

Metro Report Archives - March 2004 Articles

Wednesday, March 31

[L.A. County Could Lose \\$339 Mill.](#) Under State Budget Proposal

[See L.A. for 3 Bucks a Day?](#) High School Teams Say 'Yes!'

[SGV Sector DAC](#) Honored by Valley Community Church

Tuesday, March 30

[Board Improves Non-Contract Retirement Plan](#); OKs Other Motions

[Career Days](#) Set for Westside/Central Maintenance Employees

[Sectors Schedule April](#) Governance Council Meetings

[MTA Employee](#) Goes Bald to Help Kids with Cancer

[Six mechanics from Crossroads Depot](#) Division 2 are new heavy tow truck operators.

Friday, March 26

[Terrorist Threat Focuses Attention](#) on Rail, Bus Security

[Management Audit Web Pages](#) Join Employee Intranet

[Dodgers to Run Shuttle Buses](#) from Union Station, Chinatown

Thursday, March 25

[Grand Opening for Transit Services Bureau](#) SF Valley Office

[South Bay Open House](#) Set for Saturday, March 27

[Hearings Set at MTA](#), Friday, on State Budget Cuts, Gas Prices

Wednesday, March 24

[MTA to be Featured in Public TV Program](#) on Workers' Comp

[Chatsworth First-Graders](#) Get a Kick Out of Division 8

[Derald Andrews Commended](#) for Helping a Co-Worker in Distress

Tuesday, March 23

[Paid Permit Parking Offered](#), April 1, at Valley Metro Rail Stations

[98 and Going Strong](#), Arthur Winston Celebrates a Birthday

[Obituary](#) Services Set Friday for Real Estate Officer BonnieLee Yarbrough

Friday, March 19

[New Policy Restricts Cell Phone Use](#) to MTA Business

[Facilities Services Employees](#) Achieve Landmark Safety Record

[Ted Ball's 'Amazing Experience'](#) in Life and the L.A. Marathon

[New Foothill Transit Store](#) Opens at El Monte Station

Thursday, March 18

[MTA's Sector Approach](#) Still Evolving, Says GM David Armijo

[MTA Library Users](#) Now Have World Catalog at Their Fingertips

Wednesday, March 17

[Retirement Income Plan](#) on Finance and Budget Committee Agenda

[Division 18's Ed Tanner](#) Looks Back on Pro Football Career

Tuesday, March 16

[ATMS 'Smart Bus' System](#) Will Improve Service Safety, Reliability

[Take Tom's Challenge](#): Go MTA to Save on High Cost of Commuting Solo

[They're Doin' Great!](#) Division 3 Transportation Earns Top Honors for January

[Calming a 'Storm' of Concern](#) About Robberies Near Blue Line

Friday, March 12

[Suspicious Package](#) Prompts Partial MTA HQ Evacuation

[Another LA Marathon 'Victory'](#) for MTA Bikers, Runners
[Three Friends Pushed Each Other](#) to Finish LA Marathon
[Joe B. Scatchard](#), SCRTD's Top Money Manager, Has Died

Thursday March 11

Focus on [Consent Decree Compliance Risks Losing Ridership](#), Transit Peer Panel Warns
[Arraignment Set for Employee](#) Charged in Workers' Comp Case
[SGV Sector Staff Hosts Info Table](#) at Youth Career Fair
[Chamber of Commerce](#) event

Wednesday, March 10

[Braille Decals](#) to Help the Blind Navigate MTA Bus System
[Division 6 Maintenance Wins](#) 'Outstanding' Award for January
[Public Hearings](#), Town Hall Meetings Scheduled
[Signal Hill Street Improvement](#) Reaches Completion
[A Visit to St. Luke's](#)

Tuesday, March 9

[BRU Calls for Consent Decree Extension](#); Transit Peer Group Says MTA in Compliance
[Communications Cuts Customer Complaints](#) at Division 5
[Planters](#) for the Portal

Friday, March 5

Students Explore LA in [MTA Day Pass \\$3 Vacation Contest](#)
[MTA's Tuition Program](#) Gives Employees a Leg Up on Opportunity
Tuition Assistance Program Paid Off Big Time for [Brady Branstetter](#)

Thursday, March 4

[Public Hearings](#) Scheduled in Santa Clarita Valley
[Transit Security Officers Foil](#) Switchblade Incident
13 Grandchildren are [Bus Operator's 'Stars'](#) These Days

Wednesday, March 3

Div. 6 Maintenance Goes [445 Days Accident-Free](#)
[Searching for René](#): Father, Son Reunited Through Internet

Tuesday, March 2

[Rideshare Interest Soars](#) as Gas Prices Rise in California
Risk Management Executive [Michael Koss to Leave MTA](#)
Bus Operator Brings [New Meaning to Alternative Transportation](#)

Monday, March 1

[Board Sets Transportation Priorities](#) During February Meeting
[Board Approves Sale of Land](#) for LAUSD Middle School
[A Metro Romance](#): D-18 and Number 3 Meet, Fall in Love, Marry
[Featured Speaker --](#) MTA Controller Josie Nicasio

[Back to Archives](#)



[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

▶ [Safety](#)

▶ [Pressroom](#) (web)

▶ [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)

▶ [Policies](#)

▶ [Training](#)

▶ [Help Desk](#)

▶ [Intranet Policy](#)

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News Item: The price of regular gasoline in California rose 20 cents per gallon, in late February, and now averages \$2.133 per gallon – the first time gasoline prices have been above \$2 in the state since Sept. 15, 2003.

Rideshare Interest Soars as Gas Prices Rise in California

By BILL HEARD, Editor
(March 2, 2004) As gasoline prices in Los Angeles County rose above well above \$2 in recent weeks, rideshare inquiries have poured into MTA – soaring 45 percent since December 2003.

In December, Metro Employer Programs account representatives received 457 calls from people requesting information about carpooling, vanpooling, park and ride lots and transit services.

By the end of February, the number of information calls had jumped 51 percent to 662 for the month. February call totals also were 29 percent higher than the 514 recorded in January. There were 439 calls in November.

“We’re seeing that more and more people are looking for a way to rideshare,” says Sarah Zadok, Employer Programs accounts supervisor, who has worked in rideshare programs for 20 years.

Zadok has seen similar surges in rideshare interest following such catastrophes as the Northridge earthquake.

‘This is major’

“I haven’t seen interest this strong, recently, but this is probably the biggest hike in gas prices we’ve seen in a while,” she says. “They pay these prices abroad, but for us, this is major.”

Zadok notes that the Automobile Club of Southern California currently uses \$1.69 as the average per mile cost of commuting alone. “They’ll have to change that.”

Normally, Metro’s rideshare program receives about 400 calls a month, most from small companies interested in employee information. Metro Commute Services reps more frequently work with large companies that have rideshare goals they must attain or purchase smog credits.

Of course, the greatest number of information calls for the past year – 996 – occurred in October. But, it was the transit strike not gasoline prices, that spurred interest in ridesharing.

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Resources

▶ [Safety](#)

▶ [Pressroom](#) (web)

▶ [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)

▶ [Policies](#)

▶ [Training](#)

▶ [Help Desk](#)

▶ [Intranet Policy](#)

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Photo Credit: Photo by Kim Sim

Metro Bus Operator Alfred Portillo and his main form of personal transportation - his bicycle.

Bus Operator Brings New Meaning to Alternative Transportation

By KIM SIM

(March 2, 2004) Alfred Portillo drives enough already, spending close to 40 hours a week navigating the streets of Los Angeles as he picks up and drops off riders on Metro Bus Lines 18 and 745.

So when it comes to getting to work, Portillo opts not to drive. Instead, the 53-year old veteran bus operator bikes, jogs or rides the bus to get from his home in Montebello to Central City Division 1, where he works.

It's a routine he has kept up for almost 22 years.

"I like to keep myself in shape," Portillo says. "I like the idea of working out before I get to work. There's less stress on your body when you're driving the bus. It just brings you up."

The tradeoff for a pre-work workout is waking up early. Portillo, whose bus assignment is Monday through Friday starting at 4:47 a.m., has to leave his house by 3 a.m.

That gives him enough time to take a shower and get ready for work. He estimates it takes 55 minutes to travel the 10 miles by bicycle, his preferred form of transportation.

Biking in the dark

Having to hit the road when it's still dark doesn't worry Portillo.

"I've never really had any trouble out there, riding the bike to work," he

says. "Everyone tells me to take the car but I'm trying to keep myself in shape. It's a fun thing to do. I feel good inside."

His wife, Rose, says she's used to this by now.

"At the beginning, I would get all nervous that something would happen to him," she says. "Now, if he wants to do it, let him do it."

She does, however, tell him that if he insists on the bike, to at least "go buy a new one, go buy a better one."

It isn't as if the Portillos don't own a car. In fact, they have four — one for each member of the family. Portillo just prefers not to drive to work.

Some ridicule him

"Some of the drivers ridicule me," Portillo says with a laugh. "They say, 'Don't you have a car?' They look at me like I'm strange, like I'm from another planet."

Although fellow bus operators do joke about Portillo's habits, they say they're impressed.

"I wish I had that kind of enthusiasm," Operator Steve Moreno says. "I couldn't do it and he does it every morning."

Portillo's physical activities go beyond biking and jogging. He heads to the gym regularly after work. He swims. He plays golf. He's even trying to break into the Senior PGA Tour.

And he doesn't like to waste an opportunity to work out. During breaks, Portillo does pull-ups in the bus.

"I've just got a lot of energy, it's unreal," Portillo says. "My goal is to stay in shape all my life. I just enjoy working out. I can't see anybody having to miss out."



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Resources

▶ [Safety](#)

▶ [Pressroom](#) (web)

▶ [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)

▶ [Policies](#)

▶ [Training](#)

▶ [Help Desk](#)

▶ [Intranet Policy](#)

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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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The Venice Division 6 maintenance team gathers to celebrate 445 accident-free days. Assistant Transportation Manager Johnny Lindsey, left, and Assistant Maintenance Manager Bruce Buck, right, proudly display the record-breaking sign for all to see.

Div. 6 Maintenance Goes 445 Days Accident-Free

By JODY LITVAK

(March 3, 2004) Congratulations were given all around, recently, at Venice Division 6 maintenance.

On Feb. 25, the maintenance team celebrated 445 days without a lost time accident by throwing a catered barbecue.

Bruce Buck, assistant maintenance manager, attributes the lack of injuries to the professionalism of the crew and their willingness to look out for each other.

"We'd like to go two years without an accident," said Buck. "I don't know what we'll do to celebrate then."

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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Photo Credit: Photo by Kim Sim

René Sanz Jr., left, and his father, René Sr. have much to talk about during a meeting at Central City Division 1 after a 29-year separation.

Searching for René: Father, Son Reunited Through Internet

By KIM SIM

(March 3, 2004) For 29 long years, Metro Bus Operator René Sanz Sr. never talked to or saw his only son. René Sanz Jr. lived on only in memories.

That all changed in late February, with the help of the World Wide Web.

René Sr., an operator at Central City Division 1, and René Jr., a Los Angeles lawyer, ended an almost three decade-long separation on Feb. 20, when the two met at the elder Sanz's home in Monterey Park.

"He looks different, but it's him," René Sr. said of his first impression of his son.

Not that he expected his son to look the same. After all, the last time he saw René Jr. was in 1975, when the boy was 7 years old.

René Jr. is now 36, a criminal defense lawyer with an office on Wilshire Boulevard. There's also a daughter-in-law and an 8-month-old granddaughter in the picture.

"It's actually kind of funny," René Jr. said. "As the years have gone by, I thought of looking him up but I didn't know how he would want it, if he would want to continue (the relationship)."

Reaching out for René

Now he knows. It was his father who reached out to find him on the Internet search engine, Google. And in the week after their reunion, the two have met three more times. They also talk on the phone almost every day.

It's as if each is afraid of losing the other again.

René Sr. lost all contact with his son after his ex-wife remarried, three years after the divorce. She moved out of Monterey Park without telling him where she was going and took René Jr. with her.

The younger Sanz moved from city to city — Montebello, Alhambra and Arcadia. Meanwhile, René Sr. went to live in Mexico for 16 years, returning to the United States in 2000.

Once back, René Sr. started searching for his son, looking in phone books and using America Online and Yahoo Internet search engines.

Nothing turned up.

Then along came news reports about a teenager who found out that his own mother had abducted him when he was a child. That discovery was made after the teenager entered his name into the popular Internet search engine, Google.

Gave Google a try

René Sr. decided he would give Google a try, too. It didn't matter that he wasn't very good with computers.

"I tried different ways and I didn't get anywhere," René Sr. said. "Maybe this would be it."

His first few hits on Google, after putting in his son's name, were listings for a lawyer in Los Angeles: Law Offices of René Sanz. René Sanz, Criminal Law Attorney.

Address and phone number, both staring out at him from his home computer screen.

"It was kind of frightening, nerve wracking," René Sr. recalled. "I had been looking for a long time. You had a feeling, what if he doesn't want to talk to me?"

He finally worked up the courage to call and asked the lawyer to confirm his middle name and his mother's name.

'Are you my father?'

Then it was the lawyer's turn to ask a question: "Are you my father?"

The two have since met several times — to talk about what happened, to exchange stories and photographs and to get to know each other all over again.

In one of their more recent get-togethers, René Sr. and René Jr. discovered that they shared a favorite dish, IHOP's avocado bacon omelette.

"That's what I always order," father and son said, almost in unison.

"We spent a long time talking," René Sr. said. "I think the waiter got upset because we took so long."

At first, they didn't know how to address each other, René Sr. said.

But the ice seems to have melted now.

"I couldn't be happier," René Jr. said. "It seems like already we've known each other for a real long time. After we got over the initial shock, now it's time to hang out."

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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13 Grandchildren are Bus Operator's 'Stars' These Days

By RICH MORALLO

(March 4, 2004) In the past, Metro Bus Operator Dennis Trapp mingled with superstars like John Travolta and the Rolling Stones.

That was when he was a limousine driver ferrying pilots, flight attendants and celebrities from LAX to their hotels. Outgoing and friendly, Trapp joked with them and got the autographs of the entertainment stars.

And at one time, Trapp delivered a mean right cross when he was a boxer back in his native country of Belize. He won a silver in the flyweight division at the 1965 Pan American Games in Jamaica.

Today, Trapp drives Line 108 out of Arthur Winston Division 5 and he has achieved yet another distinction. A relatively young grandfather, he has, count 'em, 13 grandchildren.

'Feel like I'm 35'

"I turn 56 on April 11, but I feel like I'm 35," says the trim-looking Trapp, who keeps in shape by eating only twice a day and jumping rope.

