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At news conference assembled Nov. 5 in response to the passage of Measure R, Metro Board Chair Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa thanked voters and elected officials who enabled the passage of Measure R, the half-cent sales tax proposal to build public transportation projects across Los Angeles County. The officials staged a news conference at the Metro Rail Wilshire/Western Station. *Photo by Ned Racine*

2008 in Review: A Year of Triumph, Tragedy

myMetro report month-by-month					
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Compiled by Michael D. White  
*Web Content Editor*

(January 15, 2009) Both triumph and tragedy marked 2008 as Metro made news on several fronts during the year.

Triumph as Measure "R" was passed by the electorate on November 4 authorizing a one-half cent sales tax to fund a myriad of much-needed transportation projects throughout the county, but tragedy in September, when a Metrolink train accident claimed the life of employee Donna Remata, a storekeeper at Metro Headquarters. Remata was among the 25 passengers and train crew members killed when Metrolink's Ventura County Line 111 train collided with an oncoming Union Pacific freight train near Chatsworth on Sept. 12.

The event spurred an unprecedented remedial safety effort throughout the system.

Ridership soared on virtually all of Metro's rail lines and the Metro Orange Line reached record levels and construction was completed and continued on several major improvement projects including the Metro Gold Line's Eastside Extension and the Expo Light Rail Line.

Here's a month-by-month retrospective of some of the top stories in what proved to be one of Metro's most memorable years:

JANUARY

Working a 24-hour operational schedule on New Year's Eve, Metro progressed to enhanced service on New Year's Day with approximately 100 additional Rail Operations personnel from Transportation, Wayside, Facilities Maintenance, and Rail Fleet Services, and some 50 extra personnel on duty from both transportation and maintenance divisions, in the field. Metro Bus operations were backed by Customer Service agents on line control and fare collectors.



**Largest Clean-Air Fleet in the Nation:** Metro reaches a major milestone at Central City Division 1 Jan. 18 when the 2,500th Metro Bus burning compressed natural gas rolled into service after a quick pit stop at the natural gas pumps. On hand for the debut were CEO Roger Snoble, Division 1 Maintenance Manager Hector Rojas, Board Chair Pam O'Connor and Metro South Bay General Manager Dana Coffey, along with a host of Metro officials and media representatives. A clear leader in the field, Metro was the first to adapt the technology for use in transit vehicles following the adoption by the board of the alternative fuel policy in 1993. Reaching a major milestone that indicates 95 percent of the Metro fleet burns clean compressed natural gas continues to demonstrate that CNG is the best, most effective and clearly efficient clean fuel option available, said CEO Snoble. The fleet conversion is definitely not a turnkey operation, he noted, but rather a solid agency-wide effort that involves more than 100 employees and thousands of work hours getting the buses ready for operations. "An entire crew of personnel from fleet management to contracts to accounts payable to division maintenance deserve the credit for this milestone achievement," said Snoble.

The Metro Blue Line completed six months of operational tests on a new automated system to announce stops. For the preceding 16 years, the Blue Line had used two incompatible public address (PA) systems with poor quality sound that utilized headset microphones that picked up background noise in the train's cab. The first prototype system was designed by two Metro employees - Eric Czintos, maintenance specialist and Russell Homan, senior instructor for Rail Fleet Services.

A ribbon and cake cutting ceremony marked the official opening of the \$13-million, three-story, 45,515 square-foot Metro San Gabriel Valley's eco-headquarters building. The facility was built to meet LEED Silver Certified environmental standards but surpassed that goal to achieve LEED Gold Certification rating from the U.S. Green Building Council. The building surpasses the state's energy standards, consuming 33 percent less electricity than a conventional structure. The building houses the Metro San Gabriel Valley Sector offices and transportation offices, including a field office for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau.



Metro San Gabriel Valley  
headquarters building

FEBRUARY





Metro's iconic lighting of the Headquarters building on Valentine's Day inspired Metro photographer Peter Watkinson to capture the Metro heart as it sparkled in the Los Angeles skyline on the romantic evening of Valentine's Day. Thanks to clear skies swept clean after a morning drizzle by northwest winds in the early evening hours, the heart-shaped light configuration on all four sides of the Metro Headquarters shone crisp and clear throughout the night. Three local network television stations -- KABC 7, KCAL 9, and KCOP 13 -- broadcasted fly-over shots during the 11 o'clock news.

TAP Cards Go Public at Metro Customer Service Centers replacing paper monthly, weekly and Zones 1, 2 Metro passes. The TAP card enables a customer to travel the Metro system, switching seamlessly between rail and bus and ultimately to other transit systems.

