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2007 Metro Bus Roadeo Scheduled for Sept. 15 at Santa Anita



By JIMMY STROUP

(June 19, 2007) Hot on the heels of its Grand Champion Award win at the 2007 APTA International Bus Roadeo, Metro will hold the 32nd annual Bus Roadeo, Sept. 15, in search of the next batch of champions to represent the excellence of Los Angeles public transit.

Winners from the local event, hosted by the Gateway Cities Service Sector, will defend Metro's national title next spring at the American Public Transportation Association's competition, which is scheduled in Austin, Texas.

Operator sign-ups begin the week of July 2, according to Frank Cecere, assistant manager of Central Instruction, who helps coordinate the event every year. Judges will also be solicited for the Roadeo at the same time. Sign-up forms will be distributed among the operating divisions.

Bus operator finalists are whittled down to 35 for the competition on Sept. 15 from what's expected to be an entry of up to 300 operators. This year's event also will feature a mini-competition between some division managers, and between some sector general managers and union officials.

The mechanics competition will be held at the Roadeo among three-member teams from participating operating divisions. There is no preliminary competition for mechanics.

"Our sector is very excited to host the 2007 Bus Roadeo," said Gateway Cities General Manager Alex Clifford. "Our organizing committee has been working hard to make this year's Roadeo the best ever, and I think we're on track to have a really great event."

"A web page is being developed with photos and other interesting information about this year's event," said Dave Hershenson, Community

Relations Manager. "We are also working on providing on-line registration for employees interested in participating."

The 'where' and 'what'

This year's Rodeo will be held on familiar territory at the Santa Anita Race Track parking lot, this time at Gate 4. The course will be available for practice for operators from Aug. 30 to Sept. 4, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Preliminary qualifiers will run Sept. 5 through 8 and the finals will be Saturday, Sept. 15 in an all-day event that never fails to excite.

"Those who compete in the preliminaries will get the official Rodeo hat, the belt buckle, a T-shirt and a lapel pin," Cecere said. Finalists will get these and also an added special gift. Winners will be sponsored by Metro to represent the agency in an all-expenses paid trip to the APTA Internationals come spring.

Previous winners of the local Rodeo have gone to the national competition and placed high in the rankings among the 90 or so transit agencies that compete every year. Along with last year's championship team, Metro has entered teams that placed 6th in 2006, 7th in 2005 and 2nd in 2003.

Mechanics Andrew Warren Jr., Rommel Vargas and Frank Forde of Arthur Winston Division 5 have won the Metro Rodeo three years running, crafting a criterion that's becoming hard to match. And San Gabriel Valley Division 9 operator Mark Holland's unprecedented six wins in the Rodeo make his standard the mark to beat for this year's competition.