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Donee Middleton, a transit operations supervisor, recovered her will to perform because of the insistence of her son and daughter.

*Photo by  
Ned  
Racine*

## Donee Middleton Keeps a Song in Her Heart

- Division 3 singer recaptures her passion after 10-year hiatus

By NED RACINE, Editor

(April 1, 2008) Donee Middleton, a transit operations supervisor, loves to sing, she's sung almost her entire life. But it took a persistent nine-year-old boy and a Glendale Galleria karaoke contest to end a 10-year, self-imposed exile from her art.

That nine-year-old was Middleton's son Peter, who is now 12. She and he were listening to a karaoke contest in the mall. Contestants were singing the Tina Turner hit "What's Love Got to Do With It?" Young Peter decided his mother should take part.

"My son is the reason why I'm singing," Middleton states firmly. Her singing has included almost 30 open mike shows around Los Angeles, as well as a full-length show. Every day Peter and 17-year-old Dominique ask their mother if there is an open-mike show where she can perform.

"I couldn't be more blessed to have them behind me when it comes to this," Middleton explained. "They know a singer should be engaged in the art of singing."

Middleton comes from a musical family: three brothers play trumpet and saxophone, her sister sings and plays the piano. Her mother was a church choir director.

She studied voice in college at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, Connecticut. "I have exceptional tone, my professors told me that," Middleton recalled. "And they told me 'When you move to LA, sing. We want you to do it because you have such a nice tone.' "



Donee Middleton studied herself in a mirror while she sang to check that she was singing with emotion. *Photos by Sean Schricker*



With such a love for singing, why did Middleton stop singing for 10 years? Because when she sang, she would make herself cry—it was just too emotional. “I think I was afraid of getting in touch with those feelings. But now I’m ready for it.”

Although Middleton has been singing since she was five years old, she has a new challenge for her voice: She has been singing jazz for a year now. “Seriously singing with a producer, taking lessons, voice coach, in the studio making a CD, doing that all within the last year,” she explained.

“I just always loved this music,” she said of jazz. “At first I thought it was kind of corny, but I realized as I got older that this is where I live. It’s romantic, it’s beautiful. And now jazz is dying out.”

And then again, maybe it’s not. When she sang at the Dresden Room in Los Angeles in January, the Brooklyn native found herself singing jazz to an audience overwhelmingly aged 30 and under.

“The thing I’ve worked on the most is adding more emotion to the songs,” the four-year Metro employee explained. “I would

look in the mirror, play the music and then sing and watch myself. [Asking] am I emitting emotion?”

“It actually helped me using the mirror because people are telling me now that when I’m on stage, I’m very, very emotional,” said the graduate of George Gershwin Middle School, which was named after her favorite composer.

Oddly, Donee the singer sounds little like Donee the speaker. “Even people here [Division 3] say, ‘Wait a minute, that doesn’t sound like you.’” “My singing voice is actually a compilation of everything . . . I have ever learned about singing. My diction changes. I lose my New York accent when I sing.”

Now she’s recording a jazz Christmas album of international songs, including several in other languages.

Middleton tries to get in an hour of practice each day. Sometimes she does her breathing exercises at the window. Because talking is harder on her voice than singing, she tries to speak only when it is imperative, which means she sometimes sings to the bus operators.

The greatest joy for Middleton is singing for an audience, whether she’s paid or not. “When I sing, I’m giving a gift to someone,” she said. “There is nothing more rewarding than when you see someone accept a gift and they really like it.”


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## Board Requests More Information on Areas Affected by Service Changes

- Board directs CEO to present crime, gang information at April meeting

By NED RACINE, Editor

(April 1, 2008) At its March 27 meeting, the Metro Board requested more details from a report describing the service changes during 2007 and those planned for 2008 and 2009, asking Metro staff to appear at the April 24 meeting with crime and gang statistics for the areas slated for service reductions.

The report resulted from a motion by Director Yvonne Burke at the Feb. 21 Operations Committee meeting. Burke asked for information on the extent of the suggested service changes, including the changes effect on the existing Consent Decree.

At the March 27 meeting, the Board approved a motion directing Metro staff to provide additional information, including data for the areas surrounding proposed bus service reductions and line eliminations.

The requested information would include violent crime statistics (including differences by time of day), as well as noting high crime areas, gang reduction zones, gang injunction areas and clear sites.

The approved motion asked Metro staff to present alternatives to canceling OWL (all-night) service and service segments that leave areas of the region uncovered by transit.

In other Board actions, it approved a plan to commemorate Rosa Parks Human Rights Day on an annual basis.

The Board also designated \$54.4 million to aid Caltrans in addressing a \$153.1 million shortfall for highway construction projects, as well as including the Los Angeles International Airport FlyAway bus service into the EZ transit pass program.

The profile of the eastern edge of the Los Angeles River will likely change as the Board authorized the CEO to enter into a joint agreement to develop 20.2 acres of the Taylor Yard with residential and retail structures. The Board also authorized the CEO to purchase 340 steel tires for an amount not to exceed \$459,200.

The meeting was adjoined in honor of Thom Pelk, Division 2 Crossroads Depot transportation manager, who lost his battle with leukemia on March 17.

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The Metro Board has approved the purchase of 142 Camry hybrids to replace the oldest sedans in Metro's fleet.

*Illustration courtesy of Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A.*

## Board Agrees to Purchase Greener Metro Sedans

- Division 4 has received first of hybrid order

By JIMMY STROUP

(April 1, 2008) Nearly 150 of the oldest sedans in Metro's fleet will soon be replaced with new Toyota Camry hybrids. The new hybrids will replace Ford Taurus sedans more than six years old or with more than 100,000 miles traveled.

The new hybrids will cost \$3,751,400—approximately \$26,400 apiece—but bring an estimated savings of \$289,000 each year over the current models.

Non-Revenue Division 4 has already taken possession of the first of the hybrids.

"It's good for the environment in terms of miles per gallon," said Michael Stange, equipment maintenance superintendent in Quality Assurance. "The initial cost is a few thousand dollars more, but in the interest of being a good steward of the environment, that's the cost of doing business."

Stange said the Metro Board has made clear that any further sedan purchases will be hybrid vehicles. "I happen to think that's a good sound decision. The hybrids require no more maintenance than a gasoline-only vehicle."

Currently, the older Fords cost the agency between \$1,000 and \$3,000 in maintenance each year, totaling almost \$300,000. The hybrids will eliminate that maintenance cost with their new manufacturer warranties.

The maintenance savings aren't the only benefit Metro will see by switching to hybrids, which generally use about half as much gasoline as the average non-hybrid vehicle. The Camry has an estimated 33 miles per gallon (city). The present fleet has an estimated 18 miles per gallon (city).

The Camry is a full hybrid, meaning it can run entirely on gas, entirely on electricity or a combination of both. Short trips between divisions or to relief stops, for example, can be made on electric mode only.

The on-board computer informs the driver when the electricity is about to give out and will switch to a hybrid or full-gas mode, making sure employees never get stranded.

Green Car Journal, an environmentally-minded publication, gave the 2007 Camry its “Green Car of the Year” award. The Camry also received high marks in performance and reliability from several rating agencies.

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Participants in the early morning ride along included, from left, Gateway Cities Governance Councilmember Wally Shidler, Vice-chair Cheri Kelley, Chairperson Jo Ann Eros-Delgado and Council Member Larry Nelson. Jose Gomez, Division 1 bus operator, sits in the background.

*Photo by Dave Hershenson*



### Early Morning Ride Along Eye Opening for Gateway Cities Governance Council

- Information gathering exercise began at 1:30 a.m.

(April 2, 2008) Approximately twice a month, Line Ride Alongs gather Gateway Cities Sector staff and Governance Council members to ride one of the sector's bus lines. On Friday, February 29, this information-gathering exercise began at 1:30 a.m.

As is often the case, the line selected for the ride along was being considered for modification. Sector staff had recommended that a portion of the 60 Owl Line, which runs between downtown Long Beach and Artesia Boulevard, be eliminated in the late night/early morning hours.

Metro Gateway Cities General Manager Alex Clifford and staff decided to conduct the early morning trip on the 60 Owl Line so that staff and council members could evaluate ridership firsthand before making a final decision on that service. The Line Ride Along participants—including four Governance Council Members—met at the Gateway Cities Sector office at midnight before boarding the line.

What they found surprised them. Some buses carried only a few people, and a couple of buses were crowded. The group observed that a large number of the passengers were riding the bus to stay off the streets. Many passengers left the bus at the end of the line, for example, and

then re-boarded when the layover was complete and the bus began a return trip.

Clifford joined the council members, as did Hassan Fakhro, scheduling manager; Mike Sieckert, planning manager and Dan Dryden, assistant manager. The group made four one-way trips, ended their fact-finding around 3:30 a.m.

Of the service changes proposed by the Gateway Cities Sector, cancellation of a portion of the 60 Owl line prompted the most discussion. The discussion included whether a bus line that sometimes carries a large number of customers not headed for any particular destination—many of them trying to keep warm and off the street—should continue in light of Metro's need to spend its resources on productive lines.

The result of the early morning observation? The Governance Council voted to keep the current service levels on the 60 Owl line for the time being. The council also asked sector staff to work with Los Angeles County social agencies to seek assistance in providing late night/early morning customers an alternative way to stay off the streets at night. -- *From Dave Hershenson*

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Renee M. Dixon-Turner (left), Division 5's health coordinator since 2005, often attends community health fairs to obtain information.

## Arthur Winston Division Has Healthy Respect for Employee Wellness

by RENEE M. DIXON-TURNER

(April 3, 2008) The Arthur Winston Division has been having health fairs for 15 years, and they have grown to address all aspects of our employees' health. This year's theme encouraged a thoughtful diet and exercise program.

Division management's philosophy is "A healthy employee is a happy employee". We try to present information useful to our employees, as well as their families and friends, so I guess you could say "a healthy family also makes a happy employee."

We had between 200 and 300 employees walk through our information area and the new and returning vendors there. For example, Temple Medical was on hand to provide free blood pressure and glucose screening. Yochanan Israel of the Men of African Descent Cancer Support Group presented a seminar on Prostate Cancer.



Adrienne Bosley of the California Black Women's Health Project/Black Women's Mental Health Initiative.

The American Cancer Society supplied operators with healthy recipes and literature. LAX Chiropractor provided free spine analysis and massages. Carol Williams of Red Cross Healthy Habits provided helpful information on preparing healthy snacks. She also provided fresh hot air popcorn.

Other participants included: Assil Eye Institute, Black Women for Wellness, California Black Women’s Health Project, Cancer Ministry, Com Psych, Curves, D.S. Blair & Associates (Estate Planning), HIV/AIDS Prevention Advocate, Los Angeles County Office of Women’s Health, Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, Nature’s Sunshine, Planned Parenthood, Smile Finders, Touch of Mink, U.S. Bank, Voices Inc., Women @ Risk, and Women of Color Breast Cancer

This health fair was the kick off to the upcoming Metro Wellness Program. The Arthur Winston Division currently has a fitness class every Thursday morning at 10 a.m. in the Transportation department.


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## Services Planned for Wilbert Vander-Ploeg, 22-Year Metro Employee

(April. 4, 2008) Wilbert Vander-Ploeg, a Division 20 Red Line operator, has died from cancer. Vander-Ploeg was 54.

