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ACCOLADES

myMetro.net welcomes reports on achievement, honors and recognition of Metro employees from community, volunteer and professional organizations. Click here to send information to [ACCOLADES](#).

Photo by Patricia Clark



Division 18 Operator Charles Jackson with the County of Los Angeles certificate of appreciation presented to him by grateful passengers.

Patrons Grateful for Dedication of Operator Charles Jackson

(Sept. 4, 2007) Carson Division 18 Operator Charles Jackson has made some good friends among the passengers of Metro Express Line 442. They recently presented him with a certificate of appreciation.

"Thank you for your support and dedication to the passengers...We appreciate you for always looking out for us...and getting us to our destinations in a timely/safe manner."

Jackson, the patrons wrote, "always greets his boarding passengers...with a smile" and bids them farewell with, "God bless you and have a great day."

"He is a good role model for others by accepting and successfully carrying out his responsibilities and job duties. It was a pleasure to have Mr. Jackson as our bus operator for the past 6 months."

Jackson now drives Metro Rapid Line 740 between the South Bay Galleria and downtown LA via Hawthorne, Crenshaw and Martin Luther King Jr. boulevards.

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Metro Offers Customized Directory to Aid Parents in 'School Pool' Program

- Directory includes street- and city-level contacts for parents

By DAVE SOTERO

(Sept. 4, 2007) Metro has beefed up its "Metro School Pool" program to make it even easier for parents to form or join carpools to get their children to school this fall.

The program, now in its fifth year, will provide a free, customized school carpooling directory containing street- and city-level contacts that parents can reference to expedite their ridesharing relationships.

The School Pool Directory can be used to find partners for biking and walking to school as well.

Schools are considered ideal opportunities for carpooling relationships, as many families within the same community drop off their children at the same time and location, often creating peak-hour congestion on surrounding streets and roadways.

"Besides reducing traffic and parking nightmares at schools, Metro's School Pool Program helps save the environment by reducing air pollution caused by car exhaust, helping everyone breathe a little easier," said Metro Board Chair Pam O'Connor.

Raising awareness

Metro will also provide schools with promotional posters and flyers to raise awareness of the program by students and parents.

Metro School Pool began as a program offering free, voluntary and confidential matching services to parents interested in organizing school carpools.

This option is still available and is open to students in all participating public and private elementary, middle and high schools in Los Angeles County. Participation is voluntary and parents share the task of driving students to and from campus.

For information on the program or to sign up, parents must contact their local schools and complete a Metro School Pool survey. They either get matched with other parents from their childrens' school or receive a copy of the Metro School Pool Directory.

Parents phone one another and discuss their student's schedules, arrange pick-up and drop-off points and decide how to share carpool costs and driving responsibilities.

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Toastmasters International has had a chapter at Metro since June, 1997. The present group membership is at 20 and the group meets in the Board Overflow Conference Room on Tuesdays, noon to 1 p.m.



Photos: Gayle Anderson

Metro Toastmasters Chapter Celebrates 10 Year Anniversary

By JIMMY STROUP

(Aug. 5, 2007) Clubs can be fleeting. People get busy. People lose interest. So making the decade mark says quite a lot about what the Metro Toastmasters chapter has to offer those who participate.

Based around improving the public speaking – or just plain speaking in general – Toastmasters International has been around since 1924. What started as a small group of friends who gathered to practice their communication skills has exploded into a worldwide trend, with chapters in 90 countries and more than 200,000 members.



Started in 1924, Toastmasters International has more than 10,000 chapters in 90 countries and 200,000 members. 'It's given me a lot of confidence,' says current chapter president Joe Simpson, at left. Above, Area 41 Governor Michael Gholampour drops in for a visit.

In the 10 years since the Metro chapter was founded in June, 1997, the agency's Toastmaster group has grown and set a high mark for the current membership to follow. The group has even had members compete and win at national events held at conferences hosted by Toastmasters International, which

is based in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.

“Every part of our meeting asks you to do a little thing that involves speaking,” said Joe Simpson, Metro Webmaster and the Toastmasters’ chapter president. “It’s given me a lot of confidence.”



Toastmasters at Metro members meet in June to ring out the old year and ring in new officers at a year-end celebration led by outgoing president Falan Guan, center.

Confidence-building is one of the central tenets of the Toastmasters program. The group believes that with enough practice, even the most timid of speakers can become bold and exciting when communicating.

“I always felt like I needed to communicate better in an office environment,” Simpson said. “The great thing for me is, as the Webmaster, I have to communicate a lot of technical terms. So it’s given me a better grasp of how I want to communicate some of those very complicated ideas.”

The weekly meetings feature both group and individual exercises, all aimed at strengthening the participants’ ability to communicate in various situations. “Table topics,” Simpson said, is one of the standard communication drills the group does weekly to bolster both skill and confidence.

‘Thinking on your feet’

“In a lot of your daily comings and goings, you’ll be asked to speak on the spur of the moment. A ‘table topic’ is a random topic you have to speak on for one or two minutes,” he said. “If you don’t know anything about the subject, you have to improvise – it teaches you how to manage when you aren’t familiar with the topic. It gets you in the mode of thinking on your feet.”

Simpson points to himself as the model for what Toastmasters can do for the average “Joe.” The confidence he’s gained



Catch their act: Attend a virtual meeting on the [Toastmasters@Metro](#) blog. Below, Toastmasters Kathy Hendry, Paul Burke and Cynthia Jimerson command the podium.

by participating in the group for the last three years has had irreplaceable positive benefits on both his ability to speak and his career at Metro.



"I think there's some stat that says most people are afraid to speak in public. In the business setting, if you're able to communicate better, chances are you'll move up the ladder," Simpson said. "If you want to move up, if you have career aspirations, being a better communicator can only help."

The 20 or so regular members of the Metro chapter of Toastmasters meets Tuesdays from noon to 1 p.m. in the Board Overflow Conference Room in the Gateway Building. Simpson said guests are always welcome.



"If you want to be a better speaker, have fun doing it, with a group of people that's very supportive, I think you should come by," Simpson said.





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Rock Band Canon in Free Concert, Saturday, at Union Station

By RICK JAGER
(Sept. 5, 2007) The progressive rock band Canon will be featured in a free concert, Saturday, Sept. 8, in Union Station's Old Ticket Room. The concert begins at 8 p.m.

Metro employees and patrons who show a valid Metro pass, Metro Rail ticket or proof of Metrolink fare will be admitted to the free concert.

Metro's partnership with Los Angeles-based Canon is a unique opportunity to promote public transit and draw attention to environmental concerns. Metro patrons will be rewarded with a free evening of entertainment in a distinctive, transit venue.

During the concert, the band will debut "The Hourglass," a song dedicated to raising environmental awareness.

Critics say the band's music reflects a wide range of musical influences, including such 1970s rock bands as "Jethro Tull," "King Crimson," and "Yes." Their sound also has been compared to such contemporary bands as "Radiohead" and "Muse."

Canon's release "WIDE AWAKE" is described as a mix of '70s rock and Renaissance poetry.

"We are honored to have been chosen by Metro to help raise awareness on alternative, more efficient ways to protect our environment through our music," said Jason Turbin, Canon's front man. "About 5.7 billion gallons of fuel are wasted due to congestion in the United States' largest cities. More and more commuters are realizing that Metro is the way to go not only to save time and money but to protect our planet."

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Employees, Families, Guests Invited to 2007 Bus Rodeo, Sept. 15

By DAVE HERSHENSON

(Sept. 6, 2007) All employees, their families and guests are invited to attend the 32nd annual Metro Bus Rodeo, Sept. 15, at the Santa Anita Race Track.

This free family event, scheduled from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m., includes driving competition among Metro's best bus operators navigating an obstacle course, and teams of mechanics, representing their divisions, testing their skills on several bus systems to identify defects.



The event also features a classic car and motorcycle show, entertainment, various exhibit booths, and a fantastic barbeque lunch. Last year's Metro Bus Rodeo winners won the Grand Champion Award at the 2007 APTA International Bus Rodeo.

Winners from this local event, which is being hosted by the Gateway Cities Service Sector, will defend Metro's "Grand Champion" title next spring at the APTA's International competition in Austin, Tex.

This year's event is being held once again at Santa Anita Park, but at a different location accessible via Gate 4. To reach Gate 4, take the I-210 Foothill Freeway and exit at Santa Anita Avenue (Exit 32). Turn south on Santa Anita and right onto Huntington Drive. Bear left where the street splits with Colorado Place and continue on Huntington Drive to Gate 4.

For more information, including a map showing the event location, visit [mymetro.net](#) and click on the Los Angeles Rodeo logo on the right side of the home page.

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Transportation Commission OKs Funds for Expo and I-105 Ramp

(Sept. 6, 2007) The California Transportation Commission (CTC) approved two allocations of State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds, Wednesday, that will benefit Metro projects.

The allocations include \$314.6 million for the Exposition Line Phase I project between downtown LA and Culver City. The total cost of the project is about \$640 million.

The CTC also voted \$7.6 million for the westbound I-105 off-ramp at Sepulveda Boulevard, a key link to LAX.

"It's good news," David Yale, deputy executive officer for regional planning, told the LA Times. "And it's good to see the state keeping its promises."

During the CTC meeting, representatives from Caltrans said previously assumed "spillover" funds from higher state fuel tax revenues would be reduced by 50 percent for over five years.

The CTC also was told that undetermined but substantial reductions to the STIP are possible from the impact of the diminishing Federal Highway Trust fund. The 2008 STIP Fund Estimate will be adopted by the CTC in October.

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Updated Metro Writing Guide Now on Employee Intranet

(Sept. 6, 2007) An updated Metro Writing Guide, which seeks to promote consistency in the agency's written communications, is now available on the employee Intranet.

The 16-page document provides basic guidelines for correct use of Metro bus and rail service names and consistent terminology for use in written materials.

"Metro communicates in writing with customers, stakeholders and the general public in a variety of ways," said Warren Morse, deputy

executive officer of Communications. "Our message is strengthened if we can be as clear and consistent as possible in all of our written materials."

To access the Metro Writing Guide, click on the "Forms Online" link on the myMetro.net home page and then on the "Metro Writing Guide" link in the Metro Business Tools section.

The writing guide includes rules for when to use the agency's formal title – Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority – and examples of when to use "Metro."

Rules and examples of transit service names such as "Metro Local," "Metro Rapid Express" and "Metro Liner" are provided, along with the proper usage for other bus and rail line names.

The writing guide also covers punctuation and place names, along with terminology and usage guidelines for Metro facilities and position titles, among others. A series of writing tips also is included.

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Former Bus Operator Sentenced for Stealing Day Passes

(Sept. 6, 2007) A former bus operator accused of stealing Metro day passes was sentenced in LA Superior Court, Sept. 4, to three years of formal probation and five weeks of community service.

Yolanda Blackshire, 52, of Los Angeles, who retired Aug. 3 after almost 25 years' service, had pleaded guilty to two felonies for stealing day passes while assigned to Gateway Division 10.

She allegedly gave them to a co-conspirator to sell on the street. The co-conspirator, Robert Sanches, 42, of Los Angeles, was sentenced to two years in state prison for receiving stolen property and conspiracy to commit grand theft.

Blackshire will serve community service with the Cal Trans Community Service Project. A restitution hearing will be scheduled to determine how much she could be ordered to pay Metro.

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Mechanic's Skillful Driving Rescues Stranded Articulated Bus

- Gateway Division Mechanic "A" Leader Leona Swedenhjelm drove a mile-and-a-half backward down a winding street

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 7, 2007) Narrow and winding, Museum Drive snakes its way up a hillside in Mt. Washington, just west of the Pasadena Freeway.

So, just before midnight, Aug. 20, when Operator Remberto Molina took a wrong turn in his 60-foot-long articulated bus and drove up Museum and into a dead end on Dimmick Drive, he knew he was in trouble.

Unable to turn the behemoth coach around in the constricted street, Molina, a full-time operator assigned to Gateway Division 10, contacted Bus Operations Control for assistance.

It wasn't long before a four-member team – Equipment Maintenance Supervisor Roy Foreman and Mechanic "A" Leader Tim Wong of North Los Angeles Division 3, and Mechanic "A" Leader Leona Swedenhjelm and Mechanic "A" Rob White of Division 10 – arrived on the scene with a tow truck.

The team quickly realized, however, that the stranded bus was too heavy and awkward to be towed the mile-and-a-half back down the serpentine streets. The artic would have to be driven.



Gateway Division
Mechanic "A" Leader
Leona Swedenhjelm
(Badge photo)

Like backing down an alley

Settling into the driver's seat, Swedenhjelm – a 21-year Metro veteran and Division 10's graveyard shift leader – put the mammoth bus into reverse. Taking into account the artic's three axels and two sections, her task would be like backing a long truck with a trailer down a twisting alleyway.

Swedenhjelm began moving slowly, taking guidance from Foreman and Wong who walked alongside the bus. White's tow truck led the procession that, by now, included several police cars.

For the next two-and-a-half hours, Swedenhjelm steered the unwieldy



Gateway Division Mechanic "A" Leona Swedenhjelm, behind the wheel of her Corvette in this 2002 photo, can wrangle an articulated bus down a winding street - backwards.

More on Leona> See special myMetro.net report (April 3, 2002): "[Racing is all the rage for some Metro mechanics.](#)"

vehicle down the hill, avoiding trees, cars and a host of other obstacles, according to Foreman. Attracted by the spectacle, neighbors came out to snap pictures of the odd parade.

Finally, the bus reached Marmion Way where Swedenhjelm was able to turn and proceed back to Division 10.

“I have been in vehicle maintenance for more than 30 years,” Foreman later wrote. “I have worked in very hair-raising situations.... This was the most skillful execution of vehicle maneuvering that I have ever witnessed. I was impressed!”



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Electronic display screens are part of the new Transit Passenger Information System (TPIS) being installed at Metro subway stations. The \$2.2 million project includes 350 screens displaying information provided by Rail Operations Control, and should be installed in each subway station by the end of May 2008.



