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Division 8 Operators Training to Drive the 60-foot Metro Liner



Division 8's Carmello Villareal, Jesus Vargas, and Armando Romualdo are just three of the operators who have already been trained to operate the behemoth Metro Liner.



At the wheel: Clockwise, from bottom left, Division 8's Armando Romualdo, Jesus Vargas, and Carmello Villareal.

• Photos by Arlene Lim

- Bus testing on transitway may begin Sunday, Aug. 20

By ARLENE LIM

(Aug. 18, 2005) Sixty feet long, 102 inches wide, with three doors and

seating for 57 passengers, the Metro Liner is already logging miles as bus operators at West Valley Division 8 are getting trained to operate the new articulated bus.

The training, divided into two distinct portions – training on the articulated buses and training on the actual Orange Line alignment – is being taught by instructors Rob Bauer, Gloria Dorado, Joe Putt and Eugenio Villacorta.

With more than 40 operators already trained, and two to three more being trained every day, Division 8 is well on its way to making the late October deadline.

Currently, instructors at Division 8 are only training the extraboard operators. Once the assignment becomes a bid assignment, everyone will be trained on the Metro Liner.

'We're on track'

"Even with a manpower shortage, we are still able to continue training," said Transportation Manager Maria Reynolds. "I'm very pleased we're on track, and it's because our instructor team is doing a very good job."

The instructors at Division 8 collaborated to create the entire training course and lesson plan used to teach the operators.

- Operator Efrain Gomez uses a program much like the one used to familiarize operators on the Metro Liner during the first stage of training.



Operators begin training by completing an hour-and-half long computer program and test that familiarizes them with the Metro Liner. Next, operators familiarize themselves with the onboard equipment, such as battery turn-ons and gas shut-offs.

After the orientation is complete, operators are then able to drive the liner around the yard. Instructors simulate a jackknife to teach operators how to handle and clear that sort of situation.

Practice stops after turns

The operators are then exposed to basic street courses, practicing stops and stops after turns, before advancing to freeway operation.

Operators get a total of about five hours of training. Once on the alignment, it is expected that the operator will have logged about nine hours.

Although its size may be daunting, instructors and operators, alike, are quite pleased with the Metro Liner's handling.

"This is the type of bus you don't have to pray, 'Will I make it through the day?'" SaysTOS Bauer "And at the end of day, you're not praising God that you made it through the day without having to fill out an

accident report."



With the opening of the Metro Orange Line in late fall, extraboard operators are being trained to drive the Metro Liner at Division 8.

'It drives well'

Operator Cunnetta Simms agreed, saying, "Getting used to it was easy, it drives well," and adding, "but you always have to watch those mirrors."

While there was a consensus that the Metro Liner drove well, many were concerned about the acceleration when the bus is operated on city streets.

Alerted to the problem by operator concerns, Metro is working with the bus manufacturer, NABI, and Cummins, the engine manufacturer, to correct the problem and improve performance and acceleration.

Metro now plans to begin testing buses on the Orange Line as soon as Sunday, August 20.