Trapp has four children. One daughter blessed him with seven grandkids and a son gave him two more.

Four more grandchildren from his wife's two sons bring the total to 13, ranging in age from 11 years to one month.

Trapp's Metro job and another as a pastor helping the homeless in downtown Los Angeles keep him busy. He barely has time to visit his grandchildren once a month. "But, they all get presents on their birthdays."

Does he miss the days when he hobnobbed with Hollywood celebrities as he drove them around town?

Trapp shakes his head. "Today, my only stars are my grandkids."



Photo Credit: Rich Morallo

Metro Bus Operator Dennis Trapp has switched his focus from VIPs to his 13 grandchildren.


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[CEO Hotline](#)
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[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Public Hearings Scheduled in Santa Clarita Valley

(March 4, 2004) MTA will conduct two public hearings in the Santa Clarita Valley on Wednesday, March 10 to receive ideas for meeting public transportation needs in the Santa Clarita Valley.

The hearings will be held at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. in the Santa Clarita City Council Chambers, 23920 Valencia Blvd.

The Transportation Development Act (TDA) of 1971 requires that a proportional share of the sales tax revenue collected in Los Angeles County be allocated to areas that do not have Metro service, including the Santa Clarita Valley, Antelope Valley and Santa Catalina Island.

TDA funds must be spent for public transit purposes when a legitimate need for transit service can be identified. If no "unmet transit needs" are found, sales tax revenue may be used for street and road purposes.

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Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Transit Security officers James Pochick, center, and Enrique Ortiz received commendations from Lt. James Cook.

Transit Security Officer Foil Switchblade Incident

(March 4, 2004) Two Transit Security officers recently foiled what might have been a nasty incident involving a taxi driver, his passenger and a switchblade knife.

Officers James Pochick and Enrique Ortiz were on patrol at the Metro Green Line's Norwalk station in the wee hours of Feb. 15.

A cab screeched to a halt in the parking lot, the cabbie jumped out and ran up to the officers. His passenger had pulled a knife on him and threatened to cut his throat, he told the officers, unless he took him to find crack cocaine.

Pochick and Ortiz approached the cab and ordered the man to step out. He was told to place his hands on the trunk and spread his legs for a "pat down."

Instead, the suspect allegedly reached into his waistband and pulled out a 7-inch switchblade. The officers ordered him to drop the knife. After a tense moment, the man let it fall to the ground.

Now more cooperative, the man was frisked for other weapons and handcuffed. Shortly afterward, he was taken into custody by deputies from the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau.

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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Photo by Gayle Anderson

Brady Branstetter's path from Service Attendant to director of Facilities Maintenance included earning college degrees through MTA's Tuition Assistance Program

Tuition Assistance Program Paid Off Big Time for Brady Branstetter

By KIM SIM

(March 5, 2004) Brady Branstetter is one of the [Tuition Assistance Program's](#) success stories — an example of how persistence and hard work pays off.

Branstetter spent nine years obtaining his associate's and bachelor's degrees, all while working full-time. He received his bachelor's degree in Business Administration Management in 2002, after taking his first classes in 1993.

During that time, Branstetter worked his way up from a service attendant in West Valley Division 8 to Revenue Equipment supervisor to manager positions in Facilities and Wayside Systems. Now, he is director of Facilities Maintenance for MTA.

"When you're competing for advancements, the degree can really make a difference," he says.

Juggling a full-time job with school can be difficult, Branstetter acknowledged, but not impossible.

'Reaping the rewards'

"The reality is, it was two classes a semester," says Branstetter, who

took an average of six units every semester. "It was doable. I am now reaping the rewards of having done so."

With first his associate's degree from Moorpark College, a community college in Ventura, and then his bachelor's degree from Cal State Northridge, Branstetter moved up the employment ladder.

He applied for and landed a job as Revenue Equipment supervisor after receiving his associate's degree.

Branstetter got his current job as a director after completing his bachelor's degree. He says he would not even have been considered for the position without that degree, since it was a minimum requirement for consideration.

[Read more on the MTA Tuition Assistance Program](#)

"In a large place like the MTA, I think proof of education is more important in order to make decisions about promotions," Branstetter says. "If you are competing for a position, if all else is equal, the degree is going to make you successful."

It's been worth it

Although it took Branstetter a long time to get his degree, it has been worth it.

"In my particular case, the education has been very fruitful and produced results," he says. "Nine years sounded like an impossibility. As I look back, it seems like a long time."

He realizes, however, that "the time is going to march on whether you start or don't start into an educational program. My advice is to just start. Getting started is perhaps the hardest part. If you don't start, you'll never get there."

Marion Colston-Fayyaz lauded the achievements of Branstetter and others who have advanced their careers by pushing themselves.

"Those are your success stories," says Colston, Director of Strategic Organization for the unit that oversees the Tuition Assistance Program. "These are people we would like to celebrate."

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Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Students Explore LA in Metro Day Pass \$3 Vacation Contest

By DAVE SOTERO

(March 5, 2004) Can you really visit Los Angeles' best destinations in a single day for only three bucks?

That's what teams from four local high schools set out to learn, Friday, in the "Discover L.A. Via Metro: the \$3 Vacation" competition.

Metro offered prizes and special recognition to high school teams that found the best answer to the question: "Can you have a great vacation with the Metro Day Pass?"

High school students from Benjamin Franklin, Locke, Woodrow Wilson and North Hollywood high schools participated in the day-long competition. Contest winners will be announced during a special recognition ceremony later this month.

The students are members of the Metro Transportation Career Academy Program (TCAP), a community workforce development program that encourages 11- and 12-grade students to pursue careers in transportation.

Day Pass sales brisk

Metro introduced the Day Pass in January as a convenient and cost-effective fare medium that allows unlimited rides on the Metro Bus and Rail system. Since its introduction, sales of the Day Pass have been brisk throughout the region.



A TCAP student draws from a hardhat held by Dave Sotero of Media Relations to see whether a still camera or video camera operator will accompany his team.



Teams from Benjamin Franklin, Locke, Woodrow Wilson, and North Hollywood High Schools take a moment for a group photo before setting out on their Day Pass adventures.

As part of the competition, students created an itinerary of destinations accessible via the Metro Bus and Rail system and then followed that itinerary to visit as many fun and exciting locations as possible within the established time period of one day.

Teams logged each location they visited into a travel itinerary, noting site name, starting and ending location, miles traveled and

transportation used to reach the destination.

They took photos to document each destination and will write a 1,000-word essay detailing why the team's itinerary was the best for taking a one-day vacation with the Metro Day Pass.

Variety of destinations

Itineraries could include destinations such as museums, historical landmarks, art and entertainment centers, sports arenas, ethnic districts and more.

Contest entries will be judged on a point scale according to criteria such as greatest number of sites visited, best use of Metro Bus and Rail connections, and best location representing the essence of Los Angeles.

In preparation for the competition, students researched LA-area destinations on the [Experience L.A. web site](http://www.experiencela.com) (www.experiencela.com), a new online resource for exploring the region's wealth of cultural attractions.

The site provides searchable destination and event directories, interactive maps and cultural itineraries, and easy-to-use information on using public transit to get there.


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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MTA's Tuition Program Gives Employees a Leg Up on Opportunity

By KIM SIM

(March 5, 2004) It took nine years for Director of Facilities Maintenance Brady Branstetter to get his Bachelor's degree, but he might never have gotten it if not for MTA's Tuition Assistance Program.

Thanks to the program, Branstetter – who started as a service attendant – and a host of other MTA employees have had the opportunity to advance themselves by earning college degrees and professional certifications, even while working.

[Read more
about
Brady
Branstetter](#)

The Tuition Assistance Program, administered by the [Organizational Development and Training unit \(OD&T\)](#), approves all employee reimbursements for the costs of educational and training programs that lead to a college degree or a professional certification.

For coursework to qualify, it must be related to MTA business and should "be related to the duties of the employee's current position or duties of a related position or promotional opportunity within the MTA," according to MTA policy. Employees can check with OD&T for other program criteria.

The amount of reimbursement for the cost of courses depends on an employee's job classification.

Tuition reimbursements

For FY 2004, which ends June 30, represented employees are reimbursed \$175 for each undergraduate course and \$325 for each graduate course, with a four-course maximum.

Teamsters and non-represented employees are reimbursed up to \$250 per unit for undergraduate coursework and up to \$375 per unit for graduate and postgraduate coursework. There is no cap on the number of courses that they may take.

For employees in AFSCME, tuition assistance is set at a flat \$1,755 per fiscal year.

Marion Colston-Fayyaz, OD&T director, believes the program mutually benefits both MTA and agency employees.

It helps participating employees "remain current with business and technology and industry best practices," she says. "Tuition assistance offers our employees the opportunity to develop professionally on their own time. It is truly an employee benefit."

400-plus enrolled

More than 400 MTA employees are currently enrolled in the Tuition Assistance Program. Interested employees can complete an approval and reimbursement request form and submit it to OD&T.

The cost of tuition registration, mandatory health fees, textbooks, lab materials and mandatory study materials are eligible for reimbursement. However, the program does not cover expenses such as travel, parking and campus social activities.

For Branstetter, there were no additional costs.

"The reality is that the entire education was paid off, no student loans necessary," he says. "It was all paid for."

MTA's core values declare that, "employees are our most valuable resource and are to be...provided opportunities for professional development."

Puts values to work

The Tuition Assistance Program illustrates this core value by putting it to work.

Cindy Karpman, South Bay Division 18 transportation manager, obtained her bachelor's degree in Business Management from the University of Phoenix through the Tuition Assistance Program. She is currently working on her MBA, also from the University of Phoenix.

"The way the environment is now requires you to at least have an education or degree to be able to promote in the company," Karpman says. "I probably would not have been able to promote to the division manager status that I'm at now (without a degree)."

Although enrolling in the Tuition Assistance Program does not guarantee an employee promotion or job advancement, Colston-Fayyaz believes those employees who take advantage of the program, and who complete their degree or certification programs are "promotable and more marketable."

"If you look at the types of people who participate in the Tuition Assistance Program, who work and go to school in the evenings, this demonstrates initiative," she says. "In fact, they are taking the initiative to do it on their own time."


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Metro Asking Court to Clarify Order to Halt Orange Line Work

- **UPDATE:** Late Tuesday, the Court of Appeal issued a clarification of its temporary stay. The new order permits Metro to "take such interim actions (not to include completion of any construction action) as are necessary to protect the public from safety risk and hazards resulting from unfinished construction activities commenced on or before the date of this stay." No construction activities are scheduled for Wednesday and Metro construction officials and County Counsel were studying the court's clarification late Tuesday to determine its impact on Metro Orange Line construction.

(Aug. 3, 2004) Metro is seeking a clarification of an action, Monday, by the California Court of Appeal that would temporarily stop construction of the Metro Orange Line.

The court issued a temporary stay of the \$330 million project, a 14-mile dedicated bus transitway that will carry passengers across the San Fernando Valley. The project, scheduled to open in August 2005.

Metro Construction Chief Rick Thorpe has alerted Metro Orange Line contractor Shimmick-Obayashi to be prepared to suspend all construction work on Wednesday. He estimates the court-ordered temporary stay will cost the agency about \$70,000 a day.

Safety is 'primary concern'

"Our primary concern is whether the MTA may continue work in areas... where the abandonment of construction would present safety concerns," County Counsel Steve Carnevale wrote in a memo to the Board of Directors.

Thorpe noted that 11 intersections along the transitway are currently under construction and barricaded. "Is that something we want to leave for an extended period of time?"

Clarification of the court order will help determine whether such safety-related work – including the use of water trucks to keep dust down at construction sites, filling open trenches and neutralizing other potential safety hazards – can continue under a temporary stay.

The Court of Appeal earlier had found that Metro's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the transitway was incomplete because it did not include a study of the Metro Rapid system as an alternative.

Metro Rapid was a pilot project

At the time the EIR was being written, the Metro Rapid system was still a pilot project whose benefits were not yet fully known. A study of the system is now under way and will be included in the updated EIR.

The temporary stay will remain in effect until the court rules on a petition by a residents' group, Citizens Organized for Smart Transit (COST). COST is asking the court to stop the project until the Metro

Rapid study is finished.

In addition to requesting a clarification of the temporary stay, Metro also has petitioned the Court of Appeal to reconsider the order requiring the agency to study the Metro Rapid alternative.

Rulings on both matters are expected late next week or early the following week.

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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BRU Calls for Consent Decree Extension; Transit Peer Group Says MTA in Compliance

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 9, 2004) With the Bus Riders Union calling for a six-year extension of the federal Consent Decree, a peer review by three of the nation's largest transit agencies has found that Metro Bus service is achieving the required passenger load factors.

The BRU alleged, Tuesday, that MTA has not complied with passenger load factors and service requirements of the Consent Decree. It called on the Special Master to extend the Consent Decree, signed in December 1996, beyond its current expiration date of November 2006.

In a letter to the MTA Board, County Counsel Steve Carnevale wrote that the BRU's motion was "inappropriately filed with the Special Master," who, he said, is not given authority within the Consent Decree to consider such a motion. He expects the matter to be transferred to the U.S. District Court.

During a peer review of Metro services conducted, March 1-3, transit officials from Chicago, Boston and San Francisco and the American Public Transportation Association found that MTA achieves the 1.20 passenger load factor on most routes "by current common industry standards of measurement."

Meeting the load factor

Metro officials say the Metro Bus system is meeting the 1.20 passenger load factor more than 96 percent of the time.

The peer group calculated that meeting the passenger load standard, as interpreted by the Special Master, would require Metro to provide five seats for every four customers – "approximately twice as much as most agencies would provide."

The group added that "the narrow focus on load factor compliance can significantly hamper efforts to develop service for new (passenger) markets...."

"The peer group felt that our service enhancements have outpaced all or most of the nation's transit systems," said Rod Goldman, deputy executive officer, Operations. "They found that it would be mathematically impossible for us to comply with the 1.20 load factor as the Special Master has interpreted it."

Expanded Metro service

Since signing the Consent Decree, MTA has spent more than \$750 million toward complying with the agreement. Since December 1996, MTA has expanded Metro service by more than 420 buses and about 1 million annual service hours.

Nearly half of MTA's \$2.8 billion budget is devoted to Metro Bus

operating and capital expenses and subsidies for municipal bus operators.

The BRU also has alleged that, under the Consent Decree, MTA had no right to raise fares and should roll back the January 2004 fare adjustment. But, the agency said the agreement specifically includes a fare-increase provision and that the fare adjustment – the first in nine years – complied with the Consent Decree.