Photos: Gayle Anderson

New Information System for the Metro Subway Stations Installed at Union Station, Other Stations to Follow

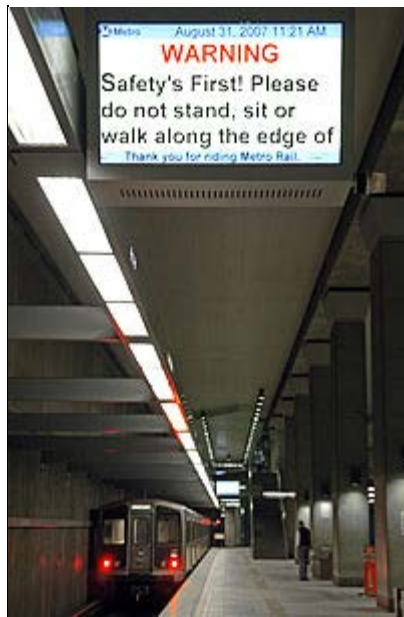
By JIMMY STROUP

(Sept. 7, 2007) Installation has begun on a new electronic signage system at Metro subway stations, replacing the single line ticker-tape style LED displays that were installed when the line opened.

Called the Transit Passenger Information System (TPIS), the board-approved \$2.2 million installation includes 350 46-inch LCD screens that are managed by Rail Operations Control (ROC) through a simple software program. The screens display up-to-date, relevant, independent information for each station.

"We've done Union Station. The contractor was responsible for putting this one in, getting it up and running, and showing us how it works," said Dan Lindstrom, manager of Wayside System Communications. "Next will be Civic Center; in a couple of weeks, we'll be out there, completely redoing that station with the new displays."

The TPIS displays are mounted directly over the old LED arms on the platforms – cut



Information system includes safety messages.

down a little for length – and are powered by existing wiring. The mezzanine-level screens will either suspend from the ceilings or be mounted on walls in conspicuous locations.

The new system only required a simple cable installation of what's essentially telephone wire to feed the screens data sent from the ROC.

Real-time, track specific

Lindstrom said the displayed information will coordinate with train arrivals and departures, will be real-time, accurate and "track specific."

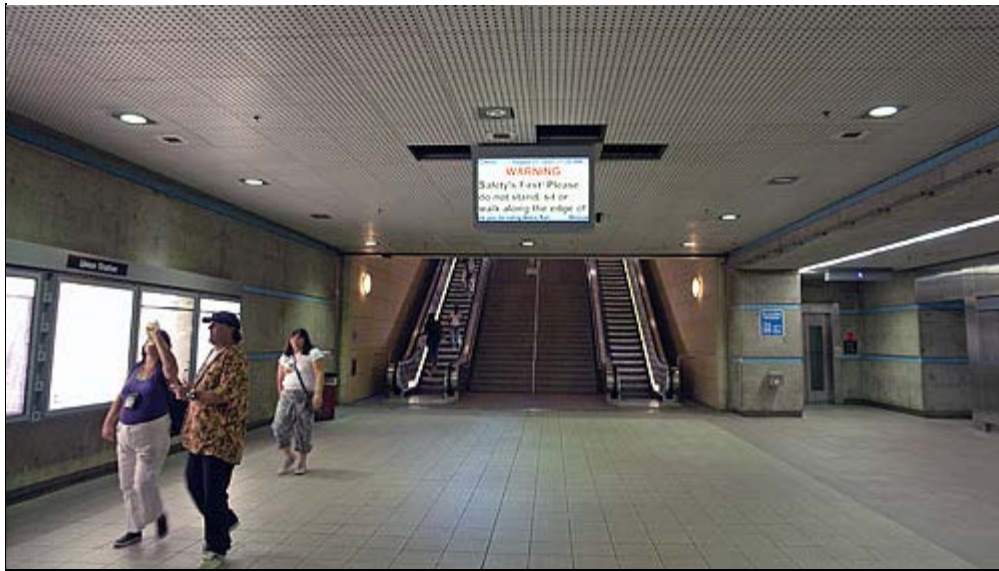
Since the screens can be programmed independently, the messages on the mezzanine screens may be different from the messages on the platform screens. And when a train arrives on the left side of the platform, the corresponding screens will be filled with information relevant to that arrival and subsequent departure.

In the event of an emergency evacuation, lights fixed to the side of the TPIS housing will flash and the screens will fill with a red-lettered message with instructions for passengers.

Installation was completed at Union Station by the contractor, JM Fiber Optics, a local company that's partnered with TransitVUE to provide initial installation and software support for Metro's TPIS.

Lindstrom said Wayside Systems has applied for funding to place the TPIS system on all the rail lines. One of the challenges to expanding this system is that LCD screens don't fare very well outdoors, though several companies are working to solve that issue.

"Part of the goal of this project is to get one set up and working in Union Station," he said. "Eventually you'll have one central visual message information system for the passengers."



Since the screens can be programmed independently, the messages on the mezzanine screens may be different from the messages on the platform screens.

One station each week

From this point on, Metro will take over the installation, completing stations a few weeks apart until they're finished in April. Six-man crews will perform the mezzanine installations on weekdays and replace the platform LED arms with TPIS screens on the weekends – one side on Saturday and the other on Sunday. Cables are run in advance to hasten the installation process.

Graffiti is always a concern, but the height of the screens – which is 10 to 12 feet, with the screens angled down for ease of viewing – will deter a lot of vandalism. The screens also feature a protective coat, and are made of a resilient plastic a lot like “hockey glass.”

Lindstrom said that the screens will be a big benefit to the passengers and make it easier for the agency to communicate important information to riders in a quick, eye-catching way.

“If we can get people looking up here to see when the next train is coming, maybe they’ll stop using the phones as much to call for schedules,” he said. “We don’t have a lot of extra manpower, so anything we can do that’s helpful to save us from extra work is good.”



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Six Injured, Train Derailed in Metro Gold Line Accident

(Sept. 11, 2007) Six people were injured and a Metro Gold Line train was derailed in a train vs. pickup truck accident just before 8 a.m., today, about a block and a half south of the Highland Park station.

Paramedics responded to the accident scene at the rail crossing at the intersection of Marmion Way and Avenue 55.

A Sheriff's deputy and four passengers sustained minor injuries and were transported to Huntington Memorial Hospital. Train Operator Edward de Hoyos was not injured.

City firefighters freed the driver of the pickup, who also was transported to the hospital and was listed in critical condition. Witnesses said the pickup truck ran a red light and was struck by the train. The accident is under investigation.

The City Fire crew, assisted by Metro Rail personnel, worked to remove the truck from under the train.

Both the north- and southbound tracks were out of service for more than three hours. A bus bridge was set up from Highland Park to the Southwest Museum station to ferry passengers around the accident site.

The northbound track was reopened to trains at 11:28 a.m. Service was restored to both tracks about an hour later after the southbound train was lifted back on to the track and sent back to the yard.


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Memorial Services for Carson Division 18's Dennis Dearing

(Sept. 11, 2007) Memorial services are scheduled, Friday, Sept. 14, for Carson Division 18 Equipment Maintenance Supervisor Dennis Dearing, who died Sept. 8.

The memorial service will begin at 10 a.m. in the Mark B. Shaw Chapel at the AARON Crematory, 1525 N. Waterman Ave. in San Bernardino (800-303-3614). The facility is located at the intersection of Waterman and Gilbert between Highland and Baseline.

Dearing, 63, died after suffering a heart attack, Sept. 6, following back surgery. He joined Metro in July 2003 as a maintenance supervisor.

"Mr. Dearing was well-liked by his employees and colleagues," said Division 18 Maintenance Manager Ken Matsuno. "He had no problem getting people to come to work on his shift. Dennis was a huge New York Yankees fan."

Dearing is survived by his wife, Sue Ann, four children, five grandchildren and his father, who lives in Lakewood, Calif.



Dennis Dearing

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The progressive rock band Canon partnered with Metro in a free concert to draw attention to environmental concerns.



Photos by Dave Sotero

Rock Band Canon Thanks Metro Patrons for 'Going Green'

- Free concert at Union Station draws hundreds

By KIM UPTON

(Sept. 11, 2007) Hundreds of Metro riders and Canon fans rocked Union Station Saturday night during a concert celebrating music, the environment and the contributions Metro riders make to the air by going "green" rather than driving.



Deputy Executive Officer of Communications Warren Morse welcomes fans to the Canon concert, Saturday, at Union Station.

The concert was free to Metro riders who presented valid Metro tickets or passes and not open to the public.

Warren Morse, Metro's Deputy Executive Director for Marketing, welcomed guests and encouraged everyone to enjoy the evening of music and remember that "Going Metro means going green."

The Hollywood-based progressive rock band Canon was introduced by film and television star Bodhi Elfman ("Collateral," "Charmed" and "Las Vegas," as well as many other movies and shows).

The four-member group, backed up by strings and wind instruments for the concert, performed songs in a variety of

styles -- some of them reminiscent of contemporary rock groups "Radiohead" and "Muse" but also influenced by "King Crimson," "Yes" and "Jethro Tull."

They also debuted their newest piece, "Hourglass," a song celebrating the rise of environmental concern around the world.

"We are honored to have been chosen by Metro to help raise awareness of ways to protect our environment. More and more commuters are realizing that Metro is the way to go, not only to save time and money but to protect our planet," said Canon front man Jason Turbin.

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Autism Disorder Hits Close to Home for Metro's Chris Limon

- Wayside Systems Assistant Manager is raising funds for research into a cure that may be too late to help his children.
- [Learn more about Autism](#)

By NED RACINE

(Sept. 12, 2007) Chris Limon, assistant manager in the Wayside Systems Division, raises money for autism research. He has two small reasons to do so.

Limon, 30, and his wife Jennifer, 29, are parents to five children: Megan, 9, twins Kristin and Alexa, 7, and twins Brandon and Mariah, almost five years old.

Brandon and Mariah have been diagnosed with severe autism. Limon, who joined Metro in 1997, says he is doing everything imaginable to help find a cure for the neurological disorder. But, if a cure isn't found in time to help his children, "hopefully it will help someone else."



Limon became involved in fundraising for autism research through a 5K walk the twins' school held in April. He created his own team, Team Limon Twins, and raised \$1,100. Walkers included Limon's mother, Maria Hernandez, and cousin, John Limon, both Metro employees, and a friend from Division 20.

Mariah and Brandon Limon, 4, diagnosed with having severe autism, attend classes and therapy six days a week in an effort to discover their capability to develop.
(Photo courtesy of Chris Limon)

But Limon was disappointed in the response he frequently heard from family and friends: "They'll be all right" or "That's what the government is for." He knows there is no guarantee his daughter and son will outgrow autism.

Although estimates of autism's prevalence vary, the National Autism Association website quotes a 2007 Centers for Disease Control report that 1 in 150 children in America today have an autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Confirmed their suspicions

The Limons were concerned with the twins' development more than a year before the Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center confirmed their suspicions.

"Their development was very slow," Limon says. "They wouldn't speak. There was never eye contact. There was never an acknowledgement of what was going on around them."

Doctors suggested the twins were simply developing slowly, as some twins do. The Limons were skeptical, however, because they were already raising their older twins. "We told them this is totally different," Limon recalls.

For the Limons, hearing the diagnosis was a relief; it confirmed their suspicions and placed them and the doctors on the "same page." (Subsequently, the twins were diagnosed as also having mental retardation, which Limon notes is unrelated to autism.)

To learn if Mariah and Brandon will develop and no longer need special services, the twins have rigorous schedules of education and therapy Monday through Friday.

They attend Whittier's Ceres Elementary School from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. An in-home motor skills development teacher works with the twins from 1 to 4 p.m. After 4, they go to occupational therapy (to stimulate their muscles).

On Saturdays and Sundays the twins receive their in-home motor skills development lessons. "That's a lot of work we go through, and we still can't figure out how to manage them," Limon explains.

Feelings of Isolation

This all builds stress on the older children and feelings of exhaustion and isolation for Jennifer and Chris.

Particularly difficult for Limon is his inability to take all his children on outings. Because the twins throw a grand tantrum when they are taken to a new environment, a common trait of children with some forms of autism, Limon can only take them to his mother's house, his mother-in-law's house and his aunt's house.

The difficulty of integrating the twins into their own family also troubles Chris. Although Mariah is usually content to sit alone and rock in a chair, her occasional violence is a concern: Limon is the only family member who is large enough to control her.

And while Mariah does not acknowledge her older sisters, Brandon will try to join in their play. His father says Brandon will smile at them, as if he knows what his older sisters are playing. "He spins around a little bit and he thinks he's interacting with them."

"He's the kind of [kid] who will walk up to you and he wants to cuddle with you," Limon explains. "Really, really loveable."

Limon relishes his work time at Metro for the relief it gives him from his burdens at home. He contrasts that with the strain on his wife. "Her day never ends."

To Learn More About Autism

- National Institute of Mental Health has a wealth in information on autism at <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/autism.cfm>
- National Autism Association has a rich website with extensive information for parents at <http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/index.php>

- The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke offers an Autism Fact Sheet at http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/autism/detail_autism.htm

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Anti-Terrorism Exercise Set Saturday at North Hollywood Station

(Sept. 12, 2007) An anti-terrorism exercise is planned Saturday morning, Sept. 15, at the North Hollywood Station. The exercise will begin at 7 a.m. and last until 10 a.m.

Metro, along with the Transit Services Bureau, the LAPD and the LA Fire Department, will conduct simultaneous drills involving simulated explosions on a Metro bus followed by a mock chemical attack on a Metro Red Line train in the North Hollywood Station.

Metro Seeks Bids to Replace Soundwall at Division 7

(Sept. 12, 2007) Metro is seeking bids from contractors interested in a construction project to erect a new soundwall at West Hollywood Division 7.

The successful bidder will replace the existing 12-foot high sound wall with a 16-foot high sound wall in order to reduce bus noise, which intrudes into the residential areas along Huntley Drive located on the east side of Division 7.

The existing sound wall and extension wall panel will be demolished and removed. The new sound wall will be constructed along the line of the existing sound wall using pre-cast concrete panels.

Federal Transit Administration Schedules 'Listening Session'

(Sept. 12, 2007) The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will hold a "listening session" in the Metro Board Room from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Thursday.

The purpose of the session is to obtain public comment on an FTA-proposed rule for major capital investment projects. The proposed rule would revise evaluation criteria for New Starts and Small Starts candidate projects.