Vander-Ploeg began working for Metro in November 1986 as a part-time bus operator. In January 1988 he became a full-time bus operator. Vander-Ploeg's survivors include a brother and sister-in-law who work for Metro: William Vander-Ploeg, a Carson Division 18 bus operator, and Katherine Vander-Ploeg, a Green Line train operator.

A viewing for the Bellflower resident will be held Monday, April 7 from 4 to 8 p.m. at the White's Funeral Home, 9903 Flower Street, Bellflower, Calif., 90706.

A gravesite service will be held Tuesday, April 8, at 11 a.m. at Artesia Cemetary, 11142 East Artesia Blvd., Cerritos, Calif. 90703. Following the gravesite service, a memorial service will be held at El Dorado Park Community Church, 3655 North Norwalk Blvd., Long Beach, Calif., 90808.

Vander-Ploeg on Friday March 28th attended the Red Line Safety and Appreciation Award Ceremony where he was the honorary guest.

"He was really dedicated to the Red Line," said John Sanchez, rail transportation operations supervisor. "I would get together with him on Fridays, and we talked everyday. He told me, 'What more can I ask for? I've done everything I wanted to do.' "

Sanchez noted that Vander-Ploeg took medical leave approximately one month ago. "I talked to him up to the day before his passing," Sanchez recalled. "He was in good spirits all the time."

"I really learned a lot from him," Sanchez recalled, noting his friend's sense of humor. "He was a good friend. He was really a good guy."



**Wilbert Vander-Ploeg**

Photo: Operator of the Quarter, 2004


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## [ Club Scene @ Metro ] by GAYLE ANDERSON

You have to be well-rounded, grounded and sport a variety of interests if you want to make the club scene at Metro these days. Ten clubs, ranging from basketball and cycling to yoga and knitting cover the gamut of physical and social realms of interaction. The clubs sprouted up at the first of the year, when Metro Employee Activities invited employees to organize groups of similar interest and came up with a budget to provide up to 10 clubs with funds for operation.

A quick glimpse at conference rooms at the Gateway Building offered these insider looks at the goings on. Here's what's up for three of the hottest clubs at Metro:

- [Lunch Walkers @ Metro](#)
- [Metro Cycling Club](#)
- [Metro Yoga](#)

**Lunch Walkers @ Metro:** Director of Transportation Duane Martin has broken through the glass ceiling of the formerly all-female walking group and can be seen on the regular speed walks through Union Station, along with two more new members of the male persuasion, Alan Gee and Carlos Fabro. In an e-mail communiqué to members, coordinator Vilma Hernandez welcomed some 17 new members. Do the math – the club has almost doubled its initial membership, skyrocketing from 19 diehards to nearly 37 regulars. More math: a three-mile walk that loops through Union Station can add 3,000 steps towards a daily fitness goal of 10,000 steps. Walker Marie Tervalon clocked in 13,000 steps the other day to Duane Martin's 12,000.

Hernandez also announced that the name of the club has been changed officially to "Lunch Walkers @ Metro," just in time to give the agency a presence in the [5k Revlon Run/Walk for Breast Cancer](#) on May 10. So far, ten Lunch Walkers have registered for the fundraiser, but the club needs a total 25 walkers registered to group #519 by Friday, April 18, to qualify as a team. "The club is dedicating the walk in memory and support of friends, co-workers and family members that have suffered from this disease," said Hernandez. Friends and family members qualify as walkers on the Metro team. For more information, including how to register, send Vilma an e-mail at [hernandezv@metro.net](mailto:hernandezv@metro.net).

The daily communiqués from Hernandez often include health tips. Dateline March 28: "Apples lower cholesterol and blood pressure, aid in digestion, stabilize blood sugar, work as a natural toothbrush and aids in weight loss. So, how about an apple?" In response, Fanny Ortiz writes: "So if I lost 7 pounds from 1/23/08 to 3/25/08, is this average?"

Meanwhile, the Lunch Walkers conduct daily walks at 11:30 a.m. (Meet at the Customer Relations Dept. door on the Plaza level) If that isn't in your schedule – no need to miss any power meetings – take up with one of many other groups that take off at different times during the day.

To belong to the club, which is trimming waistlines as well as boosting energy levels all over



Stair climbing at Union Station East Portal: Metro is my gym.

the agency, members must commit to walk three times per week for at least 30 minutes and log the distance, time and calories calculated on the club-issued pedometer onto the personalized workout sheet.



Scene on the plaza: from left, club members Cory Zelmer, David Pulsipher, Dave Sotero and Tony Jusay examine a commuter's dream bike. It folds! It's green! Can I ride it?

**Metro Cycling Club** – Watch the road! You can be a cycling enthusiast starting here, starting now, says Chair Cory Zelmer, who presides over the monthly meetings held the first Thursday of every month at the Gateway Building. Members now number around 25 and often include the 10 or so members of the Metro P.O.W.E.R. Bicycling Club from Gateway Division 10. “The club is developing into a forum where we can share ideas and build enthusiasm for cycling,” says Zelmer. “Whether you’re thinking about buying a bike or you ride to work every day or you go the distance on weekend rides, the cycling club is a resource,” he said.

The group keeps up with cycling goings-on in this big town, which amounts to quite a bit of wheel spinning. The club was on the scene at the Amgen Tour of California finale Feb. 24, working as bike valets. Besides parking some 200 bikes in the intermittent rain, the team pitched the “Bike to Work” Day on May 15 to the cycling crowd. Smaller excursions included a tour by bicycle on March 14 of Pasadena art museums, where seven or so club members pedaled off the workday stress for a bit of haute cuisine and joie de vivre on a Friday evening.

Next: Saddle up for a lunchtime ride on [Earth Day to Wilshire Center](#), where the Wilshire Center Business Improvement Corporation (WCBIC) is closing off Wilshire Blvd to through traffic from Western Ave to Harvard on April 22, allowing only pedestrians and cyclists on the street. Events will include live music performances, green information, a street bike raffle and a reusable grocery bag giveaway. Zelmer notes: “Don’t want to hassle with the traffic? Just wheel yourself onto the Metro Purple Line and exit on the spot at the Wilshire/Western station.”

The lunch-hour ride might serve as warm up for the big event – the [Los Angeles River Ride](#) sponsored by the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC) and the Honorary Ride Chairman, actor Ed Begley Jr., on June 8. Here is your chance to join some 2000 other riders for a day of cycling along the Los Angeles River. Rest stops include music, food and an Eco Expo.

Cycling 101: A workshop is in the works. It may shape up to be a six-hour nuts and bolts on everything cycling from maintenance to safety rules to taking charge in traffic. The plan is to land a certified instructor to teach the course and set aside two Saturdays to pack in everything you need to know.

The hour-long meetings are held the second Thursday of the month at noon at different locations in the Gateway building. Get on the e-mail list by sending your name to Cory Zelmer at [zelmerc@metro.net](mailto:zelmerc@metro.net).

**Metro Yoga.** Serenity now! For the rest of us, there’s nothing like a little bliss to take the edge off of a board report. Some 15 yoga students are stretching it out on conference room floors every Tuesday at noon. The class is suitable for all levels and open to all employees, said Metro Yoga coordinator Avital Shavit. Wear or bring comfortable clothing. Mats are provided, or bring your own. The fee is \$10.

Certified yoga instructor Jillian Szafranski has designed an hour-long class of Yoga poses that feature stretching and energizing breathing techniques that simultaneously increase energy levels while reducing the effects of stress.

“I’ve lost weight, toned up, and feel incredible,” said Shane Allen, a consultant in Corporate Safety who is new to Yoga. “Our instructor is fabulous and really gives us personal instruction for all levels. The breathing techniques really do reduce stress.” Garth Garrett welcomes the opportunity to work with a teacher during the work day. “It’s invigorating,” he said, “and each little adjustment the teacher makes to my posture improves and refreshes my program.” Ditto for Sangeeta Patel, who has discovered she needs the calming and stretching regimen of Yoga to balance her running program. “When I take the class, I feel refreshed and energized for the rest of the afternoon,” she says.



Follow your bliss on Tuesdays.

Interest in bliss is building, so much so that the group is considering offering a Thursday class and coordinating with the Wellness program to start a yoga class at a division. (What a way to spend that three-hour split in the middle of a shift. Traffic? What traffic?) For more information and to get meeting notification, send an e-mail to Metro Yoga coordinator [Avital Shavit](#).

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Photos: Gayle Anderson



On the clock at the Metro Gold Line yard: clockwise from bottom left, Maintenance Specialist Eric Czintos, Maintenance Specialist Ronnie Burt, and organizer Russell Homan; Rail TOS Arnold Johnson with Operator Robert Rodriguez, and, above, with Operator Donnell Dean on pre-departure rounds.

## Motivated Competitors Put the Mettle to the Pedal at 2008 Rail Rodeo

- Veteran competitor Robert Rodriguez and high-scoring first-timer Donnell Dean are top operators.
- 2007 International Championship team -- Maintainers Eric Czintos, Ronnie Burt and Toshi Manaka -- will once again go for International gold in June.
- [Winner's Circle](#): Everybody who made it this far is a winner.

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(April 8, 2008) National championship fever is in the air at the Metro Gold

Line yard, where Saturday 11 top qualifying operators and 12 top qualifying maintenance specialists took their skills to task in a grueling competition of mettle against metal.

The 2008 Metro Rail Rodeo challenge paid off. A team of high-scoring competitors have emerged to represent Metro, May 29, at the APTA International Rail Rodeo in San Francisco.



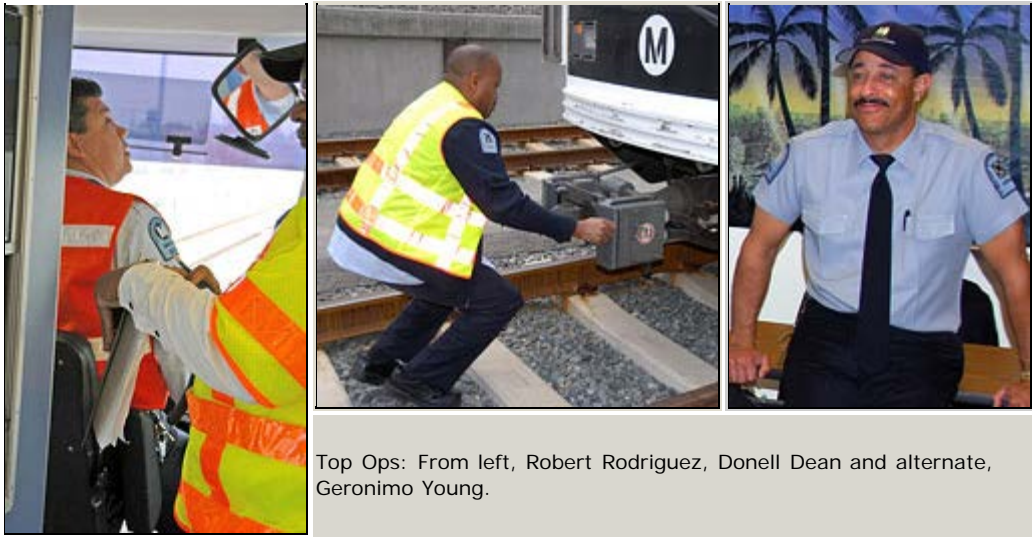
**Championship Form:** Maintenance Specialist Eric Czintos, at left, knocks off the parts identification event. Above, Ronnie Burt and Toshi Manaka solve the logo quiz.

