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Metro team takes center stage in Austin: from left, APTA President William W. Millar, Metro San Fernando Valley GM Richard Hunt, West valley Division 8 Operator Julio Flores, Arthur Winston Division 5 Mechanic Frank Forde, Chief Operating Officer Carolyn Flowers, Metro South Bay GM Dana Coffey, Arthur Winston Division 5 Mechanic Rommel Vargas, Arthur Winston Division 5 Mechanic Andrew Warren and mechanic team Coach Steve Mullaly of Central Instructions.



Photo by Margaret Merhoff

Arthur Winston Division 5 Mechanics Place 3rd at International Bus Rodeo in Austin

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(May 7, 2008) The results from the 2008 International Bus Rodeo in Austin, Texas, are in and the news is good for Metro's maintenance team.

The maintenance champs from Arthur Winston Division 5 – Andrew Warren, Frank Forde and Rommel Vargas – placed third in a field of 47 competitors from around the U.S. and Canada.

The veteran maintenance team, who took home the gold in the 2007 International Bus Rodeo held in Nashville, Tennessee, battled 47 teams in the maintenance competition, which tests mechanics' abilities to troubleshoot mechanical problems and fix them quickly.

The Orange County Transportation Authority maintenance team from Orange, California, won first place in the category and the maintenance team from Delaware Transit Corporation in Wilmington, Delaware, earned a second place finish.

Meanwhile, West Valley Division 8 Operator Julio Flores competed against 76 transit operators in the 40-foot bus competition – aptly named "rodeo." The operators' skills behind the wheel were put to the test as

they maneuvered their coaches on a difficult 11-part obstacle course which included judgment stops, right and left hand reverses and passenger stops.

Jesse De la Cruz of Alameda-Contra Transit District in Oakland, California, was named the best driver in North America, winning first place in the 40-foot bus competition. Second place was awarded to Rendol Whidden of Broward County Transit in Pompano Beach, Florida. Gilbert Castro of Tri Delta Transit in Antioch, California, received third place honors.

Overall, Metro placed in the top 20 among the 88 transit properties who competed for bragging rights as "Best Overall Transit Property."

"The (Metro) team was great!" said Frank Cecere, Operations Instruction Manager who organizes the Metro Bus Rodeo and traveled with the team to Austin. "They did good! We're looking forward to Seattle already," he said. King County Metro Transit will be hosting the 2009 International Bus Rodeo in Seattle.

More than 88 public transportation systems in North America competed in the 2008 International Bus Rodeo competition. The International Bus Rodeo is sponsored annually by the American Public Transit Association. The winners were announced at an awards dinner on May 6.

The Delaware Transit Corporation in Wilmington, Delaware, won the Grand Champion Award at the 33rd International Bus Rodeo. This honor, recognizing the men and women who keep North America's bus systems safe and efficient, is given to the bus operator and maintenance team that has the highest combined score.