Under current regulations, New Starts projects are judged on a wide range of criteria, including mobility improvements, environmental benefits, operating efficiencies, cost effectiveness, land use and other

factors.

Under the proposed rule, the criteria for project justification will be grouped into two broad categories, effectiveness and cost effectiveness, with specific measures contained within each category.

Metro Hosts People’s Republic of China Delegation

(Sept. 12, 2007) Metro hosted a 28-member delegation, Tuesday, from the People’s Republic of China National Audit Office.

The group included senior audit officials from some of China’s largest provinces, major industries and government departments. The delegation is visiting the United States to learn how American auditors handle public works audits.

Members of the Metro staff, led by Director of Audit Beni Warshawsky, briefed the international delegation on several audit areas and provided a detailed overview of audit process techniques. After the briefing, the group toured Metro Rail facilities.



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Senate Approves Bill Clearing Way for Possible Subway Extension

- Senate, House reconciliation needed before bill goes to the President

(Sept. 12, 2007) The U.S. Senate approved a bill, Wednesday, that would allow subway tunneling in parts of Los Angeles, possibly clearing the way for an extension of the subway to Santa Monica.

California Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer sponsored the provision in the Fiscal Year 2008 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development bill. Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has called for a "subway to the sea."

"Today's vote by the Senate brings us one step closer to bringing the long-awaited expansion of the Metro Red Line closer to reality," Feinstein said. "It's time to give the commuters of Los Angeles relief from the severe gridlock they face every day."

Boxer said, "This subway project is so important to helping reduce the terrible congestion in Los Angeles. We've been told this project can be done safely, so it's time to move forward."

"Clearly, we look forward to being able to secure federal funds for transit projects that would bring more mobility to Los Angeles County," said Metro Board Chair Pam O'Connor. "Metro greatly appreciates the excellent work of Senators Feinstein and Boxer, both of whom championed the provision in the bill that would lift the longstanding ban on federal funding for tunneling projects in parts of Los Angeles."

The spending bill includes a provision to overturn a 1985 law that prohibited tunneling because of the potential for methane gas explosions.

After the Los Angeles City Council passed a motion in support of reversing the laws banning tunneling in 2004 and the Metro Board voted to begin discussions of subway expansion in 2005, an independent scientific safety review determined that subway tunneling could move forward safely.

The Feinstein-Boxer provision was added to the spending bill during consideration by the Senate Appropriations Committee in July. Before the bill can be sent to the President for his signature, it must be reconciled with the House in conference, and approved by an up-or-down vote by both chambers.

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17-Year-Old Tagger Must Pay Metro Over \$30,000 in Damages

By NED RACINE

(Sept. 13, 2007) A 17-year-old tagger, using the monikers "Buser" and "Buse" has been convicted of 18 felony counts of vandalizing Metro property, damage totaling \$30,890.

According to Sheriff's Deputy Devin Vanderlaan, the male juvenile was convicted Sept. 6 at Kenyon Juvenile Justice Center southeast of downtown, not far from where he lives with his parents.

Vanderlaan, a member of the Transit Services Bureau's Special Problems Unit, reported that the juvenile is a member of the UNOK (Unlike No Other Krew) tagging crew.

"Buser" targeted Division 1 and 2 buses, as well as Metro Green Line trains.

According to Vanderlaan, sentencing requires the juvenile to pay \$30,890 to Metro, appear in Judge Alex Ricciardulli's court every six weeks and serve 300 hours of community service.

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FTA Leads Outreach Meeting on 'Small Starts' Transit Projects



(Sept. 13, 2007) FTA Deputy Chief Counsel Scott Biehl, at right, discusses the evaluation and rating process for major capital investment projects. At issue is an FTA-proposed rule that would revise evaluation criteria for New Starts and Small Starts transit projects. The FTA panel was chaired by Brigid Hynes-Cherin, FTA Administrator for Region II, at the podium, and staffed by FTA officials Rich Steinmann, seated at table, and Ron Fisher and Sean Libberton. Hosted by Metro and coordinated by Marion Colston, Director of Strategic Organizational Planning, the meeting was the first in a series of five public meetings to be held nationwide. Nearly 100 transportation and local government officials, planners and civic leaders attended the full-day session. -- from Gayle Anderson

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Koreatown is close by the Wilshire/Vermont intersection, and served as the inspiration for the artwork that graces the sides of the "Wilshire Vermont Station" building. The artist, April Grieman, is known for creating contemporary art using computer technology.



Photos by Jimmy Stroup

Wilshire/Vermont Development Plans Oct. 16 Grand Opening

- Seven-story, mixed-use building is tied to subway, Metro Rapid lines

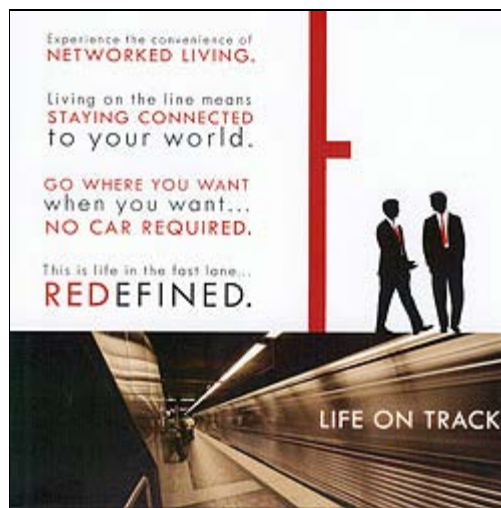
By JIMMY STROUP

(Sept. 13, 2007) The Metro Rail station at Wilshire/Vermont has been surrounded by construction for more than three years. So, the planned Oct. 16 ribbon-cutting ceremony officially marking the completion of the commercial/residential project represents the culmination of years of planning and construction, and millions of dollars spent.

Major construction at the "Wilshire Vermont Station" recently ended on the seven-story building that began with a plot of land Metro owned adjoining the subway portal and was looking to develop. As a way to meet Metro's goals and support business interests in the city, the agency went looking for developers to turn that bit of land into something to benefit everyone.



Greg Angelo, director of Real Property Management and Development, stands before the mammoth escalator that takes Metro Rail patrons up the three stories or so to ground level at the Wilshire/Vermont station. Below, the "Wilshire Vermont Station" brochure touts the Metro advantage of the mixed-use complex.



"The way the business deal works is this: we own land, we ground lease it and we get a monthly rental from leasing the land to [the developer]," said Metro's Greg Angelo, director of Real Property Management and Development. "There are certain covenants and operating rules for what they have to build there, then we bind them to what they say they're going to build."

Metro eventually entered into an agreement with Urban Partners as the developer, who joined with CalPERS in an equity partnership. The "Wilshire/Vermont Housing Partnership" was soon past all the red tape and construction began in April, 2004. What started then has recently been completed in the form of a \$135 million building.

"It's up to them to go out and lease that retail space, lease the residential units," Angelo said. "They make a profit or don't – it's their risk. Anything above and beyond the monthly rent owed to Metro is theirs to keep. So it can be a good deal for everyone."

The deal had originally involved building a new school on the northeast corner of the property, but control of that project was soon relinquished to LAUSD and Metro sold that portion of the land to the school district. A middle school is currently being built there, as originally planned.



The new Wilshire/Vermont station portal was designed by the developer to match the architectural design of the "Wilshire Vermont Station" building. Metro owns the land the building sits on and rents to the developer, who paid for construction of the building. The developer is responsible for filling the residential and commercial space.

Tenants already are in

With 449 residential units and 36,000 sq. ft. of retail space, the "Wilshire Vermont Station" is exactly what Metro wanted to place on the property, according to Angelo. Forty apartments are rented and being lived in even before the commercial spots are filled in; the complex may well become a popular living space on the Wilshire corridor.

The building features studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments that range from \$1,449 to \$2,918 monthly, depending on the size and location. It also has a pool, two fitness areas, a business center, a party room and conference rooms.

"This station is also served by our two highest ridership Metro Rapid lines: the one on Wilshire and the one on Vermont," Angelo said. "The goal, and what you hope for, is that the people who are going to rent an apartment here are the people who will use our services – be it the subway, or whichever."

The commercial property has mostly been leased already, and stores like Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf, Cold Stone, Nine West, T-Mobile, and even a Washington Mutual branch will soon be filling in the currently vacant area on the building's first floor.

"Wilshire Vermont Station" has seized upon the transit aspect in marketing apartments to prospective tenants; an informational brochure includes a system map – right on top of the packet – of the Metro Red, Purple, Gold and Blue line routes.

"That's the reason for doing this," Angelo said. "You build the density at the station and you get people to live the line: 'Live, work and Play' with Metro."

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West Valley Division 8 Wins 4th Quarter's 'Best Division' Prize



The team at West Valley Division 8 celebrates its capture of the "Best Division" prize for the fourth quarter of FY 2007. Along with accolades and the envy of its peers, Division 8 received a check for \$1,000, which will likely be spent on "good eating," said Maria Reynolds, division transportation manager. "Our employees from Maintenance and Transportation work very well together to ensure that our buses are well-maintained and that our customers receive the best service possible. I am thankful for the dedication and commitment that our employees put forth everyday."


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Jody Feerst Litvak, community relations manager, pauses before enjoying her winning recipe in the Metro Café recipe contest. Litvak was one of four winners. Litvak reconstructed the recipe for "Grandma Yetta's Citrus Mushroom Holiday Chicken" from watching her grandmother prepare the dish for years.



Photo by Ned Racine

Culinary Delight: Metro Employees' Own Recipes Served in Cafeteria

By JIMMY STROUP

(Sept. 14, 2007) The Metro Cafeteria called all Metro employees who fancied themselves chefs to arms a few weeks ago when they asked for recipe submissions. The chosen recipes were to be prepared and served in the café.

After some trimming, four dishes were selected by cafeteria manager Jose Muniz. They were served up by the food service staff for the dining pleasure of Metro employees all this week.

The winning dishes had to meet certain quantitative and cost considerations (servings of 10 and no more than \$2 per serving). The chosen contestant received a free meal the day the dish was prepared by the cafeteria staff.

The following recipes are reprinted with permission of the Metro employees who designed them.

- ["Grandma Yetta's Citrus Mushroom Holiday Chicken"](#) from Jody Litvak, Community Relations Manager

Litvak, a 16-year Metro employee, lifted this family recipe from her late grandmother. Litvak describes her as a great cook who rarely – "if ever" –

measured. Her family enjoyed this favorite for Sabbath dinners, Rosh Hashanah and Hanukkah, and can be prepared kosher or not, depending on the circumstance.

- ["Grilled Flank Steak"](#) from Frances Impert, Senior Real Estate Officer

Impert developed this recipe after being inspired by a friend's recipe for flank steak. She harbors a love for cooking shows and wishes she had more time to "play in the kitchen." As tribute to the tasty nature of her steak recipe, Impert – a 14-year Metro veteran – recalls an instance when she served the dish to some friends who aren't big red meat eaters. Sure enough, Impert caught them going back for seconds and thirds, despite a vegetarian dish being an alternative main course.

- ["Chicken Adobo"](#) from Chi Kemp, General Clerk III, West Valley Division 8

Kemp and her family have been enjoying this traditional Filipino dish for generations. She learned to prepare the meal from her mother, whose mother taught her, whose mother taught her. Kemp, who is relatively new to Metro at only eight months of service, said it's easy to prepare, inexpensive, keeps well in refrigeration and is a favorite of her children.

- ["Sindhi Biryani"](#) from Ghulam Shaikh

Shaikh said biryani is a traditional South Asian dish that's prepared different ways depending on where it's being served. This recipe was adapted by Shaikh and his wife, Shazia, and originates from Sindh, the southwestern province of Pakistan. Shaikh said that one of the nice things about biryani – which is a "must" for his family gatherings – is that different regions adapt the basic meal to alternative specifications, so one biryani is a completely different kind of meal than another.

Grandma Yetta's Citrus Mushroom Holiday Chicken
<p>Ingredients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 whole chickens cut-up (or equivalent number chicken pieces – feel free to use whatever types of pieces you like)• Salt to taste (you can omit altogether but should definitely omit if you are using kosher chicken)• 1 large orange sliced into thin disks• 2 lemons sliced into thin disks• 1 small yellow onion sliced thin, disks separated into rings• 2 to 4 garlic cloves chopped• 1 pound brown mushrooms (feel free to substitute other type of mushrooms if desired). Clean and cut larger mushrooms in half or quarters.• 1/2 jar Carmel Mushroom Soup mix or 1/4 - 1/3 cup Osem Mushroom Soup mix• 1 and 1/2 cups ketchup <p>Preparation</p> <p>If you are using whole chickens, remove fat pieces, gizzards, neck, liver, etc. Discard fat. Discard liver or freeze to reserve for another purpose. Save and freeze gizzards, neck and</p>

remaining pieces for stock or other uses. Cut up chicken into serving pieces – breasts, wings, thighs, drumsticks. You should have the backbone and perhaps some other bits of the chicken remaining. Add these to the pieces you are reserving for stock.

Rinse chicken pieces and pat dry. Sprinkle with salt if you are not using kosher chicken.

Distribute orange slices in a single layer over the bottom of the baking dish. It's OK if they slightly overlap. Repeat with lemon slices. Sprinkle some of the onion rings on top of the orange/lemon layer. It's likely you will not need all the orange, lemon or onion. Sprinkle chopped garlic on top of this. Sprinkle about half the mushrooms over this mixture.

Mix up the Carmel Mushroom soup mix with the ketchup to make a paste. Rub paste all over chicken pieces. Place the chicken pieces in the baking dish fairly close together. Sprinkle remaining mushroom pieces over the top. Add any remaining soup/ketchup mixture on top of this.

Cover baking dish tightly with aluminum foil and place into a pre-heated 350 degree oven. Bake about an hour. Once chicken pieces are baked through, remove foil and bake for an additional 5-10 minutes to allow the top to brown and the sauce to carmelize a bit. (Don't worry; it's really hard to overbake this dish.)

Remove chicken pieces to a serving platter and cover to keep warm. Strain what's left in the baking dish into a sauce pan being sure to reserve the solids. Allow liquid to settle, and then remove the fat from the top. Return the solids to the remaining sauce and pour some over the chicken pieces. Keep the remaining sauce warm until ready to serve. Pass the remaining sauce in case anyone wants extra.

