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RR Champs> Metro Red Line operators Tu Phan, foreground, Jesus Valdez, center, and Manjit Singh, at left, placed first, second and third, respectively, at the 9th annual Metro Raildeo. Rail Transit Operations Supervisor Esther Pippins, at right, who coordinated the event, will accompany the winners to the international competition in Miami as their coach.



PHOTO BY GAYLE ANDERSON

## Metro Red Line Operators Claim Top Three Slots at 2004 Raildeo

By KIM SIM

(May 4, 2004) Call it a Red Line sweep.

Metro Red Line operators Tu Phan, Jesus Valdez and Manjit Singh placed first, second and third, respectively, at the 9th annual Metro Raildeo, held Saturday, May 1, at Metro Red Line Division 20.

Out of 1,000 possible points, Phan scored 835, while Valdez finished with 712.5. Singh rounded out the top three with 662.5 points.

Phan and Valdez will now advance to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) International Rail Rodeo, June 2-9 in Miami, where they will compete among the best from across the United States and Canada.

Singh will serve as the team's alternate, in the event that Phan or Valdez is unable to compete.

PHOTO BY BILL HEARD



winner, Operator Tu Phan, studies where to place track warning flags during the efficiency test portion of the competition.

**Phan’s fourth title**

It was Phan’s fifth time competing and the fourth time he has topped Metro’s rail rodeo contest. In 2002, he placed second but made up for it by winning the International competition with fellow operator Robert Rodriguez. Rodriguez was unable to compete this year because of a broken leg.

“I’m trained to operate a train so I’m doing my daily duties,” Phan said, in between events. “I’m not doing anything different.”

Nineteen operators from all four Metro Rail lines participated in the event.

They were scored in five categories — uniform inspection, safety quiz, efficiency test, predeparture inspection and an actual operator’s course. Each component was worth a different amount, from 50 points for the uniform inspection to 500 for the actual course. All participants started with 1,000 points and points were deducted for errors.

Valdez, the second-place finisher, has entered the Raildeo four times. His finish on Saturday was the highest he has ever placed.

“I felt pretty good because this is the division where I worked at, so I had a pretty good chance of placing (in the) top three,” Valdez said.

**‘Just the beginning’**

Rail Transit Operations Supervisor Esther Pippins, who coordinated the event, will accompany the winners to Miami as their coach.

“The win here is not the end,” Pippins said. “It’s just the beginning because we’re going to take the Internationals.”

2004 Metro Raildeo Operator Competitors
Tu Phan, 835 pts.
Jesus Valdez, 712.5 pts.
Manjit Singh, 662.5 pts.
Jacqueline Luna, 660 pts.
Ramon Alvarez, 655 pts.
Michael Barnes, 637 pts.
John Davis, 627.5 pts.
Ramon Reilly, 612.5 pts.
Paul Arriaza, 582.5 pts.
Russell Caddell, 577.5 pts.
Mary Barrios, 571 pts.
Harry Schouten, 500.5 pts.
Ruben Ramirez, 475 pts.
Aaron Cain, 471 pts.
Michael Lespron tied with Jesus Serrano at 447.5 pts.
David Wilson, 432 pts.
Ernest Miller, 431 pts.

New to the operators' competition this year was the efficiency test, which tested operators' knowledge of rules and regulations, such as when to use a certain colored flag.

One of the changes to the actual operator's course was the inclusion of a slow zone, where operators had to maintain a steady speed of 10 miles per hour.

In judging for the actual course, judges placed a measuring cup a little over three-quarters full of water on the train to test for smoothness of operation. If the water line fell to below three-quarters but still more than half remained, 15 points were deducted; if the water sloshed to below half, 30 points were deducted.

### **Operator tests staged**

There were also several "set-ups," or real-life scenarios.

One, to test for compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), involved a blind passenger missing his stop and dropping his cane. The operator was expected to be courteous and assist the passenger in retrieving his cane and giving him directions.

The second involved an unknown white powder on the train, to check operators' awareness of terrorism procedures.

The appropriate thing to do in such a case would have been to call Rail Operations Control, turn off the air conditioning to prevent the substance from blowing away, and evacuate the train, said Byron England, manager of instruction for the Blue Line.

Of the 500 points allocated to the actual course, operators were docked 30 points if they failed to answer the emergency intercom and 40 points if they failed to see the white substance and turn off the air conditioning.

### **Tests 'nothing new'**

"With all the terrorist stuff that's going on, we put out a protocol that they check the train (for) any suspicious packages and those types of powdered substances," England said. "All of these operators at one time had to enroll through basic training to become train operators. (The tests were) nothing new."

Eugene Adams, Red Line transportation manager, said a celebration would be in order, sometime before the two operators and their coach leave for Miami on May 31.

"In 2002, we won the whole thing," Adams said, referring to the team of Phan and Rodriguez winning the APTA International. "We're going to try to do it again this year."

The operators' team will travel alone to this year's APTA international. No maintenance specialists participated in Saturday's Metro Raildeo.

The winning operators received an engraved plaque, a U.S. Savings Bond and a specially designed Raildeo jacket.

But for many of the operators at the competition, the Raildeo was not about winning but about having pride enough in their job to show up and want to do their best.

Said Metro Gold Line Operator Michael Lespron, "I'm here to represent the Gold Line and do my best I can for the guys."

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