The Transit Services Bureau (TSB) spent Saturday making a public service announcement (PSA) emphasizing the importance of pedestrian safety around trains.

Construction above and below ground continues on the Expo Light Rail Line. The new line, scheduled to open in 2010, will connect Downtown Los Angeles and Culver City, traveling along Metro's Exposition right-of-way. Approximately 8.6-miles long, the line will feature nine new stations.



Moving the world: New train operators graduate in first class of 2008. They are, standing, from left, are Dayman Medearis, TOS Ricardo Perez (instructor), Miguel de la Cruz, Monzur Chowdhury, Paul Andrews, Ken Collins, James Green, Cesar Hernandez Almanza, Norman

Woods, Naik Hassan and Peter Rosendale. Instructors, seated, from left, are Hector Gutierrez, Luis Canal, Arnold "A.J." Johnson, Cristobal Medina, Esther Pippins, Gerald Harper and Will Johnson.

**MARCH**

After several months of discussion, the Board of Los Angeles County Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies (LA SAFE) awarded a \$31 million, 10-year contract to develop and deploy a multi-county Motorist Aid and Traveler Information System (MATIS). The system allows travelers to dial "511" on their phones and receive detailed traffic information to aid their daily commutes.

The draft of Metro's new 2008 Long Range Transportation Plan was released with seven community meetings planned to gauge public input. The plan offers a 25-year blueprint for transportation planning in Los Angeles County through the Year 2040 and outlines proposed improvements to the region's transportation infrastructure.

How, a national graphic design magazine, has awarded five *In-HOWse Design Awards* to Metro Creative Services. The design competition reviews the achievements of organizations with in-house designers. The publication reviewed over 4,000 entries and recognized Metro Creative Services with a Merit award for the Metro Orange Line opening materials and four Honorable Mention awards in the Government category for the Metro Bus fleet design, Metro's series of popular proprietary icons, Metro's fare media series and the Metro Works Postcard series.



Big success: San Gabriel Valley Division 9 kids swarm the LASD helicopter at agency-wide participation in "Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day" on April 24. More than 400 children from every division took part: 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.

**APRIL**

Officials from 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). 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) and is expected to improve the movement of goods and services throughout the major I-5 corridor.

The Metro Board met before a full audience to take the first step in placing a half-percent sales tax measure on the November ballot and voted 12 to 0 vote to approve a motion 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.

**MAY**

Metro received three nominations from the California Transportation Foundation in recognition of excellence in transportation during 2007. The nominations for

the prestigious “Tranny” awards were in the categories of Traffic Operations, Community Awareness and Roadway. The nominations in the “Traffic Operations” and “Roadway” categories were both earned for Metro’s “dramatic efforts” to reduce overall congestion, while the “Community Awareness” nomination honors the Metro Arts Docent program that familiarizes Metro riders with the public art projects featured at many Metro Rail stations.

The Metro Vanpool Program marked its one-year birthday by enrolling its 600th vehicle. The landmark makes the program the fastest growing public vanpool system in the entire United States.

**JUNE**

Reflecting a national movement toward public transit use, Metro Rail ridership last month shot up 6 percent over May 2007, one of the highest one month spikes on record. The surge was led by gains in both subway and Metro Gold Line ridership. The Gold Line reached its highest volume between Los Angeles and Pasadena with average weekday boardings totaling 23,141. Earlier this month the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) announced that Americans took 2.6 billion trips on public transportation in the first three months of 2008, almost 85 million more trips than the first quarter 2007.

Fresh from a successful 90-day trial period, a new campaign was launched to make the Metro Red Line and Purple Line cleaner and safer for passengers and employees. The “Mission Terminal Attack” was crafted as a “multi-level assault on crime and grime” in partnership with Metro Security and maintenance and the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department Transit Services Bureau (TSB).



**Role model:** Carolyn Flowers, chief operations officer, is a healthy example for Metro Wellness Program participants. At an AHA convention in Atlanta, Flowers was named a Power Ambassador by the American Heart Association for her success in bringing its “Power To End Stroke” information to thousands of Metro employees.



**Metro Rail Team Takes Top Honors at 2008 APTA International Rail Rodeo**  
The Los Angeles Metro Rail championship team won the prestigious Rail Transit Team Achievement Award at the 16th Annual American Public Transportation Association (APTA) International Rail Rodeo, held in conjunction with the 2008 APTA Rail Conference in San Francisco May 31 - June 2. The winning team members are Operators Robert Rodriguez and Geronimo Young and Rail Equipment Specialists Eric Czintos, Ronnie Burt and Toshi Manaka. The Los Angeles Metro team, racking up the highest rail operator and maintainer team combined score, walked away with the Team Achievement Award. Eighty-one contestants from 20 rail systems competed for top honors.