In January 2004, MTA lowered the cash fare by 10 cents, while raising fares for regular pass holders. The agency did not raise the price of student, senior and disabled passes.

Here are other facts about MTA and the Consent Decree:

- By fall 2006 – end of the 10-year Consent Decree term – MTA will spend more than \$1 billion on the Consent Decree.
- The MTA has purchased 2,000 new buses, largely to replace aging buses that were prone to breakdowns, although 420 of these buses were used to expand service.
- Since March 1998, the MTA has implemented a pilot program of 13 new bus lines and more than 60 buses.
- The MTA submitted a Five Year New Service Plan for consideration in February 1999. Both parties have not agreed to a common plan.
- The MTA has continued to implement its Five Year plan, which includes expansion of Metro Rapid to approximately 26 bus lines. So far, this has resulted in more than 120 buses of new service.

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Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Assistant Transportation Manager Michael Williams-Carr, center, meets informally with Operator Silveria Cazares, left, and Operator Rahsaan Earl in the Division 5 training room.

Communications Cuts Customer Complaints at Division 5

By RICH MORALLO

(March 9, 2004) Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

That was the key activity helping Arthur Winston Division 5 achieve the lowest Metro Bus customer complaints ratio for December 2003.

"We achieved a rating of 2.23 complaints per 100,000 boardings," said Assistant Transportation Manager Michael Williams-Carr.

"Communicating to the staff, among ourselves and with other departments such as scheduling, maintenance and law enforcement was a vital component in handling customer complaints."

The division's strategy in keeping staff well informed included a monthly "rap" session, an informational meeting where up to 60 operators, mechanics and service attendants gathered together in the division training room to get the latest updates on procedures and policies.

"The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department's Transit Services Bureau also participated and provided a law enforcement input in our discussions," Williams-Carr said.

Providing feedback



Photos by Michael Walton

Metro Bus operators Scheryl Scott and Majid Dawood discuss an article in the Division 5 newsletter.

The rap sessions also give the staff a chance to ask questions and provide feedback on what is working well and not so well with their jobs on the buses and in the maintenance area.

When an operator, for example, mentioned the number of fare evaders on his line, a supervisor rode along and explained to the evaders about the consequences of not paying. The fare evaders promptly paid.

"We continue to work closely with the transportation managers and operators who provide us comments on service improvements regarding their lines," said Service Development Manager Madeline Van Leuvan, who oversees the scheduling section for the Metro South Bay.

Consequently, the scheduling staff added running time on many bus lines in order for the operators to comply with in-service, on-time performance standards.

Monthly newsletter

To highlight the information brought up at the rap sessions, the division publishes a monthly newsletter containing transportation news, safety and work procedure reminders, fitness and health tips, and various event announcements.

The newsletter is handed to each operator as they pick up their paychecks and assignments at the dispatch window.

Providing excellent customer service included responding to complaints within 24 hours and management making personal contacts to resolve concerns.

Williams-Carr described visiting a business owner who complained that his driveway was often blocked by Metro vehicles.

Found another location

"We visited the location, talked to the owner, found another location to pick up the operator coming off his assignment, and then had a supervisor follow up to ensure everyone followed the new procedure," Williams-Carr said.

Division 5 managers posted their target goals, also called Key Performance Indicators, and spent hours talking to staff and reminding them of the agency's vision – to lead the nation in safety, mobility and customer satisfaction.

"We have found that by focusing on critical areas, customer complaints will decrease," Williams-Carr said.

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(web)▶ [Archives](#)▶ [Events Calendar](#)▶ [Research Center/
Library](#)▶ [Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)▶ [Metro Classifieds](#)▶ [Retirement
Round-up](#)**Metro Info**▶ [Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)▶ [Org Chart](#) (pdf)▶ [Policies](#)▶ [Training](#)▶ [Help Desk](#)▶ [Intranet Policy](#)**Need e-Help?**

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Planters for the Portal



A small grove of pygmy date palms sprouted in front of the East Portal over the past weekend. Workers placed 13 decorative planters, with palms and flowers, in front of the building to protect the walkway – and the Portal, itself – from intrusion by vehicles. The 800- to 1,000-pound planters had been in storage since One Gateway Plaza was built, but had not been previously used, according to Steve Noonan, chief engineer for Catellus Development Corp., the property manager for the complex. In coming months, Catellus plans a series of repairs and restorations to the Plaza, including refinishing metal surfaces and installing new pavers in the oval roadway. (3/9/04)



Catellus Chief Engineer Steve Noonan checks the flowers in one of the planters at the East Portal. The pygmy date palm will grow to about 10 feet in height.

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(web)▶ [Archives](#)▶ [Events Calendar](#)▶ [Research Center/
Library](#)▶ [Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)▶ [Metro Classifieds](#)▶ [Retirement
Round-up](#)**Metro Info**▶ [Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)▶ [Org Chart](#) (pdf)▶ [Policies](#)▶ [Training](#)▶ [Help Desk](#)▶ [Intranet Policy](#)**Need e-Help?**Call the Help Desk
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Stops and Zones' Laborer "A" Jose Aguirre places a Braille decal at a Metro bus stop (Photo by Chip Hazen). **Inset:** The Braille decals include the Metro Bus line number and the direction (Photo by Lisa Huynh).

Braille Decals to Help the Blind Navigate Metro Bus System

BY LISA HUYNH

(March 10, 2004) Approximately 10,000 blind people use the Metro systems and many of them have trouble finding the correct bus stops.

To alleviate the problem, Metro's Accessibility Advisory Committee, recently suggested the installation of tactile and Braille decals at bus stops to help the blind correctly find their bus stop.

In coordination with Metro's Stops and Zones Department and students at Braille Institute, this four-month pilot project will test the success of the program by determining if persons who are blind or visually impaired can locate the decal and if the decals will stand up to weather and vandalism.

"We're doing this so that blind people can figure out where the bus stops are," says ADA Compliance Officer Chip Hazen. "Instead of having to ask someone where the stop is, the decals will give them the opportunity to do the stop independently."

Decals on Line 204

Last month, Stops and Zones personnel started placing Braille decals at bus stops along Metro Bus Line 204, which serves the Braille Institute, the second largest school for the blind in the country.

Line 204 runs along Vermont Av. between Hollywood Blvd. and 120th St.

The decals, which include the line number and the direction of the route

written in Braille and raised letters, are being placed three and a half inches below the map case.

Stops and Zones personnel are about half way done with installing the decals.

"If the blind can find the decals and it makes sense to them, then we'll expand the project to other bus stops," says Hazen. "The whole purpose of the ADA is to help people use the transportation service just like those individuals who do not have a disability."

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Focus on Consent Decree Compliance Risks Losing Ridership, Transit Peer Panel Warns

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 10, 2004) The narrow focus on complying with the Consent Decree's bus passenger load standards could cause a "negative spiral of declining ridership," a panel of transit executives has warned.

The executives, who convened in Los Angeles March 1 – 3 for a peer review of Metro Bus service, represented transit properties in Chicago, Boston and San Francisco. They were joined by an advisor from the American Public Transportation Association.

"Successful routes may be victims of their own success," the panel observed in its report. "LACMTA is penalized for growth in ridership. This can lead to a disincentive to marketing and improving service."

Commenting on the Consent Decree's passenger load standards, the panelists wrote, "By the laws of probability, compliance...as interpreted by the Special Master is unachievable."

Achieving the standard

Instead, the panelists advised applying passenger load standards consistent with current industry practice. Under those standards, they said Metro Bus service is achieving the required 1.20 load factor.

In fact, the panel said Metro service enhancements have "outpaced most, if not all, of the nation's transit systems."

Noting that passenger loads "are only one measure of service quality," the panel recommended focusing on a broader range of service quality issues. These included continuing to develop the Metro Rapid bus network and modifying service as ridership grows or shrinks in certain areas.

Also: [BRU Calls for Consent Decree Extension](#)

The panel also observed that MTA has deferred significant capital projects in meeting its Consent Decree obligations.

Overall, the peer review panel felt the Metro staff "demonstrated exceptional diligence" in its efforts to improve bus service.

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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Venice Division 6's maintenance team proudly gather around their newly won "How You Doin'?" trophy after an award presentation, March 8.

Division 6 Maintenance Wins 'Outstanding' Award for January

By KIM SIM

(March 10, 2004) With its high marks in various categories of judging, Venice Division 6 Maintenance was honored with the "How You Doin'?" award for being the Outstanding Maintenance Division for January 2004.

Assistant maintenance manager Bruce Buck and his team were presented with the trophy in a March 8 ceremony.

The perpetual trophy is engraved for the highest-scoring maintenance division, but is passed along each time there is a new winning division.

Not being able to keep it permanently, Buck said, stirs up the group's competitive spirit.

"They're really psyched about this," Buck. "They win it a lot and they want to keep it. They're going to do anything they can do to get this trophy for the year."

Judging criteria

In the judging for the award, maintenance divisions are graded on miles between mechanical failures, attendance, new Workers' Compensation



Assistant Maintenance Manager Bruce Buck gets a grip on the maintenance division's "How You Doin'?" trophy for January 2004.

claims per hundred employees and bus cleanliness.

Division 6 ranked No. 1 in all categories except for bus cleanliness, in which it ranked No. 3.

During the presentation, Westside/Central Sector Finance Manager Michael Davis told the group, "Not only for the Westside/Central sector, we think you guys are a shining star for the entire agency."

Jermani Martin, a service attendant leader, called the award "top of the line for us."

"What I want is to be the example that everyone's following and that's No. 1," Martin said. "That's what we're shooting for."

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Public Hearings, Town Hall Meetings Scheduled

(March 10, 2004) MTA has scheduled public hearings, this month, in Lancaster, Palmdale and Santa Catalina Island. The Gateway Cities Service Sector will hold a series of town hall meetings.

The first hearing is set for 10 a.m., Thursday, March 11, at the Lancaster City Council Chambers, 44933 North Fern Avenue.

The second hearing is scheduled at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 13, in Palmdale at the Chimbole Cultural Center, 38300 Sierra Highway.

At the public hearing on Santa Catalina Island, Tuesday, March 16th, MTA will receive ideas and suggestions for meeting public transportation needs on the island. The 7 p.m. hearing will be held in Avalon at the Catalina Justice Court, 215 Metropole Avenue.

Town hall meetings

The Gateway Cities Service Sector town hall meetings will be held on Wednesday, March 24 in the cities of Bell and Cudahy, and on March 25 in the City of South Gate.

In addition to presenting information on bus transit, the public will be encouraged to comment on how Metro Bus service can be improved in their communities. The town hall meetings will be held at the following locations:

Wednesday, March 24, 2004, 10:30 – 11 a.m., at the Bell Community Center, 6250 Pine Avenue (Senior Group).

Wednesday, March 24, 2004, 7 – 8 p.m., Clara St. Park
4835 Clara St. (Community Group), in Cudahy.

Thursday, March 25, 2004, 6 p.m., at the Girls Club House,
4930 Southern Avenue (Community Group), in South Gate.

[Home](#)[CEO Hotline](#)[Viewpoint](#)[Classified Ads](#)[Archives](#)[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)[Pressroom](#) (web)[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)[Policies](#)[Training](#)[Help Desk](#)[Intranet Policy](#)

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A Visit to St. Luke's

Sheriff's Lt. Mike Herek made his annual visit, recently, to St. Luke's Elementary School in Temple City to introduce kindergarten pupils to law enforcement and public transportation. In addition to showing the kids his patrol car, radio, badge and other equipment, Herek talked about transit safety and distributed literature about Metro services and the effort to fight graffiti. Like Herek, other members of the Transit Services Bureau make annual law enforcement orientation visits to their adopted schools. (3/10/04)

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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

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Improvements to this segment of Spring Street between California Avenue and Long Beach Boulevard in Signal Hill included road reconstruction, traffic signal upgrades, new gutters, sidewalks and trees.

Signal Hill Street Improvement Reaches Completion

(March 10, 2004) A \$5.6 million street improvement project in Signal Hill, begun 10 years ago to improve traffic flow and access to public services and local businesses, has been completed.

MTA contributed \$2.4 million in grant funds for the project, a public/private partnership that created more than 400 construction jobs and transformed a substandard roadway into a fully improved major thoroughfare.

MTA Board members Don Knabe, also chairman of the LA County Board of Supervisors, and Beatrice Proo, mayor of Pico Rivera, attended the dedication of the rebuilt roadway.



City officials in ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Spring Street Revitalization Corridor Project, a \$5.6 million street improvement project in Signal Hill. Front row from left: Long Beach Council Member Laura Richardson, MTA Director Beatrice Proo, County Supervisor Don Knabe with scissors, Signal Hill Mayor Michael Noll, Vice Mayor Ellen Ward and Council Member Tina Hansen. Back row from left to right: Signal Hill officials Larry Forester, Emerson Fersch, Edward Wilson, Charlie Honeycutt and Ken Farfsing.

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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Chamber of Commerce Event -- Sheriff Lee Baca, center, was featured speaker at, March 3, at the El Monte – South El Monte Chamber of Commerce monthly community-business luncheon. The San Gabriel Valley community relations staff attended in support of the Chamber event and the sector's commitment to community involvement. From left are Chamber President Richard Nichols, Sheriff's Capt. Richard Shaw of the Temple Station, El Monte Mayor Ernesto Gutierrez, Sheriff Baca, SGV Community Relations Manager Helen Ortiz, Community Relations Officer Liz Armijo-Holbrook and Sheriff's Deputy Gary Debondt. (3/11/03)


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Arraignment Set for Employee Charged in Workers' Comp Case

(March 11, 2004) An arraignment is pending for a former Metro Bus operator accused of Workers' Compensation fraud after claiming she had been attacked last September by a passenger.

Anna Lewis, 34, of Pomona, turned herself in to Pomona Police, March 9, and was released the following day on \$30,000 bail. Lewis was hired as a BDOF operator in May 2003 and was terminated December 10.

Lewis is the third employee since late December to be arrested in such a case. She is charged with five counts of Workers Compensation insurance fraud and one count of making a false police report.

Lolita A. Hicks Dolliole-Crowder, 50, of Palmdale, a 23-year Metro veteran was arrested Dec. 30 on 16 fraud counts. Gail Alcantar, 54, a 19-year employee, was arrested Feb. 19 on a felony insurance fraud charge.

Lewis was operating a bus out of Division 10 last September when she claimed to have been attacked by a passenger who hit her in her face and stole her packet of bus transfers.