It was the second victory lap for the Maintenance Specialist team, who took first place at the 2007 APTA International Rail Rodeo in Toronto.

Maintenance specialists Eric Czintos, who placed first in last Saturday's event; second place Ronnie Burt, and third place Toshi Manaka will carry Metro's flag in the maintenance competition at the 2008 Internationals.

It was a close call. Rail General Manager Mike Cannell recalls the moment when he heard that last year's International champion Eric Czintos was thinking about sitting this one out. With the cross-country rival WMATA rising in the ratings, the stakes were too high to lose one of the team's top players. "I strongly urged Eric to reconsider," said Cannell.

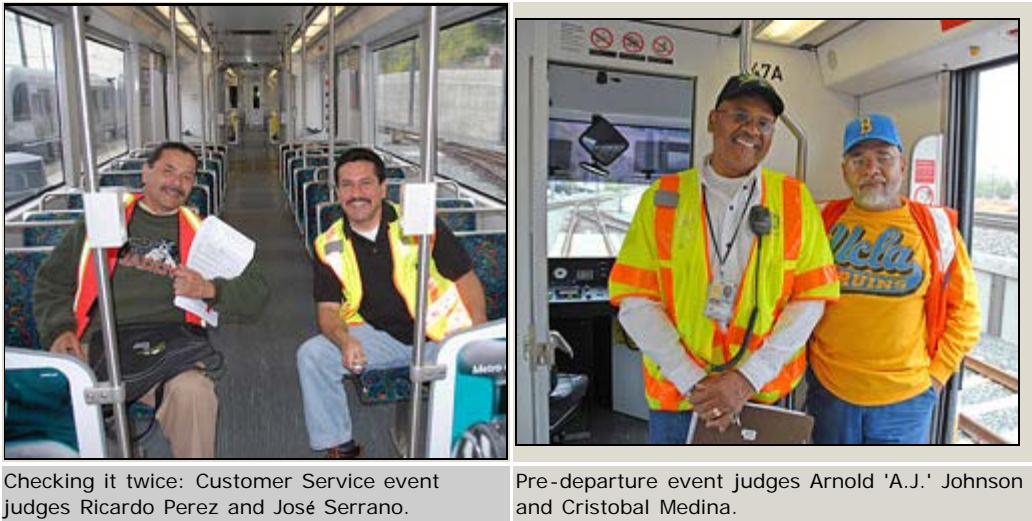
Leading the rail operator team will be Metro Red Line Operator Robert Rodriguez, a past winner and returning champion who topped out Saturday's competition with 557 points. His teammate will be Metro Blue Line Operator Donell Dean, a first-time competitor who scored high marks to take second place in the grueling race. Veteran competitor Rodriguez has been a frequent Metro winner, competing at the Internationals, and scoring wins for Metro in 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2007.



Top Ops: From left, Robert Rodriguez, Donell Dean and alternate, Geronimo Young.

Metro Red Line Maintenance Specialist Glen Abraham, who placed fourth, will be the maintenance team alternate. Metro Blue Line Operator Geronimo Young, another high-scoring first-time competitor who placed third in the operator's event, will be the operator alternate.

The 2008 Rail Rodeo was hosted at the Metro Gold Line yard for the first time. Metro, then called MTA, held the first local event in 1995, sending Red Line Operator Yandell Lister, now retired, to APTA's International finals in New York.

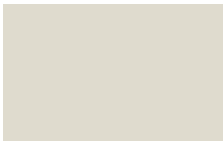


Checking it twice: Customer Service event judges Ricardo Perez and José Serrano.

Pre-departure event judges Arnold 'A.J.' Johnson and Cristobal Medina.

"Then, as now, Rail Transportation Instruction supports the event from start to finish," said Linda Leone, Rail Instruction Manager. The instructors design the events, work as judges and provide back-up where it's needed. This year, Transportation events were designed by Rail TOS Esther Pippins. Equipment Maintenance Instructor Russell Homan designed the Maintenance competition.

Train operators representing every Metro Rail line competed in five events: Uniform Inspection, Safety Quiz, Customer Service, Pre-departure Inspection and the Over-the-Rails Course.





Competitor Alex Bandayan keeps his eyes on the track en route to the Indiana siding in the Over-the-Rails Course.

The 12-mile over-the-rails course, to some the most nerve-racking part of the operation-side events, takes about 20 minutes to complete. It ran from the Sierra Madre Villa Station to the Indiana siding just past the Mission Station and back again.

"It went really well," said Duane Martin, Director of Transportation, "Everybody put forth a great effort. The course had to share the track time with revenue, so it involved the cooperation of Rail Operations Control and the Rail Instruction, and, of course, the patience of the contestants."

Davide Puglisi, Rail Division transportation manager, said the course has many elements meant to test the skills operators would need to excel in their job performance.

"Operators are judged on their procedure – making sure they make their public announcements and routine safety checks," he said. "They're also judged on how they handle emergencies. There are a number of obstacles throughout the course and a variety of things they need to observe and communicate to control."

Spotting suspicious packages and the precision stops proved to be the most challenging parts of the course this year, he said. The precision stop requires particularly quick thinking and smooth moves on the part of the operator. Even though the contestants know where the stop will be, they only get one chance to apply the brakes, with no adjusting as they stop. Meanwhile, an evaluating team of two judges, clipboards in hand, emerges from the sidelines to measure the precision of the operator's stop.



Except for the guy in the orange safety vest with a clipboard and a stop watch tracking an operator's every move, and uncharted emergencies popping up in unexpected places, the Over-the-Rails course is a piece of cake.

Gold Line Operator Alex Bandayan, a train operator for the last four years of his 10-year career at Metro, looked confident in his pressed uniform as he boarded the test train. "I am nervous," he said. "This is my first time as a competitor. It's a different kind of pressure to be tested on things you do automatically every day."

Maintenance specialists also had to cope with new events in their portion of the Rail Rodeo, including identifying electronic semiconductors and using a "growler" to identify defective electrical winding segments on motor armatures.

"New events keeps us competitive and gets us in shape for the Internationals, where our team might face a number of unfamiliar challenges," said Russell Homan, senior equipment maintenance instructor, who coordinated the maintenance event. "This year, the HVAC troubleshooting seemed to pose the biggest challenge."



Maintenance Competition Event organizers George Kennedy and Russell Homan keep tabs on the competitors who advance from one event to the next in a tension-filled room.

Maintainers from all four rail divisions were represented within the ranks of the 12 maintenance specialists who competed in the Rail Rodeo.

The 10 events for maintainers consisted of the Written Test, Semiconductors, the Growler, Mystery Box, Wheel Defect, Measuring Devices, Parts Identification, Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning (HVAC), Circuit Solver, and a mystery event which turned out to be "Know that Logo," which required participants to identify logos from U.S. and some foreign transit properties.



Metro Blue Line Maintenance Specialist George Moreno tackles the "Growler"

Metro Green Line Maintenance Specialist Charley Houck takes a spin at the "Wheel Defect" station.

Second-place winner Ronnie Burt continued his record of placing high enough to attend the international APTA competition for the sixth year running.

All the competitors are winners, officials noted. Operators and maintenance specialists must maintain a nearly perfect attendance and work record during the past year to be eligible to compete.

"The competitors scored very well," noted Martin. "They were ecstatic over it and definitely motivated."

One obvious motivation is a factor that must not be discounted, said Martin. Beat WMATA.

Go Metro.

2008 Rail Rodeo Winner's Circle	
Operator Competition	Maintenance Specialists Competition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Robert Rodriguez</li><li>• Donell Dean</li><li>• Geronimo Young</li><li>• Ramon Reilly</li><li>• Sebastian Castaneda</li><li>• Ruben Ramirez</li><li>• Herbert Guillen</li><li>• Alex Bandayan</li><li>• Jorge Solano</li><li>• Rosalva Flores</li><li>• Ramtin Gholizadeh</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eric Czintos</li><li>• Ronnie Burt</li><li>• Toshi Manaka</li><li>• Glen Abraham</li><li>• Rafaele Mastrangelo, Jr.</li><li>• Jose Padilla</li><li>• Stan Nacon</li><li>• Richard Hernandez</li><li>• Marcos Martinez</li><li>• George Moreno</li><li>• Joselito Suarez</li><li>• Charley Houck</li></ul>

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Alonzo Williams, who has worked 24 years in Metro's Call Center, received recognition for his performance in the Call Center Service Challenge. *Photo by Ned Racine.*

## Williams Wins Award for Talking a Good Game

24-Year Metro veteran wins accolade at first APTA call center competition

By NED RACINE, Editor

(April 9, 2008) When Alonzo Williams sat on a stage in Orlando, Florida, in February and answered questions from three someones behind a black curtain, his work typified his 24 years as a professional listener.

Williams, communications manager for Customer Relations/Metro Information, was competing in the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA's) first Call Center Customer Service Challenge. This was an APTA effort to recognize behind-the-scenes transit employees for their service to the public.

"It was definitely an honor," said Williams, who was worked in Metro's Call Center for 24 years. He was one of eight contestants selected from 70 applications and the only male. "I was the last contestant to go on, so that was a little nerve wracking."

The judges did not award Williams first place—although they later told him he came very close to winning. In fact, two other agencies offered Williams a job in their call centers, and several attendees asked him how Metro handles customer calls.

Most of all he was gratified that APTA recognized the work of transit agency call centers. "Call centers are highly underrated as to their usefulness to the agency, and this was a great way to showcase the call center talent around the country."



Alonzo Williams (left), communications manager, competed in APTA's first Call Center Service Challenge in Orlando, Florida.

The call center competition was part of APTA's 2008 Marketing and Communications Workshop, Feb. 24 to 27 in Orlando, Florida.

During the competition, Williams was presented with three scenarios; he described them as "Customer Service 101. "They just wanted the [contestants] to go through resolving the various issues. There were marketing experts around the country who served as judges."

Williams found the first two scenarios very basic: "How do you get from point A to point B at a certain time. The second one involved a young lady who was a little bit difficult; she just talked on and on." The third scenario involved a woman who had left a child on a bus. "I've had that actually happen live here at Metro, so it was fairly easy to deal with."

Now Williams is eager for other competitions, not only APTA-sponsored events, but local competitions. He believes they would illuminate the importance of transit call centers. "Besides the bus operators, the call centers talk to more people on a daily basis than any other entity in the agency," he explained.

"[At the competition] I learned that all call centers have the same problems; they have the same issues, and they deal with them fairly similarly," he said. "That was a little bit surprising."



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Gerardo Perez was the only of his four companions who was able to “summit” (reach the top) of Mt. Aconcagua (22,842 feet high) in January. *Photo courtesy of Gerardo Perez*



**West Valley Operator Scales Tallest Mountain in South America**

- Gerardo Perez has his sight set on Alaska’s Mt. McKinley – the tallest mountain in North America.

By JIMMY STROUP

(April 2, 2008) The “Seven Summits” are the tallest peaks on each continent. Gerardo Perez, a bus operator from East Valley Division 8, spent January reaching the summit of Mt. Aconcagua in Argentina, the first success in his quest to climb all seven.

