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^ Rail GM Mike Cannell, at far right, surveys smooth-running operations as parade-goers line up for the eastbound Metro Gold Line train to Sierra Madre Villa Station.

Metro Puts "A" Team on the Line as New Year's Day Boardings More than Double to Nearly 60,000

By GAYLE ANDERSON
Photos by Gayle Anderson

< Rail Division Transportation Manager Bruce Shelburne and Bus Operations Control Manager Steve Rank confer at Memorial Park Station on New Year's Day.

(January 4, 2008) With Metro service more in demand than ever, the 119th Tournament of Roses Parade and 94th Rose Bowl Game scored another spectacular New Year's Day triumph under the trademark California sunny skies and balmy 70 degree weather.

As Metro suited up the "A" team that began 24-hour operations on New Year's Eve and progressed to full-steam-ahead service on New Year's Day, one thing was not so certain: How could revelers ever do it without us?

Approximately 100 additional Rail Operations personnel from Transportation, Wayside, Facilities Maintenance, and Rail Fleet Services were in the field on Tuesday, said Bruce Sheburne, Rail Division Transportation Manager.

Metro Bus operations held the line with some 50 extra personnel on duty from both transportation and maintenance divisions, backed by Customer Service agents on line control, and fare collectors who set up shop at



Metro Bus Operator Carlon Humphries awaits returning parade crowd at Memorial Park Station.

busy stations and outpaced the TVMs.

And clean? Everybody was talking about how clean the sparkling system was as busy custodians and quietly efficient service attendants were filling up 40-cubic-foot trash bins and cleaning up food spills nonstop.

The three trash bins - one at Heritage Square Station and two at Sierra Madre Villa Station - were emptied of New Year's Eve trash in anticipation of the New Year's Day accumulation, reported Steve Mendoza, Custodial Services Manager. The 150 cardboard trash containers placed at all Gold Line stations were well used. "We basically stayed ahead of the game," he said.

All took place under the watchful eyes of the LASD Transit Services Bureau and Metro Transit Security Officers, who patrolled every line, station, bus, and train, offering directions, information and plain old hospitality.



Metro Transit Security Officers, from left, Regino Atienza, George de Leon, Anthony Hoang and Alberto Escarda arrive for second shift at Memorial Park Station. The security effort focused on crowd control and revenue collection from TVM machines and ticket booths operated by Customer Service agents, said TSO Belford Gaines, who worked the day's first shift that began with a briefing at 5 a.m.

"It was a real team effort," said Steve Rank, Bus Operations Control assistant manager. "New Year's is one of the most important times when the rail and bus sides really coordinate into a big combined effort."

As for the point after, Rank even heard of late-comers and lost Illini fans piling into Sheriff's cars and Metro vehicles for a ride home or to their accommodations.



Criss-crossing crowds at Memorial Park Station coming to the game and going back home after the parade pack the street as buses stand ready to transport the overflow crowd.



Metro Bus Operations assigned 20 buses to the effort, positioning 12 at Memorial Park Station, eight at Del Mar Station and five at Lake Station. By special arrangement with the Pasadena Police Department, Metro buses moved through the immovable traffic, sailing across the closed-to-traffic Colorado Blvd and onto the Arroyo Parkway, practically coasting into Union Station.

"We filled up every single bus," said Rank. "Once the parade broke and the lines for the train grew to a 20-minute wait, we could pull people out and onto the waiting buses."



Fighting Illini, from left, Enrico Bove, Erica Wilke, Dawn Febrowski and Scott Gahlbeck, took the Gold Line to the end of the line to catch the parade then hopped back on the train to return to Memorial Park Station for the game when the parade ended.

Shelburne estimated the Gold Line ridership for New Year's Day to be between 55,000 and 60,000, more than twice as many boardings than the year before. The ridership tally includes the boardings on 20 supplemental buses used for express service to Union Station following the parade, as well as the 12 supplemental buses used to transport crowds returning from the Rose Bowl game.

The day began with lines of parade-goers stretching from the Gold Line entrance at the concourse on the Union Station end, wrapping back to the east nearly all the way to the East Portal lobby, said Shelburne. At the peak, passengers took about 25 minutes, or a four-train wait, to get on board. Trains departing Sierra Madre Villa Station were leaving with full loads.



Team players include, clockwise from top left, RTOS Frank Hooks at Sierra Madre Villa Station, RTOS Fausto Gonzalez and RTOS Abraham Miranda at Memorial Park Station, and Customer Information Agent Marie Tervalon, Government Relations Manager Art Henry and Customer Information Agent Jackie Exeart at Union Station. Said 36-year veteran Tervalon, who worked line control at Memorial Park for the second year, "Very well-mannered, very nice crowd... definitely more people this year."



Lines were heaviest following the parade, when the four Pasadena stations closest to the parade route had queues that filled corridors and sidewalks by 10:30 a.m. "At approximately 12:30 p.m., all queues were accommodated," said Shelburne, who noted the significance of the steadfast Metro buses. "Without the buses, he said, "the wait time would extend at least an additional 30 minutes for all people at Del Mar and Memorial Park."



It was mostly shirt-sleeve weather for the blizzard-prone Illini but USC fans tended to bundle up in sweatshirts.

Football traffic started shortly after 9 a.m. from Union Station and continued until 2 p.m. at Memorial Park. The incredible number of visitors from Illinois may have accounted for the increase in ridership, said Shelburne. Could it be the weather and the good Metro service that kept the Illinois smiles from fading even though their team was trampled by the unrelenting USC Trojans?

Football fans filled up the buses and trains for the ride home, but Shelburne said that was the easiest part of the day. Rose Bowl fans arrived in orderly fashion after the game, deposited at Memorial Park Station by giant tour buses doubling as shuttles. The rush was over at 7:45 p.m., and Metro tucked away the assembly-line Rose Bowl service in record time.



While the Rose Parade floats get ready for their close-up at Victory Park, Metro Gold Line Train Operator Jorge Solano and Metro Gold Line Transportation Manager Doug Jackson await surge of float viewers headed for the shuttles at Sierra Madre Villa Station.

But Metro’s work was not over, as nearly 2,000 more boarded Metro buses at Sierra Madre Villa Station to shuttle to the parade float display at Victory Park. The shuttle carried some 1,300 visitors on parade day and more than 850 on Jan. 2, reported Rank.

The plan for next year and the year after are already beginning to form in Shelburne’s mind. “Next year will be a Thursday event,” he mused. And then, the unthinkable: “In 2010, we will have two football games. The parade and Rose Bowl on Friday and the National Championship Game the next week.”

Where did you say the line starts?



The engine that could: The constant stream of Metro Gold Line trains made the trip to Pasadena easy for the thousands that packed Union Station for the ride to the Roses.