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Paper Trail: BOC's Steve Rank with some of 2,000 temporary signs that will be posted on along the Marathon route. Photo by Ned Racine.



LA Marathon Challenges Metro Bus and Rail Service Planners

By NED RACINE

(Feb. 28, 2007) For its 22nd annual race March 4, the LA Marathon course runs from Universal City to Downtown Los Angeles, a new route presenting unique challenges for Metro's bus and rail service planners.

"There have never been as many cars on our rail lines as there will be that day," said Steve Rank, assistant operations control manager in Bus Operations Control. Rank and Rail Division Transportation Manager Bruce Shelburne planned the rerouting of 91 bus lines and a resulting increase in rail service.

Because of the Marathon's snaking route from Universal City to Flower Street and Fifth Street, the 2007 Marathon will effect Metro's bus routes more than any Marathon before. "Every [bus line] that comes downtown changed," Shelburne said.

All Metro Rail lines will run as scheduled with increased service during the 26.2-mile race. Regular service on some bus lines will be restored as the race progresses. The farther west the bus line is, Rank explained, the sooner it will resume usual service. He estimates the Hollywood area should resume usual service by noon, with downtown bus lines back to normal by 6 p.m.

Particularly affected will be the downtown area. There will be no Metro Bus service south of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, east of Soto Street, west of Western Avenue and north of 3rd Street.

"There's no way to detour buses around [Marathon] barricades because

[the route] curves several times," Rank explained. The Marathon route crosses some bus lines four times.

Lines temporarily rerouted

To compensate, Metro will funnel passengers on affected bus lines to Metro Rail stations. Bus lines will be temporarily rerouted to the Blue Line's Grand Boulevard and Vernon Avenue stations, Union Station and the Red Line's Wilshire/Western Station.

On Line 81, for example, northbound buses will be rerouted to Union Station. Line 81 southbound coaches will be sent to the Blue Line's Vernon Station. Shelburne estimates that 27 bus lines that usually end at another location will terminate at Union Station.

Approximately 40 Customer Information staffers will direct participants, spectators, and bus riders to the reconfigured downtown bus network. Over 2,000 temporary signs will direct Metro riders.

Marathon organizers have acquired 20,000 parking spaces within a short walk of a Metro Red Line station. Runners should park either at the starting line or the finish line, although Rank believes most runners will park near the finish line.

Consequently, Shelburne expects huge northbound ridership on the Red Line between 5 and 9 a.m. (the runners start at 8:15 a.m.) and heavy southbound traffic on the Red Line all day. Red Line trains will be running every six minutes, using 90 of the 104 rail cars.

"There's going to be an ocean of people," Rank said, regarding use of the Red Line on Sunday. He began planning Sunday's bus operations in October.

Shelburne sees this year's LA Marathon as an opportunity to introduce potential riders to the Metro Red Line. "I think for a lot of these runners, this will be their first exposure [to the Red Line]".