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Grilled Flank Steak
<p>Ingredients</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 and 1/2 lbs. flank steak• Marinade• 1/2 cup olive oil• 1/2 cup balsamic vinegar (full-bodied red wine may be substituted)• 4 tbsp fresh rosemary, lightly chopped• 5 garlic cloves, crushed• "Salsa"• 6 large or 10 medium Roma tomatoes, chopped• 3 tbsp green olives stuffed with pimentos, chopped• 2 tbsp fresh basil, chopped• 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil• Squeeze of fresh lemon juice (approx. 2 tsp)• Salt and pepper <p>Preparation</p> <p>Mix all marinade ingredients. Score steak 1 inch apart. Place in a large, re-sealable plastic bag. Pour in marinade, seal, making sure to remove most of air out. Gently "massage" the bag, making sure marinade is distributed all over steak. Refrigerate overnight, two nights, or at least four hours, turning steak over occasionally.</p> <p>Remove steak from refrigerator one hour before grilling, and let stand at room temperature. Meanwhile, make salsa and set aside. Preheat grill on high and lightly oil. Remove steak from marinade, discard marinade. (You can leave the garlic and rosemary pieces on the steak.)</p>

Season steak generously with salt and pepper on both sides and place on hot grill. Cover grill and let cook approx. Five to six minutes on one side, flip over, and grill other side four to five minutes for medium rare or to desired doneness (remember that the steak will continue cooking after being removed from heat!).

Transfer steak to a plate, tented with foil, and let rest for eight to 10 minutes. Using a very sharp knife, slice diagonally against the grain into ¼ inch slices. Transfer to a serving platter, and lightly fan out. Spoon “salsa” down the center of the steak, and serve remaining salsa on the side.

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Chicken Adobo
Ingredients <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 lbs. chicken thighs and legs• 1/3 cup Kikkoman soy sauce• 1/3 cup white vinegar• 2 tbsp chopped garlic• 1/2 cup chopped onions• 2 tbsp oyster sauce• 1/2 tsp ground black pepper• 1/2 cup water (optional) Preparation <p>Wash and cut chicken into bite-sized pieces approximately three by three inches. Marinate chicken with vinegar, soy sauce, garlic and pepper 30 minutes before cooking.</p> <p>In a saucepan, add remaining ingredients and cook for about 30 minutes. Stir when it begins to boil.</p> <p>Serve with steamed white rice.</p>

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Sindhi Biryani
Ingredients <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 medium-sized onions, finely sliced• 1 and 3/4 pounds boned chicken pieces• 2 and 1/2 cups cooking oil• 2 tbsp ginger• 2 tbsp garlic• 2 tbsp red chili powder• 1 cup yogurt, whipped• 2 tbsp cumin seeds, ground• 2 tbsp fenugreek seeds, ground

- 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
- 3 tbsp ground mix of black pepper, cinnamon, clove and coriander
- 4 medium tomatoes, sliced
- 4 small green chilies
- 4 cups water
- 4 cups rice
- 1/2 bunch fresh green coriander
- Mint leaves to taste
- Salt to taste

Preparation

Fry onions in oil on medium heat until golden brown. Add chicken meat, ginger and garlic; stir fry for about 10 minutes.

Add red chilies and yogurt and cook for another 10 minutes.

Add cumin, fenugreek, turmeric, and ground seasoning mixture; cook for two minutes. Add tomatoes and green chilies. Cook for few minutes.

Add water and rice. Add salt to taste. Cook until rice is softened and well cooked, or until all the water has dried out.

Add two pinches of green coriander and mint leaves. Bring the flame to low and cook rice on the low flame for about five minutes.

Serve with salad and ranch (raita).

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Internal 'Call for Projects' Starts Capital Budget Preparation

- Deadline for capital project proposals is September 30
- Only about half of proposals will make the cut

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 14, 2007) If your department has a big project in mind for FY 2009 – perhaps a major expenditure for new equipment or facilities – you've got until the end of this month to make your case for it.

The annual in-house "call for projects" is the first step in developing Metro's \$600 million capital program. Proposed projects that survive a rigorous evaluation process over the next three months will become the foundation of the FY 2009 budget.

Each year, the Office of Management and Budget receives between 300 and 350 internal proposals for capital projects, says OMB Executive Officer Michelle Caldwell. They compete for placement within the capital budget – but only about half make the cut.

"If anyone thinks they need a capital project in FY 2009 – or any time in the next five years – this is the time to do it," says Caldwell. "Metro maintains a five-year capital program for planning purposes and updates the plan each year."

Submitting a capital project proposal is simpler now than in previous years, according to Caldwell. Department project managers no longer have to cope with complicated computer programs or trade files back and forth to develop a proposal.

Complete an on-line form

The entire process can be accomplished by accessing the data system on the OMB website and completing an on-line form.

To give a project a leg-up in the evaluation process, Caldwell advises project managers to spend time developing the scope and justification for their project, including how it relates to Metro's strategic plan.

"You should do a cost/benefit analysis," she says. "Be realistic in what the project will cost and be ready to answer questions about it and defend your project. It's not a requirement that the project 'save' the agency money, although many do, provided the completed project brings value to the agency."

In the three months following the project submission deadline, the proposals are screened by Metro's subject matter experts, who also will rank them for submission to the next level – the Executive Investment Committee headed by CEO Roger Snoble.

The committee, which includes Snoble's direct reports, evaluates the

projects and fits them in to the funds available in the next fiscal year's proposed budget. So-called "below the line" projects are put off for inclusion in subsequent years' budgets or are rejected all together.

Grouped by subject matter

Capital projects are grouped by subject matter such as revenue vehicle purchases, facilities improvements, IT communications and non-revenue vehicles, along with "other" projects like signage and carpeting.

Examples of projects approved in the FY 2008 budget include:

- \$40 million to rebuild 250 buses,
- \$3.4 million for a new four-color printing press, and
- \$15 million for a new rail car wash and cleaning platform at Division 20.

The \$600 million capital program, along with Metro's \$1 billion bus and rail operating budget, make up a sizeable chunk of the agency's overall \$3 billion annual budget.

The four-month process of developing the annual capital budget is necessary, Caldwell says, because "we need to know which of our resources are going to be tied up in capital projects – both dollars and people. It's not only funding that limits our capital program, but also the people available to complete the work."


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Rail Operations Slates In-house Training Program for RTOS Application Process

(Sept. 14, 2007) In response to the growing demands of an expanding system, the Rail Transportation Department has developed a program, beginning Sept. 21, to aid applicants in the competitive selection process for promotion.

The Rail Transportation Promotional Opportunity Program (RTPOP) was created by a team that includes a director, a manager, two assistant managers and a rail transportation operations supervisor (RTOS).

Their initial focus was to start a recruitment program for the RTOS position and develop brochures and workshops to aid employees with the various stages of the application process.

"We wanted to take an active role in the future of Rail Operations by investing in our employees both current and future," said Byron England, Director of Rail Operations Control and Instruction. "Recruitment for entry level positions will be one of the most important tasks we'll do for our department. It is important that we let our employees know that we are a team and we care about their professional growth."

Workshops will focus on subjects that will all come together to help produce a qualified, prepared applicant for an RTOS position. The initial workshops will help participants evaluate scenarios and articulate their actions through the critical thinking process.

Participants will also benefit from other internal and external sources of information pertinent to Rail Operations

Best from within

The team that developed the program is committed to seeing current Metro employees promote through the organization. Several of the committee members started out as operators themselves, so they're partial to the benefits of hiring from within.

"We're targeting employees who are trying to promote up into the ranks of supervision," said Red Line Division Transportation Manager Duane Martin. "We look forward to the opportunity to hire from within the ranks."

Douglas Jackson, Red Line Division Transportation assistant manager, agreed with Martin, noting that the second on CEO Roger Snoble's list of Core Values is a dedication to appreciate the resources within the agency and to develop them.

RTPOP Workshops

The first RTPOP workshop is open to any Metro employee, whether a rail employee or not. It's scheduled for Friday, Sept. 21 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. or 1 to 5 p.m., and Saturday, Sept. 22 from 7 to 11 a.m. or 12 to 4 p.m., held at Metro Red Line Division 20, 300 S. Santa Fe Ave., Los Angeles. The other workshops will be scheduled at later dates. Employees who are interested in participating on their own time should reserve a spot at one of the sessions by contacting either Esther Pippins at 922-3213 or Douglas Jackson at 922-3221.

For Jackson, people are the resource that can be developed most effectively.

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Lisa Arredondo of UTU Local 1607 sails her bus through the obstacle course barrels without a scratch, bump or wobble.



Just for Fun: Managers, UTU Officials Compete for Bragging Rights

- Barrels go flying as they drive the Bus Roadeo obstacle course
- Contest winner Lisa Arredondo of UTU says, 'This is fun!'
- [MORE!>](#) Div. 8's Operator Flores, Div. 5 Maintainers Forde, Vargas and Warren Win 2007 Bus Roadeo

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 18, 2007) When 11 Metro managers and UTU officials took turns fumbling their way through a truncated version of the obstacle course during the 2006 Bus Roadeo, last Saturday, it was just for fun.

But, the mini-competition underscored a fundamental truth: safely driving a transit bus – 40 feet or even longer – through all the hazards Metro bus operators face daily on the road takes consummate skill and professionalism.

The lunchtime contest, run strictly for entertainment, featured five transportation division managers – Sonja Owens, Doug Middleton, Curley Little, Grant Myers and Maria Reynolds. They competed against service sector general managers Mark Maloney, Dana Coffey and Jack Gabig, and the leaders of three UTU locals, Robert Gonzalez, Vic Baffoni and Lisa Arredondo.



Contest winner Lisa Arredondo emerges victorious from the grueling course.

Coffey, who started as a bus operator, but has been out of the seat for 28 years, found her stint behind the wheel to be a humbling experience. On her run through the final obstacle, in which 10 barrels are lined up to form a narrow alley, Coffey sent five careening across the Santa Anita Race Track parking lot.

"It definitely shows that being an operator is not an easy job," she said. "It requires concentration and focus and, I can tell you, I didn't have either today!"

Unlike the confident maneuvering of the 35 professional drivers during the real competition, the managers and union officials crept through their 180-degree turns and curb approaches and most managed to take out at least one, and usually more, barrels on final approach.

Skill exhibition

Perhaps the most skill was exhibited by Vic Baffoni, chairman of UTU Local 1608 since 1994, and Lisa Arredondo, who has chaired Local 1607 since January 2007.

Baffoni made his moves with the assurance of the operator he was for 23 years, making the barrel run without hitting a single one. It was a fitting exit for Baffoni, who recently was promoted to vice president and director of the international union's bus department.

He'll take up his new post in January 2008, either in Cleveland or in Washington, D.C. "I'll be coming out to LA," he said. "This is my home property and a lot of our membership is here. When there's an issue and my assistance is needed, I'll be here."

But, in the end, bragging rights went to Arredondo who was a Metro bus operator for 24 years, working the extra board out of North Los Angeles Division 3. Over the years, she competed in seven Bus Roadeos, recording the highest scores for any female bus operator.

As the TransitTV on board her bus played the local news and weather, Arredondo swung the big coach through its moves and drove confidently between the row of barrels, leaving them unscathed and stopping within three inches of the cone that marked the end of the course.

Proclaimed the winner, a surprised Arredondo said, "This is fun! I haven't been driving a bus for over nine months, but, it's easy to get back on that bus. I love it!"

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Meet the Champs: West Valley Division Operator Julio Flores Flores is joined in the winner's circle by the maintenance team from Arthur Winston Division, from left, Rommel Vargas, Frank Forde and Andrew Warren Jr.



Photos by Gayle Anderson

Div. 8's Operator Flores, Div. 5 Maintainers Forde, Vargas and Warren Win 2007 Bus Rodeo

- Team will represent Metro at APTA Internationals in Austin, Tex.
- [Just for Fun:](#) Managers, UTU Officials Compete for Bragging Rights
- Results: | [Operators](#) | [Mechanics](#) |

By JIMMY STROUP

(Sept. 18, 2007) West Valley Division 8 Operator Julio Flores almost missed his chance to compete in this year's Metro Bus Rodeo. The starters called his name several times before Flores ran to the check-in with only moments to spare before they declared him a no-show.

"They gave me a last call, but I got here before they cut the time off," said Flores, who was enjoying the classic car show and trying to stay relaxed before competing.

Good thing for him that he made it in time. After all, Flores won the bus operator half of the Rodeo by a fair margin, earning his first-ever victory after placing as high as third in previous competitions.



Object of this game is to back the bus between precisely placed cones without knocking anything over.

Flores was joined in the winner's circle this year by the maintenance team from Arthur Winston Division 5. Frank Forde, Rommel Vargas and Andrew Warren Jr. helped win the American Public Transportation Association Grand Championship for 2006. The Division 5 team has now won four of the last five years' local competitions.

"It feels wonderful to win again," Warren said. "We were hoping we would have a good outcome and we did. We're looking forward to representing Metro at the APTA internationals."

The APTA competition for 2008 – where Forde, Vargas, Warren and Flores will defend the agency's First Place title – will be held in Austin, Tex. next May.



Metro Bus maneuvers through orange cones at Santa Anita Race Track.

Unprecedented turnout

Estimates had this year's Roadeo attendance topping 700, a number that most reckoned as unprecedented. The crowd seemed to feel that the classic car show, family entertainment and competitions were superior in scope and size to previous years – and all at a new location that presented the team with some problems to overcome.

Though the Roadeo takes place at the Santa Anita Race Track every year, this year's competition was held at Gate 4 – normally the event is out of Gate 6, which is on the other side of the parking lot.

Alex Clifford, Gateway Cities Sector general manager, whose sector hosted

the event, said there were some challenges with the layout and some facilities. In the end, though, he said “the team we’ve come to rely on set this all up and it came together in a wonderful fashion.”

San Fernando Valley Sector General Manager Richard Hunt acted as emcee (with assistance from his daughter, Jennifer), calling the play-by-play for the bus operator half of the competition as well as the just-for-fun manager and sector manager bus competitions.