“The summit is 22,842 feet but getting there was tough,” Perez says. “I was 20 feet from the summit – I could see it – and I had to stop and rest. I mean, I could almost touch it but I was so tired. You’re so high that when you walk only a few steps, you’re already tired.”

Perez has been mountain climbing – mountaineering – for about 10 years, but the outdoors have always called to him. His childhood home in Puerto Rico was by a river and he says he was always hiking the river trails, swimming and fishing.

“When I got to the U.S., I moved to



Gerardo Perez, an 18-year Metro bus operator, scales mountains in his spare time. He recently climbed Mt. Aconcagua in Argentina, the tallest mountain in South America. *Photo by Jimmy Stroup*

California and went for a hike with my brother-in-law in the Sierras," he says. "He thought I had some skill and encouraged me to go to Mount Whitney (14,495 feet) and give it a try. The first time, I didn't make it up. The second time, I made the summit, and from then on I was hooked."

Since becoming hooked, there isn't a mountain in California he hasn't climbed – most several times. Well, there is Mt. Shasta to climb, but Perez says he's got plans to check that off his list.

But Mt. Baldy? Check. Mt. Whitney? Check. Mts. Sangorgonia, San Jacinto and White? Check. He's even climbed Mt. Rainier in Washington state and scaled the tallest and third-tallest mountains in Mexico.

### **Baseball at 14,000 feet**

Perez was unable to summit 20,320-foot Mt. McKinley the last time he tried because he was injured at 14,000 feet, felled by the National Pastime.

"Somebody [brought] out . . . a plastic baseball bat and ball – I don't know where it even came from," he says. "We were stuck where we were because of weather, so we started to play baseball to pass the time. I fell running to first base and pulled my hamstring really badly.

"It was the first climb in the history of Mt. McKinley where a person had to be flown off the mountain for a non-climbing injury. I've talked to the rangers who work there since and they tell me, 'You know, you're famous up here,'" he laughs.

The injury forced Perez to sit patiently on the side of the frozen mountain for 10 days while the weather cleared enough for a helicopter to fly him out. He'll be back in Alaska in May to re-attempt the North American giant and check off the second of his Seven Summits.

- [Continued:](#) Part II of Gerardo Perez's summit of Mt. Aconcagua.

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## Part II: **West Valley Operator Scales Tallest Mountain in South America**

- [Continued from Part I:](#) Gerardo Perez has his sight set on Alaska's Mt. McKinley next – the tallest mountain in North America.

By JIMMY STROUP

(April 9, 2008) Some of Geraldo Perez's climbing success may be natural talent, but he spends all his spare time at sea level training for future climbs. He and his wife, Mirla, are constantly running somewhere and regularly participate in half and full-length marathons.

"I try to go to the gym, and run between 30 and 50 miles a week," he says. "You have to be dedicated because the mountains will take it out of you. You have to prepare yourself."

### **Wife enjoys hikes but not extreme climbs**

Mirla enjoys a good hike, too, but stays away from the more extreme climbs. Mountaineering involves a lot of risk and he says you have to be practical even when it's unpleasant.

"The reason I don't take her on the larger expeditions is because we can't leave the kids alone," he says. "Not only that, but it's too dangerous. If someone's going to die, I'd rather it was only me and not both of us. It's not fun to think about, but it's a dangerous sport and you have to think realistically."

### **Mt. Aconcagua? Check.**

All told, the Argentinean monster took Perez 11 days: nine to go up and two to come down. He went with three friends from LA, but was the only one in the group to summit. His fellow climbers came down with a common problem in the climbing community: altitude sickness.

"The first time I did Whitney, I had altitude sickness so bad. It was my first big climb and I was unprepared for it," he says. "You get headache, nausea, dizziness. You can't coordinate your steps."



On top of Mt. Aconcagua: Eleven days later, Geraldo Perez reaches the summit.

"The best medicine is to go down. I've had to take friends who were sick down before and you have to stay with them every step of the way – almost carrying them. It's like having a person who is drunk walk down a mountain with you."

But their sickness wasn't going to stop Perez. The team made it to 17,500 and he made the summit push from there in a single, 18-hour day. The entire trek was unlike any other mountain he'd climbed.

"The terrain in Argentina was completely different from anything I've done before," he says. "It was cold, but no snow up to 17,000. And it was all gravelly and difficult to walk on. You take two steps up and slide back a step. After about 18,000 feet there was snow all the way to the summit, but no snow on top. It was weird."

Perez says he literally ran down Mt Aconcagua in two days in anticipation of returning home after the cold (-27 degrees below zero at the worst) journey. And that was in Argentina's summertime climate. He says it would take a month to climb if you did it in the winter.

**Future plans**

Energized from his latest success, Perez plans no hiatus break like most of us might. He's off to Alaska in May to conquer Mt. McKinley and is putting together a trip to scale numbers three and four in his quest for the Seven Summits.

"My plan is to go from here to Russia to do Mt. Elbrus, which is the highest mountain in Europe," he says. "Then from there, I'll fly to Africa and do Kilimanjaro in the same trip. I think it will be cheaper that way. I should be gone about a month in order to do both. I hope my wife can put up with that."

Mt. Elbrus is 18, 510 feet high and covered with ice and snow year-round. Tanzania's Mt. Kilimanjaro is 19,341 feet high and ought to be an easier climb with less extreme temperatures.

If Perez accomplishes that, he'd only have Vinson Massif in Antarctica (16,050 feet), Puncak Jaya in Indonesia (16,024 feet) and the mammoth Mt. Everest in Nepal (29,029 feet). He'd then join an elite group of mountain climbers and even be a class unto himself.

"If I do it, I'll be the first Puerto Rican to do it," he says. "You have to keep a low profile on that for me, though, OK? I don't want another Puerto Rican to get ahead of me."

Until he can head out again for his next mountain, Perez will stick to what keeps him happy: training.

"It's a lot of work, effort and training, and you have to be prepared," he says. "But I like the challenge. It's something that most people don't do. One guy asked me yesterday, 'Why do you go to the mountains?' I said, 'Because they're there and because they won't come to me.'"

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Transportation officials, including Metro Board Members Pam O'Connor, Mike Antonovich and Ara Najarian, cut ribbon officially opening I-5 HOV lanes to the public. *Photos by Dave Sotero.*



## Transportation Officials Unveil L.A. County's First HOV Lane on Golden State Freeway

By DAVE SOTERO

(April 10, 2008) Metro joined Caltrans and other officials to celebrate the completion of the county's first High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV), or carpool lane, on the Golden State Freeway (I-5) April 4.

The project has added 6.2 miles of HOV lanes to the northbound and southbound I-5 from the Simi Valley Freeway (SR-118) to the Antelope Valley Freeway (SR-14).

Nearly 357,000 commuters use the I-5/14 interchange on a daily basis. The new lanes will save carpoolers about one minute per mile or up to one hour a week for daily commuters and help to relieve congestion, improve mobility and enhance safety. The lanes will also improve the movement of goods and services throughout this major I-5 corridor, which many consider the "backbone" of the California Highway System.

The new HOV lane just before pylons were removed for the official opening. The project has added 6.2 miles of HOV lanes to the northbound and southbound I-5 from the Simi Valley Freeway (SR-118) to the Antelope Valley Freeway (SR-14).



Metro programmed \$88 million in local, federal and bond revenues for the two phases of the project, which will later include bridge work and soundwall construction. The agency plans to invest \$4.6 billion by 2030 to close gaps in the carpool system, improve congested freeway interchanges, build carpool lane connectors and manage freeway incidents.

This milestone represents the first leg of a broader HOV lane network intended for Interstate 5. By 2012, Metro's goal is to expand I-5 HOV lanes from the 118 Freeway to the 170 and from the 170 to the 134 Freeway. This will create a complete carpool lane system connecting the Antelope and San Fernando valleys.

"Metro is committed to expanding L.A. County's carpool lane network because it encourages ridesharing, reduces congestion and greenhouse gas emissions," said Metro Board Chair Pam O'Connor at the press conference. "It's one of the agency's most effective tools for improving freeway system mobility. We must all imagine a traffic-free future that includes more ridesharing options because our future mobility depends on it."

Caltrans District 7, covering Los Angeles and Ventura counties, has 482 carpool lane miles – the most in the state. California has about 40 percent of the nation's total HOV lane miles. Some 750,000 people use carpool lanes every day in Los Angeles County alone.

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Equipment Maintenance Supervisor Juan Castro (left), Mechanic "A" Carlos Martinez, and Warranty and Equipment Mechanic Kevin Cameron pose near a transmission being tested on the dynamometer, which simulates road conditions and measures performance.



## Equipment Maintenance Supervisor Saves Metro Big Money

By JIMMY STROUP

(April 10, 2008) Since December 2007, Juan Castro has saved the agency more than a quarter of a million dollars. And all he did was employ a little of what he called "common sense."

As an equipment maintenance supervisor, Castro oversees the repair and rejuvenation of hundreds of transmissions in Metro's coaches. Normally, a transmission comes into Central Maintenance and is disassembled to determine why it was sent for repair.

But over the years, Castro and his technicians noticed that occasionally a transmission would be taken apart for no reason –there wasn't a thing wrong with it. Often the technician would have a feeling that the transmission was all right even before that happened.

Castro figured that a good deal of energy and money could be saved by identifying these instances before a mechanic goes to the trouble and expense of opening up a perfectly good machine.

The average transmission coming in to Central Maintenance will have more than 150,000 miles on



Equipment Maintenance Supervisor Juan Castro is responsible for saving more than \$250,000 in parts and labor by catching good transmissions before they get torn apart for an unnecessary rebuild. This transmission, the 22nd of 34 he's caught, will soon be shifting gears on a Local Metro bus near you.

it since its last rebuild. But these odd cases Castro started to look for would have low mileage and appear almost new.

Since he started to look for these oddballs, Castro has found 34 cases where the transmission came in labeled as bad but turned out to be perfectly serviceable. This process, called "re-qualification," is what's saving the agency some big money.

### **Money saved from doing nothing**

It takes the average technician 36 hours of labor and \$4,000 worth of parts to rebuild a transmission for a grand total of \$5,200. It takes Castro about \$500 of labor

and testing to figure out the transmission doesn't need a rebuild.

"You can just look at them and tell a lot about it. Well, I guess a transmission technician could. You couldn't," he laughed. "But you could learn. We all didn't know anything about transmissions once."

The first clue for Castro and mechanics like Carlos Martinez – who both have more than 25 years of experience poking around in bus engines and transmissions – is the mileage.

"If it's got low mileage and it's come in for a rebuild, something under 50,000 miles, there's a strong possibility that it's good and that there's nothing wrong with it internally," Martinez said.

Now, instead of simply opening a transmission, Castro takes a look at each new device and marks candidates for his "re-qualification" program with a yellow maintenance tag: "Save for Juan Castro."

After the cursory examination, Castro will put the transmission on a dynamometer, which runs the transmission under stressful conditions and measures the performance, aided by a technician to run the test equipment – a "dyno tech."

If it tests well, Castro has basically written Metro a \$5,000 check. He puts the transmission on a pallet, marks it good and moves on to the next case in what he calls his "detective" work.

But only the strong survive. Castro won't send out a transmission if he thinks it won't run for at least 100,000 miles before coming back to Central Maintenance for an overhaul. Questionable cases are all fully rebuilt

by the mechanics he works with.