But, investigators from MTA's Workers' Compensation Special Investigations Unit said videotapes pulled from the bus Lewis was driving showed that, from the time she entered the bus until she exited, she was never attacked or even approached by any passenger.

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Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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SGV Sector Staff Hosts Info Table at Youth Career Fair

(March 11, 2004) The San Gabriel Valley Service Sector staff hosted an information table, March 3, at the 3rd Annual Foster Youth Career Fair & Resource Expo at Jackie Robinson Park in Pasadena.

More than 500 foster youths attended the event. Representatives from 48 agencies were present to accept job applications and inform students of the multitude of job opportunities available to them.

San Gabriel Valley Community Relations Officer Liz Armijo-Holbrook, with the aid of Intern Sebastian Hernandez and Division 9 operators Juan Augspurger and Cathy Hardway, provided information about transportation options and Metro services.

Many participants also had questions about job opportunities with Metro.

Sponsored by Supervisor Michael Antonovich's office, the fair was aimed at providing entry-level jobs and career preparation resources to newly-emancipated or soon-to-be-emancipated foster youth.

"Emancipated foster youth are a particularly vulnerable population," says Antonovich. "By offering them a vehicle for obtaining employment, we will be filling a gap that currently exists."

-- From Liz Armijo-Holbrook



Division 9 operators Cathy Hardway and Juan Augspurger staff an information table during the Youth Career Fair.



Division 9 Operator Juan Augspurger hands a bagful of Metro literature to a participant in the Youth Career Fair.

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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Photo by Rich Morallo.

Waiting for the LA Marathon to begin are, from left, Manuel Duarte, Division 7; Luis Diaz, Division 18; and Jaumen Ramos, Division 1.

Three Friends Pushed Each Other to Finish LA Marathon

By RICH MORALLO

(March 12, 2004) Metro bus operators Luis Diaz, Jaumen Ramos and Manuel Duarte follow assigned bus routes as they transport thousands of passengers every week along Los Angeles streets.

Diaz drives Line 204 on Vermont Avenue; Duarte, Line 2 on Sunset Boulevard and Line 30 on Pico Boulevard. Ramos, on the extra board, may drive any of several other Metro Bus lines.

As marathoners, the three followed their own instincts, strategies and hearts as they pounded those same Los Angeles street pavements for 26.2 miles during Sunday's 19th Los Angeles Marathon.

Eager and fresh, Diaz of Division 18, Ramos of Division 1 and Duarte of Division 7 smiled for the camera near the Los Angeles Library just before the race start.

The youngest of the three at 38 years old, and the fastest, Ramos expected a challenging day.

"I normally reach my wall at the 25th mile, and it's awful," he says, referring to the part of the race where a runner is most likely to give up.

Hitting the wall

"I reach my wall after 20 miles," grinned Duarte, 43, who had run in all of the 18 previous Marathons, and introduced Diaz, also 43, to long

distance running five years ago.

The 90-degree weather slowed the trio, who drifted apart from one another in the crowd of 23,000 other runners during the next two hours.

"At the 13th mile, I met one of my regular running partners, Jose Lopez from Division 10," Diaz says. "All I could think of was keeping my goal pace, a nine-minute mile." He finished in four hours, 40 seconds.

Duarte, who had trained for four months, wanted to finish before the four hour, 30-second mark.

"But even with good preparation, sometimes circumstances during the day of the race and the weather can change everything," he reflected, after crossing the line at 5:53.

Ramos finished ahead of his fellow operators at 3:53. "I kept on thinking about those pictures before the race started and, because we poised for them, I knew I had better finish the marathon."

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Joe B. Scatchard, SCRTD's Top Money Manager, Has Died

(March 12, 2004) Joe B. Scatchard, the SCRTD's former top money manager, has died. He was 86.

Scatchard, who served as treasurer-controller-auditor for the SCRTD, retired from MTA's predecessor agency in 1987 after 15 years' service. He died March 4 at the Silverado Alzheimer's Home in Azusa.

The Scatchard family plans a memorial service at 11 a.m., Monday, March 15, in the Court of Freedom, Forest Lawn Cemetery, Glendale.

Prior to joining SCRTD, Scatchard had worked for Sundstrand, then for Systems Development Corp. Earlier, he had retired from the U.S. Navy as a Supply Corps commander. He was a native of Chester, Pa.

"He was my mentor. I adored him," said MTA Controller Josie Nicasio, who worked as an accounting manager in Scatchard's department. "There was no one like him."

Scatchard is survived by his four children, sons Steve and Jay of Arcadia, and daughters Jill of Sebastopol and Leslie of Greeley Hill. His wife, Wylo, died in 1992.



Joe B. Scatchard and his wife, Wylo, as they appeared in a Headway newsletter photo at his SCRTD retirement dinner in February 1987.

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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Note: Photos will change every 5 seconds



Left: Division 1 Operator David Martinez, Jr., ran this year's Marathon in 4 hours, 50 minutes. A veteran of 18 of the 19 races, his personal best was 3 hours, 59 minutes. **Right:** Software Engineer Vazgen Vartanian completed his seventh LA Marathon, this year. With a time of 3 hours, 40 minutes, he placed 571 among all runners, tenth in his age group.

Another LA Marathon 'Victory' for Metro Bikers, Runners

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 12, 2004) A squad of Central City Division 1 mechanics – four bikers and a runner -- was among the Metro employees who crossed the finish line, last Sunday, during the 26.2-mile LA Marathon.

Mechanics Eva Torres, a seven-year veteran biker; first-year bikers Mac Magruder and Fred Hines; biker James Wilson, who has both biked and run the Marathon for nine years; and runner Jose Martinez, in his second outing, all came home with participants' medals.

"There were more hills than last year," says Torres, whose race began at 6 a.m. "but it was good, with good weather."

Runner Jose Luis, a Regional Rebuild Center mechanic who has run in five of the 19 LA Marathons, found it tough going once the day began to heat up the hilly course. Even so, he turned in a 6 hour, 15-minute time.

Luis, who open-heart surgery in 1993, thinks 2004 may be his last year to compete. But, he thinks that every year. "I say no more, but then I see everybody getting ready and I run again!"

A marathon in Germany

Paul Kim, a Metro Red Line traction power inspector, has run 23 marathons – 10 in Los Angeles. His events also include races in Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and, last September, in Berlin, West Germany.

"The Berlin race was better," he declares. "The runners and spectators were very polite. The weather and the course were both good."

For Everett Wilson, an assistant auditor, this year's LA Marathon was his 19th, but he has compiled a string of 63 marathons over the years. Following surgery last fall, he was just getting back on the road again, only to be hit by the heat.

"I shut it down at mile 14," he says. "I lost seven pounds in this race, it was so hot!"

His pal, Marco Pedemonte, agreed. "I walked it!"

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Employees make the best of their time during Friday morning's evacuation.

Suspicious Package Prompts Partial MTA HQ Evacuation

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 12, 2004) An unidentified package that looked suspiciously like a homemade bomb, but turned out to be a harmless radio transmitter, prompted an evacuation, Friday morning, of some MTA Headquarters employees.

The package, described as a plastic-wrapped cylinder with wires attached, was discovered about 8:15 a.m. in the day's mail.

"We did what was right," said Mail Room Supervisor Dan Colonello. "We looked at it, determined it was suspicious, cleared everybody out and contacted Security."

Shortly afterward, MTA Security officers and Sheriff's deputies began evacuating employees from Plaza level and P-1 offices. A 10 a.m. announcement informed employees on upper floors that they were in no danger.

Meanwhile, the Sheriff's Arson and Explosives squad arrived and deployed a robot to inspect the package, which they took the away with them.

A Metro transmitter

Later, it was determined that the device is a transmitter used by Metro. A similar device, discovered in the Headquarters building several years ago, also set off a flurry of activity.

"Everybody is being proactive because of what happened in Spain," said

Phyllis Meng, General Services supervisor.

U.S. Homeland Security officials issued a bulletin, Thursday, advising state officials, police and transit and rail agencies to be vigilant in light of the bombings in Madrid's subway system.

"Based upon assessments of the incident in Spain, there does not appear to be any corresponding similar threats to the United States... and there are no plans to raise the threat level at this time," a department spokesman said.

Nevertheless, Sheriff's Lt. Mike Herek said, "We want to stay vigilant and sustain our presence. We don't want to give anybody a chance to think our guard has dropped."

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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ATMS 'Smart Bus' System Will Improve Service Safety, Reliability

By KIM SIM

(March 16, 2004) When Metro Bus operations controllers put in the call to Sheriff's deputies about a bus hijacking, Feb. 20, they were aided by the newly implemented Advanced Transportation Management System.

Using ATMS, Bus Operations Control personnel were able to determine the exact location of the bus and a description of the armed suspect. Deputies arrived within minutes.

Without ATMS, "the response time would have been greater and the deputies probably would not have been able to apprehend the suspect," says Tom Jasmin, Director of Operations Control.

ATMS is a high-technology package that includes a voice and data radio network, an automatic vehicle location system, a video surveillance system, automatic passenger counter and an automatic voice annunciator.

Also in the package are computer-aided controller consoles, a new communications equipment room, and an Emergency Dispatch Center at Metro Red Line Division 20.

Improves communications

The goal of ATMS is to improve communication between operators and controllers and provide passengers with more reliable transit information.

Installation started in September 2003 at the Regional Rebuild Center. Now, more than two-thirds of Metro Buses have the new equipment.

Between 15 and 20 buses are converted each day, according to ATMS project manager Tom Pope.

Metro's entire revenue bus fleet ATMS Phase 1 equipment installation project is on schedule to be completed by the end of April tested in July and fully operational by September. Metro will take complete control of the system from Motorola in March 2005.

"You can have more consistent coverage," Transportation Operations Supervisor John Cohen says of the new system. "Especially on the

PHOTO BY KIM SIM



Transportation Operations Supervisor Sandra Noflin monitors buses from her new controller console in Bus Operations Control.

Metro Rapid. Now you know exactly where they are at all times.”

One feature of ATMS, the Radio Frequency Local Area Network, or RFLAN, will ensure that things go smoothly in the bus yard.

System queries a bus

Each time a bus enters or leaves the yard, the system queries the bus to make sure its software is up-to-date. This includes any changes in scheduling that previously would have required paper assignments to be handed out to the correct bus operators.

“It automatically checks every bus when it comes and goes,” Pope says. “It checks the system, says you’re fully within the system-wide configuration parameter and that everything’s updated; everything’s fine.”

ATMS Phase 2 is another work-in-progress for the creation of script recordings for Metro’s 18 thousand stops and zones for the automatic voice annunciator. The audio and visual next-stop announcement feature was added onto the ATMS package after funds became available.

The script will include “all major stops, transfer points and points of major interest,” Jasmin says. “It’s a feature for our customers, particularly for the blind and the hearing impaired.”

Bus controllers, bus operators, field supervisors and roving mechanics have already been retrained for ATMS. Training for the division maintenance and transportation staffs will start the week of March 22.

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Calming a 'Storm' of Concern About Robberies Near Blue Line

By RICH MORALLO

(March 16, 2004) Slightly wet from the evening's rain late last month, Sheriff's Lt. Rick Martindale and one of his team members, Sgt. Carlos Jaen, strode from the parking lot into the Bethel Baptist Church in Watts.



LASD Lt. Rick Martindale

They had come to answer residents' biggest question: How can they help stop the robberies and muggings at the 103rd Street Metro Blue Line station?

In the past few months, passengers using that Metro Rail station had been victimized by thieves, robbers and gang members. They wanted action from the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau.

"About 60 percent of our community use public transit, including the Metro Blue Line, and we have to feel safe when we are on public transportation," Jacquelyn Simms, of the Watts Neighborhood Council's transportation committee, told the law enforcement officers.

Arrest for robbery

Martindale, who's in charge of security for Metro Blue and Green Line trains, stations and other facilities, told the assembled residents that the deputies, in a joint operation with LAPD, had recently arrested a man for robbery on the train.

"The same suspect was wanted by LAPD for four other robberies," said the lieutenant. "Much of the crime in that area is actually away from Metro property so we often coordinate our law enforcement activities with LAPD."

He described the 'modus operandi' of some gang members traveling on the train: they would spot a possible victim and get off the train with the passenger, follow the victim a few blocks, and then rob him.

When the residents started asking questions about the security cameras at the 103rd Station, Martindale told them he was coordinating a request that would move a Sheriff's Law Enforcement Technician (LET) into the closed-circuit TV room of the nearby Rail Operations Center.

Identify suspicious activity

"An LET technician screening the monitors would be able to identify suspicious activity faster," he said.

Martindale also informed the group that funding may soon be available to upgrade the cameras, and that funding has been requested for additional deputies to support night shift patrols along the rail line.

"Your help is important in keeping us informed," said Martindale, adding that he welcomes all phone calls, even anonymous tips. The residents agreed to pass the word to neighbors.

Later, after Martindale had answered the last question and passed out his business cards, he headed back to his car.

He had just confirmed with the residents that the neighborhood around the Metro Blue Line's 103 Street station is a priority for him. And although the rain was still falling, the lieutenant, a 23-year veteran with the department, felt the storm had passed.

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

▶ [Safety](#)

▶ [Pressroom](#) (web)

▶ [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)

▶ [Policies](#)

▶ [Training](#)

▶ [Help Desk](#)

▶ [Intranet Policy](#)

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Division 3 receives the award for Outstanding Transportation Division for January 2004.



Photo by Aurora Jackson

Division 3 Transportation is Outstanding for January

By LISA HUYNH

(March 16, 2004) North Los Angeles Division 3 kicked off the year right – winning the “How You Doin!” award for Outstanding Transportation Division for January 2004.

General Manager Jack Gabig congratulated the team with a trophy.

“The reason why we’re first is because we have a very proactive team,” said Gabig. “We’ve achieved a new milestone here, but we’re still striving for a higher level of on-time performance.”

Division 3 came in first in the category of in-service on-time performance and improved on their customer complaint ratio.

“On-time performance is the primary focus of our operation, next to safety,” said Transportation Manager Dan Frawley. “I’m really proud of these bus operators. They are the ones who have won and earned this award.”

Frawley, who has been with division 3 for five years, says he couldn’t be more proud. “Not only are we proud of Division 3, we’re also proud of Division 9.”