By all accounts, the whole day went off without a hitch. Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers attended the event, taking in the competitions right from the beginning of the day.



Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers: “Plus! It’s fun!”

“This is a wonderful event. It encourages our employees to hone their skills and it recognizes employees who are at the top of their form,” she said. “Plus, it’s fun.”

Metro Board Director John Fasana was on hand and gave his congratulations to all those who competed.

“In terms of commitment to excellent customer service, this is one way in a friendly competition that really helps everybody focus on their skills and focus on the pride they have in the work they do,” he said. “When you see a turnout like this, you can see that people have a lot of pride in the work they do at Metro.”



Calling the shots: Gateway Cities GM Alex Clifford, Metro Board Member John Fasana with organizer Steve Mullaly, and organizer Frank Cecere get the trophies underway.

Winners and runners-up

Winning operator Flores scored 626 of a possible 650 points. Sam Morales of Central City Division 1 – who’s won the event several times in the past and is always a strong competitor – captured second place with 610.

Third place was awarded to Marcos Mejia-Portillo, also of Division 1, who gave Morales a run for his money with 608.

The winning maintenance team from Division 5 scored 1,085 of a possible 1,550 points. San Gabriel Valley Division 9 – with members Adrian Garcia, Eduardo Garcia and Armando Martinez – placed second with 775.

Third place went to Division 2 – with members Alfredo Cardenas, Andrew Filimaua and Edward Hernandez – who scored 675.

Thirty-five operators and 11 maintenance teams competed in this year’s

event.

Results prepared by Steve Mullaly:

2007 Metro Bus Roadeo
Bus Operator Obstacle Course Results

Finish	B/N	Operator	Div	Final Score 650 Max
1	16850	Flores, Julio	8	626
2	12699	Morales, Samuel	1	610
3	18310	Mejia-Portillo, Marcos	1	608
4	16821	Martinez, Luis	2	597
5	28090	Gavia, Herman	3	585
6	25827	Navarro, Juan	3	582
7	16349	Mota, Ramiro	2	581
8	16568	Acosta, Joe	3	575
9	34749	Patlan-Gutierrez, Felipe J	1	565
10	10245	Holland, Mark D	9	564
11	35340	Gonzalez, Juan A	3	561
12	18326	Valdez, Jesus B	2	541
13	28909	Serrano, Juan	8	538
14	18269	Martinez, Ricardo	9	536
15	29522	DeAngelis, Maximiliano	1	536
16	3270	Sia, Leoncio	9	519
17	25595	Guzman, Gabriel	10	517
18	18855	Escareno, Francisco	10	512
19	28185	Figueroa, Juan	15	491
20	29783	Ramirez, Cesar	10	487
21	28351	Obieta, Dean Louis C	15	486
22	35534	Zapata, Nelson F	10	486
23	12961	Pereira, Miriam L	15	480
24	28626	Wilbanks, Jeffery	2	473
25	29533	Lopez, Marcos	18	465
26	30089	Hernandez, Manuel	10	448
27	23978	Magana, Cesar	15	446
28	25425	Jordan, Guadalupe	3	442
29	8970	Ponce, Domingo	1	439
30	28958	Pasaphunthu, Nipon	3	426
31	2622	Barbosa, Joe	9	423
32	28130	Lopez, Edgardo	15	414
33	34338	Calles, Jose M	10	413
34	23508	Rivera, Hector	1	383
35	20817	George, Ricky D	1	368
36	29082	Contreras, Miquel	15	0

2007 Metro Bus Roadeo
Mechanics Competition

Results prepared by Steve Mullaly

1st Place - Division 05

Name	Badge
Andrew Warren Jr	11076
Rommel Vargas	16627
Frank Forde	27943

2nd Place - Division 09

Name	Badge
Armando Martinez	27171
Eduardo Garcia	27454
Adrian Garcia	27649

3rd Place - Division 02

Name	Badge
Andrew Filimaua	17527
Edward Hernandez	27397
Alfredo Cardenas	27886

4th Place - Division 01

Name	Badge
Gus Sanchez	24713
Sergio Barron	19244
Watana Don Reiwtavee	23193

5th Place – Central Maint. Shops

Name	Badge
Tim Hong	27685
Henry Ochoa	27040
Fernando Aguilar	27070

6th Place - Division 10

Name	Badge
David Klinkenborg	15519
Angel Feria	24794
Saul Sanchez	27899

7th Place - Division 07

Name	Badge
Baldemar Gonzalez	20338
Craig Daniel	23749
Glenn Buakong	15208

8th Place - Division 15

Name	Badge
Kirk Langmayer	3146
Ray Hilton	27482
Brad Pardo	24644

9th Place - Division 08

Name	Badge
Simon Agaronov	27399
Ha Nguyen	22413
Ivan Roldan	20662

10th Place - Division 18

Name	Badge
Luke Logan	5364
Mina Ros	17575
Raymond Phung	15126

11th Place - Division 03

Name	Badge
Cristobal Hurtado	27066
Nelson Rodriguez	19440
Wilson Aguinaldo	17676



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New Bus Lanes, New Development, New Buses and Cars on Committee Agendas

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- [Item 10. North Hollywood Development](#)
- [Item 26. Bus Accident Investigation Unit](#)
- [Item 39. 260 New Buses](#)
- [Item 40. 135 Sedans](#)
- [Item 41. High-Rail Truck](#)

(Sept. 18, 2007) New bus-only lanes, a big, new transit-oriented development and requests for new buses and cars are among items to be considered in September by various Board committees.

Item 9, Bus Speed Improvements. The Planning and Programming Committee will discuss a staff recommendation to seek Federal Transit Administration funding for projects aimed at improving bus speeds in the Wilshire, Van Nuys and Sepulveda transit corridors.

The Wilshire Corridor Bus-Only Lane project would be a 9.6-mile peak period bus-only lane between downtown Los Angeles and Santa Monica, estimated at a cost of \$31.5 million. The proposed lane is expected to improve bus travel times by an average of 24 percent.

The Van Nuys project calls for construction of a half-mile bus-only lane and other roadway improvements estimated at \$8.5 million. The Sepulveda project would include construction of a seven-mile bus-only lane and other roadway improvements estimated at \$42.9 million.

Item 10, North Hollywood Development. Metro's 15.6 acres of property at the North Hollywood station would be converted to a 1.72-million square foot mixed-use development under a proposal to be considered by the Planning and Programming Committee.

The "No-Ho Art Wave" project, proposed by Lowe Enterprises, would include almost 1.2 million square feet of office, retail or entertainment and community space, 562 residential units and 6,200 parking stalls.

The project, which would be built in three phases on either side of Lankershim Boulevard, would "promote the community vision for North

September Committee Meetings

Wednesday, September 19

- 1 p.m. – Planning and Programming
- 2:30 p.m. – Finance and Budget
- 3 p.m. – Ad Hoc Congestion Pricing Committee

Thursday, September 20

- 9 a.m. – Special Board Meeting – Security Workshop
- 10 a.m. – Executive Management and Audit
- 11 a.m. – Construction
- 12 noon – Operations

Thursday, September 27

- 9:30 a.m. – Full Board Meeting

Hollywood" with a design that would integrate Metro's transit operations, according to a staff report. Metro would receive annual revenue of \$10.9 million from the minimum base rent, adjusted by the Consumer Price Index every five years.

Item 26, Bus Accident Investigation Unit. Metro's System Safety and Security staff is recommending development of a Bus Accident Investigative Unit with a staff of four certified accident investigators who would be supervised by the director of Corporate Safety. The Executive Management and Audit Committee will discuss the motion at its Sept. 20 meeting.

Members of the unit would be the primary investigators of serious accidents that involve injuries, multiple vehicles and pedestrians, and those that result in fatalities. The investigators also would be able to evaluate the current bus operator training programs, recommend and develop program improvements, and institute new accident prevention programs with the overall goal of continuing to reduce accidents and improve safety.

Item 39, 260 New Buses. The Metro staff is recommending purchase of up to 260 new 45-foot composite buses over a two-year period in a motion to be discussed by the Operations Committee. Currently, 20 percent of Metro's bus fleet is made up of high-capacity 60-foot articulated buses or 45-foot lightweight buses.

Of the 260 buses, the staff proposes that 210 be powered by CNG, while the remaining 50 would have gasoline-hybrid propulsion systems. Those 50 are expected to replace some of Metro's oldest diesel buses assigned to Venice Division 6. The division is not suitable for fueling CNG buses, but could accommodate the hybrid vehicles.

Item 40, 135 Sedans. The Operations Committee will discuss a motion authorizing the CEO to award a \$2.36 million contract to Victor Buick Pontiac GMC Truck, Inc., for 135 four-door sedans. The cars will replace older vehicles in the operator relief fleet.

It was Metro's original intention to buy 103 hybrid sedans, but bids received were non-responsive because they didn't meet Metro's technical requirements for warranty and training. To get a better yield on diminishing capital funds, the agency decided to buy 135 regular sedans to replace more vehicles in the aging non-revenue fleet.

Item 41, High-Rail Truck. The Operations Committee will discuss a motion authorizing the CEO to award a contract to a firm that can offer the best price and availability for a high-rail truck with an articulated crane to carry such heavy materials as rail ties and track segments along the rail lines, to help perform repairs and to remove debris from the tracks.

An earlier bid for the truck was rejected as non-compliant with Metro's requirements. The staff also found that such trucks could be purchased for less on the open market. The contract price is not to exceed \$250,000. The new vehicle will replace an older truck that has exceeded its service life.



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Funeral Services, Thursday, for Div. 5 Operator Jimmy Coulter

(Sept. 18, 2007) Funeral services are scheduled, Thursday, for Metro Bus Operator Jimmy Coulter, who died Sept. 11 following a long bout with cancer.

A viewing will be held from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 19, at Spaulding Mortuary, 3045 S. La Brea at Jefferson in Los Angeles, 323-934-1181.

The funeral will begin at 11 a.m., Thursday, Sept. 20, at Mt. Tabor Missionary Baptist Church, 6614 S. Western Ave. at 67th Street in Los Angeles, 323-753-3189.

Coulter, 57, joined Metro in May 1998 as a BDOF operator and was advanced to full-time operator in June 1999. Friends at Arthur Winston Division 5 described him as "very friendly and outgoing, always smiling. He loved to play Dominoes," according to division Stenographer Gail Ligon.

Coulter is survived by his wife, Jessie, and four children, Jimmy Coulter Jr., Jamal Coulter, Katrina Crawford and Wanda Crawford.



Jimmy Coulter

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San Gabriel Valley Division maintenance crew, with Maintenance Manager John McBryan, center at left, and Transportation Manager Doug Middleton, take in the big prize.



Photo by Jimmy Stroup

Division 9 Captures FY 2007 Best Division "How You Doin'?" Award

(Sept. 19, 2007) On behalf of the transportation and maintenance employees of San Gabriel Valley Division 9, Maintenance Manager John McBryan and Transportation Manager Doug Middleton accepted the "big check" for the top prize in the "How You Doin'?" competition.

The \$2,000 check was awarded to the division for winning the "How You Doin'?" award for Best Division, FY 2007. Middleton said the division plans to use the money to hold a day-long party in early October to celebrate the award.

"I'm very proud of the contributions that employees of the transportation and maintenance put toward achieving this goal," Middleton said. "They work hard and it pays off."

McBryan echoed these sentiments, saying that Division 9 is "filled with people who step up and take care of business. They care and go the extra mile."



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Funeral Scheduled for Blue Line Operator Anthony Cuadra

(Sept. 19, 2007) A funeral service will be held, Friday, Sept. 28, for Metro Blue Line Operator Anthony Cuadra, who died Sept. 14 following a short illness.

Cuadra had been in poor health for some time, according to friends. He was rushed to Centinela Freeman Regional Medical Center in Marina Del Rey, Sept. 13, and was placed on life support in the Intensive Care Unit where he died.



Anthony Cuadra

A viewing will be conducted from 5 until 9 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 27, at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, 6300 Forest Lawn Dr. in Hollywood Hills, 800-204-3131. The funeral is scheduled at 1 p.m., Friday, Sept. 28, in the cemetery's Church of the Hills.

Cuadra, 46, joined Metro in March 1999 as a BDOF operator and transferred to the Blue Line in June 2005.

"Tony really took to the trains, learning the job quickly and thoroughly," said Duane Martin, now transportation manager of the Metro Red Line. "It impressed me that he learned the job so well. He was very well liked by all the Blue Line operators."

A native of Honduras, Cuadra lived in Mar Vista, Calif. He is survived by his wife, Teresa, and daughter, Amanda; his parents, a sister and two brothers.

"He had never been more proud of his accomplishments than when he completed his training to be an operator on the Blue Line," said his friend Gail Ligon, Arthur Winston Division 5 stenographer. "He loved operating the train."

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Fare Inspector Brittany White holds out the 25 tickets she wrote the morning of Sept. 17. White was one of four TSB officers and fare inspectors writing citations at the Imperial/Wilmington station. Among all the officers at multiple stations north of Imperial/Wilmington, 587 citations were issued to safety offenders in a four-hour period. Photo by Jimmy Stroup.

in charge of the citation team at the Imperial/Wilmington station. "I have to go to court and defend them just like any other ticket."

Calibet was describing the codes prohibiting crossing train tracks when red warning lights are flashing. Though pedestrians normally have the right-of-way wherever they go, trains can't stop very quickly and are afforded right-of-way in all cases.

"It clearly states don't cross when the lights are flashing, but people still do," said TSB Lt. Jenny Bethune, the ranking officer on the scene. "They're in such a hurry to catch the train that they don't care."

Bethune said the TSB was working with Metro to create new, highly visible signs that will better warn people when not to cross the tracks. She said that despite the warning – no matter what they do – people will cross the tracks illegally.

Media along for the ride

Officers Catch Nearly 600 Violators During Rail Safety Event

Blue Line stations targeted to raise passenger safety awareness; at \$177 each, citations total exceeds \$100,000

By JIMMY STROUP

(Sept. 19, 2007) As part of a multi-agency effort to increase rail passenger's awareness of safe behavior around the tracks, the Metro Blue Line was the staging ground, Sept. 17, for an operation that had the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau citing offenders for unsafe practices.