"We don't want to give the guys at the divisions a bad part," Castro said. "It's a lot of work for them to take a transmission off and replace it. We don't want them to go to the trouble unless we think the replacement, the rebuilt transmission, will last on that coach for at least two years."

**Following the paper trail**

Castro also saved the agency more than \$100,000 by identifying six bad transmissions that were part of a recent buy from the Allison Transmission Company. Since they were still under full warranty, Metro sent them to Allison and got six new, working transmissions.

All told, Castro's preemptive detective work has saved the agency roughly \$277,000 in parts and labor – not to mention that technicians' time isn't wasted rebuilding transmissions that don't need it. The entire affair has added a new level of efficiency to the transmission rebuilding process.

"It's common sense," he laughed. "But the people working here have the experience to turn that common sense into something that saves time and money."

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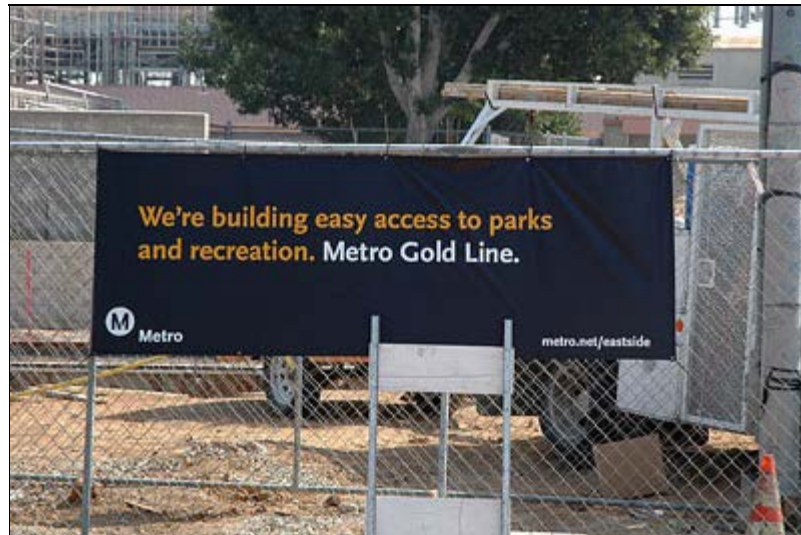
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One of more than 40 banners hung along the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension light rail route, this banner faces Indiana Street. In the background is the Ramona Opportunity High School. The Indiana station will be to the left.

Photos by Ned Racine

## Banners Inform Neighbors Metro Gold Line East Extension Is Coming

By NED RACINE, Editor

(April 11, 2008) With each station canopy erected, the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension moves closer to its late 2009 opening. To generate excitement for the project's approach, Regional Community Relations has begun a banner campaign along its route.

The project team has installed more than 40 banners at strategic locations along the light rail project, particularly in Little Tokyo/Arts District, Boyle Heights, and East L.A. The banners carry 15 messages in English, Spanish, and Japanese.

Messages on the 3-by-7-foot banners include:

- We're building opportunities.
- We're building easy access to parks and recreation.
- We're building a perfect start to family weekends.

After three and one-half years of construction, the six-mile-long



project is 78 percent complete and boasts almost three million work hours without an accident requiring a single day away from work.

The Eastside Extension banners were hung near the eight new stations, such as this future underground station at First and Soto streets.

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 Boyle Heights to Atlantic/Pomona boulevards in East Los Angeles.



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[ Hot off the Web ]



- [Check it out:](#) All about bikes on metro at metro.net.

(April 11, 2008) Although carbon footprints have only recently grabbed the national consciousness, reducing our use of carbon-based fuels can have long-term benefits to our planet. Fortunately, a 140-year-old technology can help, and Metro's here to show you the way.

Bicycles, that cutting edge technology of the 1870s—when metal frames first became available—use only their riders' muscle power. But where to stow those two-wheeled powerhouses when you've arrived at your destination?

The map of bicycle lockers and racks on the Metro System shows the carbon-conscious rider where to lock up his or her trusted vehicle. [Download locker map \(pdf\)](#)



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Poets share a heartbeat with rush-hour commuters during Poetry in Motion reading in Union Station. Below, from left, moments with Marisela Norte, Elena Karina Byrne and Suzanne Lummis.



Photos: Josh Southwick

## Metro, Poetry Society of America present live rush-hour readings by acclaimed poets at Union Station

- 10th Anniversary of Poetry in Motion L.A.: Live poetry readings in the Metro system invite rush-hour commuters to cherish the moment during National Poetry Month of April

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(April 11, 2008) Metro and the Poetry Society of America presented acclaimed California poets Elena Karina Byrne, Suzanne Lummis, and Marisela Norte in a live poetry reading during the afternoon rush hour, April 10, at Union Station to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Poetry in Motion*® L.A. The poets invoked the muse during a two-hour period to soothe the soul, lift the heart and invite the sometimes harried commuters to cherish the moment.

"Each year (of Poetry in Motion) is different and it continues to touch more and more people," said Maya Emsden, Deputy Executive Officer, Creative Services. "It is so gratifying to see people so enamored by the program."

Poet Elena Karina Byrne, moderator for the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books and director of the MOCA Night Vision series, finds the transit environment and the rush of commuters inspiring. "The Union Station event brought some familiar faces, in addition to new devotees," she said. "Two men told me they remembered the readings on the Metro cars and in the stations in previous years. One man took several placards to put on display in his classroom. Another woman, who listened for most of the two hours, said we made her year and thanked me profusely. Our hope is, of course, to touch as many hearts and minds as we can..."

Free commemorative bookmarks inscribed with the poetry of Emily

Dickinson and Octavio Paz were distributed to commuters and poetry lovers.

Traditionally held during the National Poetry Month of April, the rush-hour readings are a collaboration of the Poetry Society of America and Metro. The readings personify and extend the experience of *Poetry in Motion ® L.A.*, where the work of poets is inscribed on placards and placed aboard Metro buses throughout the year. The program brings poetry to an estimated one million Metro bus customers a day.

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Photos by Esther Carlstone and Irma Rivera



Metro kids take aim with hula hoops to toss a ring around the rocking horse. Below, balloon artist makes bright blue swords, pink poodles, balloon hats and much, much more.



### 3,500 Pack Knott's Berry Farm for Metro Family Day

(April 15, 2008) Metro Gateway Cities General Manager Alex Clifford welcomed employees, their families and guests to last Saturday's fourth annual Metro Family Day at Knott's Berry Farm.

Like the record heat, which soared to nearly 100 degrees, attendance soared to 3,500, easily

doubling last year's tally, said Danielle Boutier, Director, Communications Services.

Speaking on behalf of Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers, Clifford echoed the sentiment of the day: "It's important to take some time off to be with your family. This is quality time with your Metro family."



Metro Gateway Cities GM Alex Clifford: Quality time with Metro family.

It was an easy directive to follow for the 3,500 who enjoyed a summer's day at the amusement park. Many families arrived early and took a midday break to enjoy a delicious spread of hamburgers, chicken and all the trimmings under canopies in the picnic area.

Kids competed in hula hoop and musical chairs competitions, went hand-over-hand up a climbing wall or – armed with air-filled jousting poles – challenged each other on a bouncing cushion.



Helmeted knights of yore on the jousting arena. Below, Metro Bus Operators Jaime Marquez, East Valley Division, and Juan Guzman, Gateway Division give the logo some face time.



The appearance of Snoopy, Charlie Brown and other Peanuts characters made the day extra special for the little ones. And many walked away with balloon hats, gold fish, swords, poodles and other air-filled animals.

After lunch, many families visited Camp Snoopy or panned for gold dust or braved the roller-coasters and other rides. And many went home with souvenirs – or at least a smile. -- from Gayle Anderson





Clockwise from bottom left: \* Hula hoops are good for lots of stuff \* Kayla Trujillo, daughter of Andrew Trujillo, Gateway Division scheduling, poses for caricature. \* Alex Clifford sets the tone for fun! \* Metro Red Line Operator William Lee meets up with Snoopy. \* Look, Ma! A balloon sword! \* Climbing wall goes all the way up. \* Real Estate Officer Reggie Buenrostro with wife Marisol and son Daniel. \* Face painting is always worth sitting still for. \* East Valley Division Operator Jaime Marquez' godson Christian Szabo turns into a pirate!



Hula hoops are good for lots of stuff.


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## Recent Survey Indicates High Job Satisfaction Among Public Transit Workers

- Almost 2,500 employees responded to survey

By NED RACINE, Editor

(April 15, 2008) A recent survey of approximately 2,500 public transportation employees found almost three-quarters of the respondents stating they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their jobs.

The survey was conducted in Dec. 2007 and Jan. 2008 by TransitTalent.com, a website that describes itself as "The Career Hub for Public Transportation."

Although top executives were the largest group of respondents (20 percent), responses were received from workers in many fields, ranging from accounting to safety.

While 72.3 percent said they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their jobs, 41.8 percent said they were "very satisfied." Less than five percent (4.8 percent) responded that they were "not satisfied."

The most widely chosen factor in job satisfaction was "challenging work," followed by "work/life balance" and "public service." Interestingly, only 4.9 percent listed "pay" as their most important consideration in job satisfaction.

The path respondents took to their public transportation careers seemed to rely more on chance than planning. The survey reported that 70.6 percent of the public transportation workers found their way to the industry through "accidental" circumstances rather than long-term planning. Less than 12 percent planned to work in public transportation during their school years.

The survey was conducted by sending an email invitation and survey link to approximately 10,200 people, most of whom work for American Public Transportation Association member organizations. Invitations were also sent to members of the American Bus Association and the United Motorcoach Association.

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Photos by Ned Racine

Alex Jauregui of Kaiser Permanente offers suggestions to Antonio Barajas, bus operator, on ways to incorporate fiber, fresh fruits and vegetables into his diet. For those who grab food on the run, Jauregui suggests healthy food choices available at fast-food restaurants.

## Wellness Makes Its Way to Gateway Division 10

- Metro and United Transportation Union partnership works to improve the health of employees.

By JIMMY STROUP

(April 17, 2008) A new partnership premiered at Gateway Division 10, April 16, part of the agency-wide effort to bring the new United Transportation Union/Metro wellness program to each bus and rail division.

The event – to be repeated every two weeks until every division has been visited – featured vendors, food and education for the operators and maintainers, as well as for management. The campaign isn't picky; if you want to get healthy, it wants to help you.

"It's a win-win with this program, honestly," said Lisa Arrendondo, UTU Local 1607 chairperson, who's running the program from the union side. "Better health means you get better employees. But the operators get the benefit of a healthy lifestyle and you can't put a price on that.

"I was an operator, I know how it goes. I ate badly. I ate quickly and all the wrong food," she continued. "There are healthy choices around but we need to instruct our people about what's bad and what's not. Believe it or not, not everything at Carl's Jr. is bad. Not everything at Taco Bell is bad. You just have to learn what's OK. We're teaching them in this program about that very thing."

Arrendondo was joined by the UTU General Chairman James Williams, who said the union will be out in "full force" to support the program he called "substantial" and "necessary."

"Over the years, various programs have come and gone, but this one is

going to work – it won't slip through the cracks," Williams said. "We're committed to making this work because we need to improve the health of our operators. It won't end up on someone's desk, forgotten. I can assure you that."