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Take Tom's challenge: Go Metro and save more than \$4,000 a year in commuting costs



PHOTO BY LAURA WOODWARD

March 16, 2004 - MTA Board Member Tom LaBonge, holding sign, center left, urges commuters during a news conference, Tuesday, to switch from solo driving to public transportation, carpools or vanpools to save more than \$4,000 a year in commuting costs. Commuters typically pay \$20 a day – or \$4,896 a year – to drive alone, compared with an average of \$624 a year for public transportation or \$852 a year for ridesharing. "I challenge the people of Los Angeles County to 'Take Transit Tuesday and Thursday,' " said La Bonge. He is joined by, among others, MTA Board Member and City Councilman Antonio Villaraigosa, holding sign, center right, Deputy CEO John Catoe, back row at left; Employer Programs Manager David Sutton, second from right, and commuters who bike, rideshare and use public transportation, including cyclists Helen Lessick, Metro Art, center front, and Jesse Simon, Marketing, at right.

PHOTO BY LUIS INZUNZA



Councilmen Villaraigosa and LaBonge, joined by Deputy CEO John Catoe, hoist the Metro Day Pass at news conference

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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Division 18's Ed Tanner Looks Back on Pro Football Career

By RICH MORALLO

PHOTO BY RICH MORALLO



Metro Bus Operator Ed Tanner



PHOTO COURTESY OF ED TANNER

Ed Tanner as a star of the
John Marshall High School
Barristers football team.

(March 17, 2004) First-half football action. Ed Tanner's team kicks off. Fast, fleet, he sprints toward the ball carrier. At the 35-yard line, he flings himself at the kick-off returner, stopping him in his tracks.

Tanner's teammates congratulate him for the spectacular tackle as ABC TV cameras roll. It's Monday Night Football, September 1982.

Today, South Bay Division 18 Operator Ed Tanner still relishes that highlight of his NFL career.

"My Houston Oilers teammates just loved it. I was the RTD bus driver who just tackled a New York Giants veteran," says Tanner, who currently transports people on the 30-mile Line 260 through Cudahy, South Gate, East Los Angeles and Monterey Park to San Marino and Altadena.

John Marshall H.S. star

A 1975 graduate of John Marshall High School, Tanner had been playing football since he was a yag-high youngster growing up in South Central LA.

"My mom wanted me to go to college, and knew my athleticism would get me there," he says. Indeed, after a couple of years at Los Angeles City College, Tanner won a scholarship to Kentucky State where he continued playing football and earned a B.A. in special education.

When he couldn't find employment helping the physically-handicapped, Tanner started with the Rapid Transit District in 1980, driving the old Line 84 along Western Avenue.

Then a friend told him about tryouts for the Houston Oilers, and after a local coach vouched for him with the Oilers organization, Tanner knew he was going to compete.

Intense training

"I took a four-month leave of absence from the RTD and then spent most of my time training at Van Ness Park, the field right next to Arthur Winston Division," he recounts. His intense sprinting, weight-lifting and five-mile jogs conditioned and strengthened him.

In May 1982, Tanner entered the one-day trials in Houston with 1,600 other athletes.

"I remember dashing 40 yards in 4.24 seconds, faster than the times of even the Houston Oilers regulars," he said. At the end of the day, he and only two others were picked.

Tanner played on special teams as a running back and wide receiver for the Oilers (now the Tennessee Titans) through the 1982 season.

Later, he was released from the Oilers. His professional football career ended in the now-defunct United States Football League when he was cut during the New Jersey Generals' training camp.

Tanner returned to the MTA in 1998 and has been honored once as Operator of the Month at Division 18.

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[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Retirement Income Plan on Finance and Budget Committee Agenda

- [Retirement Income Plan](#)
- [Bus division assessment](#)
- [Eastside Extension](#)

(March 17, 2004) A proposal to make a series of changes in the non-contract employees' Retirement Income Plan goes before the Finance and Budget Committee on Thursday.

The Operations Committee will receive a report indicating that Metro operating divisions are generally in poor condition and more than half are over-capacity. The report cites an "urgent and immediate need" for improvements.

The Construction Committee will receive a report on bids for construction of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension and the status of the Full Funding Grant Agreement.

Retirement Income Plan, Item 13: The four-part motion before the Finance and Budget Committee calls for the addition to the non-contract employees' Retirement Income Plan of a Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP), identical to that provided for union employees. DROP would allow a member of the RTD/MTA Retirement Plan to "retire" for pension purposes, but continue active employment.

Another provision of the motion would eliminate the \$133.33 currently deducted from the monthly annuity paid to retired members of the RTD/MTA plan. The elimination of this deduction is consistent with improvements given to union employees.

Two other provisions extend to eligible members of the RTD/MTA retirement plan the option to purchase up to five years' additional service credit called "Air Time." Members of PERS currently have this benefit.

Bus Division Assessment, Item 23: The Operations Committee will receive a report that shows Metro operating divisions, all of which are more than 20 years old, are generally in poor condition and more than half are over-capacity.

The report says there is "an urgent and immediate need for Metro to provide increased bus maintenance and capacity system-wide for relief of overcrowding at the divisions, improvement of efficiency and to control excess 'deadhead' cost."

The report notes that the operating divisions were not designed to

Committee Meetings

Thursday, March 18

- > Executive Management and Audit Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- > Finance and Budget Committee, 10:30 a.m.
- > Construction Committee, 11:30 a.m.
- > Operations Committee, 1 p.m.

maintain and operate the number of buses now in the fleet. The number of buses exceeds capacity at divisions 1, 5, 6, 7, 10 and 18.

The report estimates that \$312 million in additional funding will be needed through FY-2010 to improve and expand the divisions to meet future needs. Next steps recommended include development and approval within the next few months of a plan to fund the needed improvements.

Eastside Extension, Item 17: The Construction Committee will receive a report indicating that the original bid of \$644.4 million for construction of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension has been reduced by \$57.6 million to a new total of \$586.8 million -- \$600,000 below MTA's revised construction budget.

With the reduction in the construction budget, MTA is seeking approval of the \$898.8 million Full Funding Grant Agreement now being reviewed by the federal government to allow construction of the Eastside project to begin in June 2004.

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[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

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Metro's Sector Approach Still Evolving, Says GM David Armijo

- [Orange Line on the horizon](#)

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 18, 2004) Metro's service sector approach is still evolving, as David Armijo sees it. It began in 2001 as a concept, became reality in 2002 and in 2004 will begin to show benefits from the effort invested in it.

Armijo, general manager for the San Fernando Valley sector, says his first fiscal year's work was to eliminate duplication, improve efficiency and performance. That year, the sector realized a \$3 million savings.

The second year was focused on improving productivity, improving on-time performance, reducing customer complaints, accidents and Workers' Compensation claims.

Armijo compares the development of the service sectors to a fruit tree. "You don't get fruit the first year, it takes time to nurture and grow. We're in a transitional period now."

Hitting the numbers

But he believes that in the fiscal year ahead the San Fernando Valley sector, along with the four others, will begin hitting the numbers and putting more programs into place.

"We're going to be more creative," he says. "There are a lot of ideas among the general managers."

One of the things Armijo wants to accomplish in the Valley is to improve conditions aboard Metro Buses, including reducing graffiti, by developing better relations with the community and the schools.

The opening of a new Sheriff's station



GM David Armijo

Commitment to the Community

(March 18, 2004) As if General Manager David Armijo's service sector job didn't keep him busy enough, he also has made a major commitment to the San Fernando Valley community.

For the past two years, he has served on the board of the Valley Girl Scout Council. As an executive committee member, he helped revise the by-laws, adjust the organization's business practices and evaluate the senior staff.

He also is serving this year on the Valley Industry and Commerce Association (VICA) Leadership Institute. The group has studied criminal justice in the Valley, human resources and needs among the area's needy families and the arts.

At a recent luncheon, Armijo introduced the new Metro Connections hub and spoke concept to the VICA transportation committee. He'll now serve on a subcommittee where his expertise will be a resource in developing transportation solutions for the community.

Finally, Armijo – who holds a masters degree in public administration from Cal State Long Beach – continues his commitment to education by teaching

adjacent to the sector office in Chatsworth later this month is an important element of the plan, but it also will allow closer cooperation between the field supervisors and vehicle operations supervisors on his staff and the Sheriff's deputies.

Orange Line on the horizon

The biggest thing on the Valley sector's horizon, however, is the opening in mid-2005 of the Metro Orange Line – the bus transitway connecting North Hollywood and Warner Center. And Armijo already is looking ahead to the elements of a service plan.

The cross-Valley express line, which will see 60-foot articulated buses serving 13 bus stations along the 14-mile restricted roadway, will be keyed to the Metro Red Line schedule and will foster a significant number of local route changes.

These might include "circulator" shuttle buses which would feed passengers into the Warner Center hub beginning in FY 2006. The shuttle could employ 30-foot buses as the most appropriate vehicles for that type of service.

Noting that the area is expecting sizeable population growth in the near future, Armijo says, "A circulator will encourage more people to begin relying on public transportation."

A prestigious assignment

The Metro Orange Line is expected to be a prestigious assignment for the bus operators, including extra-board drivers, who will be headquartered at West Valley Division 8.

Operators, who may bid into the assignment under the current contract agreement, will be specially trained to handle the big coaches.

Training also will cover the unique requirements of the transitway, including signal preemption, schedules, line connections and safety, station stops and customer service.

"We really want this to be a successful service," says Armijo. "We want the operators to be ambassadors and to be as proud of operating the line as we are of providing it. We want to be sure they have what they need to make it a success."

a professional-level course on leadership at CSULB.

In May, the university's College of Health and Human Resources will present Armijo the Distinguished Alumnus Award for 2004. The award honors career achievement and community involvement.

About his community work, Armijo says, "From my standpoint, it's an opportunity to tell the Metro story and to network with other business leaders, the public and non-profit organizations. People are always amazed about how much there is to the MTA."


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[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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MTA Library Users Now Have World Catalog at Their Fingertips

By MATT BARRETT

(March 18, 2004) Employees seeking transportation information now can simultaneously search 17 libraries and the world catalog, thanks to the recent addition of "TransCat/First Search," a new service offered by MTA's Dorothy Payton Gray Transportation Library.



Link to the MTA Library at
<http://intranet1/dept/mtalibrary>
The TransCat/First Search link
is located under "Resources."

Although MTA librarians have had access to the world catalog since 1979, only now is it being offered directly to library users via the Internet. MTA also can borrow items from other libraries through the interlibrary loan program.

The MTA Library also lends items to other research institutions and government agencies interested in its collection of rare transportation artifacts and documents.

Joining together the catalogs of the nation's best transportation libraries allows transportation libraries to leverage their resources better, and bring direct research access to library users.

Maximizing timely access

"We're delighted that the National Transportation Library selected the MTA as a participating library," says Joanne Kawai, deputy executive officer, Policy Research. "Our goal continues to be maximizing timely access to transportation research."

The U.S. Department of Transportation is picking up the full cost of MTA's participation for the first year.

Nelda Bravo, the national transportation librarian, says the response has been tremendous. Other transportation libraries, including some large European transportation libraries, are expressing interest in joining the catalog.

To join the system, a library's records must be included in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) cataloging system, something the MTA Library has been doing consistently since 1976.

52 million library records

More than 45,000 public, academic, government and research libraries in 85 countries are part of the OCLC network, providing access to more than 52 million library records.

A recent survey of transportation libraries found that MTA's library is the fourth largest in collection size, after U.C. Berkeley, Northwestern University, and the U.S. Department of Transportation, and fifth largest in circulation.

It is also the only transportation library in all of Southern California, while Northern California benefits from seven transportation libraries.

The MTA Library stays in close contact with its counterparts at the CalTrans library in Sacramento, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Library in Oakland and the librarians at U.C. Berkeley.

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(web)▶ [Archives](#)▶ [Events Calendar](#)▶ [Research Center/
Library](#)▶ [Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)▶ [Metro Classifieds](#)▶ [Retirement
Round-up](#)**Metro Info**▶ [Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)▶ [Org Chart](#) (pdf)▶ [Policies](#)▶ [Training](#)▶ [Help Desk](#)▶ [Intranet Policy](#)**Need e-Help?**Call the Help Desk
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Facilities Services employees celebrate two years without a lost work-time injury.



PHOTO BY ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

Facilities Services Employees Achieve Landmark Safety Record

By ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

(March 19, 2004) Carrying the feeling of a job well done, the 57 employees of Metro Facilities Services shared a Southern-style lunch, Thursday, to celebrate two years without a single lost work-time injury.

Members of the unit, part of Facilities Maintenance, were presented with individual safety certificates and a banner they autographed to commemorate their accomplishment.

In addition to being served a hearty meal featuring rib eye steak, the employees each received a multi-wrench and a towel embroidered with the "Safety's First" slogan. Food and gifts were provided by MTA's Safety Department.

The honored crew consists of 57 air conditioning technicians, locksmiths, electronic communications technicians, painters, property maintainers, electricians, facilities system technicians and supervisors. The cost center – based out of the Regional Rebuild Center and MTA Headquarters – services all Metro Bus, Metro Rail and non-revenue divisions.

Randolph Gordy, Facilities Maintenance manager, says his team's diligence led to the achievement of this milestone.

A major accomplishment

"It's hard work to get this far," Gordy says. "This is a major accomplishment."

Brady Branstetter, director of Facilities Maintenance, believes the crew's success can be attributed to safe work practices – not luck.

"Their habit is to work safely," says Brady Branstetter. "Maintaining a safe work record means practicing work habits where the unexpected is

anticipated.”

With this achievement under their belts, the crew’s next goal is to continue working without an injury.

“Considering the type of construction-oriented work they perform and the large size of the group, being the first to reach the two-year mark is a real team success that deserves recognition and praise,” says Denise Longley, deputy executive officer, Strategic Development, Facilities/Operations. “I attribute such an incredible record to the team’s receptiveness to listening and sharing ideas on how to improve safety and then implementing the information into their work routines.”

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[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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New Foothill Transit Store Opens at El Monte Station

(March 19, 2004) Foothill Transit and Metro officials joined, Thursday, in the Grand Opening of the new Transit Store at the El Monte Station.

Open for business since Feb. 1, the Transit Store serves about 700 customers each day and is rapidly becoming the most popular of Foothill Transit's six stores.

"The El Monte Station Transit Store is the result of teamwork from both Foothill Transit and the MTA," said Bob Huff, president of the agency's executive board. He said adding the store "only enhances the service we provide to our customers."

"The completion of this Transit Store signifies our commitment in providing top-notch transit services," said General Manager Jack Gabig of the San Gabriel Valley service sector. "MTA is proud to partner with Foothill Transit in making this improvement."

Also attending the ribbon-cutting



County Supervisor Gloria Molina, center, joined Foothill Transit and MTA officials at the Transit Store ribbon-cutting. Also shown are SGV Service Sector GM Jack Gabig, rear row left, and MTA Director John Fasana, rear row center.



