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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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