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A wheelchair competitor whizzes by Metro bus Stop in a burst of speed, as a cameraman films the action during the 2007 LA Marathon.



RRC's Bus Conversion Team

The Regional Rebuild Center team worked 'round the clock to convert the eight buses assigned to LA Marathon wheelchair transport. Team members were:

Body Repairers:		
Duc Banh	Christopher Haile	Jose Hernandez
Paul Giraldo	Thomas Widdison	Daniel Copp
Victor Wada	James Lopez	Fermin Amezcuita
Jack Genchi	Alfredo Garcia	Ralph Griego
Sheetmetal Worker:	Ray Bozyk	

Working 'Round the Clock for Marathon Wheelchair Racers

- RRC employees converted 8 buses for wheelchair use

By ELIZABETH LEIDER

(March 13, 2007) Forty-eight hours before the starter gun signaled the launch of the 2007 Los Angeles Marathon, Metro's Steve Rank got a phone call.

The Los Angeles Marathon had a problem. They needed buses to move as many as 120 to 150 wheelchair racers from their hotel in downtown Los Angeles, at the Figueroa and 7th Street intersection, to the start of the race at Universal City. The people from the Los Angeles Marathon wanted to know if Metro could help.

Metro immediately sprang into action. Starting Friday at 8 a.m., body shop employees at the Regional Rebuild Center (RRC) took eight NABI buses, including a 45-foot composite bus, normally used to train operators and worked around the clock to transform them from rolling classrooms into

wheelchair-accessible transportation.

Employees “stripped the seats out of the buses, put in custom-made wheelchair securements along the insides of the buses, and Metro used those shells to transport wheelchair passengers,” said Rank, assistant operations control manager in the Bus Operator Center.

Made special tie-down brackets

The job also included removing handrails and modesty panels and manufacturing special brackets and installing tie-down straps for the wheelchairs.

The buses carried not only those participating in the marathon but also their daily wheelchairs, race wheelchairs and their personal attendants.

After the wheelchair racers had been dropped off at the starting line, the buses drove wheelchair attendants and day chairs back to the racers’ hotel.

Once the marathon was over, the conversion team had to return the buses to their original state by removing the extra wheelchair securements and reinstalling the seats, handrails and modesty panels.

“At the 11th hour, the MTA rescued us from a desperate situation,” rejoiced Nan Harman, coordinator for the Wheelchair Division of the Los Angeles Marathon. “We are grateful beyond words.”