Erinne La Brie, and Katherine Koch.



PHOTO BY LUIS INZUNZA

LASD Prepares For New Year's Festivities on the Metro Gold Line

By ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

(Dec. 22, 2003) As passengers board the Metro Gold Line en route to the 115th Rose Parade this New Year's Day, members of the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau will be keeping a watchful eye out for their safety.

The presence of Sheriff's deputies, fare inspectors, MTA Security officers and employee volunteers will be significantly increased along all Metro Rail Lines – particularly at Union Station and Metro Gold Line stations.

The officers will work crowd control and block the transportation of unsafe items and belongings that may obstruct walkways on train cars.

"We hope we can make taking the trains and buses to the event part of their experience," says Sheriff's Lt. Mike Parker. "We want to make it safe and enjoyable."

Dangerous items

At checkpoints along Metro hub stations and transfer points, Sheriff's deputies will stop passengers with dangerous and oversized items that the trains cannot accommodate. This includes lighter fluid, hibachis, ladders and large umbrellas.

"For people traveling to the Rose Parade on the train, it's best to travel light," says Parker.

Although Parker was unable to give an expected attendance figure, he

believes the event at peak times could be comparable in size to the opening of the Metro Gold Line last July.

Parade-goers may try to avoid heavy ridership travel times by planning a longer day in Pasadena.

"Go early and leave late," says Parker. "Go look at the floats after the parade and enjoy the day."

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Division 1 Transportation Department celebrates two "How You Doin'?" awards.



PHOTO BY VERONICA TORREJÓN

Division 1 Party Recognizes 'How You Doin'?' Awards

By VERONICA TORREJÓN

(Dec. 22, 2003) Between the rapidly approaching holiday season, the end of the strike, and two "How You Doin'?" awards, bus operators at Division 1 had much to celebrate Friday.

The festivities kicked off early with an award ceremony led by General Manager Rich Rogers, who presented two awards for Outstanding Transportation Division to Transportation Manager Sonja Owens.

The celebration continued with the annual holiday party complete with food, a raffle and music courtesy of DJ Jamie Figueroa, who works as a bus operator at the division.

"We're celebrating everything – Christmas, being back to work, the awards," said Owens. "It's good to be alive."

Trophy and a check

The first award, for the month of September, was marked with a trophy. The next was a quarterly award that earned the Division a \$500 check.

Both awards are in recognition of the tremendous improvement Division 1 has shown over the past two years, Rogers said. The division earned the award seven out of nine months this year and three out of 12 months last year.

"This division is going beyond where the bar has already been raised," Rogers said. "This is a huge accomplishment."

On a roll

Operators were on a role when the quarterly award was earned just before the start of the strike, Owens said. "The family atmosphere here has pulled us together and helped a lot. It's brought us all closer together."

Owens is proud of the people in her division who have continued to

DJ Jamie Figueroa is the hit of the party as he poses with Bus Operator Ed Pendleton.



work hard despite difficult times that have been compounded by the supermarket strike that has left many operators with family members walking the picket lines.

"With everything else going on we have been able to maintain a high standard of efficiency," Owens said.

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Division 6 takes home Most Improved Maintenance Division and Best Maintenance Division in the 'How You Doin'?' program.



Division 6 Clinches Two 'How You Doin'?' Awards

By LISA HUYNH

(Dec. 22, 2003) The Maintenance team of Venice Division 6 clinched two "How You Doin'?" awards for the first quarter Fiscal Year 2004 - Most Improved Maintenance Division and Best Maintenance Division.

"We've taken the safety program to heart," says Maintenance Manager Bruce Buck. "We take care of each other, we come to work and we take care of business. I work with a fabulous group of people and I'm glad to be a part of this team."

Division 6 was lowest in new Workers Compensation claims and accidents. The team was first in attendance and placed second in on-time pullouts and miles between mechanical failures.

"It's such a joy to come out here to be a part of this award ceremony," says Sector General Manager Jim McElroy. "This award was very well-deserved because Division 6 is a self-driven and well-run division. There's a strong commitment to service here."

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Division 8 wins two 'How You Doin'?' awards for August and September.



