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Operator Ignatius Arellano has been at Carson Division 18 since 1974 and driving Line 120 on Imperial Highway for 25 years. His dedication, hard work and model behavior prompted sector management to "give" him his own bus.

King of the Road: This Operator 'Owns' his Division 18 Bus

Operator Ignatius Arellano's performance rated the unusual honor

By JIMMY STROUP

(Oct. 30, 2007) Carson Division 18 Operator Ignatius Arellano has built a reputation as a model of dedication.

An operator since the mid-1970s, Arellano's record of excellence caught the attention of management. They rewarded him by giving him his own bus – Number 6570 is his to drive daily.

Arellano, 56, is the first Metro employee at Division 18 to be

honored with his own bus. It's not really his, of course, but you wouldn't know that to talk to him.

The principle of ownership is one Arellano has embraced throughout his career. He "owns" his line (120), his riders (along Imperial Highway) and now his bus ("my baby").

"I tell the customers that they need to be careful with my bus," he said. "I tell them that it took me 32 years to pay it off, so now it's mine."

That kind of banter is typical Arellano. His working philosophy is one that melds a respect for others and a jovial manner. It's this that probably contributes to his being on a first-name basis with a startling number of his riders.

"I joke with them, you know. And no one gives me any trouble," he said. "I've been running the line a long time. I know everything about that line – I time the lights, I know when it's busy and not. I love it."

The obvious choice

Transportation Manager Cynthia Karpman is first in line to sing his praises, citing his excellent performance. When South Bay Sector General Manager Dana Coffey's suggested "giving" a bus to an operator; Arellano was the obvious choice.

"No one else has gotten their own bus," she said. "We have a lot of long-standing, good employees at this division – we're lucky that way. So he's not the only one with the credentials to earn something like this. But

he's a standout in every way."

Arellano has seen a lot of changes during his long service on Line 120. The neighborhood has improved a good deal since the 1970s – a period he called his "combat training" – when drugs and gangs were much more in control of the areas along Imperial.

His regular passengers have also come to be very attached to him, just as he's become attached to them. Arellano lets the "regulars" know when he's going on vacation. A lot of them drive their own cars for the weeks he's gone, proving that he's a big part of the reason they choose to ride Metro.

"It's like this," he said. "There are operators and there are drivers. A driver will just drive down the road, eyes ahead, never even bothering to worry about the passengers. I'm an operator. We know it's about the passengers, too."

Arellano's eligible for his full retirement in another five years, but said he can't think of a reason to do it – not that he couldn't fill his time, but because he finds the satisfaction of driving Line 120 worth sticking around.

"I enjoy it out here," he said. "Why should I retire when I've got it made out here?"