Tammy Nguyen, assistant manager of the Foothill Transit Store, greets General Manager Gabig of the SGV Service Sector during the Grand Opening celebration.



The Foothill Transit Store serves about 700 customers daily at the El Monte Station.

ceremony were County Supervisor Gloria Molina, MTA Director John Fasana, SGV Governance Council Chairman Bart Doyle and members of the Foothill Transit executive board.

The store, which sells transit passes and other items, is open Monday through Friday, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Visitors gather in the customer service area of the new Foothill Transit Store at El Monte Station.

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(web)▶ [Archives](#)▶ [Events Calendar](#)▶ [Research Center/
Library](#)▶ [Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)▶ [Metro Classifieds](#)▶ [Retirement
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at 2-4357[E-Mail Webmaster](#)**New Policy Restricts Cell Phone Use to MTA Business**

- Employees must reimburse agency for personal calls
- Acknowledgement of Receipt form required

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(March 19, 2004) A new policy that took effect Feb. 1 requires employees and contract staff who were issued MTA cellular phones to submit a receipt form to the ITS Department no later than Tuesday, March 23.

The new policy restricts the use of MTA cell phones to agency business. It requires users to reimburse the agency for the cost of personal calls at the rate of 25 cents per minute.

The "Cell Phone Acknowledgement of Receipt Form" will serve as a record that employees who have MTA cell phones have read and accepted the terms of Cellular Phone IT4 policy.

The policy and the required receipt form are available on myMetro.net by clicking on "IT Policies" on the ITS Department web page. [Click here](#)

A standard formula

The 25-cent rate was derived from a standard formula that takes into account the total cost of a cell phone package that includes surcharges, long distance and roaming charges, plus taxes.

In accordance with the new policy, the ITS Department anticipates distributing the first of the cell phone bills to employees and contracted staff during the last week of April. The bills will account for the individual user's activity.

Employees should identify personal cell phone calls listed on their bills and reimburse the agency at the 25 cents per minute rate. Reimbursement payments should be made directly to the Treasury Operations office on the 21st floor.

"The accountability is required for compliance with the MTA/PTSC

How it works

- ITS monitors cell phone bills and issues copies of individual bills to users each month.
- Users determine personal calls and reimburse the agency at the rate of 25 cents a minute. Employees make reimbursement payments directly to Treasury and receive a receipt number to enter on the ITS Cellular Bill Certification Form as proof of payment.
- Employee submits completed Cellular Bill Certification Form for approval and sign-off by their respective supervisor or manager.
- Employee submits manager-approved Cellular Bill Certification Form to ITS by the specified deadline.

Employee Code of Conduct regarding telephone use," says Chief Information Officer Elizabeth Bennett.

'No appearance of impropriety'

The code states that all MTA telephones should be used for agency business, but that "occasional and limited personal use is permitted as long as it does not interfere with the performance of your official duties and there is no appearance of impropriety."

The new policy may prove to be an efficient solution to the challenges of a rapidly changing and expanding realm of cell phone use in the workplace.

"The good news is that the policy is streamlining the use of cell phones and providing a significant cost savings to Metro," said Bennett. "For example, we were able to demonstrate inconsistencies in billing from our service providers and as a result pooled our packages into a lower general rate."

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Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

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- Division 7 Operator Ted Ball earned his medal as much for his persistence in life as for his participation in the L.A. Marathon.



PHOTO BY GAYLE ANDERSON

Ted Ball's 'Amazing Experience' in Life and the L.A. Marathon

By KIM SIM

(March 19, 2004) Metro Bus Operator Ted Ball is something of a celebrity these days.

The West Hollywood Division 7 operator was profiled in a recent Los Angeles Times sports column, featured on the KTLA News at 10 and called "amazing" by a KTLA anchor. All this before and after the 61-year-old participated in the Los Angeles Marathon, March 7.

Ball finished the 26.2-mile run in 6 hours, 44 minutes and 48 seconds.

For the more than 24,000 people who swarmed the streets of Los Angeles for the annual race, maybe it wasn't that big a feat. But consider this: Ball is a double-lung transplant recipient, who underwent surgery less than two years ago after being plagued with life-threatening asthma all his life.

Before his operation in May 2002, "I was probably two months away from death," Ball says. "I got a transplant and now I'm finally well. What do you do to mark it?"

Ball settled on running in the Marathon.

'An amazing experience'

"It's ego," he says. "I've been sick all my life and I get to do something like this? It's amazing. It's an amazing experience."

He ran and he walked — a tremendous accomplishment for a guy who

Ted Ball nears the finish line of the 19th Los Angeles Marathon in downtown Los Angeles.



used to measure every step and have to guard against losing his breath.

During the race, Ball sucked on salt tablets so he wouldn't be dehydrated. He stopped at every water station for two cups — one to drink and one to douse himself. For nourishment, he ate the peanut butter and jelly sandwiches he carried with him.

By the time Ball got to mile 14, a blister had developed on a toe on his right foot. By the end of the race, the bottoms of his feet were burning.

"The race was incredibly hot and it was a killer," Ball says. "The last four miles down Olympic Boulevard, it was like 92 degrees. It was brutal."

The 5-foot-7, 112-pound Santa Monica resident made it to the finish line, even if it wasn't exactly the way he imagined it.

'Legs were gone'

"I actually was so beat that I walked across the line," Ball says. "I tried to run but my legs were gone (at) around Mile 18."

Ball wore a long-sleeved shirt for the event and women's-size running shoes because his feet were too small, he says.

He also joked that the reason he wore lightweight sweatpants was that, "I got the skinniest legs in the world and my wife says, 'You're not exposing those legs to the public.'"

What Ball did show off to the public was an incredible amount of determination.

Born with asthma and subject to constant infections, pneumonia and bronchitis, Ball developed scar tissue on his lungs from all the infections. His asthma was so severe that anything could cause it to flare up — hot weather, cold weather, physical exertion, diet.

He was a sick child born into an athletic family. In fact, his brother, Jack Ball, is a triathlon coach at UC Berkeley.

Running in the Marathon, then, was a way to prove himself.

Treadmill and weight lifting

Almost immediately after his surgery, Ball worked the treadmill and lifted weights during his cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation at UCLA Medical Center.

He continued his workout at the YMCA in Santa Monica, running three to four miles a day, at first, on the center's rooftop track and steadily going "up and up" in distance.

Ball made it to 20 miles in February, when he first started to run on the actual streets.

Times sports columnist T.J. Simers wrote a profile on Ball a few days before the Marathon, and a copy of the story is on display at West Hollywood Division 7, where he is a part-time bus operator.

His walk across the finish line was also shown at the end of KTLA's News at 10 broadcast the day after the race.

"That's kind of neat to be recognized," Ball says. "It makes the Christmas letter more interesting."

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[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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L.A. City Councilman Bernard Parks, right, honors Arthur Winston's life and service during an event at City Hall. At left, General Manager Dana Coffey.



98 and Going Strong, Arthur Winston Celebrates a Birthday

(March 23, 2004) When he was 98, it was a very good year – and Monday, March 22, was a very good birthday celebration for Metro's Arthur Winston.

The durable and energetic service attendant leadman, his friends and co-workers at Division 5 marked the occasion with cake and ice cream. The celebration at the facility named in his honor continued into the afternoon with a catered barbecue.

Although Winston's birthdays have drawn more and more attention in the last few years, the nearer he comes to the 100 mark, the more interest he receives from Los Angeles officials and the local and national media.



Division 5 Maintenance Manager Alex DiNuzzo shares a moment with Arthur Winston during a birthday party, Monday.

Jet Magazine sent a reporter and photographer to Division 5, Monday morning, to do an interview and take photos. A story is expected to make the April issue.

NBC and CBS

The "NBC Today Weekend" show aired a segment, recently, showing Winston at home and at work. "CBS Evening News with Dan Rather" has

taped a piece for future use.

The LA *Times* profiled him in a Feb. 13 story in which Winston shared some of the wisdom of his years and life.

On Friday, March 19, Los Angeles City Hall by Councilman Bernard Parks honored him. During an event televised on the city's Channel 35, the councilman presented a resolution and a plaque commemorating Winston's 70 years of dedicated service and noting his 98th birthday.

South Bay General Manager Dana Coffey, Government Relations Manager Wilbur Babb and South Bay Community Relations Officer Victoria Woods accompanied Winston on his visit to City Hall.

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[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Services Set Friday for Real Estate Officer BonnieLee Yarbrough

(March 23, 2004) Services are scheduled, Friday, for Real Estate Officer BonnieLee Yarbrough who died, Sunday, following a short illness.

The service will be held at 2 p.m. at the Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church, 8351 Magnolia Ave., Riverside. An open-casket viewing will precede the service at 1:30 p.m.

A separate viewing will be scheduled at the Akes Family Mortuary, 9695 Magnolia Ave., Riverside. A time has not been announced.

Yarbrough, 60, was first employed as an MTA Real Estate officer in September 1996. She is survived by her husband, Doug, two grown sons and two grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, friends may make a donation in her name to the Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church.



BonnieLee Yarbrough


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[Viewpoint](#)
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[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Paid Permit Parking Offered, April 1, at Valley Metro Rail Stations

- 25 spaces each at NoHo, Universal City stations

By ED SCANNELL

(March 23, 2004) Effective April 1, Metro will convert 25 parking spaces at both the North Hollywood and Universal City Metro Red Line stations to paid permit parking.

The limited conversion is intended to help manage demand for parking which during the week exceeds capacity at the two stations. The North Hollywood station has a total of 919 parking spaces and the Universal City station has 555.

A monthly parking permit will cost \$39, plus a one-time processing fee of \$4.95. Permits are renewed automatically through the Metro.net website until cancelled by the user.

The paid parking permits may be reserved on a first-come-first-served basis at www.Parkmetro.net. A permit will be sent by mail. Applications also can be made via telephone by calling 1-800-997-0197.

Demand meets the threshold

"Last July, the MTA Board approved a policy under which a limited number of spaces at Metro Rail stations could be set aside for guaranteed parking if demand at those stations regularly exceeds capacity," says CEO Roger Snoble. "Demand at the North Hollywood and Universal City Metro Red Line stations certainly meets that threshold."

Spaces set aside for paid permit parking will be painted green and will include signs designating them as "paid permit parking only." Permit holders will not be assigned a specific space and may use any of the green spaces.

Spaces will be available to permit holders from 4 a.m. to 10:15 a.m., working weekdays only. Paid permit spaces not filled by 10:30 a.m. will be open to all Metro patrons at no charge.

The number of permits issued will not exceed the number of available green spaces at each location. Permits purchased for parking at one Metro Rail station are not valid at the other station.

Rail systems in several major U.S. cities have instituted limited paid parking at stations where demand exceeds capacity. These include New York MTA, MBTA (Boston), CTA (Chicago), WMATA (Washington, D.C.), MARTA (Atlanta), MTA/SDTI (San Diego Trolley), and BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit).



[Home](#)[CEO Hotline](#)[Viewpoint](#)[Classified Ads](#)[Archives](#)[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)[Pressroom](#) (web)[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)[Policies](#)[Training](#)[Help Desk](#)[Intranet Policy](#)

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Chatsworth First-Graders Get a Kick Out of Division 8

By ERIC RAPP

(March 24, 2004) Every year, groups of first graders from Sierra Canyon School, a private school in Chatsworth, take a tour of West Valley Division 8.

For the kids, it's a fun field trip, and a chance to see how a bus division works.

Division 8 and the San Fernando Valley sector office provided snacks and some promotional materials for the most recent tour, March 15, to give the children something to remember their trip by.

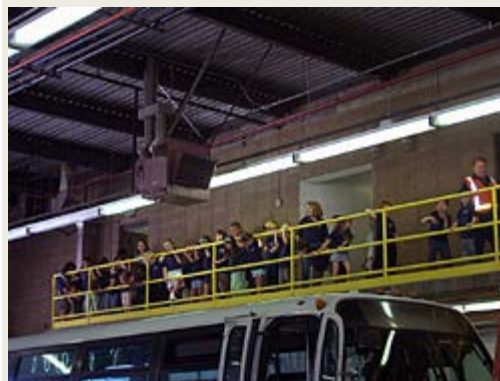
More importantly, it was a chance to give the students some vital messages about safety and courtesy on the bus.

Division 8 Operator Marc Hollander, a veteran of school tours, talked to the students for about half an hour about these important topics.

Mechanic Scott Lanski, who helped give the tour, has done it for 15 years. He always enjoys showing the kids the vacuum cleaning system and the oversized tools that mechanics must use on buses.

But, he says, "they like going through the bus washer the best."

Sierra Canyon School students tour the maintenance shop, attend a safety seminar and ride Metro through the bus washer.



PHOTOS BY ERIC RAPP





| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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MTA to be Featured in Public TV Program on Workers' Comp

By KIM SIM

(March 24, 2004) MTA's efforts to reduce Workers' Compensation costs will be featured in a public television hour-long news magazine program, Thursday, March 25.

Check it out: [Click here](#) or go to californiaconnected.org

The episode of "California Connected" will be aired locally on KCET, Channel 28, at 10 p.m. The program will examine the rising cost of Workers' Compensation premiums in California.

Among the issues to be covered in the program are how to fix the system, the costs of Workers' Compensation for California employers, and employer and employee perspectives.

The show will take a look at MTA's self-insured and self-administered Workers' Compensation claims program as a potential cost-reducing approach.

Self-insured employers provide their own coverage for Workers' Compensation liabilities instead of paying premiums to a third-party company to handle claims.

'More cost-effective'

"It's definitely more cost-effective because nobody cares more about your own money than you do," says Pamela Murano, manager of Risk Management's Special Investigations Unit. "We're much more knowledgeable about our employees and their work requirements and what they do."

Two years ago, MTA spent \$60 million on Workers' Compensation. Last year, the agency spent \$54 million, Murano says.

She attributes that decrease to several factors — MTA's Safety's 1st program, more efficient handling of claims and more aggressive investigation of Workers' Compensation fraud.

Members of the "California Connected" team filmed in February and interviewed Murano, Chief Financial Officer Richard Brumbaugh, senior investigator Roy Romero of the Special Investigations Unit and Deputy Executive Officer of Corporate Safety Gary Spivack.

"California Connected" is a weekly program that airs on local PBS stations throughout the state.

EDITOR'S NOTE: To report Workers' Compensation fraud, call 213-922-2800.


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Central City Division 1 Metro Bus Operator
Derald Andrews

Derald Andrews Commended for Helping a Co-Worker in Distress

By KIM SIM

(March 24, 2004) Metro Bus Operator Derald Andrews' calm and collected response to a fellow bus operator's breathing difficulties earned him an employee's commendation.

