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► [CEO Hotline](#)

► [Metro Projects](#)

► [Facts at a Glance](#)
(web)

► [Archives](#)

► [Events Calendar](#)

► [Research Center/
Library](#)

► [Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)

► [Metro Classifieds](#)

► [Retirement
Round-up](#)

Metro Info

► [Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)

► [Org Chart](#) (pdf)

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Former General Manager Rich Rogers is presented an award from fellow GMs, from left, Alex Clifford, Jim McElroy of Westside/Central, Dana Coffey of South Bay and David Armijo of San Fernando Valley.

Past, Present, Future Set Tone for New Gateway Cities Leadership

By KIM SIM

The 1950s vintage bus, the "Metro Experience" mobile theater and a lineup of new Metro Buses, weren't the only glimpses those who attended the Gateway Cities Sector open house, Feb. 20, got of MTA's past, present and future.

They also saw the past, present and future of the sector's leadership as – with a handshake – General Manager Rich Rogers turned over the reins to his successor, Alex Clifford. Clifford had been managing director of operations.

About 200 attended what had been planned as a celebration of the sector's one-year anniversary. Instead, the luncheon reception turned into a day to recognize the Gateway Cities sector's accomplishments and to mark its change in leadership, as Rogers worked his last day with MTA.

"Sort of ironic how it ends, on this being my last day," Rogers said.

Good-natured ribbing

Speaker after speaker good-naturedly ribbed Rogers about his decision to leave sunny Southern California for a job on the East Coast. Rogers has been named senior vice president of East Coast Operations at MV Transportation, Inc.

"I think the world of Rich



and I question his sanity to move to the East Coast in the middle of winter," said Don Knabe, Los Angeles County Supervisor and MTA Board member.

On hand for the change of leadership at the Gateway Cities sector were, from left, incoming GM Alex Clifford, MTA Board members Bea Proo and Don Knabe, Deputy CEO John Catoe and outgoing GM Rich Rogers.

Said Deputy CEO John Catoe: "Someone from the East Coast made him an offer he couldn't refuse — despite the snow."

Plans for the event, co-hosted by the Gateway Cities Service Sector and Non-Revenue Operations, were slightly changed, not only in content but also in location, when rain forced the reception indoors.

The celebration included a "transit fair" of MTA's past, present and future.

To symbolize the past, a light green 1958 MTA bus was brought into the sector's parking lot, as well as photographs of buses from the past. Vintage fare boxes and vintage advertisements for trolley trips were also on display at a booth staffed by MTA Library Assistant Jim Walker and Gateway Cities Governance Council member Wally Shidler.

Symbol of the future

The Metro Experience, an interactive 3-D theater that simulates an actual train ride, represented the present. Also on display were new Metro Rapid and Metro Local buses, the Universal Fare System and the HASTUS software program — the future of MTA.

Sector Community Relations staffers David Hershenson and Cathy Manzo, along with Harold Torres and Dora Vega of Non-Revenue Operators planned and coordinated the event.

The Gateway Cities sector's four primary objectives under Rogers' leadership were to improve transit services, improve safety, take care of its employees and enhance the image of the organization.

The sector established two new lines — 611 and 612 — and restructured another, Line 111. The sector also saw improved safety, with reductions in both accidents and workers' compensation claims.

The sector implemented an employee feedback survey and created an employee-based task force. As part of its community outreach program, the sector conducted quarterly town hall meetings.

Now, as Clifford put it, it is time to fill Rogers' "big shoes."

"It'll be a big challenge for me to take that baton and run with it," Clifford said, "but I'm ready for that."

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