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Vijay Khawani Named to Head Revamped Metro Corporate Safety

- Department to consolidate rail and bus safety programs
- First order of business – a bus accident reduction program

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(April 22, 2005) Vijay Khawani, a veteran of more than 17 years in transit safety, has been named to head Metro's reorganized Corporate Safety Department.

Khawani, 42, who joined Metro in March 1992, had served as director of the Rail Operations Safety Department since 2001. That department has now been consolidated with Corporate Safety, formerly headed by Jim Pachan, who recently was named maintenance manager at West Hollywood Division 7.

The reorganized department will encompass bus and rail systems safety, facility safety, fire/life safety, accident reconstruction, safety audit, OSHA-mandated programs, industrial hygiene, and the TransitSafe program. Construction Safety and the service sector safety specialists will continue as separate functions. Some 14 employees will staff the Corporate Safety Department.

"Vijay, the Corporate Safety staff, and our partner DuPont make a strong, experienced team, well equipped to manage the safety challenges ahead," says Andrea Burnside, managing director, Operations Administration. "Their marching orders for FY 2006 are to drive down vehicle accident rates, while continuing our successes with injury claims reduction."

Managed rail safety program

As head of Rail Operations Safety, Khawani was responsible for managing all aspects of rail safety and the Metro Blue Line grade crossing safety improvement program. He also supervised state and federal regulatory compliance on all rail projects.

Prior to joining Metro, Khawani served for four years – 1987 to 1992 – with the California Public Utilities Commission where he was responsible for safety oversight and enforcement activities of the



Vijay Khawani

Director Metro Corporate Safety

-Joined Metro in 1992.

-Named director, Rail Operations Safety in 2001. Responsible for implementation of Metro's rail system safety program, accident investigation plan, internal safety audits, CPUC triennial audits and the operational evaluation program.

-Served as manager, Operations and Maintenance Safety from 1992 to 2001. Managed CPUC's safety oversight plan for the Metro Blue, Green and Red Lines. Initiated a long-term maintenance funding program for Blue Line grade crossing safety.

-Previously served as a transportation engineer, California Public Utilities Commission, 1987 to 1992. Implemented the CPUC's safety oversight program for Los Angeles and San Diego transit systems. Investigated accidents on the Metro Blue Line and the San Diego Trolley.

Los Angeles and San Diego transit systems.

One of Khawani’s primary responsibilities in his new position will be to implement a new seven-point bus accident reduction program.

Although the number of bus accident claims fell by 22 percent between October 2001 and June 2004, and bus vehicle accidents dropped by 13 percent between FY 2002 and FY 2005, improvements are still needed, according to Burnside.

New accident reduction program

The accident reduction program calls for a points-based reporting system that will improve the ability of management and safety specialists to analyze accident and injury severity, and to better track the success of training and safety programs.

The points-based reporting system will provide focus for an improved operator training program that will emphasize defensive driving. It is not currently being considered for discipline, which is a matter for collective bargaining, Burnside says.

Increased operator training will include one- and two-day defensive driving courses for operators who have been involved in multiple avoidable accidents.

Other aspects of the accident reduction program include more training for the safety specialists and transportation operations supervisors assigned to the Accident Review Board; a rewards and recognition program for Metro’s safest bus operators; and the addition of bus safety features that would improve operator visibility and warnings for pedestrians and motorists.

An effort also will be made to map the location of frequent accidents to identify problem areas and streets and highways with high accident rates. The program also includes a public awareness and bus safety education campaign targeting pedestrians, motorists and bicyclists.

Developed regulations addressing safety hazards at grade crossings.

- Earned a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering from UCLA, 1986.

- Khawani and his wife, Neelam, live with their two sons, Dillon 9, and Ashwin, 7, in Westhills.