Andrews came to the assistance of another bus operator, Feb. 23, after being alerted to the situation by a waiting passenger. In an Employee's Commendation Memorandum, Transit Operations Supervisor Adrienne Gipson wrote that Andrews "went beyond the call of duty."

A bus operator for Central City Division 1, Andrews was working Line 18 when he stopped at the layover zone on Vermont Avenue and Sixth Street.

What happened next was that "a passenger waiting for the 201 line approached my bus and told me that the operator of the 201 bus couldn't breathe," Andrews said.

He used his own cell phone to call 911 and then placed a priority call to Bus Operations Control for help.

'Checked her pulse'

"The first thing I did was to turn her coach on to get some air," he said. "I proceeded to get her arms up, check her pulse. She was breathing."

He fashioned a cold compress for the bus operator using water and paper towels.

"My reaction was, I was going to help, see what I could do, for another co-worker," Andrews said. "(The Fire Department) told me I did a good job."

It wasn't easy getting in to assist the bus operator in the first place. Because the door was closed, Andrews had to run around to the side to open the driver's window.

Life-saving skills

This isn't the first time the 20-year veteran of MTA has had to put his life-saving skills to the test.

Andrews, who learned CPR while serving in the military in the late 1970s, once had to assist a passenger who said he couldn't breathe.

"It's part of the job," Andrews said of being prepared to deal with emergencies. "I would do it again."

As is customary with all commendation recipients, Andrews will be recognized at the division's next staff meeting.

The purpose of such recognition is to "just let the employees know what happened," Transportation Manager Sonja Owens said. "Let them know what he did."

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[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Metro San Fernando Valley to Host Grand Opening for New Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau Facility

By Lisa Huynh

(March 25, 2004) Twelve Sheriff's deputies and three sergeants are calling the new Sheriff's facility in the San Fernando Valley home.

The San Fernando Valley Service Sector will host a grand opening beginning at 10 a.m., Saturday, March 27, to welcome the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau. The facility is located next door to the sector office at 9760 Topanga Canyon Boulevard in Chatsworth.

The celebration, which is free and open to employees and the public, will include a Transit Safety Fair. The grand opening will be held at noon. Lt. Pat Jordan is in charge of the 3,000-square foot facility.

"This is a huge impact, not only to the community, but to our bus operators because it's increasing our safety force," says Community Relations Manager Marta Maestas-Mack.

"The purpose of the "satellite" facility is to allow our Valley bus units to deploy closer to their patrol area," says Capt. Dan Finkelstein. "This could not have been accomplished without the support and guidance of David Armijo and John Roberts."

Fully equipped building

The facility, a 70-by-42 foot modular building, will be shared by the Sheriff's deputies and Metro's Vehicle Operations. It has computer workstations, a report/briefing area, men's and women's shower and locker rooms, a kitchen and offices.

Derrick Ballentine, who has been a Sheriff's deputy for 15 years, loves

PHOTOS BY LISA HUYNH



Sheriff's Deputy Derrick Ballentine and Division 15 Maintenance Manager John Robert.



From left, Sgt. Mike Ballai and deputies Derrick Ballentine and Mike Baker.



The 3,000-square foot Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau facility is located next door to the San Fernando Valley Sector offices.

being at the new facility. "It used to take us a long time to get from downtown to the Valley. Now that we're here, it has decreased my travel time and in turn has increased my patrol time."

The San Fernando Valley sector is the second sector to have its own branch office of the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau. The San Gabriel Valley sector was the first.

"Working out of a joint facility like this will maximize the efficiency of both operations, says Division 15 Maintenance Manager John Roberts. "There will be more of an exchange and interaction of issues and problems concerning the community."

Transit Safety Fair

The Los Angeles Unified School District, Red Cross, Los Angeles Fire Department and the Sheriff's search and rescue team are expected to participate in Saturday's Transit Safety Fair.

The Sheriff's "Mounted Posse," the "Metro Experience" mobile theater and a 15-piece jazz band will provide entertainment. The Sheriff's Department will recruit reserve Sheriff's deputies during the fair.

To promote the event, the sector staff distributed 10,000 flyers to nearby residents, libraries and schools. They also mailed invitations to elected officials.

"If this safety fair goes well, I can see us doing it on an annual basis," says Maestas-Mack. "I don't think the community can learn too much about safety."


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Hearings Set at MTA, Friday, on State Budget Cuts, Gas Prices

(March 25, 2004) CEO Roger Snoble will testify, Friday, at a joint hearing called by State Senate and LA City Council transportation committees to determine the impact on MTA of proposed state budget cuts.

The session, which begins at 2 p.m. in the MTA Board Room, will follow a 10 a.m. hearing scheduled by State Assemblymember Jenny Oropeza, chair of the Assembly Transportation Committee, who will take testimony on the state's soaring gasoline prices.

The afternoon hearing will look at how proposed transportation funding cuts and Governor Schwarzenegger's budget proposals will affect MTA and transportation in LA County.

The hearing will be jointly conducted by Sen. Kevin Murray (D-Los Angeles), chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee; Sen. Joseph Dunn (D-Santa Ana), chairman of a Senate Budget Committee subcommittee; and City Councilman Antonio Villaraigosa, chairman of the Council's Transportation Committee and also an MTA Board member.

Transportation Committee Chair Oropeza, a former MTA Board member, has invited policy, business, consumer and transportation experts to testify at the morning hearing.

Among those expected to testify are Jamie Court, Foundation for Consumer and Taxpayer Rights; Jack Kyser, chief economist for the LA County Economic Development Corp.; Pat Perez, manager of the Fuels Division of the California Energy Commission and representatives for automobile associations.

Oropeza has scheduled a second hearing on gasoline prices for April 1, but no time or location have been set.


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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South Bay Open House Set for Saturday, March 27

By KIM SIM

(March 25, 2004) The South Bay Service Sector will hold its first-ever Community Open House, Saturday, March 27, with its top priority to get the community involved.

The public is invited to the event, which will take place at Arthur Winston Division 5 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"The purpose is to get the community familiar with the division," said Metro South Bay communications officer Victoria Woods. "Basically, it's just to get the community involved in what's going on."

Several activities planned for the Open House include a tour of the division, a bus and rail safety program, an award reception for student winners in an MTA essay contest and a question-and-answer session with Governance Council members.

In addition, there will be an information booth about the service sector concept as well as a community relations table to update residents on activities planned for the area.

For the kids, Hero, the Metro Sheriff's dog, and other special characters will be on hand.

A Governance Council meeting at 9:30 a.m. will precede the Open House. It is also open to the public.

General Manager Dana Coffey and Communications Manager Rich Morallo will be in attendance. The division's transportation and maintenance staff will also be present.


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Dodgers to Run Shuttle Buses from Union Station, Chinatown

By RICK JAGER

(March 26, 2004) The Los Angeles Dodgers will offer bus shuttles from Union Station and from the Metro Gold Line Chinatown Station to selected baseball games this season.

The Dodger Roundtripper Station to Stadium Shuttle, operated by First Transit, will begin its runs, April 2, for the Dodger's exhibition game against the Angels. The shuttle also will run on Opening Day, April 5, and every Friday the Dodgers have a scheduled home game.

Fans can board the shuttle on the Transit Plaza. The shuttle will travel west, taking Elysian Park through Gate A and dropping fans off at a specially designated stop in lot 13 of Dodger Stadium. Cost for the round trip is \$2.

Patrons using the Metro Gold Line can also catch a Dodger Shuttle Bus from the Chinatown Station. Metro passes are not accepted on the shuttle.

Buses will leave Union Station every 15 minutes or less from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Buses will depart the Metro Gold Line Chinatown Station every 30 minutes.

Return service from Dodger Stadium will begin no later than the top of the 8th inning. The last bus will leave 30 minutes after the last out, but no later than 11 p.m.

For information on the Dodger Roundtripper Station to Stadium Shuttle call 323-244-1-HIT.

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(web)▶ [Archives](#)▶ [Events Calendar](#)▶ [Research Center/
Library](#)▶ [Metro Cafe](#) (pdf)▶ [Metro Classifieds](#)▶ [Retirement
Round-up](#)**Metro Info**▶ [Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)▶ [Org Chart](#) (pdf)▶ [Policies](#)▶ [Training](#)▶ [Help Desk](#)▶ [Intranet Policy](#)**Need e-Help?**Call the Help Desk
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Terrorist Threat Focuses Attention on Rail, Bus Security

- **Increased police presence on Metro**
- **More vigilance by employees needed**
- In this report:
 - > [Employee 'Eyes and Ears' Needed](#)
 - > [What Homeland Security is Doing](#)
 - > ['What you can do to help' pamphlet and video](#)

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 26, 2004) With the terrorist bombings in Madrid, Moscow and the Middle East a vivid memory, the U.S. government and transit agencies nationwide, including MTA, are focusing more attention on rail and bus security.

More law enforcement and security officers, many undercover, are patrolling rail and bus lines. Metro Rail fare inspectors are keeping an eye out for unusual behavior while checking tickets.

Train platforms, buses and rail cars are being searched more frequently for suspicious packages. Bomb-sniffing dogs are deployed on a regular basis.

There's increased cooperation and communication among local law enforcement and emergency agencies and such federal agencies as U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the FBI and Secret Service.

The federal government has been more generous with funding for local security efforts, including a

The Transit Services Bureau has increased the presence of sworn officers in the Metro Rail system. Shown here, from left are Sheriff's deputies Frank Richter, David Sivard and Amore Smith.



Employee 'Eyes and Ears' Needed

More "eyes and ears" are needed in the campaign to prevent terrorism, says Transit Police Chief Dan Finkelstein. He asks all employees who work in or use the Metro system to help.

Whether riding a Metro Bus or catching Metro Rail, employees can bolster security efforts by reporting suspicious packages and behavior that is not "like a typical Los Angeles commuter."

All Metro Rail platforms have emergency phones that connect to a Rail Operations Center. The push-button phones and speaker boxes may be found near the fire equipment cabinets at the ends or near the middle of the platforms, as well as on the subway mezzanine levels near the ticket vending machines.

Metro Bus operators have direct radio contact with the Bus Operations Center. Bus and rail controllers are in constant communication with the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau and the Sheriff's dispatcher.

What Homeland Security is Doing

Over the past two years, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has focused on improving the flow of security-related information among all levels of government.

The department also has provided more funding, has developed new security measures

\$4.5 million grant to MTA. The money is being spent for a security command vehicle, chemical/biological protective suits for first responders and a high-rail vehicle to transport emergency personnel to an incident site.

Deputy CEO John Catoe, Transit Police Chief Capt. Dan Finkelstein and other MTA security officials have participated recently in several conference calls with Homeland Security.

Transit security briefing

Under Secretary Asa Hutchinson and his staff briefed some 100 transit and security officers across the country on the Madrid bombings. The group also discussed how U.S. transit agencies could improve anti-terrorist procedures.

“Since the Madrid bombings, we’ve increased our law enforcement staffing a lot with the goal of having at least some presence on every subway platform,” says Finkelstein, who heads the Sheriff’s Transit Services Bureau, as well as the Metrolink security unit. “We have 24/7 patrols in and around Union Station.”

and has increased training for transit security agencies.

Homeland Security is planning a pilot program to screen luggage and carry-on bags for explosives at rail stations and aboard trains. Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration will test the concept, which will not be similar to airport screenings, at one commuter rail station.

The department also is working on a rapid-deployment Mass Transit K-9 program to assist local law enforcement teams. Additional training and assistance also will be provided to local K-9 teams.

The Administration’s FY 2005 budget request includes \$407 million to allow Homeland Security to develop biological countermeasures and \$63 million for chemical and high explosives countermeasures to help detect and counter threats to transit systems.

Editor’s note:

The Transit Services Bureau is offering a pamphlet, entitled “What You Can Do to Help,” and a 17-minute video about transit security. The “Warning Signs, System Security Awareness for Transit Employees” video has been distributed to all operating divisions and is available to department managers for employee meetings. For a copy of the video, contact Paul Lennon at 922-4418.

As Los Angeles’ largest transit hub and a converging point for thousands of commuters every weekday, Union Station cannot be overlooked as deserving the highest possible security, Finkelstein believes.

That’s why he helped set up a Union Station security working group that includes the Transit Services Bureau, MTA Security, Amtrak Police, MWD security, the LAPD Central Division and developer Catellus’ private security company.

“Terrorism is all about fear – making you think your government can’t protect you,” says Finkelstein. “With a strong police presence, we do what we can to allay those fears.”

Beyond Union Station

The expanded transit security effort reaches well beyond Union Station. The police chief’s goal is to ensure a strong visible presence of deputies and fare inspectors on or around all rail platforms.

During the evening hours, deputies frequently clear an entire train and thoroughly search it for suspicious packages. One side benefit: they’ve reduced the number of transients sleeping on the trains during operating hours from about 200 to about a dozen.

But, transients are a continuing concern. Not only do they annoy passengers, they frequently leave their belongings on the platforms and trains. More than one security alert has resulted from just such instances.

So, whether it's increased police presence or more attention to items left on a bus or train, Finkelstein says these tense times require more vigilance by law enforcement officers, transit employees and the public.

He notes that the bomb-laden backpacks and packages that killed 200 and injured 1,500 had gone unnoticed for 30 or 40 minutes in Madrid's subway system.

"If even one of those could have been defused, or if a train could have been evacuated," he says, "perhaps 60 lives could have been saved."

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Management Audit Web Pages Join Employee Intranet

- [Check it out](#)

(March 26, 2004) MyMetro.Net expands again, today, with the addition of the Management Audit Services Department (MASD) to its family of web pages.

The MASD pages can be found by clicking on the Select a Department drop-down menu on the right side of the Intranet home page.

"We hope that by offering this website, we can increase knowledge of MASD's role in protecting the agency's assets", says Managing Director William Bernsdorf. "Additionally, we want to do everything we can to facilitate communication with other departments and their staffs."

In addition to the Mission Statement and an explanation of the department's function and charter, the web pages include the MASD organizational structure with links to charts showing internal, Information Technology and external audit and contractor pre-qualification personnel.

The External Contract Audit Services Group, for example, supports a wide range of "large-dollar" MTA procurements and projects. The Internal Audit group assists management in achieving financial and operating goals.

Other features of the MASD web pages include organization guidelines, the audit process, MTA's contractor pre-qualification program and how it works, and a page for special recognition of employees.

The MASD web pages were a joint project of Chief Administrative Analyst Patricia Jacobs, who coordinated the project, and Assistant Webmaster Kevin Woo, who designed the pages.