UTU General Chairman James Williams and Metro Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers both attended the wellness event, April 16, to show their support. The event included group exercises and stretching, in which they participated.

### **Supported all the way up to the top**

Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers was all clad in yellow – the official polo shirt of the wellness campaign – to show her support for improving the general health of Metro employees. She was especially positive on the future of the wellness program due to the strong cooperation between Metro and the UTU.

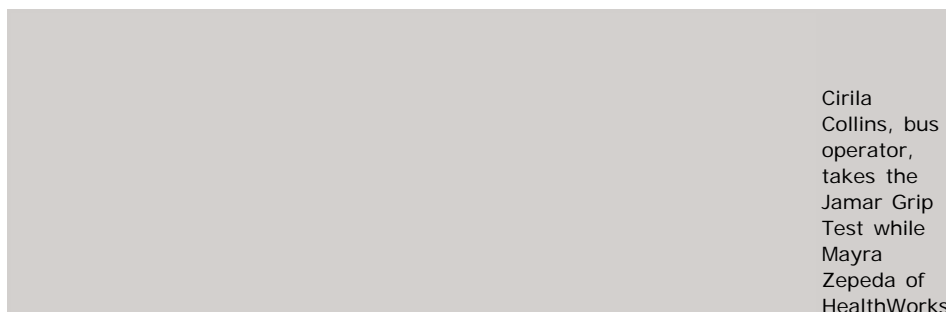
"We wouldn't be able to succeed without the partnership we have with the union," she said. "We both care and we both want to support this effort in every way we can."

The four-hour event ebbed and flowed as operators made their way in and out of the division, with many operators spending their split time learning about (and eating) healthy foods and getting their body mass index (BMI) measured.

The wellness program is especially concerned with four elements of health that can be easily measured: blood pressure or hypertension, cholesterol, BMI and glucose monitoring (for those at risk of developing diabetes).

Health care vendors Kaiser Permanente, PacifiCare, United Health Care, Dental Health Services, Blue Cross of California and HealthWorks all provided information. Those interested were given an instant measurement in several of the four key categories.

There was even a massage specialist who gave out free massages as part of the event. Massage Therapist Aaron Martino said that operators free from stress and pain are less prone to accidents and that massage therapy is a useful way to achieving that stress relief.



Cirila Collins, bus operator, takes the Jamar Grip Test while Mayra Zepeda of HealthWorks



encourages. The Jamar grip test is often a tool used during physical therapy.

Interest at Division 10 has been good said Rick Montes, a 22-year Metro veteran who's pulling double duty as his division's wellness ambassador. In the short time the program's been running, Montes has gotten more than 30 operators who want to participate in group exercise.

"I've been exercising for a while on my own, but I'm learning from the program, too," Montes said. "We took our first group walk last week and went a mile. It's a good start."

**A program for literally everyone**

Lisa Arredondo said the program has been designed to be flexible, understanding that not everyone is going to be able to start off at a certain level of exercise or be able to augment their diet right away.

"There's always something we can do. There's no excuse," she said. "For someone to say, 'I'm in my 50s, I'm tired...' we can work around that. Instead of a mile, let's just walk around the parking lot a few times. We're making it so there's no excuse."

Next stop for the wellness traveling show: Metro Red Line Division 20 on April 30.



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## Operations Committee honors Transportation Deputy Michael Cano for quick-thinking rescue of boy in subway tracks at Wilshire/Normandie Station



From Left, Operation Committee Board Members Yvonne Burke, Michael Antonovich, John Fasana, CEO Roger Snoble, Board Member Bernard Parks, Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers and Board Member Doug Failing present Michael Cano with a tribute etched with the words: *"In recognition of his selfless act of heroism, we honor Michael Cano, Transportation Deputy, Supervisor Michael Antonovich"*

April 17, 2008 - Michael Cano, transportation deputy to County Supervisor and Metro Board Member Michael Antonovich, is an official hero these days after rescuing a boy who had fallen into the subway tracks at the Wilshire-Normandie Station on March 26.



"I was in the right place at the right time," said Cano, who originally thought he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Cano had taken the wrong train that day to go to a meeting in the San Fernando Valley. When he realized his mistake, he exited at the Wilshire/Normandie Station to backtrack to the Metro Red Line route. That's where he saw a little boy who was so mesmerized by his video game that he wasn't watching where he was going.

"He was running and I could see where he was headed - right to the platform edge," said Cano, who is used to the rambunctious perpetual motion of his nephews. Cano took off running after the boy but couldn't reach him in time. The boy had fallen into the tracks in the proximity of the electrified third rail.

With only a heartbeat to spare, Cano and the boy's father, who had also raced to the platform, pulled the boy up to safety. It was a close call and Cano is grateful he had taken the wrong train. "I know about the third rail but I would like to see signs that warn of this danger. In another situation, rescuers would be in trouble if they didn't know exactly where the third rail is." -- from Gayle Anderson

< Transportation Deputy for County Supervisor Michael

*Photos: Gayle Anderson*

Antonovich, Michael Cano: Right place at the right time.

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## Singer-Songwriter Carina Ricco to Give Free Concert Tuesday



- Earth Day concert begins at noon on Union Station's South Patio

By NED RACINE, Editor

(April 21, 2008) Latin singer/songwriter Carina Ricco will give a free Earth Day concert for Metro and Metrolink riders tomorrow from noon to 1 p.m. at the Union Station South Patio.

Ricco, filling in for Canon, whose appearance was cancelled because of a band member's illness, wants to thank Metro and Metrolink riders for their contribution to making the earth a better place by leaving their gas-guzzling, air-polluting cars behind.

Metro Board Chair and Santa Monica City Council Member Pam O'Connor and Metro officials, will join Ricco in marking the 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day.

The Union Station South Patio is located at 800 N. Alameda St., Los Angeles, CA 90012.

"I think it is very clear what is going on with our planet," Ricco said. "We are lots of people, generating lots of trash, pollution, and the weather is going through drastic changes as a result of global warming. Every day more and more animals are added to the endangered species list. Our resources are dwindling: less water, less forests. And we are directly responsible for this. It is vital that we change our habits and old ways."

Born in Veracruz, Mexico, Ricco spent her childhood in Argentina. She began her professional musical career when she returned to Mexico as a teenager. She now lives in Southern California.

"Artists have a tremendous responsibility in society," she said. "We are in the public eye and what we think, say and do is known by the rest of the world. We are opinion leaders as people listen to us. When we have a microphone in hand, [we] have a responsibility not only to share our music but also to help raise awareness."

Regarding Earth Day issues, Ricco hopes people leave her concerts realizing "what we don't do today will affect us tomorrow. Every little thing we do makes a huge difference. It doesn't matter how small the effort, it should be done. To conserve water, to turn off lights when not in use, recycling, Going Metro more and driving [less], generate less trash."

Rocco sees signs that her environmental messages do affect her audience. "Often people will come to me after a show or an interview and say something like: 'Carina, thank you for what you said. I am in agreement and I am doing something about it.'

"I have two little ones who are very concerned with the planet," she explained. "This planet is our legacy to them. As a family, we work together as a team to raise awareness inside our own house . . . When we educate [children] on the subject we will guarantee that they won't repeat the errors of the past and do a better job.

"It is all a matter of awareness," she added. "We have to keep repeating the message until it is understood."

Ricco's latest album, "viaje personal (Personal Journey)," is her third album. She released her first album in 1993.



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## Services Scheduled for Transit Security Officer Harold R. Wilson

- 18-year Metro veteran dies unexpectedly
- **UPDATE:** A viewing is scheduled for Monday, April 21, from 4 to 8 p.m. The memorial and interment will be held on Tuesday, April 22, at 10 a.m. Both services will be held at Draper Mortuary, 811 N. Mountain Ave, Ontario, Calif., 91762 Information: (909) 986-1131
- A Metro bus for Metro employees who wish to attend the funeral of Sr. Transit Security Officer Harold Wilson on Tuesday morning will leave from the bus turnaround at Gateway Plaza at 9 a.m. Information: Lt. James Cook 922-3631 or Security Control Room 922-7600.

By NED RACINE, Editor

(April 21, 2008) Services will be held on April 21 and 22 for Harold R. Wilson, senior transit security officer, an 18-year Metro employee and Marine veteran. Wilson was 62.

Wilson joined Metro in April 1990 after working 18 years in the banking industry as an industrial engineer conducting work improvement and efficiency studies. His last work day was Saturday, April 12.



Harold Wilson

Rick Nelson, a close friend of Wilson, and Nelson's partner, Henry Solis, both senior security officers, visited Wilson's Montclair home early Sunday morning when he failed to report to work. Nelson and Solis found Wilson lying on his kitchen floor.

"Harold was the epitome of professionalism and a real role model for Metro transit security officers," said Dan Cowden, director of security. "He'll really be missed by management in the department. He was just a rock solid guy."

Nelson, who had known Wilson for 17 years, recalled that Wilson's home was full of books. "He read everything," Nelson added, noting the wide range of Wilson's interests.

Wilson was a graduate of Montclair High School, Mount San Antonio College and the Rio Hondo College Police Reserve Academy. A decorated combat veteran, Wilson joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1963.

Nelson said he will most remember Wilson's dry sense of humor. "But even though it was dry, it was very funny." Nelson also described Wilson as a great friend. "A lot of people confided in him."

According to Nelson, Wilson was devoted to his dog Ty, and was an avid gun collector. In fact, Wilson served as range master for the Metro Transit

Security officers, servicing and repairing handguns, as well as serving as a firing range safety officer and firearms instructor.

When Wilson came to Metro, he became a member of the newly formed Revenue Protection Team. "His training, experience and natural leadership ability quickly singled him out, and he went on to become one of the key architects of today's Revenue Protection section and Red Line Sweep Team," Cowden said.

Nelson recalled that Wilson was one of the first supervisors conducting Red Line security sweeps—designed to check that no one is left in the system after service hours—and took a great deal of pride in that.

Wilson is survived by his brother William, a resident of Hesperia.

Funeral arrangements are pending.



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## Metrolink Marks Earth Day in Big Way by Unveiling New Locomotives

- Locomotives will significantly reduce the particulate matter they produce

By NED RACINE, Editor

(April 22, 2008) Metrolink unveiled a more powerful, cleaner locomotive today while touting the importance of commuters choosing trains over automobiles.

The partially electric engines, 10 feet longer than Metrolink's other locomotives, will produce 50 percent less particulate matter than the 1998 Environmental Protection Agency standard and feature the capacity to pull 10 passenger cars rather than six, transporting an additional 1,200 passengers.

In a statement on Metrolink's website announcing the new locomotives, Keith Millhouse, Metrolink Vice-Chairman and Moorpark City Councilman, said "You aren't really green if you aren't riding public transit. You can drive a hybrid, recycle and plant trees but remember that driving alone to work takes a toll on the environment."

Metrolink, Southern California's regional commuter rail service, will add 15 environmentally friendlier trains to the Metrolink fleet over the next year.

Metrolink reports that the MotivePower MPXpress® commuter locomotive will produce approximately 42 percent less oxides of nitrogen when compared to other trains in Southern California.

According to Metrolink, its locomotives already are the cleanest in the industry, being fueled by ultra low-sulfur diesel fuel. The new locomotives, costing \$1.9 million each, have an engine start-stop technology that reduces emissions produced during idling by one-half.