TSB deputies issued nearly 600 citations to Blue Line patrons between 6 and 10 a.m. at stations north of Imperial/Wilmington. At \$177 each, average, the total amount of the citations issued exceeds \$100,000.

"It's a vehicle code violation," said Deputy Albert Calibet, who was the officer

Along with issuing citations, Union Pacific, BNSF Railway and Metrolink partnered to offer media representatives a ride in the engine of a freight train to see first-hand how pedestrians and cars violate traffic laws pertaining to train crossings.

The two-engine, two-car rig cruised up and down the freight line that runs parallel to the Blue Line all morning. Reporters "caught" safety offenders on tape illegally driving or walking across closed crossing gates, and news agencies played the recordings on evening newscasts that night in an additional attempt to increase safety awareness.

At a press conference following the issuance of citations by TSB and Union Pacific Police, Sgt. Brian Godwin described the need to reinforce safety practices among regular Blue Line patrons.

"I don't think anyone is happy, necessarily, to get a ticket," he said. "But overall it's for the best to get people educated about what is and what isn't safe behavior around trains."



TSB Lt. Jenny Bethune said this sign was a model of what the Sheriff's Deputies and Metro have been working on to better warn rail patrons that crossing tracks when the red lights are flashing is against the law. Bethune said she'd rather see people follow the law than give out citations to those who violate the vehicle code. Photo by Jimmy Stroup.


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Photo op: Rideshare spokesman Huell Howser, 3rd from left, joins traffic reporters, from left, Dona Dower, Diana Rizzo, Ginger Chan, Tom Storey, Lori Ryan and Humberto Jimenez at 11th annual Golden Pylon Awards.



Photos by Juan Ocampo

Southland Transit Agencies Hail Traffic News Reporters as "Part of the Solution" to Region's Giant Traffic Jam

- PBS television host and the region's official Rideshare spokesman Huell Howser welcomed traffic reporters to 11th Annual Golden Pylon Awards Sept. 19 in Hollywood. Awards spotlight achievement of broadcast traffic reporters who help keep the traffic moving by pitching Rideshare and other public transit options. Presentation follows release of much-anticipated Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Annual Urban Mobility Report, the nationally known study on traffic congestion in the nation's 85 largest metropolitan areas. Event is a prelude to Rideshare Week Oct. 1-5.



By GAYLE ANDERSON

Sept. 20, 2007) The Southland's official Rideshare spokesman, PBS television host Huell Howser, handed out coveted Golden Pylon Awards to Southland traffic reporters at an awards luncheon Wednesday, honoring the true grit reporters whose on-air traffic talk keeps the region's traffic moving by promoting rideshare options such as carpool lanes, vanpools and public transportation.

Illuminating a stellar effort in unraveling the region's huge traffic knot, gleaming Lucite trophies in the shape of a traffic cone pylon went to five reporters who report on the daily traffic grind for numerous

broadcast outlets.

They are:

- Tom Storey, Metro Networks – You hear him from the air on KFVB Air

"I'm inviting every solo commuter in Southern California to leave their car at home and share the ride," he said. Howser offers ridesharing tips and "Tales from the Fast Lane" at www.commutesmart.info, where commuters can find a carpool partner, a vanpool, and get fast, on-line routing for bus or train.



Emcee Howser with Rideshare officials, including Metro Commute Services Director David Sutton and Warren Morse, DEO of Marketing, center, event coordinator Jill Smolinski, seated, at left, and Transportation Program Director Cosette Stark, seated, second from left. The awards ceremony is sponsored by five regional transit agencies: Metro in Los Angeles County, Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside County Transportation Commission, San Bernardino Associated Governments and Ventura County Transportation Commission.

The awards ceremony is sponsored by five regional transit agencies: Metro in Los Angeles County, Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside County Transportation Commission, San Bernardino Associated Governments and Ventura County Transportation Commission.

The Golden Pylon Awards is a traditional prelude to Rideshare Week – Oct. 1 -5 – a statewide campaign aimed to encourage thousands of commuters to 'share the ride' to help reduce traffic and smog. Currently 77 percent of commuters drive alone to work, and traffic congestion increases by 3 percent each year.

The awards underscored the release Sept. 18 of the Texas Transportation Institute's 2007 Annual Urban Mobility Report, which noted that traffic congestion continues to plague American cities of all sizes.

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LA Region Continues to Lead Nation in Traffic Congestion

- Cost the region \$9.3 billion in 2005, Traffic Institute calculates

(Sept. 20, 2007) A national study released Tuesday by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) shows that the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana region continues to lead the nation in delays caused by traffic congestion.

The TTI study also shows, however, that traffic congestion continues to worsen in American cities of all sizes, creating a \$78 billion annual drain on the U.S. economy.

Clogged streets and highways cost the Los Angeles region \$9.3 billion in 2005, TTI said. The study indicates that the region purchased an extra 384 million gallons of fuel to cope with congestion, and that travelers spent 490.5 million hours stuck in traffic.

Other TTI figures indicate that the Los Angeles region ranks first in the nation in terms of operational improvements that squeeze more capacity out of local streets and highways, and third in savings from public transportation.

These are among the findings in TTI's *2007 Urban Mobility Report* – the most detailed picture yet of a problem that is growing worse in all 437 of the nation's urban areas. The current report is based on 2005 figures, the most recent year for which complete data was available.

Congestion affects travel

Worsening congestion, the study notes, is reflected in several ways:

- Trips take longer;
- Congestion affects more of the day;
- Congestion affects weekend travel and rural areas;
- Congestion affects more personal trips and freight shipments; and
- Trip travel times increasingly are unreliable.

"Hopefully, lawmakers in Sacramento and Washington will be jarred in to action by the congestion report," said CEO Roger Snoble, calling on the legislators to "recognize the economic toll traffic takes and how investment in operational improvements, public transportation and other rideshare programs can and is making a substantial difference in Los Angeles County."

TTI's 2007 mobility report notes that congestion causes the average peak-period traveler to spend an extra 38 hours of travel time and

consume an additional 26 gallons of fuel, amounting to a cost of \$710 per traveler.

The report identifies multiple solutions to the congestion problem that, researchers say, must be used together to be effective. These include:

- Get as much service as possible from existing infrastructure;
- Add road and transit system capacity in critical corridors;
- Relieve chokepoints;
- Change usage patterns;
- Provide choices;
- Diversity the development patterns; and
- Keep expectations realistic.

"We need more and better public transportation," said William W. Millar, president of the American Public Transportation Association, noting that "only 53 percent of Americans say that they have access to any public transportation."

Pointing out that even someone who never rides a bus or a train benefits from public transportation, Millar said, "we need to make a national commitment to improve all modes of transportation. America needs and deserves a world class transportation system."



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On the scene: Los Angeles Fire Department crews extinguish small fire caused when an SUV broadsided a northbound Metro Gold Line train at a Mount Washington area crossing at Avenue 50 and Marmion Way.



Photos: Wilbur Babb.

Six Injured in Metro Gold Line Accident at Mount Washington Crossing

- SUV may have crashed through crossing gate. Impact with train caused a fire; driver was rescued from burning vehicle by "Good Samaritan."

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(Sept. 21, 2007) A sport utility vehicle broadsided a Metro Gold Line train during the Friday morning rush hour today, causing a fire and injuring six people in the second Gold Line crash in two weeks.

The Metro Gold Line train was heading from downtown Los Angeles north to Pasadena when it was struck shortly after 7 a.m. at the Ave. 50 and Marmion Way intersection crossing in the Mount Washington area.



SUV was demolished by a fire caused by the impact.

A total of 6 people were injured and transported to area hospitals. Two Gold Line passengers and the female driver of the vehicle were transported to Huntington Memorial Hospital. Two passengers of the train and the train operator were transported to Glendale Hospital. None of the injuries were life-threatening.

The cause of the crash remains under investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), but preliminary reports indicate the woman driving the SUV drove through the railroad crossing gates, which were operating properly, and crashed into the train, said Marc Littman, Deputy Executive Officer, Public Relations.



News reports say the driver of the SUV was trapped in her burning vehicle until a passing motorist stopped and went to her assistance.

LAPD Detective Michael Kaden told reporters on the scene that a motorist stopped at the scene of the accident took immediate action. He jumped the fence, appropriated a knife and cut the woman's seat belt in order to free her from the driver's seat, said Kaden.

Both the northbound and southbound tracks were out of service for nearly four hours. A bus bridge was set up from Highland Park to the Southwest Museum station to transport passengers around the accident site.

Fire seared the train, causing both exterior and interior damage to the operator's cabin.

Service was restored to both tracks at approximately 11:15 a.m. after the vehicle was removed from the tracks at 11:10 a.m.

It was the second injury accident involving the Gold Line in less than two

weeks.

On Sept. 11, six people were injured and a Metro Gold Line train was derailed when a pickup truck ran a red light during the morning rush hour at a crossing in the Highland Park area northeast of downtown - just a few blocks away from Friday's accident.

It was the most serious accident since the Gold Line opened in 2003.

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NRO Inspector General Eric Feldman, center, is shown here with NMCA officers for 2006/2007, from left, Margaret Merhoff, vice president, programs; Phyllis Walker, president; Joe Marzano, treasurer; and Susan Dove, secretary.



Photo by Bill Heard

False Charges: No. 1 Fraud in Government Contracting

- Leading U.S. inspector general calls for partnership with contractors to head off fraud

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Sept. 21, 2007) The Number One fraud government agencies find in dealing with contractors is company employees who make false charges against a contract, a leading U.S. inspector general told an audience of procurement professionals, Wednesday, at Metro Headquarters.

One way to fight this and other fraud, says Eric Feldman, inspector general of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) – a Department of Defense agency that develops, buys and operates the nation's spy satellites – is for government agencies to work with their contractors to root out fraud at the source before it escalates.

Feldman was guest speaker at the monthly meeting of the National Contract Management Association's LA Gateway chapter. NCMA members are contract managers and procurement officers at Metro and other local government agencies.

As inspector general, Feldman is responsible for the work of 80 auditors, inspectors and investigators who provide independent oversight of NRO programs. His 28 years of experience in auditing and fraud control include

positions with the Government Accounting Office, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Although the NRO is based in Chantilly, Va., about 24 miles west of Washington, D.C., it also has offices in El Segundo near many of the nation's aerospace companies.

"Government agencies are getting more and more scrutiny on contracting," says Feldman. "We, in government, have to partner with the private sector to try to identify fraudulent activity and behavior early in the process before they turn into major frauds involving the companies themselves."

Five frequent frauds

The five most frequent frauds in government contracting, he says, are mischarging costs, false claims, false statements, bribes and gratuities to employees, and kickbacks.

Mischarging costs against a contract can include employees charging for time they weren't at work, recording false overtime, and surfing the Internet instead of working on the project. A company may think of such behavior as employee abuse, but it can escalate into criminal charges against the company.

"We reach out to those companies," says Feldman, "especially to the business compliance and ethics offices to identify the 95 percent of fraud that...involves the behavior of individual employees. We work with the company to go after those individuals who have broken the public trust."

Feldman advises government procurement departments to fight contracting fraud by developing close relationships with the business ethics offices and internal investigative offices of the companies they do business with.

Working with the people who are responsible for keeping employees honest and making sure a company's business practices are above board can "help them identify irregularities and red flags when they see things that just don't seem right."

Feldman's office recently conducted an ethics baseline survey among NRO employees. It got good response, but "disappointing results on employee understanding of appropriate ethical behavior." He's now planning an ethics training program for NRO employees.

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Employee Assistance Program Reached Out to Bradley Co-Workers

- Counselor spoke with co-workers shocked by operator's accidental death

By NED RACINE

(Sept. 21, 2007) No one in South Bay Division 18 expected Gregory Bradley to be killed during his evening shift Thursday, July 26. But even while word of the operator's death spread through the division, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) began to offer assistance to shocked co-workers.

Bradley, 35, was killed when an SUV ran a red light and crashed into the driver's compartment of his bus. Bradley was thrown through the windshield and pinned beneath the right rear wheels of his coach. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Hope Morrow, MA, a certified trauma specialist for ComPsych (Metro's supplier of psychological counseling services) heard media reports of the accident and called her supervisors, informing them Bradley's death would require counseling.

Then Morrow headed for Division 18, arriving very early in the morning July 27. Announcements on the public address system and flyers at the mark-up window announced her arrival. Transportation Manager Cindy Karpman lent Morrow her office for confidential conversations.

Cheryl Brown, assistant transportation manager at Division 18, noticed that Morrow was there before she arrived. "She was on point and stayed on point," Brown recalled. "She was here for the operators."

"In this type of situation (a sudden death) and this type of setting (the Division 18 break room), my role is to provide what is called 'psychological first-aid'," Morrow explained. "Essentially, I was onsite to talk to employees as needed. This may involve chatting in the break room—if the individual is comfortable with that—or



Carol Holben has been Employee Assistance Program (EAP) project manager since she joined Metro in 2003. One of the services EAP offers is grief counseling, which it offered at Division 18 following Operator Gregory Bradley's death in a bus accident. Photo by Ned Racine

About EAP

The EAP's confidential assistance offers help for personal concerns, including

- Relationships
- Problems with your children
- Substance abuse
- Stress, anxiety or depression
- Job pressures
- Marital conflicts
- Grief and loss

chatting in a more private setting.”

Financial and legal problems

‘Psychological first-aid’

- Child and eldercare resources

Although Morrow calls her approach “psychological first-aid,” Morrow notes these conversations are not psychotherapy. She frequently responds to bus and rail accidents for Metro.

Not as well known as its Traumatic Injury Program, designed to help bus and rail operators with their reactions to a traumatic accident, EAP often helps staff members absorb a co-worker’s death.

Hector Guerrero, assistant manager of the Rail Division Transportation, requested a grief counselor at the Rail Operations Center following the sudden death of Charles Walker, a Rail Operations instructor, on August 11.

Counselors have also visited Auditing and other departments following employee deaths over the past year. “We tend to do more individual counseling with operators after accidents because that is just what occurs here more at Metro,” said Carol Holben, Metro’s Medical Standards & Compliance administrator and licensed clinical social worker.

