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PHOTOS: LUIS INZUNZA



Raildeo Champs in Action

The heat is on for the emerging trophy winners at Metro's 2005 Raildeo. Above, Rail Transportation Manager Davide Puglisi tallies winning operator Tu Phan's performance and, at right, Mechanic Ronnie Burt is under the clock in a nerve-wracking countdown.

[Stats:](#) How they finished.

'Best of Best' Rail Team to represent Metro at APTA Finals

- Veterans Tu Phan, Ronnie Burt, Eric Czintos to lead team
- Rail Operations Summer Celebration, Saturday, June 25

By ARLENE LIM

(April 12, 2005) It was a contest to determine the "best of the best." Train operators and equipment maintenance specialists competed in the 2005 Metro Raildeo, last Saturday, for the right to represent Metro in international rail competition.

Taking top honors in the

Competition - 2005

maintenance contest were equipment maintenance specialists Ronnie Burt, Eric Czintos, and Rafael Mastrangelo Jr., who placed first, second, and third, respectively.

The three, along with operators Tu Phan and Ruben Ramirez, will now move on to the American Public Transportation Association International Rail Rodeo, June 2-6 in Pittsburgh, Pa. Tu Phan and his teammate, Robert Rodriguez, won that event in 2002.

"That's what we're trying to do here, get the best of the best and get the right team," said Burt, who along with Czintos is no stranger to winning. Both were members of the team that took home first place at the 2003 international competition.

Winners' prizes

The winners will not only go to the Internationals, but will also receive a U.S. Savings Bond of \$300, \$200, \$100 for first, second, and third place. Burt will also be awarded an electric screwdriver for his first place win.

Hosted at the Metro Blue Line yard, 10 of the 17 participants competed in the rail operations events, while seven participated in the maintenance portion of the Raildeo.

Events in this year's maintenance Raildeo included a 30-minute written test and nine other events, consisting of a mystery box, wheel defect event and safety table. All ten of the events, which lasted 15 minutes each, were each worth 100 points, with a maximum total of 1,000 points.

This year's events were designed to better prepare the competitors for the Internationals.

"We tried to make it as close as we can, so that they can get the



Operator Robert Markham isn't pushing the train; he's fixing it!



Mechanics must reassemble complicated equipment.



A judge times Jose Rodriguez donning hazard wear.



Getting through the paperwork is part of the deal.

experience of what it will be like at the Internationals,” said Russell Homan, senior rail fleet services instructor.

‘Coolest under fire’

“The competition always depends on whoever is the coolest under fire,” said Robert Markham, Metro Blue Line operator, and Raildeo competitor. “We all get excited when we’re in competition and sometimes we forget the little things, but whoever is the coolest and remembers the most, will be the best,”

Metro Red Line Operator Tu Phan, Metro Gold Line Operator Ruben Ramirez and Metro Red Line Operator Ramon Alvarez were the ‘coolest’ operators at the Raildeo this year, placing first, second, and third.

The 10 rail operators competed in five events: Uniform Inspection, Raildeo Quiz, Raildeo Course, Pre-Departure Inspection, and the newly added Customer Service/ADA.

‘Better chance of competing’

“I put in a customer service event, because I thought it was an area we needed to work on, so we’d have a better chance of competing,” explained Raildeo Coordinator Esther Pippins.

As better preparation for the Internationals, not only did Pippins add an event, but also made the operator events in the Raildeo a bit tougher.

“It’s an unusually challenging course this time, and we’re getting good results,” said Davide Puglisi, rail division transportation manager and raildeo judge. “It’s difficult because we’re going out on the main line.

Now that the competition is over, a separate Rail Operations Summer Celebration – with food, live entertainment and fun for the kids – is set for Saturday, June 25, at the Metro Red Line facility. The event will celebrate the Metro Rail team and all Raildeo participants.

METRO RAILDEO 2005 > RESULTS					
Operator	Total Score	Rank	Mechanic	Total Score	Rank
Phan, Tu	848	1	Burt, Ronnie	905	1
Ramirez, Ruben	702	2	Czintos, Eric	885	2
Alvarez Ramon	698	3	Mastrangelo, Rafaele	786	3
Hill, Renee	689	4	Rodriguez, Jose	670	4
Maes-Melendez, Vicky	678	5	Anderson, Dean	664	5
Nataniel, Lorenzo	654	6	Pelesasa, Anthony	581	6
Markham, Robert	624	7	Padilla, Jose*	375	7
Caddell, Russell	622	8			
Barnes, Michael	570	9			
Cain, Aaron	566	10	*Jose Padilla could not complete the events due to a prior commitment.		