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Photos by Gary Leonard

## Carina Ricco Asks Concert Audience to 'Go Green. Go Metro.'

- Earth Day concert draws audience to Union Station's South Patio

By NED RACINE, Editor

(April 22, 2008) Mother Nature provided a perfect setting of cloudless sky and pleasant breeze as singer/songwriter Carina Ricco offered a lunch-time concert to celebrate Earth Day's 38<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Ricco, filling in for Canon, whose appearance was cancelled because of a band member's illness, sang two songs whose title she thought appropriate for Earth Day; Planet Azul (Blue Planet) and Aire (Air).

Metro Board Chair and Santa Monica City Council Member Pam O'Connor welcomed the audience and introduced Ricco. O'Connor asked how many of the audience had taken public transit, and she received a sea of raised hands in response.

Under gently swaying palm trees, O'Connor



Singer/songwriter Carina Ricco in concert at Union Station.

introduced Mother Earth, who looked remarkably similar to Anna Mercaldi, assistant public communications officer. “There’s a lot we have to do to make sure we take of Mother Earth,” O’Connor said. “She is in a little bit of trouble right now.”

O’Connor also reminded the audience on Union Station’s South Patio that public transportation slashes the United States’ consumption of gasoline by four billion gallons annually.

Between songs, Ricco, a mother of two, asked her audience to make sure a healthy earth “is here for our kids and the future.” Ricco sang in Spanish and spoke to the audience in English.

After playing nine songs, Ricco signed off with “Go green. Go Metro.”

Ricco’s band included Fran Iturbe (guitar), Karl D’Amico (guitar), Fernando Torreblanca (drums) and Alberto Albis (bass).

Metro distributed “I ride for a greener LA” tee shirts, Bike to Work Day tote bags and a variety of Metro maps. The Metropolitan Water District offered information on saving water and packets of California poppy seeds, a plant adapted to Southern California’s Mediterranean climate and requiring little water to survive.

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Super commuter Dave Sotero, senior communications officer in Media Relations, at the Metrolink exit with his trusted folding companion, a bright green Brompton. *Photos by Gayle Anderson*



## Imagine this:

**Folding bike puts an end to automobiles, at least in this commuter's life!**

- 

[More:](#) What to pack on your commute

By GAYLE ANDERSON

Dave Sotero grabbed his prized folding bike from his 19<sup>th</sup>-floor cubicle and headed for the elevator. In a few minutes he would join with other members of the Metro Cycling Club for their ride to Wilshire Center's Earth Day Festival.

At the bicycle parking area on P-1, his bright apple green folding bike unfolded in less than 20 seconds. He donned his sea-green stylish helmet, snapped on his reflective leg bands, flipped on his safety blinkers and pedaled off in style.



Sotero, center, pedals off to Wilshire Center Earth Day festival with members of the Metro Cycling Club. Foreground: Metro Cycling Club Chair Cory Zelmer.

One month ago, Sotero, a senior communications officer in Media Relations, imagined life without a car and then did something about it.

"I decided to buy a folding bike to solve my short bike-to-transit commute," said Sotero, who traces his moment of truth to reading the Long-Range Transportation Plan. "A single sentence in the plan gave me a call to action. It said the single most effective action a household can take to cut its carbon footprint is to replace one car in a two-car family with biking and transit. I already did the transit part, so biking to transit was the missing link in my becoming car-free."

Sotero remembers the day he first saw the Brompton folding commuter bike. Tucked away in an Oceanside bike shop, the British import is bright apple green, weighs a modest 25 pounds, sports a tasteful one-size-fits-everything tote bag on shapely handlebars and turns heads everywhere it goes. It was love at first sight.

Sotero plunked down the \$1,200 plus change and took his folded companion on the Metrolink ride home. Giving an Irish lilt to her English manufacturer's surname, he's christened the bike Bonnie Brae Brompton.

Sotero says that folding bikes are the missing link to reaching critical mass for bicycle commuting. For starters, folding bikes are a commuter's dream on the Metro system. "They fit easily inside a crowded rush hour bus or train," he said. "No need to compete for space on a bike rack. And you don't have to worry about leaving them inside a bicycle locker or stored some place where they might get stolen."

Sotero continues his litany of the bike's

**It's so easy being green.**



virtues: "My bike fits in a small corner of my cubicle. If you just need a quick ride from someone to a transit stop, the bike fits perfectly in the trunk or back seat of a car. There's no need for a bike rack on the car either. That makes hitching rides when needed a no-brainer."

"I've only had my bike a little more than one month, and I haven't burned any gasoline for commuting. I estimate I've already saved more than \$100 just leaving my car in the driveway," he said.

Sotero also attributes his turning point to a book he found in the Metro Library, *How to Live Well Without Owning a Car* by Chris Balish. "The book really makes the case that automobiles are wreaking havoc in our lives and recommends new ways to solve commuting problems for everyone," he said.



Now that his commuting dreams have all come true, is there anything left on Sotero's transit wish list?

"I'd like to see Metro develop a folding bike demonstration program similar to its Segway scooter program a couple years ago," he said. "I think agency employees and the public would love a chance to try these bikes out and show how easily they can be used on the transit system."

"Commuters are astonished when they see my folding bike on a Rapid Bus or Red Line train. Most never knew such a bike was available. They want to know how it works, how much it costs and where to get one. The demand is there. The bike raises awareness every time I take it on the system."

Here's Dave's list of "must-have" items to pack in your bike bag if you're thinking of commuting by bicycle:

- Helmet
- Sun glasses to keep the sun and bugs out of your eyes
- Metro Beanie for cold morning rides
- Metro reflective bands to keep your pant leg out of the bicycle chain
- Metro neon safety vest for staying visible, especially at night
- Timetables for all area bus and rail services in case you need to take a different transit service
- Spill-proof coffee container
- Sealed food container for breakfast on-the-go



- Lightweight windbreaker
- Portable snacks like granola bars or trail mix
- Flashing deflectors that fit on clothing
- Small water bottle
- Folding comb or brush
- Smart phone for checking Metro Rapid Bus schedules at rapidbus.net and Metro Local schedules on mobile Trip Planner and bike paths on bikemetro.com
- Paperback book for reading while in transit or waiting for transit connections
- Bike lock (cable and U-Lock recommended)



>Sotero's iPhone photos document the "I can do anything and go everywhere" attitude of Ms. Bonnie Brae Brompton, the amazing folding bicycle.

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Metro Transit Security was honored by the Los Angeles City Fire Commission for its emergency work and partnership with the fire department. From left: Sgt. Vance Bjorklund, LAPD; Lt. Rivers Jacques, Metro Security; Chief Douglas Barry, LAFD; Deputy Executive Officer Jack Eckles, Metro Security; Lt. James Cook, Metro Security; Chief John Quintanar, LAFD. *Photo courtesy of the Los Angeles City Fire Department*



## Metro Security Honored by City Fire Commission

By JIMMY STROUP

(April 23, 2008) In a public ceremony, April 15, Metro Transit Security was given a letter of appreciation from the Los Angeles City Fire Commission to recognize Metro as a fire department partner and member of the first-responder community.

Two life-saving incidents in October and June 2007 convinced Fire Chief John Quintanar, who works with Metro Corporate Safety in a consulting capacity, to alert the Fire Commission to Metro Transit Security's successes in the past year. Quintanar's request turned into the accolades from the Fire Commission last week.

"The fire department wanted to recognize us as a member of the first-responder community," Metro Transit Security Lt. James Cook said. "We host events for training. We work as partners with the fire department. It's a range of things that, in total, make us members in good standing of the first-responder community."

In October 2007, two Transit Security Officers entered a burning building to rescue people inside. In June 2007, Metro Security officers came across a seven-car pile-up on the Glenn Anderson (105) freeway.

"[The commendation] was based on the goodwill the LA Fire Department and Metro have developed over the years as first responders," Quintanar said. "We're really partners, helping each other in crisis situations."





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### Prolific Tagger of Metro Property Sentenced to One Year

(April 23, 2008) After two years of investigation for \$108,000 worth of property damage to Metro equipment, Gustavo "Guser" Romero pleaded guilty to vandalism and was sentenced to one year in prison.

Transit Services Bureau Deputy Albert Zambrano, who worked the case with his partner Deputy Devin Vanderlaan, was none too pleased by the ruling from Judge Melissa Widderfield.

"It hurts us to see that we do so much work and then this guy only gets a year," Zambrano said. "It's discouraging to us. It's like a slap in our faces."

In addition to a year in prison – likely to be reduced to a few months due to the overcrowding of facilities – "Guser" will be on probation for five years, will be required to earn his high school equivalency, find a job and participate in an anti-graffiti program.

Deputy District Attorney Jeffrey Greenberg had asked for a 35-year sentence but "Guser" will probably serve six months or less. His sentence represents less than 2 percent of what prosecutors wanted.

"This is and was a prison-type case, in my opinion, with the substantial losses and damage," Greenberg said.

Because of his short sentence, "Guser" will be housed in a Los Angeles County jail instead of state prison.

- See metro.net report Feb. 13: [TSB Deputies Rise Early to Bring Down a Tagger](#)

-- Based in part on a report in the Daily News



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Metro Supports Pollution Fight with 65-Foot Reminder of Public Transit

By JIMMY STROUP

(April 24, 2008) Symbolizing the role public transit plays in reducing pollution, a 65-foot Metro Orange Line articulated bus will attend the H2Oaks Clean Clear Water Festival Sunday, April 27, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

In supporting the Rotary Club Sherman Oaks Sunset’s effort to fight pollution, Metro is supplying the Metro Liner coach and the location—the festival is at the Metro Orange Line Sepulveda Park/Ride, located between Erwin and Oxnard streets in Sherman Oaks.

“They requested our bus out there – the 65-foot artic,” said George Trudeau, San Fernando Valley Sector assistant transportation manager. “The event is in support of environmental causes, and they’re promoting the use of public transit because it goes right along with what they’re interested in.”

Activities will include a climbing wall, craft booths, a mini car show featuring hybrids, food and a section devoted to animal rescue. Information can be obtained by calling 818.342.9389 or e-mailing organizer Jodi Levine at [jodilovesdogs@yahoo.com](mailto:jodilovesdogs@yahoo.com).


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## Metro Hosts Symposium on Congestion Pricing Options

(April 24, 2008) Metro hosted an introductory symposium on Congestion Pricing Options for Los Angeles County yesterday, which drew nearly 100 attendees representing transportation agencies and the offices of elected officials.

Carol Inge, chief planning officer, and Ashad Hamideh, transportation planning manager, presented:

- Concepts of congestion pricing
- Initiatives within Los Angeles County
- Examples of successful implementation in the United States and abroad

The presentations were followed by a robust question and answer session, facilitated by Lynda Bybee, DEO Regional Communications. Joining Inge and Hamideh in answering questions were Frank Quon, deputy director, Caltrans Operations District 7, and Rich Macias, interim director, planning for the Southern California Association of Governments.

Discussion items included the experiences of London and San Diego, the level of environmental and business community support for congestion pricing, criteria for selecting toll road locations and assigning prices, capacity and equity issues, and how to ensure that toll revenues are used to support transit use.

"Even though this was our kickoff meeting, the participants took a big step toward establishing the partnership we'll need as we proceed," said Bybee, whose staff organized the symposium.