PHOTO BY LISA HUYNH

Division 8 Receives Top 'How You Doin'?' Honors

By LISA HUYNH

(Dec. 22, 2003) Winning award after award, West Valley Division 8 recently took home another "How You Doin'?" award for Outstanding Transportation Division for the months of August and September.

"Winning this award is a clear indication that our operators are doing a good job," says Transportation Manager Maria Reynolds. "I think this division is doing well and we're going to continue to keep that going. I'm excited."

For the month of August, Division 8 scored the best in in-service on-time performance and running hot. They also reduced the number of accidents.

For September, the team significantly reduced the number of accidents and new Workers Compensation claims.

Sector General Manager David Armijo congratulated the team with a trophy for their hard work and dedication.

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Division 9's award-winning maintenance and transportation teams got together to pose for photo.



PHOTO BY LAWRENCE COSNER

Double 'How You Doin'?' Award Wins for Division 9

By LISA HUYNH

(Dec. 22, 2003) San Gabriel Valley Division 9 sweeps the competition – winning the “How You Doin’?” award for Most Improved Transportation Division for first quarter FY2004 and Best Maintenance Division for the month of September.

“I am proud of the outstanding improvements that our operators have made here,” says Transportation Manager Mike Greenwood. “It validates the hard work we’ve been putting into the division. This recognition will encourage the us to keep up the good work.”

The transportation team has significantly improved on reducing the number of accidents, injuries and complaints. They’ve also made improvements on on-time pullouts and on-time performance.

“Our noteworthy improvements are made possible because of the hard work from our operators, supervisors and managers,” says Greenwood. “Also, we couldn’t have earned this award without the support of the entire San Gabriel Valley Sector staff and the Vehicle Operations Supervisor team.”

The maintenance team scored the best in on-time pullouts and miles between mechanical failures.

The transportation division a \$500 check for the achievement.

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Some of those who gathered for the dedication ceremony were, from left, OCTA CEO Art Leahy, MTA Director John Fasana, Beth Dyer, MTA Director Antonio Villaraigosa and former SCRTD Chairman Nick Patsaouras.



PHOTOS BY BILL HEARD

Leaders Dedicate Plaque to John Dyer, 'Father of Subway'

By BILL HEARD, Editor



Beth Dyer, widow of former SCRTD General Manager John A. Dyer, with the plaque that will be mounted in the Wilshire/Vermont Metro Red Line station.

See metro.net report:
[Memorial Service Set, May 28, for SCRTD's John Dyer](#)

(Dec. 22, 2003) Current and former leaders of MTA and its predecessor agency, SCRTD, gathered in the Board Room, Monday, to dedicate a plaque honoring John A. Dyer as "father of the Los Angeles County subway system."

Dyer, who died of a heart attack, May 3, in Glendale, was general manager of SCRTD from 1981 to 1988. He is credited with securing funding for the Metro Red Line and seeing it through the initial design and start of construction in 1986.

His widow, Beth, represented the family and unveiled the plaque that will be placed in the Wilshire/Vermont Metro Red Line station. In May, the MTA Board voted to name the station in Dyer's memory.

"John Dyer was a nationally recognized leader and considered a visionary in developing successful transit systems in major cities around the country....,"

the plaque reads in part. "He was the pioneer in developing the plan and funding for the Los Angeles Metro Rail system...."

'Transformed public transportation'

"He had a huge part in transforming public transportation," said MTA Director John Fasana, during opening remarks. "It's only appropriate

that we name a Metro Rail subway station in his honor."

Los Angeles City Councilman Antonio Villaraigosa, who served as a member of the SCRTD Board, noted that Dyer had increased bus ridership by 33 percent and had obtained \$1.2 billion for the subway's first construction phase and another \$1.3 billion for the second phase.

"When you're a pioneer, you're sometimes the only voice against the wind," said Villaraigosa. "Those visionary continue to share the dream, to paint the picture, to put the mural on the canvas."

CEO Art Leahy of the Orange County Transit Authority, who served Dyer as an SCRTD staff member, called him "a demanding boss, an inspiring leader. I learned a lot from him. I'm in his debt."

Former SCRTD Board Member Mike Lewis said Dyer "...gave us mobility. He built an 18-mile spinal cord of a subway, capable of meeting our needs for many generations...We salute you with our highest honor and a lasting tribute to your contribution to our community and to our future."

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