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Transportation planning managers Paula Carvajal-Paez, left, and Jami Carrington coordinated development of Metro's new Travel Information Kiosk. Eight kiosks, as part of a pilot program, will be placed in key locations around the county. Photo by Bill Heard



## Metro Kiosks Will Provide Travel Information to Commuters

- Pilot program will place 8 kiosks around LA County

BY JIMMY STROUP

(Jan. 10, 2006) As part of a new pilot program, Metro will soon place several interactive kiosks in key locations throughout the county to provide up-to-date travel information to commuters.

With printable Internet-based travel planning and the latest highway condition updates, the eight Travel Information Kiosks are designed to complement Metro's other information services.

"There are quite a number of people calling 1-800-COMMUTE just to get basic transit information, including travel itineraries, which may take several minutes for an agent to process," said Project Manager Jami Carrington. "And not everyone has the Internet at their fingertips. This will enable people to enjoy direct and speedy access to their own virtual customer information center."

The first kiosk will be placed in the Gateway Transit Center's Customer Service Center, located on the Plaza level of the building's southwest corner, sometime this month.

By March, the other kiosks should be placed in their locations—which include employment centers in Hawthorne, El Segundo and near LAX, LA Valley College in Valley Glen, the Palmdale MetroLink station, the El Monte Transit Center and the Metro Customer Service Center on Wilshire Boulevard.

These eight kiosks are actually hand-me-downs from the City of Long Beach, which tried a similar program in the mid-1990s that eventually fizzled out.

**'From the dust'**

"It is truly a pilot that rose from the dust. When they didn't work someplace else, we thought we'd try it out and see how to make them work," Carrington said.

After Metro got control of the kiosks, the units were reworked for their new mission with the help of CeroView, an Irvine-based company that deals exclusively in information kiosks.

"They've been doing yeoman's work for us. We feed them what we want and they configure the pages and are preparing the software set-up for us," Carrington said.

"Metro's webmaster and the Design Studio have been instrumental in designing the pages and how they will look. But CeroView is completing the refurbish work, developing the software, setting up the looping and so forth," she said.

Upon first receiving the units, the kiosk designers realized they would have to totally refurbish the machines. They used the existing shells and refilled them with newer equipment amenable to the project's requirements: a touch screen and a computer that can handle the interactive Internet-based programming the kiosks will rely on.

Carrington is quick to emphasize that the kiosk program wouldn't have gone anywhere without a multi-departmental effort from every quarter.

Countywide Planning and Development helped secure the kiosks from the City of Long Beach and provided 50 percent of the funding which was used to purchase the new computer hardware. The other 50 percent of project costs were funded by Communications and overall project coordination was provided by Research and Development.

**Providing project assistance**

Other departments that provided assistance on the project include Metro's Information Technology Services, Customer Relations and Marketing Department. Carrington said cooperation has been the key to the kiosk kick-off.

"I think that what's making it so successful is that everyone has a little chunk of investment in it," she said.

Once the kiosks have been placed, Carrington and her team will begin tracking and compiling information about how people are using them. Part of the host site responsibility will include contributing regular surveys on customer feedback, as well as providing regular cleaning and paper restocking of the kiosks.

"This is first and foremost a pilot program," she said. "We're testing the efficacy of this type of technology out there. We want to know what people are saying—good, bad or indifferent—about what it doesn't do, what it does do, how we can improve, what's out there."

Into the future, Carrington hopes the kiosks will be able to expand their information base to allow sister transit agencies to include their

information on the units.

"In my perfect world we'll have them in many more transfer and hub locations, even at our rail stations," she said. "If we could have them at more employer sites where they have multi-tenant buildings, and even in some public places like libraries where information is readily available on all levels, that would be great."

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