At its meeting today, the Board approved a consultant contract to develop a Congestion Pricing Operating Plan for Los Angeles County. This will include at least three options for implementing congestion pricing in Los Angeles County by 2010. Each option would feature a concurrent and extensive public education and outreach program.



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## Services Planned for Friday for Patricia Casas

(April 24, 2008) Services will be held Friday for Patricia Casas, whose brief Metro career was cut short by illness. Casas died April 18.

A service will be held April 25, at 10:30 a.m. at St. Finbar's Catholic Church, 2010 W. Olive, Burbank, CA (818.846.6251)

Casas began working at Metro in February 2006 as a customer information agent, but began medical leave in September of that year. Her doctors would not allow her to return to work.

Casas, who was born in January 1960 in Los Angeles, was a Burbank resident when she died. She is survived by her husband, Jesus Casas, West Valley Division 8 bus operator, three sons and two daughters.

Rachel Aquilar, who did her initial training with Casas, remembers her. "She was really top notch."



Patricia Casas


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## Board Alters Service Changes and Supports Research into Sales Tax Ballot Measure

- Motion eliminates proposed reduction of 100,000 service hours

By NED RACINE, Editor

(April 29, 2008) The Metro Board met before a full audience April 24 as it considered approving service changes. The Board later took the first step in placing a half-percent sales tax measure on the November ballot.

By a 12 to 0 vote, the Board approved a motion from directors Antonio Villaraigosa, Bernard Parks and Yvonne B. Burke to cancel the proposed June 2008 Tier 1, 2 and 3 service cuts. The motion excepted cuts to Limited Stop service on Lines 330, 115/315, 361, 350 and 394. Six new Metro Rapid lines would be implemented, achieving a total savings of \$4.7 million.

The motion also eliminated the proposed 100,000 revenue service-hour change scheduled for December 2008 and included in the Fiscal Year 2009 budget.

With an eye toward increased transportation funding, the Board approved a motion from Chair Pam O'Connor to authorize the CEO to:

- Research the requirements for putting a half-percent sales tax measure on the November ballot
- Develop a comprehensive package of programs and projects

This effort would include moving up schedules for those projects included in the constrained plan of the Draft 2008 Long Range Transportation Plan. It would also mean including the highest performing projects in the Tier 1 section of the Strategic Plan.

As part of the Board's approval of its Consent Calendar, it increased the budget of the Exposition Light Rail Transit Project (Phase I) by \$54 million, allowing construction of an aerial station on the Metro-owned right-of-way between Venice and Washington boulevards. This precludes construction of an interim at-grade station near the Washington/National intersection.

Culver City contributed \$4 million to the cost of the aerial station, which was originally scheduled to be built during Phase II of the light rail project.

In other actions, the Board agreed to contract with North American Bus Industries to purchase up to 260 compressed natural gas buses. Including spare parts, diagnostic equipment and training aids. The contract has a not-to-exceed value of \$170,915,626.

The Board also directed the CEO to develop a funding agreement with the City of Los Angeles and other affected parties to repair and replace some black terrazzo along the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The CEO will report to the Board within 90 days with an implementation plan and estimated costs.

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Big surprise: San Gabriel Valley Division 9 kids swarm the LASD helicopter. *Photo by Jimmy Stroup*



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## Big Success: Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day

By JIMMY STROUP

(April 29, 2008) More than 400 children from every division at Metro took part in Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day, April 24. West Hollywood Division 7 topped the list at nearly 70 kids and San Gabriel Valley Division 9 was a close second place with almost 60.

The event was organized – more like master planned, considering the size – by Liz Porras, a human resources assistant. With so many, Porras had to create a schedule to rectify the desire to see it all with the need to keep things flowing smoothly. But creating and sticking to schedules is what Metro does best and Porras's schedule was no different.

The undertaking included communicating with the tour locations, but also with vendors for T-shirts, Aramark for a deal with the Metro Cafe to feed the little ones and the services within Metro to get the kids moved around from place to place.

For each participating division, Porras created a grid to see that all the children got the benefit of a full tour. The Red Line, Metro Security, Metro Copy Center, Metro Design Studio and Customer Information Department were only some of the stops available to see.

This year's event was themed "Making Choices for a Better World," crafted around Metro's desire to help ease the problems of traffic congestion and pollution (just to name two).

Photos by Jimmy Stroup and Gayle Anderson

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## West Valley Division 8 Celebrates Safety with a Party

(April 29, 2008) \$750 in award money from a safety audit was parlayed into a party, April 9, to celebrate the continuing efforts of West Valley Division 8 operators to stay safe on the job.

They must be doing something right: Division 8 is currently sporting the lowest collision rate in the agency year to date. Maria Reynolds, transportation manager, and Richard Hunt, San Fernando Valley sector general manager, were both on hand for the event to thank the operators for their diligence.

In addition to a healthy lunch – with an eye toward those waistlines the agency-wide wellness campaign is working to shrink – deserving operators were awarded with belt buckles and uniform patches from Corporate Safety to show their commitment to driving safe every day.

A portable DVD player, a digital camera and an iPod digital speaker system (among other goodies) were among the prizes that were also part of the celebration, won at random in a drawing.



Operator Lisa Thompson is awarded her "5 Years Driving Safely" belt buckle by Assistant Transportation Manager Robert Castanon. Corporate Safety awarded operators who had excellent safety records with buckles and uniform patches. *Photo courtesy of Dave Miklic*

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CEO Roger Snoble addresses full house at all-hands meeting on Tuesday.



Photos by Gayle Anderson

## CEO's "All Hands" Meeting Details Successes, Struggles and His Top Ten

By JIMMY STROUP

(April 30, 2008) CEO Roger Snoble invited Metro employees April 29 to an "All Hands" meeting to recognize the hard work and success of current projects and address his Top Ten vision for the future.

Snoble detailed recent Metro accomplishments, including an unprecedented safety record on the Gold Line Eastside Extension project. The project reached nearly 3 million hours of work without a lost time accident.

"I'm calling it the best project in America," Snoble said. "We're on track to open on time and on budget."

He also highlighted the success Metro has had in working with Transit-Oriented Developments – 33 projects, so far – and Metro's unending commitment to Going Green with 2,500 clean-burning CNG buses and energy saving solar projects. Snoble then commended the growth of Metro Rapid, which is by far the largest rapid system of any transit agency in the country.

Snoble praised Congestion Pricing as a unique pilot on several fronts: it adds some much-needed funding; converts carpool lanes to toll lanes on the 10 and 210 freeways; increases bus efficiency on the freeways; and, encourages people to get out of their cars and onto transit.

"It's not to give people driving a Lexus a faster trip, but to improve our bus speeds in the carpool lane," he said.

Challenges

The meeting also detailed some challenges the agency will face in the near future. Snoble was candid, saying that lack of funds is Metro's primary problem but that the agency has been diligent in maintaining fiscal responsibility.



CEO Roger Snoble

"We are a little worried about [our funding sources] because of the rough economy, but we'll get through it," he said. "But we will present to the Metro Board a balanced budget. We don't have the huge deficits the city and state have because we've been working hard to erase our structural deficit."

Snoble discussed the draft Long Range Transportation Plan, which he said was a mix of paid-for and wished-for projects. In both cases, he boiled the need to plan realistically for the future down to a simple point: quality of life.

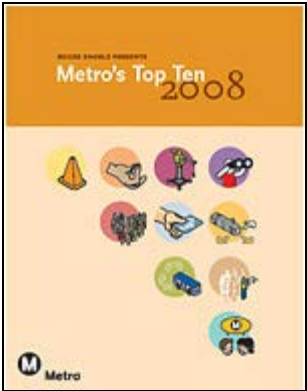
"As funding becomes more scarce, planning becomes more important," he said. "Through mobility we will be able to provide a high quality of life. Even though the system is over-taxed today, we have a responsibility to improve that system for our children."

He also used the meeting to unveil his Top Ten, which are his directives ("Though, I don't like to call them directives, but that's what they are," he said) to keep the agency moving forward in a united effort.

Top Ten

In order they are: (1) Safety's First; (2) Pinch Every Penny; (3) Think Big; (4) See the Future; (5) Exceed Expectations; (6) Tap, Tap, Tap; (7) Head East; (8) Go Green; (9) Speak With One Voice; (10) Talk Amongst Ourselves.

Taken together, Snoble said these points will give Metro a blueprint for maintaining the success the agency has enjoyed. Some are familiar, such as Safety's First, and some are newer, but none are completely new ideas. He said they are things we do now but things we need to stay focused on to keep Metro moving forward.



[Download](#) Top Ten brochure (PDF)

Exceed Expectations: "I think we do this every day," he said. "We need to see what [people] want and continue to give it to them."

Speak With One Voice: "Communications is always a difficult problem in any organization," he said. "But we don't want it to be a problem. We want it to be an opportunity."

Pinch Every Penny: "In good times we need to pinch that penny," he said. "In bad times we need to pinch that penny even harder and we need to prepare to do that."



**And the Roger Award goes to...** from left, Ann Kerman, Brad McAllester, Lynda Bybee, Patricia Soto, (CEO Snoble), Heather Hills and Robert Calix. The A-list team of producers and stars won the 2008 award for the Best Long Range Transportation Video.

But it wasn't all business. With a self-effacing humor that personalized the CEO, Snoble handed out some awards to the employees who helped create the Long Range Plan video – which has sparked quite a lot of public interest. Snoble awarded six "Rogers" for actress, two for actor (one in Spanish), behind-the-scenes supporting role, stagehand and producer.

The meeting wrapped with a few questions. One was about Congestion Pricing and the other was about divisions bursting at the seams with more coaches than the yards were designed to hold.

"In the Long Range Plan we have plans to reconstruct two divisions with just that in mind," he said. "The question is really how do we provide quality service if we don't have quality facilities? That is a big, big challenge. We realize it and we're trying to work it out as best we can."

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San Fernando Valley Governance Council member Kimberleigh Richards, Metro Community Relations Manager Rich Morallo, Metro Environmental Compliance and Services Director Cris Liban and his son Jean Paul attended the H2O Clean Clear Water Festival to show their support – along with event organizers Rotary Club-Sunset Sherman Oaks – for ending pollution of waterways and beaches in Southern California. *Photo courtesy of Cris Liban.*



### Metro Supports Sherman Oaks Clean Water Festival

(April 30, 2008) Information booths, food and activities were all the rage at the H2O Clean Clear Water Festival, April 27, in Sherman Oaks. The event was meant to increase awareness of the hazards of pollution to waterways and beaches, and to promote good habits so the damage that's already done can be corrected.

Metro supplied an information booth as well as the location – the Orange Line Sepulveda Park/Ride – to support the environmentally-conscious cause, organized by the Rotary Club-Sunset of Sherman Oaks.

Metro's Sustainability Committee, directed by Board Chair Pam O'Connor, has partnered with the local Rotary Club in a pilot program to install five aqua filtration filters at drain locations along the Orange Line route. Trash is constantly washed into the county waterways through these drains and the filters should dramatically reduce the amount of waste that ends up at the beaches.

Los Angeles County Supervisor and board member Zev Yaroslavsky and Los Angeles City Councilwoman Wendy Greuel supported the event, which was co-hosted by the Rotary Club and Metro. -- *from Helen Gilstrap*

