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APTA International Bus Rodeo Grand Champion Award winners are, from left, Mechanic Frank Forde, Operator Mark Holland, Mechanic Rommel Vargas and Mechanic Andrew Warren. They're shown here with the trophies they won at last September's Metro Bus Rodeo at Santa Anita.



Photo by Gayle Anderson

Metro Wins 'Grand Champion Award' at International Bus Rodeo

- Warren, Vargas, Forde and Holland to bring home the trophy

(May 9, 2007) Metro made beautiful music in Nashville this past weekend when its four-member Transit Operations team struck all the right chords to win the Grand Champion Award at the APTA International Bus Rodeo.

The team's combined score in the maintenance event and in the driving portion of the Rodeo carried it to the top against teams of operators and mechanics from transit properties across the United States and Canada.

"This is certainly Metro's year to shine," said CEO Roger Snoble. "First, we're named America's Best Transit System and now, to add to the luster, our team wins the APTA International Bus Rodeo! Congratulations to Transit Operations and to our outstanding team members Andrew Warren Jr., Rommel Vargas and Frank Forde of Arthur Winston Division 5 Maintenance and Operator Mark Holland of San Gabriel Valley Division 9."

The Warren-Vargas-Forde team earlier represented Metro at APTA International competitions in Salt Lake City and in Dallas. This year, the men competed against 46 maintenance teams in six timed technical events, finishing in first or second place in four of the events -- 35 points ahead of the second place finisher, Sacramento Regional Transit District.

Metro last won the APTA maintenance competition in 1997.

Holland also is a familiar Metro face at the APTA competitions. In Nashville

this year, he competed against 77 bus operators in the 40-foot bus category and finished in the top one-third. He has represented the agency five times previously, beginning in Montreal in 1988. He also competed for Metro at Internationals in San Antonio, Orlando, Philadelphia and Salt Lake City.

Particularly sweet

At Snoble noted, this year's win was particularly sweet, coming on the heels of Metro's "America's Best" honor.

"LA is, in fact, Number One in the nation," said team coordinator Frank Cecere, who along with colleague Steve Mullaly accompanied the team to the International event.

"Both Steve and Frank work tireless hours preparing our Roadeo teams for this very challenging competition," said San Fernando Valley General Manager Richard Hunt. "Much of our team success is attributed to Steve, Frank and the instruction staff."

Meanwhile, Metro's Rail Roadeo team is preparing for the APTA International Rail Roadeo scheduled June 2 in Toronto.

Representing Metro at that event will be Red Line operators Tu Phan and Robert Rodriguez and equipment maintenance specialists Eric Czintos and Ronnie Burt of the Blue Line and Rafaele Mastrangelo Jr. of the Red Line.

All five members of the Metro team have been multiple winners at the local level and have represented the agency at a number of APTA Internationals.