Holben has been EAP project manager since she joined Metro in 2003. Metro’s EAP has existed more than 25 years.

Holben emphasizes that the confidentiality of staff members’ conversations with Morrow and the other ComPsych counselors is protected by the counselors’ professional code of ethics, as well as by state, federal and Metro regulations.

Program is confidential

“The program can only be successful if people feel they can go and talk about anything they need to and it’s not going to get back to their workplace,” said Holben, who helped companies recover from the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001.

“When an employee death has occurred, I usually do a lot of listening, and then, depending on the individual’s needs, I am usually teaching about any variety of topics,” Morrow said.

“I might be teaching about what to expect during the grieving process so that the individual knows that his or her experience is normal. We might discuss the tasks of grieving so that the individual understands what’s needed to gain a healthy resolution of the grief process, or what actions the individual can take to keep the grieving process more manageable.”

At Division 18, Morrow recalled, some operators talked with her and some did not. Morrow discussed with operators what they could do to support the Bradley family and the possibility of creating a Gregory Bradley memory book for them.

“It was a shock,” Brown reflected on Bradley’s death. “It was horrible. I don’t want to go through that again.”

“It is important for people to have a confidential, professional resource to help them deal with the challenges we all face in our daily lives,” Holben said. “We want this for the personal sake of the employee, but it also helps Metro be more efficient because people are able to really focus on their jobs and not be distracted by personal issues.”

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Eastside Extension Construction Continues in Gateway's Shadow

By NED RACINE

(Sept. 21, 2007) While rail installation has become familiar in the eastern segments of the six-mile-long Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension, rail installation almost in the shadow of the Gateway Tower represents a new phase for the project.

With light rail and its supporting structures being installed between Vignes Street and Alameda Street, current work nears the Little Tokyo/Arts District street-level station at 1st and Alameda.

Even now hundreds of feet of concrete have been poured near Vignes Street, accompanied by the forming of new concrete areas, the installation of drains and the demolition of some intersection paving.

The accompanying photographs were taken September 18.

Scheduled to open in late 2009, the \$899 million Eastside Extension features eight new stations (two underground) and will run between Union Station in downtown Los Angeles via the Little Tokyo/Arts District and Atlantic/Pomona boulevards in East Los Angeles.

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Photos by Ned Racine



A worker changes blades on his saw, preparing to make a 12-inch-deep cut in the paving at the intersection of 1st Street and Hewitt Street.



The saw at work. The paving at this intersection will be replaced with concrete.



A worker pounds a stake that will hold a concrete form in place. The gray tape holds rubber covers to protect the rail from being rusted by the concrete poured around it.



After gradually removing excess dirt, workers slip a drain under rail along 1st Street. The white foam cover will be removed before the drain begins working.



More hammering as a worker secures a spacer in position before concrete is poured around the rails. In the right background is a





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A 43-member team of Metro Rail employees from Wayside Systems, Signals, Traction Power, Gold Line Rail Fleet Services and the Rail Operations Center, along with Rail Transportation, repaired half-mile of Gold Line catenary damaged by train. *Photos by Gayle Anderson*



Ops Committee Honors Metro Rail Team's Actions> When a Metro Gold Line train's pantograph ripped through a half-mile of 750-volt catenary wire, Aug. 19, a 43-member team leaped into action. For the next six days, Metro Rail employees from Wayside Systems, Signals, Traction Power, Gold Line Rail Fleet Services and the Rail Operations Center, along with Rail Transportation, worked overtime to get the system back in full service. Members of the team were honored for their hard work and professionalism, Sept. 20, by the Board's Operations committee. Shown here with members of the Metro Rail team are Board members Michael Antonovich (far left), John Fasana (center, seated) and Yvonne Burke (far left, seated). Also shown are Rail Operations General Manager Mike Cannell (standing, left) and CEO Roger Snoble (standing, right). In the photo, below, the team gathers in front of Metro Headquarters. (9/25/07)



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Metro

September 12, 2007

Letters to the Editor
Los Angeles Times
202 W. 1st Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Editor:

Increasing the transparency of the Congressional earmarking process is a step in the right direction as the *Times* Sept. 23, 2007 editorial ("The Value of Congressional Pork") suggests. However, there is an important distinction to be made between narrowly-drawn, poorly-vetted earmarks pushed by a member of Congress versus legitimate projects that have undergone intense scrutiny and evaluation by the federal government through an established process. The Metro Gold Line Eastside Light Rail Project, which your editorial cited as an example of "pork", underwent rigorous review by several agencies and the U.S. Secretary of Transportation.

The President's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2008 recommended \$80 million from the Federal Transit Administration's "New Starts" program as the fourth installment for construction of the \$898.8 million Eastside project.

Fixed guideway transit projects that are included in the Administration's budget are required by law to meet strict tests for cost-effectiveness, local financial capacity, environmental benefits, project readiness, technical capacity and many other criteria before being awarded a "Full Funding Grant Agreement", which is a commitment by the federal government to fund a specified portion of the project. This is exactly what the Eastside light rail project has undergone, and Metro is now on schedule to complete the project by late 2009.

The *Times* is right to call for greater disclosure of earmarks and funding decisions by our Congressional representatives. At the same time, however, let's be mindful of the fact that not all projects are alike. Some may be questionable in nature, but many have been thoroughly analyzed in an open manner and deserve to be seen in a more positive light.

Sincerely,

Roger Snoble
Chief Executive Officer



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Snoble Disputes Times Editorial Calling Eastside Project ‘Pork’

- [Letter to the Times](#) (PDF)

(Sept. 25, 2007) CEO Roger Snoble is disputing an LA *Times* editorial that characterizes the Metro Gold Line’s Eastside Extension as a “pork item” in the U.S. Department of Transportation’s 2008 budget.

In its Sunday editorial titled “The Value of Pork,” the *Times* called for greater scrutiny of legislative “earmarks” – those add-ons to congressional legislation that allocate funding or tax breaks to specific projects that many times are promoted by special interests.

According to the editorial, \$8.5 billion or 13.5 percent of the U.S. DOT’s \$63 billion budget “was diverted to lawmakers’ pet projects.” Among the projects the *Times* took exception to as a “pork item” is the six-mile Eastside Extension that will connect Union Station and East LA.

In his letter to the editor, Snoble wrote that the administration’s proposed budget for FY 2008 recommends \$80 million from the Federal Transit Administration’s “New Starts” program as the fourth installment for construction of the \$898.8 million project.

The CEO agreed that “transparency of the congressional earmarking process is a step in the right direction...However, there is an important distinction to be made between narrowly-drawn, poorly vetted earmarks pushed by a member of Congress versus legitimate projects that have undergone intense scrutiny and evaluation by the federal government through an established process.”

Noting that the Eastside Extension “underwent rigorous review by several agencies and the U.S. Secretary of Transportation,” Snoble concluded his letter agreeing that the newspaper was “right to call for greater disclosure of earmarks and funding decisions...” but added, “...let’s be mindful of the fact that not all projects are alike...(and) many have been thoroughly analyzed in an open manner and deserve to be seen in a more positive light.”

The Eastside Extension will feature eight new stations (two underground) and will run between Union Station and Atlantic/Pomona boulevards in East Los Angeles via the Little Tokyo/Arts District and Boyle Heights.

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Willie Corbin, who has returned to work as a transit operations supervisor, instruction.

South Bay Retirement Ceremony Honors 40 Operators

Retirees total 527 years of combined service to Metro

By JIMMY STROUP

(Sept. 25, 2007) 527 years is a long time. It's 27,404 weeks. Or 192,355 days. 4,616,520 hours. 527 years' worth of minutes is a ridiculously high number.

527 years is also the combined number of service years put in by a group of 40 recent retirees from Carson Division 18. The division held a celebration, Sept. 21, to honor the dedication of the retirees – and to allow them to offer advice to the younger operators.

The retirees – some of whom have been retired since 2005 – were honored with a plaque, a scroll signed by all the employees at Division 18 and an

embroidered jacket. They were then afforded the opportunity to tell the younger, still-working employees what they'd learned after a quincentennial of combined service.

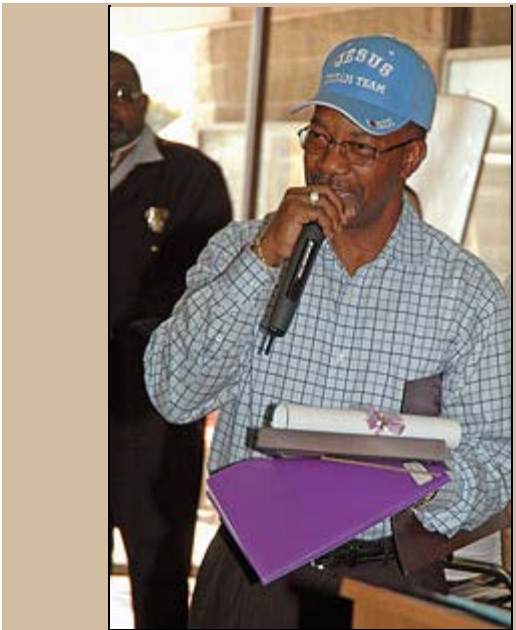
"My advice to all those who are young is to come to work, avoid miss-outs and accidents, and you'll make it through," said James Galliard, who's now the pastor of Greater Harvest A.M.E. Church in Victorville. Galliard spent his entire Metro career at Division 18.

All kinds of advice

Most honorees took their opportunity to speak to the younger operators about what to do day-to-day: show up on time, in uniform, with a good attitude. But some were more specific, offering pointed financial advice.

"Words of advice: if you want to retire, you better have a 457 or a 401K," said Hubert Reid, a retiree after 23 years of service. "Early on, I learned that you need to be investing money so that you can live off the investment. The retirement here is good, but you need to have other things going on for you, too."

Photos by Ned Racine



A. J. Stubblefield was one of 40 recent retirees honored at Carson Division 18 on Friday, September 21. Stubblefield retired after almost 36 years on the job.

South Bay Sector General Manger Dana Coffey was on hand to wish the retirees well, citing their long service and experience as one of the wheels that makes Metro’s vast machine turn.

“Today’s event was a great celebration, and a tribute and compliment to our operators who served for so many years,” she said.

Following the ceremony, the 100 or so retirees, operators and guests enjoyed a chicken dinner, polished off with a giant piece from a cake decorated with a thank-you message from the agency and the retirees’ badge numbers.



Hubert Reid, who retired after 23 years of service, advised younger operators to invest their money wisely.

“This has been a very good environment for me, in terms of good co-workers and good managers,” said A.J. Stubblefield, who retired with almost 36 years on the job. “This is a good job with very, very good benefits and I was proud to work here.”


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Critical But 'Invisible' Orange Line Team Wins Industry Award

- Project controls effort overcame multiple obstacles

By NED RACINE

(Sept. 26, 2007) The Metro Orange Line recently won an award for excellence in a critical area most of its riders never consider.



Roger Dames, Metro Orange Line project manager, and William Brown, project controls manager, display the award the project controls team won for overcoming threats to the Orange Line's budget and schedule. Photo by Ned Racine

The Association for the Advancement of Cost Engineering's (AACE) Southern California chapter named the Orange Line its Southern California Project of the Year, in part because the project team overcame a court-ordered, month-long work suspension and the discovery of contaminated soil on the construction site.

William Brown, the Orange Line's project controls manager, his staff and consultant Carter-Burgess also had to overcome record-breaking rains between December 2004 and March 2005. Brown has worked for Metro since 1981 when he began

as a cost/schedule analyst.

AACE cited the project controls team's ability to proactively manage and mitigate issues before they impacted the project.

"Bill has managed cost and schedule for Metro capital projects since the 1980s, and I'm delighted to see his fine work recognized by the AACE," said Roger Dames, Orange Line project manager.

In June, the Orange Line won an award from the American Institute of Architects for the beauty of its stations and landscaping.


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CEO UpDate

Only Glimmer of Light at End of Tunnel for Proposed Subway Extension

- Major hurdles still ahead for line to Santa Monica
- Transit group suing state to prevent loss of funding
- Metro Rail team speeds recovery after Gold Line incident



CEO Roger Snoble

By CEO ROGER SNOBLE

With recent congressional action lifting the prohibition against tunneling beneath Wilshire Boulevard and all the discussion about extending the subway to Santa Monica, some people may have the impression that the project is a go. Unfortunately, however, there are many roadblocks yet to negotiate before we can expect to board a "subway to the sea."

Right now, we're holding what's called "scoping meetings" to gauge public interest and support for various route options. The most talked about is building an extension west from Wilshire/Western.

Another would be to extend the subway from Hollywood/Highland across Hollywood to Santa Monica. And still others would be routed to capture areas of West Hollywood, with a stop at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.

But, we still face major hurdles before we ever could break ground on this project. Despite congressional movement, there's still a prohibition against spending federal funds for tunneling along Wilshire.

The second hurdle is local Proposition A, passed by the voters some years ago, that prevents us from using revenues from the half-cent sales tax for subway construction. Obtaining state funding also is problematic. As you can see, it's going to be difficult to come up with non-federal, non-local money even to carry us through the environmental review process.

I don't want to be too gloomy about this, even though it's probably five to ten years before we'll know for sure how we will build the subway extension. But, if enough people get behind it and feel it's an important addition to our transportation system, then somehow we'll figure out how to get it built.

Recouping lost funding

And while we're talking about funding, the California Transit Association – of which Metro is a member – recently filed a lawsuit to prevent the illegal transfer of \$1.3 billion out of the Public Transportation Account into the state budget. Over an eight-year period, state raids on the PTA have amounted to \$3 billion.

The state wants to use the money to help solve the budget deficit. Both Democrat and Republican legislators apparently have decided that transportation funding isn't a very high priority and they preferred to fund education, health care and other statewide programs.

The state's actions transferring the funds won't impact Metro's FY 2008 budget, but it will affect us in FY 2009 when we'll need the money for bus and rail service, improvements and maintenance. We strongly support the CTA's lawsuit and hope it's successful in recouping the lost transportation funds.

Tip 'o the Hat to Metro Rail

I want to conclude this month's column by offering my sincere appreciation to the 43 members of a Metro Rail group who responded so quickly and professionally, Aug. 19, when a Gold Line train lost power, its pantograph became entangled in the catenary system and brought down about a half-mile of 750-volt power line and hanger wires.

