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‘Greeting’ the New Year: Customer Information Tests the New ‘Metro Greeters’ Program Over the Holiday Season

By JIMMY STROUP

(Jan. 3, 2008) The Metro Customer Information Department used the busy holiday season to test a pilot program that had Customer Service agents at Union Station pointing passengers in the right direction: “Metro Greeters.”

For almost three weeks, five “Metro Greeters” were placed at Union Station and the 7th/Metro subway station – during peak hours – answering questions and directing customers to their destinations.

“The idea initially was to assist passengers with their questions,” said Alonzo Williams, Customer Relations Communications manager. “We wanted to be proactive, though. We didn’t want the greeters just waiting for people to approach them. We wanted to direct people.”

The greeters, who usually answer questions on the phones in the Call Center, answered the same questions in person.

“The goal is to, hopefully, help more people who are still disoriented,” Williams said. “People are out there traveling and asking as they go. Yes, we would like to reduce the number of calls coming into the Call Center, but really it’s to provide hands-on customer service to people in the field, who might not call.”

Williams said the greeters helped more than 5,000 customers during the three weeks, and hopes the program can continue to help people in the future – if it can get funded.

The holidays are the “slow season” in the Call Center, so the Customer Information Department was able to spare the agents to work as “Metro Greeters.” Williams indicated that if the program were to continue, he’d like to see more stations with the greeters, such as the LAX Transit Center, the Hollywood/Highland station and the Wilshire/Vermont station.

He also said that in the future, the greeters could be used in conjunction with other types of customer information programs, for example, the Metro Kiosks.

“The idea would be to bring new people in, put them on the phones, get them trained, and put our most experienced people in the field,” he said. “That would be ideal.”