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Sectors Schedule April Governance Council Meetings

(March 30, 2004) Residents of the five Metro service sector areas are invited to attend Governance Council meetings scheduled for April.

The meetings are scheduled at the following times and locations:

- Metro Westside/Central Service Sector, 3 – 5 p.m., Thursday, April 1, La Cienega Tennis Center, 325 S. La Cienega Blvd., Beverly Hills.
- Metro San Fernando Valley Sector, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 7, Marvin Braude Constituent Service Center Community Room, 6262 Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys.
- Metro Gateway Cities Service Sector, 2 – 4 p.m., Thursday, April 8, The Gas Company, 9240 Firestone Blvd., Downey.
- Metro San Gabriel Valley Sector, 5 p.m., Tuesday, April 13, Metro San Gabriel Sector Office, 3369 Santa Anita Ave., El Monte.
- Metro South Bay Service Sector, 9:30 – 11 a.m., Saturday, April 17, Carson Bus Division, 450 W. Griffith St., Carson.

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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MTA Employee Goes Bald to Help Kids with Cancer



The screenshot shows the St. Baldrick's website. At the top, it says "SHAVING THE WAY TO CURE CHILDHOOD CANCER" and "benefiting CureSearch National Childhood Cancer Foundation". Below that, it says "BE BRAVE ... GO BALD". There are navigation links: HOME | HISTORY | THE CAUSE | SPONSOR A SHAVEE | JOIN | SHAVEES & LOCATIONS | MEMBERS | CONTACT US. A banner says "WELCOME TO THE DONATION PAGE OF ELOISE CATALANO". Below that, it says "Thank you for helping me fight childhood cancer". There are two photos: one of a woman with dark hair and one of a person's head being shaved with "ST. BALDRICK'S" written on the back. At the bottom, there is a button that says "Make a donation in Eloise's name".

[Click here](#) to visit the web page of Eloise Catalano on the National Childhood Cancer Foundation web site. For more information on the fight against childhood cancer, go to the St. Baldrick's website at www.stbaldricks.org

- **Radio DJ shaves the head of ITS programmer Eloise Catalano in a live broadcast to promote childhood cancer fundraising campaign.**

By GAYLE ANDERSON

The moment of truth for Eloise Catalano came in a barber chair. After months of thinking and talking about shaving her head to promote awareness in the fight against childhood cancer, Eloise was finally doing it.

During a live broadcast on radio station KBIG 104 on March 12, Catalano sat poised at the radio station in Glendale while morning DJ LeighAnn sheared off Catalano's dark auburn locks to peach-fuzz length.

The finishing touches came two later on St. Patrick's Day. In the middle of an Irish pub, a local barber carved out the words "St. Baldricks" on the back of Catalano's shorn head at a media event held in Toluca Lake.



ON THE AIR - Eloise Catalano shows off new haircut with KBIG DJs LeighAnn and Charlie Tuna.

As word from both events began to spread, Catalano's sponsorship donations picked up speed. Two weeks later, her personal effort has raised more than \$2,500s toward an ambitious goal of \$50,000.

Now in its fourth year, St. Baldrick's is an international campaign of the National Childhood Cancer Foundation (NCCF) held on or near St. Patrick's Day. Each "shavee" collects donations from sponsors to support childhood cancer research in return for shaving their heads, an act of solidarity with children who often lose their hair during treatment.

Barber Steve Arenas applies finishing touches with a hair sculpture of "St Baldricks" on the back of Catalano's shorn head.



Catalano was one of 1,849 "shavee's" who volunteered on this St. Patrick's Day to shave their heads with the hope of raising \$3 million dollars worldwide.

A programmer analyst in ITS, Catalano is an avid volunteer. She's served up 'Meals on Wheels' to grateful seniors for 13 years now and also sponsors the NCCF's "Adopt a Teddy Bear" program.

"Meeting the children when we delivered Teddy Bears during the holidays was a very moving experience," said Catalano.

When people ask why she is involved to a greater degree than most, she is quick to say she is not there for personal reasons. "I feel I need to help," she says. "Cancer is the number one killer of children. Back in 1970, the curable rate was around 40 percent . Today, thanks to cancer research, the curable rate is up to 80-85 percent of the cases."

Catalano will gladly lift the wig she wears to work to earn a donation of

\$5 to the cause, and she has had some takers. The hair is growing back pretty fast, she warns, but the donation jar is still open.

To make a donation and learn more about the fight against childhood cancer, go to the St. Baldrick's website at www.stbaldricks.org and click on the "Sponsor a Shavee" tab. Type "Eloise" in the first name field and select "search" to bring up Catalano's page which includes before and after photos and an option to make an online donation.

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[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Board Improves Non-Contract Retirement Plan; OKs Other Motions

- [Expansion of Division 1](#)
- [Regional "smart card" clearinghouse](#)

(March 30, 2004) The MTA Board has approved the addition of a Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) to the non-contract employees' Retirement Income Plan.

DROP would allow a member of the RTD/MTA Retirement Plan to "retire" for pension purposes, but continue active employment. The DROP plan is identical to that provided union employees.

The Board also voted to eliminate the \$133.33 currently deducted from the monthly annuity paid to retired members of the RTD/MTA plan. The elimination of this deduction is consistent with improvements given to union employees.

The Board's vote also permits members of the RTD/MTA retirement plan to purchase up to five years' additional service credit called "Air Time." Members of CalPERS currently have this benefit.

Representatives of CalPERS will be at MTA Headquarters, Tuesday, April 6 to answer employees' questions about "Air Time." Two sessions are planned for the Board room from noon to 1:30 p.m. and again from 2 to 3:30 p.m.

Information about "Air Time" also can be found on the CalPERS web site at www.calpers.ca.gov.

Division 1 Expansion

Following a public hearing, the Board agreed to begin an eminent domain action to acquire a 2.3-acre parcel of land just to the south of Central City Division 1.

Metro plans to expand Division 1, increasing the division's capacity from its current 183 to 283 buses and adding as many as 120 employee parking stalls. Once the property is purchased, the agency will ask the City of Los Angeles to close a portion of Industrial Street, which will be included in the bus yard.

The Board's motion also directed MTA staff to negotiate with the property owner for the development of adequate, mutually agreeable parking to meet the needs of the area and Metro's bus requirements.

Regional Clearinghouse

The Board also approved a motion budgeting \$16 million for a regional clearinghouse and service center to handle the Regional Transit Access Pass (TAP), also called the "smart card."

The funds will be used for technical design, program development and implementation of the Regional Universal Fare System (UFS).

MTA will purchase a data collection system and hire a contractor to operate the regional clearinghouse and Transit Access Pass (TAP) service center. The facility will serve Metro and the 11 municipal operators participating in UFS.

Metro will install bus and rail UFS equipment beginning this summer. The municipal operators have completed their purchase of UFS equipment and expect to take delivery late this year.

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

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New Tow Truck Operators



Six mechanics from Crossroads Depot Division 2 recently earned certificates qualifying them as heavy tow truck operators. Back row, from left, are Rodrigo Tovar, Leo Licea, Roy Demas, Anthony Vance, Jimmy Watson and Juan Carlos Carrillo. Instruction included techniques for recovering and towing inoperative Metro Buses. Paul Rankin of Qualify Assurance, front row left, and Walter Graham, not shown, taught the class. Both have attended the Army Heavy Recovery School in Aberdeen, Md. Also shown are Dale Zielinski, Equipment Engineering project engineer, and Equipment Maintenance Superintendent Mike Stange. (3/30/04)


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Career Days Set for Westside/Central Maintenance Employees

By KIM SIM

(March 30, 2004) In an effort to provide maintenance employees with the information they need to move up the job ladder, Human Resources supervisors will head out to three maintenance divisions in the Westside/Central Service Sector for the first-ever Maintenance Career Day, April 1 and 7.

The sessions, provided to maintenance employees at Venice Division 6, West Hollywood Division 7 and Gateway Division 10, will educate them about career advancement programs and opportunities.

"I'm very much for training and expanding opportunities for my employees," says Frank Lonyai, Division 10 maintenance manager. "We've tried to tailor the whole event to the special needs of the employees — what's available out there and how (they) can fit into that. That's the major goal."

Division 6 and Division 7 will hold their career day on Thursday, April 1. The times for the sessions at Division 6 are 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., while the times for the sessions at Division 7 are 6 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Division 10 has planned its career day for Wednesday, April 7, at 6:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Human Resources supervisors Janet Chu-Hooker and Scott Lloyd will go out to the divisions to explain employment positions and opportunities both within and outside of MTA maintenance.

'Educate and inspire'

Attendees at the half-hour sessions will also be informed about career-advancement programs available to them, such as the Tuition Assistance Program and MTA-sponsored training.

In addition, there will be an overview of the recruitment and selection process. Employees will learn how to find out about job vacancies, read and understand job bulletins and prepare for tests and interviews, says Maintenance Career Day coordinator Bruce Moore.

"The purpose is really to alert, inform, educate and inspire maintenance employees (about) what their opportunities are and how to take advantage of them," Community Relations Manager Jody Litvak says. "This is something that our maintenance management staff at each of the divisions wanted to do for their maintenance staff."

Michael Davis, finance manager for Westside Service Sector Office, came up with the idea for a Maintenance Career Day and discussed it with the maintenance managers, who decided to make it a part of their service improvement program.

"I hope we can let the employees out in the divisions understand that

all of the benefits that are available to employees in Gateway, those same benefits are available to them in the divisions," Davis says. "They have the opportunity for career growth."

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[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [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)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

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Division 9 Maintenance Manager John McBryan, left, and Transportation Manager Michael Greenwood, right, congratulated San Gabriel Valley DAC members Cathy Hardway and Juan Augspurger on receiving the Valley Community Church award.



PHOTOS BY LIZ ARMUJO-HOLBROOK

SGV Sector DAC Honored by Valley Community Church

(March 31, 2004) The San Gabriel Valley Division Advisory Committee (DAC) was honored, earlier this month, during the annual dinner of the Valley Community Church.

Division 9 operators Juan Augspurger and Cathy Hardway accepted the church's Special Donors Award on behalf of the DAC. The dinner is held each year to thank those who have made contributions of funds or service to the church.

The San Gabriel Valley DAC raised more than \$300 to help the church buy food for needy families. Augspurger, Hardway and Operator Jaime Lozano sold holiday pins last December to raise money for the food drive. DAC members helped distribute the food.

Division 9 operators Cathy Hardway and Juan Augspurger received the Valley Community Church Special Donors Award on behalf of the San Gabriel Valley DAC.



| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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Five-member teams from Benjamin Franklin, Locke, North Hollywood and Woodrow Wilson High Schools competed against each other to have the best one-day "vacation" within Los Angeles County using the new Metro Day Pass.



PHOTOS: JUAN OCAMPO

See L.A. for 3 Bucks a Day? High School Teams Say 'Yes!'

By DAVE SOTERO

(March 31, 2004) Can you really visit Los Angeles' best destinations in a single day for only three bucks?

That's what teams from four local high schools found out in the "Discover L.A. Via Metro: the \$3 Vacation" competition conducted earlier this month by Metro.

Five-member teams from Benjamin Franklin, Locke, North Hollywood and Woodrow Wilson High Schools competed against each other to have the best one-day "vacation" within Los Angeles County using the new Metro Day Pass.

The Locke High School team won the competition with the best mix of Metro Bus and Metro Rail and an itinerary that took them to the Disney Concert Hall, Universal Studios, City Hall, the Peterson Auto Museum and other destinations.

"We saw in one day – less than five hours – with a few people...virtually all of what Los Angeles has to

offer," the team wrote in an essay.

In second place was Woodrow Wilson High, followed by North Hollywood High and Benjamin Franklin High School. All four schools participate in the Transportation Career Academy Program (TCAP).

‘Interesting and fun places’

"Our goal was to see how many interesting and fun places we could visit relying solely on MTA for transportation," the Woodrow Wilson team wrote, "and we were not disappointed. We went from Universal Studios to La Brea Tar Pits in one day."

Although the North Hollywood High team ranked third, the group achieved the longest one-day journey, racking up a total of 102 miles visiting destinations between Long Beach and Pasadena.

Community Relations staffers Valarie Harrison, Victoria Woods, Eric Rapp and Cathy Manzo accompanied the teams on their \$3 vacations.

Teams took site photos, wrote essays and gave oral presentations on their itineraries, detailing why theirs was the best for taking a one-day vacation with the Metro Day Pass.

Contest entries were judged on a point scale with such criteria as greatest number of sites visited, best use of Metro Bus and Rail connections, and best location representing the essence of Los Angeles. Prizes included monthly Metro passes, movie tickets, and Metro merchandize.



\$3 Vacation: North Hollywood High School students, from left, Otto Hovsepian, Jesus del Val, Linda Nunez, Leonela Colque and Victor Sotero, reach Metro Gold Line Memorial Park Station in Pasadena on a quest for best itinerary.


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)
[Pressroom](#) (web)

[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)

[Policies](#)
[Training](#)
[Help Desk](#)
[Intranet Policy](#)

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L.A. County Could Lose \$339 Mill. Under State Budget Proposal

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 31, 2004) During a hearing that drew testimony from a number of local leaders, March 26, CEO Roger Snoble told a joint panel of city and state lawmakers that Los Angeles County could lose more than \$339 million to proposed state budget cuts.

In his testimony, Snoble listed a number of measures MTA has taken in anticipation of a reduction in state funding.

They include canceling the 2004 Call for Projects, deferring more than \$1.7 billion in other projects and lending the state more than \$300 million to keep construction of the Eastside Extension and the Metro Orange Line on track.

The proposed state budget includes \$1.7 billion in transportation funding cuts. That comes on top of \$2 billion transferred in the past two years from the state's transportation fund to other uses.

Snoble said investing \$1 billion in transportation projects would create some 40,000 jobs in the county. He noted that curtailing funding for traffic congestion relief would risk the loss of federal funding for the Eastside Extension and the Alameda Corridor East project.

Among the recommendations MTA made were using transportation funds to spur the state economy and create jobs; preserving funding for vital traffic congestion relief projects; and reducing from two-thirds to 55 percent the percentage of voters who must approve an increase in transportation-related sales taxes.

The hearing, held in the MTA Board room, was conducted by Sen. Kevin Murray (D-Culver City), chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee; Sen. Joseph Dunn (D-Santa Ana), chairman of a Senate Budget Committee subcommittee; and City Councilman Antonio Villaraigosa, chairman of the Council's Transportation Committee and also an MTA Board member.