It was a daunting task to repair the damage and the Metro Rail team – made up of employees from Wayside Systems, Signals and Traction Power, Gold Line Rail Fleet Services and the Rail Operations Center, along with Rail Transportation – really stepped up to the plate.

Working overtime for the next six days, the team got the system back in good working order. They did a great job and gained experience that will allow them to improve their response even more. I was very proud to stand with this remarkable team when they were recognized last week by the Board's Operations Committee.

September 26, 2007

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Metro's Cesar Guzman Volunteers Help for El Salvador Town

- Growing up in poverty, he has helped build homes, schools in his home town

By JIMMY STROUP



Metro Bus Operator Cesar Guzman works on poverty relief projects in his native El Salvador. Photo by Jimmy Stroup.

(Sept. 27, 2007) When Cesar Guzman was a child in San Sebastian, El Salvador, the fair came to his little village. There were rides, food and midway games.

Or, at least, that's what he could see from down the street; Guzman was far too poor to afford a ticket to the fair. He didn't even have shoes.

Like most of San Sebastian's residents, Guzman – now an operator at Arthur Winston Division 5 – grew up in what most Americans would consider abject poverty. The 11,000 people who live in the town are generally subsistence farmers, eking out a meager existence. His family had enough to eat, but his parents couldn't pay for anything extra.

San Sebastian is in the Department of San Vicente – similar to an American state – which is in the mountainous interior of El Salvador. Thirty-five percent of the country's population lives below the poverty line and most of San Sebastian fits into this category. When Guzman, 41, grew up there in the 1970s, things were even worse than they are now.

He remembered that as a young boy, his older sister did laundry for three months to earn enough money to buy him some rubber shoes and a pen, so he could learn to write.

At 15, Guzman was considered "big enough to hold a rifle" by the El Salvadorian Army and was pressed into an obligatory two-year service that ended up lasting three. In that time, he was sent to train and serve in various places – including the U.S. – that broadened the teenager's perspectives.

"They paid me \$10 a month, most of which went to my parents," he said. "They needed it more than me."

Bound for America

At 18 and out of the Army, Guzman got a job in the American consulate in El Salvador as a bodyguard. During this time he decided to try for a life in America. Three years later, at 21, he made it to the U.S., hopeful for the future. That was in 1988.

After some early struggles and long days spent working and learning English, Guzman has realized the best that America can offer to those seeking a better life. He joined Metro in 2000 and has settled into a long-term career. He's married with two daughters and was awarded American citizenship in February.

By all accounts, his life is filled with accomplishment.

In 2001, though, following a devastating earthquake in El Salvador, Guzman helped start the El Comité de Batanecos: a non-profit organization that raises money to build schools, homes and general community improvements in his old hometown.

"For the last six years, since the earthquake hit El Salvador, I got involved in helping people work to rebuild their houses, supply schools with computers or whatever they need to get a good education," he said.

The charitable work is now one of three parts of Guzman's life: family, driving for Metro and El Salvadorian relief efforts. He travels to Central America at least three times a year (sometimes with his family and sometimes alone) to help build a house, donate clothes and toys to children, or any number of other tasks.

'Lucky to be going to school at all'

His efforts have seen 12 homes built, two schools, the donation of 20 computers to local schools and the construction of a short-wave radio station, which should be on-line in a few weeks.

"When these kids get to high school – if they're lucky enough to be going to school at all – they

El Comité de Batanecos is online at www.machacal.com, with pictures of San Sebastian, the school they built and the people who live there.



Guzman's El Comité de Batanecos built Instituto Nacional de San Sebastian, the local school for the region's children. Schools in the region

don't have the skills, the computer skills, to be able to compete in the bigger cities for jobs that pay even the leanest of wages," he said. "We're trying to fix that."

haven't had money for – or even electricity to run – computers, so Guzman found money to fix those problems. He hopes the 20 computers his group has donated will help make San Sebastian's children more competitive in the job markets in bigger cities.

Guzman's El Komite de Batanecos, named after the regional nickname for the residents of San Sebastian, has partnered with the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) to stretch the donated dollars' use in El Salvador.

"With our partnership with PADF, they give us a two to one deal. If something costs \$21,000, we only have to come up with \$7,000," he said. "It's an arm of the United Nations; they've created these foundations to help the poor around the world."

His efforts in the U.S. are spent mostly spreading the word about what his organization does in order to raise funds. His group regularly holds dinners to raise money, selling traditional El Salvadorian meals (called pupusas) to help the cause. They also host biannual dances at local churches.

Healthcare, too

The money is spent on structures and things like clothes, but also on healthcare. Guzman solicits doctors to accompany him to his village to give much-needed medical attention to the people. He's recently brokered a deal that will allow his group to buy 500 hearing aids at \$35 each; the devices normally cost as much as \$400.

His efforts also give the townspeople work – his group hires San Sebastian locals to build the structures the community benefits from.

"It's all volunteer in the U.S., but in El Salvador, we pay the townspeople for the work they're doing to improve the community," he said, noting that this charitable model improves the local economy, too, however slightly.

Though he has obvious sentiment for his hometown, he has special concerns that drive him to help San Sebastian, too. Two of his five sisters still live there, in poverty like most of the town.

Working on a toy drive

Guzman is currently working on a toy drive for Christmas. He's trying to fill a shipping container with enough toys to help make this Christmas a special one for the kids who he said have little or nothing to look forward to for the holidays.

"The kids don't even have enough money to buy clothes. They jump around when we bring them the toys, they are so happy," he said. "We take [toys] up to the poorest mountain areas of San Vicente where they have nothing. You can see the smiles on their faces from the joy they get out of a \$1 ball."

Guzman is traveling to El Salvador in a few weeks to christen the short-wave radio station and then again at the end of November for the Christmas delivery. The goods will be shipped in containers from Los Angeles with the help of the El Salvadorian consulate and a reduced price from a shipping agency.

Guzman has done much to help the people of his old hometown, but the

memory of the fair he was too poor to attend has stuck with him.

A few year ago, without fundraising and on his own, Guzman contracted with an entertainment company to hold a fair for a day in San Sebastian – free to everyone.

“It was a very special moment for me,” he said. “Something that I will hold on to for the rest of my life.”

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Funeral Services Set for Former SCRTD General Counsel Richard Powers



Former SCRTD General Counsel
Richard T. Powers

(Sept. 27, 2007) Funeral services are planned, Friday, for a longtime SCRTD general counsel and interim general manager. Richard T. Powers, who died Tuesday in Fullerton, was 83.

A rosary is scheduled at 7 p.m., today, at Beatitudes of Our Lord Catholic Church, 13013 San Gertrudes Ave. in La Mirada (562-943-1521. The funeral will be held in the same location at 10:30 a.m., Friday.

Powers retired from the agency in 1987 after serving as general counsel, beginning in 1971. For eight months, beginning in September 1980, he was general manager pro tempore between the tenures of general managers Jack Gilstrap and John Dyer.

"He loved working for the District and with his friends," said his son, Richard Powers Jr. "He always spoke very highly of it."

Powers, who died at the Park Vista Morningside assisted living facility in Fullerton, had suffered a series of strokes and had been in ill health for some time, according to a family member.

Prior to joining the SCRTD, Powers was on the legal staff of Western Airlines. He attended St. Bonaventure University and earned a law degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He was a native of Wellsville, N.Y.

Powers is survived by eight children and eight grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Noel, who died in 1982.



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Memorial Service Set for Division 1 Operator Ruben Salazar

(Sept. 27, 2007) A memorial service is scheduled Saturday, Sept. 29, for Metro Bus Operator Ruben Salazar, who died suddenly Sept. 18.

The memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. at First Fundamental Bible Church, 2301 S. Findlay Ave. in Monterey Park (323-728-3897). A potluck reception will follow the memorial service.

Salazar, 50, joined Metro in November 1987 as a part-time operator and was promoted to full-time operator in October 1989. He spent virtually his entire career at Central City Division 1 and drove out of that division until Sept. 8.

Salazar, who lived in Victorville, is survived by his wife, Lorena, and two children, Josh, 21, and Lisette, 23.



Ruben Salazar



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Parolee Saves Ticket Price, Pays With Incarceration

- Sheriff's deputies arrest rider at Hollywood/Highland subway station

By NED RACINE

(Sept. 28, 2007) An arrest at the Hollywood/Highland station, Sept. 20, illustrates the danger of being penny wise and pound foolish.

During routine fare enforcement at the subway station, Sheriff's deputies Keith Schumaker and Ron Smith stopped Ruben Deshon Power as he exited a train. According to the deputies, Power could not produce a ticket nor identification.

During questioning, Power claimed he was a parolee from the Pelican Bay State Prison near [Crescent City](#), according to Smith and Schumaker.

When the deputies asked the Los Angeles resident if he had anything in his possession they should know about, he reported that he had a toy gun in his nylon briefcase. In addition to the toy gun, the deputies reported they discovered a wig.

They also discovered a gray baseball cap, a digital camera, red and black flashlight, a silver business card holder and a Blackberry cell phone. Despite his claims that he owned the electronic devices, Power could not name any contacts on the cell phone or photographs on the digital camera, according to the deputies.

The deputies later traced most of the items in Power's possession to a Tarzana car burglary the night before.

Power remains in custody.

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Metro Sending [www.mta.net](#) into Well-Deserved 'Retirement'

- Taking over the job will be [www.metro.net](#)

By NED RACINE

(Sept. 28, 2007) Although no farewell luncheons are planned, a longtime "co-worker" will be leaving Metro beginning Monday, Oct. 1. By Oct. 31, this quiet-but-steady "worker" will disappear altogether.

Metro is retiring the web address [www.mta.net](#). Visitors attempting to access that web site will see a page directing them to [www.metro.net](#).

E-mails sent to [www.mta.net](#) will bounce back to the user. So, for those employees whose business cards still list [www.mta.net](#) as their e-mail address, it's time to order new business cards.

For departments that direct the public to [www.mta.net](#) pages, a [www.metro.net](#) address will be required.

Departments unsure how to make the switch can call the ITS Help Desk at 922-4357.

Metro gains a big advantage by retiring [www.mta.net](#). The amount of spam hitting the Metro e-mail servers is expected to drop by half, a time-saving development given that 95 percent of the e-mail that reaches the e-mail servers are spam.

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The "Rainbow Bridge" overpass creates safe passage over the Metro Blue Line and commercial train tracks that separate a middle school in Watts from the nearby neighborhood. A Wayside Systems Facilities maintenance team repainted the community icon after Metro took ownership of the overpass earlier this year. The two-man team restored the bridge in three days and repaired all the fixtures that light the bridge at night. Photo by Jimmy Stroup.



Wayside Systems Team Restores Watts "Rainbow Bridge"

By JIMMY STROUP

(Sept. 28, 2007) Metro's Wayside Systems Facilities restored a bit of history recently when a team repainted the so-called "Rainbow Bridge," a pedestrian overpass just south of the Blue Line 103rd Street station.

The agency acquired ownership of the overpass earlier this year after it had languished in disrepair since it was originally painted with the rainbow theme in 2003. Wayside Systems restored the 48 steps on the east side and the 47 steps on the west to their unique brilliance with only three days of work.

"We took full ownership recently and repainted it the way the community had wanted it, and did it in time for the Watts Towers events this weekend," said Randolph Gordy, manager of Wayside Systems

Facilities. "It cost us \$3,500 in labor and \$500 in paint. Not too expensive, really."

The Watts Towers Day of the Drum Festival is Sept. 29 and the Simon Rodia Watts Towers Jazz Festival is Sept. 30. ([PDF](#))

Gordy said Metro wanted to finish the overpass before the events began. Wayside Systems also touched up the 103rd Street station to make sure Metro was looking its best for all the extra visitors for the free festivals.

"It was sort of a labor of love. It's important to the community," Gordy said. "Every year we'll repaint and we'll have graffiti crews out there to touch it up regularly, if it should get tagged."

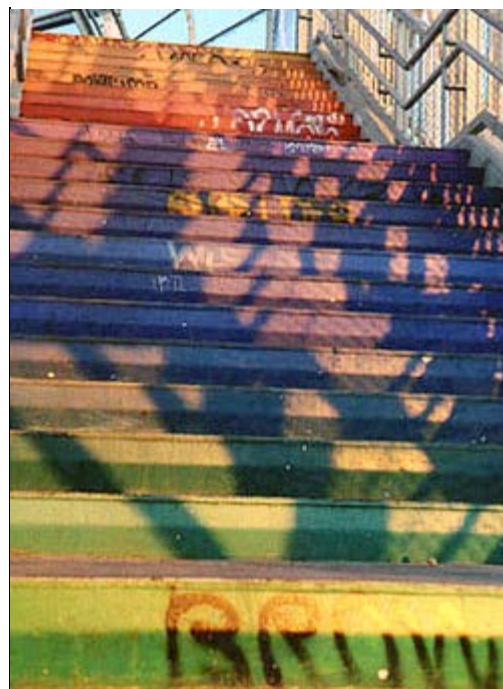
For the community

The bridge was originally painted with the rainbow theme as a means of encouraging ownership among local residents. Known as a "Passage to Peace" project, community leaders hoped to inspire community involvement, as well as promote anti-gang, anti-graffiti and anti-drug messages.

Metro also replaced and repaired the light fixtures in the overpass. The free Watts Towers events should draw quite a crowd and Gordy said the agency wanted to be sure the bridge was as safe as it was neat to look at.

The Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles is also redoing the parking lot surrounding the west side of the overpass, which will lend a finished look to the whole area once it's completed in a few weeks.

The Watts Towers events are both from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and take place at the Simon Rodia Watts Towers, on 107th Street, south of the Blue Line



The "Rainbow Bridge" in Watts south of the Metro Blue Line's 103rd Street station had fallen into disrepair in 2003 when community leaders organized the funds and people to repaint the pedestrian overpass. (File photo) Below, students travel up and down, east and west, on the steps recently repainted by Wayside Systems Facilities. (Photo by Jimmy Stroup)



103rd Street station. The Day of the Drum and the Watts Towers Jazz festivals are both free. ([PDF](#))

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