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Deputy CEO John Catoe addresses some 1,500 attending Greater Los Angeles Vendor Fair. *Photos by Dave Sotero*



12th Annual Greater LA Vendor Fair Key to Business Opportunities

BY DAVE SOTERO

(May 3, 2005) More than 1,500 attendees and 350 exhibitors participated in this year's Greater Los Angeles Vendor Fair, April 27.

The day-long public agency outreach event, the region's largest, was themed "Your Key to Business Opportunities" and featured information-packed workshops, exhibit booths and networking sessions from Metro, the City and County of Los Angeles, the Metropolitan Water District and Los Angeles Unified School District.

"The Fair was really successful this year," said Julie Ellis, Manager for Metro's Client/Vendor Service. "All of the agencies worked together to make it happen. The vendors themselves were pleased with all of the workshops, and a lot of them made connections with other vendors."

Metro conducted several well-attended workshops, including small business orientation, information technology (IT), and small business certification.

From left,
Teresa
Milliken, Al
Rangel,
Valerie
Rader,
Aileen
Landau,
Norma



Elson-Adams offer Metro Commute Services programs at Metro's mega-booth.

'Event sends a clear message'

"We believe this outreach event accomplished much in our efforts to outreach to small, disadvantaged, and minority-owned businesses," said Lonnie Mitchell, executive officer for Procurement and Material Management. "The event sends a clear message to our vendor community that we recognize and appreciate their role in helping this agency achieve its goals."

In addition to Procurement, Pre-Qualification, Diversity and Economic Opportunity, Commute Services, Ethics, and Real Estate participated in Metro's "Mega Booth" to meet directly with members of the small business community and talk about Metro departmental needs and contracting opportunities.

Other Metro departments involved in making the Fair a success included Vehicle Technology & Support Services, ITS and Facilities Maintenance.

This year, the agency hosted its first Speed Networking Session, where over 50 vendors met with Metro staff to begin the dialogue for vendor registration, certification and pre-qualification. Vendor Fair participants also had an opportunity to board a 45-foot CompoBus in the Metro booth to personally experience Metro's vehicle fleet.

Number of sponsors grew

The number of Fair sponsors grew from 5 to 16, and included new public and private industry participation, including Corporate Express, Comerica, Southern California Edison, the Community Redevelopment Agency and Los Angeles World Airports.

Next year, the Los Angeles Community College District is expected to join the Fair as a hosting agency, further strengthening its reach and opening more opportunities to small business.

Vernon Ware, president of View Inc., an IT consultancy in Covina, Calif., said the Fair's IT focus was particularly helpful.

"The Fair was one of the better small business events I've attended, and I go to many," he said. "I was able to meet quite a few vendors that had some interest in my services. I'm following up with them now."

