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Rose Bowl fans arrive as parade-goers depart at Memorial Park Station.

It's Magic! Three-car Trains Make Wait Disappear on New Year's Day

By GAYLE ANDERSON
myMetro.net

(January 6, 2009) With Metro service more in demand than ever for the 120th Tournament of Roses Parade and 95th Rose Bowl Game, the Metro Gold Line scored another spectacular New Year's Day triumph, transporting an estimated 45,000 eager celebrants and fans to the Pasadena festivities.

New this year, three-car trains with seven-minute headways made the traditional lines that swarm the Memorial Park Station disappear from the platform "much, much quicker," reported Rail General Manager Mike Cannell.

Approximately 75 additional Rail Operations personnel from Transportation, Wayside, Facilities Maintenance, and Rail Fleet Services were in the field on New Year's Day, while Metro Bus operations held the line with some 35 extra personnel on duty from both transportation and maintenance divisions.

On the job:



Rail General Manager Mike Cannell

The Operations team was backed by Customer Information and Service Agents, Revenue Department and other Gateway personnel providing information, crowd control and fare collection.

Thanks to busy custodians and quietly efficient service attendants filling up 40-cubic-foot trash bins and cleaning up food spills nonstop, the Metro system sparkled in the trademark California sunshine.

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

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

Metro Bus Operations assigned 20 buses to that effort, positioning 12 at Memorial Park Station and eight at Del Mar Station. By special arrangement with the Pasadena Police Department, Metro buses maneuvered through unmovable traffic, sailing across the closed-to-traffic Colorado Blvd. and onto the Arroyo Parkway for the trip to Union Station.

"We filled up every single bus," said Alarcon. "Once the parade broke and the lines for the train began to swell, we could direct people onto the waiting buses."



Bus Operations coordinator Steve Rank, Asst. Operations Control Manager.



Rail Operations coordinator Bruce Shelburne, Rail Division Transportation Manager.



Customer Information Agent Marie Tervalon directs departing parade-goers to the trains at Memorial Park Station.

As for the point after, football fans returning from the Rose Bowl game packed Memorial Park station in surges, said Rail General Manager Mike Cannell.

"The exodus of football fans from the Rose Bowl game was more intense than ever," said Cannell, who observed many Penn State supporters going to the parade, then to the game, then returning to Memorial Park Station for the return trip to Union Station.

Rose Bowl fans, deposited near Memorial Park Station by shuttle buses, filled trains and buses for the ride home. The rush that began about 5 p.m. was over by 7:45 p.m.

Shelburne estimated the ridership boarding the Metro Gold Line after the game to be about 9,000 with Metro ridership for the entire day holding close to 45,000.



Penn State fans arrive at Memorial Park Station alongside USC supporters.

The New Year's Day tally includes the boardings on 20 supplemental buses used for express service to Union Station following the parade, as well as the five buses that were used to shuttle crowds from the Sierra Madre Villa Station to the float viewing at Victory Park.

"From 5:30 to about 8 a.m., we transported about 4,800 out of Union Station to Pasadena," Shelburne estimated. "The three-car trains really did make a difference in moving the passengers compared to last year when lines of waiting passengers stretched back almost to the East Portal.

"After the Parade, we cleared the four stations serving the parade route in less than an hour's time from each one. Allen Station was the last to clear at 11:45 a.m., a considerable difference from the 1:15 p.m. endgame in 2008," he said.



Three-car trains running seven-minute headways keep lines moving at Memorial Park Station.

New assignments on the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension and Expo Line will thin the ranks of three-car trains available for next year's festivities, said Cannell.

"The plan for next year will have to take into account that trains starting in East Los Angeles on New Year's morning will be half-full by the time they arrive at Union Station," said Shelburne. "Also, next year the parade and Rose Bowl game on Friday will be followed several days later by the College Football National Championship Game. The two-day operation will pose a bigger challenge."

Organizers are betting the Metro system will win the face-off with a bigger challenge. "It's what we've come to expect of Metro," said Alarcon. "Now we can assure our passengers they will be there on time."