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2007 Rail Rodeo Winners' Circle

Rail operator event winners:	Maintenance event winners:
1st place – Tu Phan (Red Line) 2nd place – Robert Rodriguez (Red Line) 3rd place – Ramon Reilly (Blue Line)	1st place – Eric Czintos (Blue Line) 2nd place – Ronnie Burt (Blue Line) 3rd place – Rafaele Mastrangelo, Jr. (Red Line) 4th place – Toshi Manaka (Red Line)
Other competitors, in alphabetical order: Ramon Alvarez (Red Line) Michael Barnes (Blue Line) Aaron Cain (Red Line) William Dover (Red Line) Vicky Maes-Melendez (Red Line) Herman Mijangos (Red Line) Glenda Murrell (Gold Line) Alfredo Ramirez (Blue Line) Ruben Ramirez (Gold Line) Jorge Solano (Gold Line) David Wilson (Gold Line) Jorge Zavaleta (Red Line)	Other competitors, in alphabetical order: Nicholas Alexander (Blue Line) Robert Dimerin (Gold Line) Marcos Martinez (Blue Line) Stan Nacon (Blue Line) Jose Padilla (Green Line) Joselito Suarez (Blue Line) Frank Takacs (Blue Line)

Experienced Team to Represent Metro at International Rail Rodeo

- Operators Phan and Rodriguez are multiple past winners
- Maintainers Czintos, Burt and Mastrangelo are top finishers

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 13, 2007) A well-seasoned team of competitors emerged as victors from the 2007 Metro Rail Rodeo and will represent the agency, June 2, at the APTA International Rail Rodeo in Toronto.

For the third year in a row, rail maintenance specialists Eric Czintos, who placed first in last Saturday's event; second place Ronnie Burt; and third place Rafaele Mastrangelo, Jr., will carry Metro's flag in the maintenance competition at the Internationals.

Photos by Ned Racine



Rail maintenance specialists Eric Czintos placed first in the maintenance competition. Ronnie Burt, right, took second place.

The team took second place at the APTA International finals in 2005 and 2006.

Leading the rail operator team will be Metro Red Line Operator Tu Phan, who won Saturday's competition as he has so many times in the past. His teammate will be Red Line Operator Robert Rodriguez, who also has been a frequent local winner. The men have competed together and separately at the Internationals, scoring wins for Metro in 2000, 2001 and 2002.

Metro Red Line Maintenance Specialist Toshi Manaka, who placed fourth, will be the maintenance team alternate. Metro Blue Line Operator Ramon Reilly, who placed third in the operator's event, will be the operator alternate.



Mike Moore tells his son, Justin, that he drove this very bus – now restored for historical display – when he was an operator at Division 3 back in 1978-79. “It wasn’t a real fast bus, but it was dependable, our work horse,” says Moore, now assistant transportation manager at the Metro Gold Line. The bus had no air conditioning and operators had to wrestle it through

turns without power steering.

Bright sunlight and good weather

Some 300 employees and their guests basked in bright sunlight and temperate weather during Saturday's Rail Rodeo, held in the parking lot at Division 20. The event featured a barbecue lunch and fun for the kids – with the Metro Experience mobile theater, a fire truck and musical performers, along with the always popular jumper house.

"We had a good turnout today, with people from many divisions and from Gateway," said Deputy Executive Officer Melvin Clark of Rail Operations.



Wayside Systems Property Maintainer Enrique Emery, with son Jonathan.



Kids love the jumper house, a favorite feature of the Rail Rodeo event.

This year's event for the operators was different from previous contests. Instead of being conducted in the Division 20 rail yard, event trains were scheduled to run on the main line between Union Station and the Westlake/MacArthur Park station.

Although operating skills remained important factors in the judging, safety and awareness of possible terrorist activity were emphasized during the 2007 contest. Competitors had to be alert for unattended packages and suitcases placed on the platforms they passed, for open doors and electrical boxes, and for trespassers in the tunnels.

"We're the first line of defense for anything that's happening out there, whether it's an abandoned package, a spill or a suspicious person," said Metro Blue Line Operator Ramon Reilly, who placed third in the event. "The operator can be the first responder in a situation like that. It's serious; it's the real deal."

'Be on the lookout'

"Transportation agencies are soft targets," agreed Rail Transportation Operations Supervisor Esther Pippins, event coordinator and the instructor who will accompany the operator team to the Internationals. "We encourage our operators to be on the lookout and be aware of their surroundings."



Maintenance Specialist Jose Padilla of the Metro Green Line sorts through a cluster of electronic gadgets during the parts identification event.

Maintenance specialists also had to cope with new events in their portion of the Rail Rodeo, including filling in the missing elements of an electrical circuit, and a "fun event" called Know That Logo, which required participants to identify logos from U.S. and some foreign transit properties.

Also new to the event was a plastic replica of a train wheel that featured many of the defects those parts can experience during use.

"We're trying to make our events as much as possible like the Internationals," said Russell Homan, senior Equipment Maintenance instructor, who coordinated the event. "The goal is to get a team that can win at the Internationals."