Displaying a creative blend of marketing and environmental consciousness, Metro began distributing three new promotional giveaway pencils made from recycled paper money, denim and recycled newspaper. Interestingly, each of the “cash” pencils contains 30 percent “retired” currency or approximately \$7 in retired greenbacks.

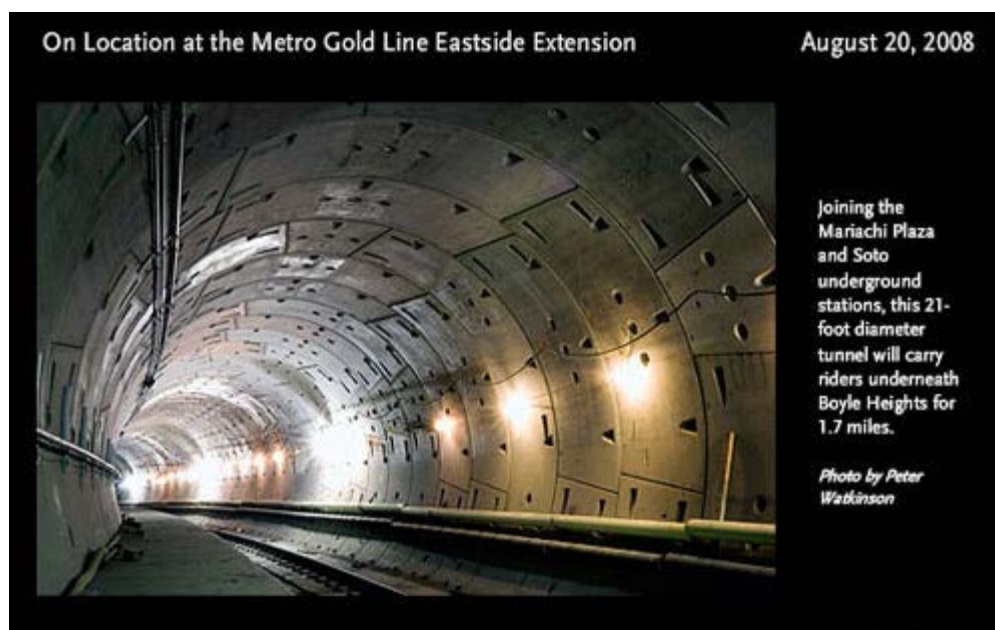
JULY

Metro was selected to receive more than \$16 million from the Governor's Office of Homeland Security (OHS) as part of a dispersal of funds to increase mass transit security statewide. The money was awarded to help fund the implementation of a gating system on Metro's Red and Purple lines and on some select light rail stops. The Metro Board approved the gate project in February.



Official Metro Gold Line train piloted by Operator Ruben Ramirez breaks through the banner at Union Station to mark the dedication of the 13.7-mile light rail line to Pasadena on July 25, 2003. The Metro Gold Line marked its fifth anniversary in July and was hailed as a historic return of a rail corridor idle for more than 50 years. The route, which has become increasingly popular, was up 31.8 percent this year over last year. The last electric trains - the Pacific Electric "Red Cars" that served the same route linking Pasadena and downtown Los Angeles - ceased operation in the 1950s. *Photo by John Weiskopf*

In a historic vote, the Metro Board of Directors took a critical step in placing on the November ballot a new half-cent sales tax measure for Los Angeles County that would finance dozens of transportation projects. The tax measure would also fix potholes, fund major highway construction, buy clean fueled buses and build new rail lines spread throughout the county in a concerted effort to keep pace with major population and job growth. Metro directors also approved an ordinance including an expenditure plan detailing how the sales tax – estimated to generate \$40 billion over 30 years – would be spent. Those monies also could be leveraged with state, federal and private sector funding.



Underground and street-level stations grow recognizable as stations as the six-mile-long Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension project advances toward its scheduled opening date of mid-2009.

## AUGUST

Reversing an earlier vote, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted 3 to 2 to place a proposed half-cent sales tax measure to fund transit projects on a consolidated ballot for the Nov. 4 general election. The following day, the California State Senate's Appropriations Committee ruled unanimously (14-0) to clear AB 2321, a bill that would allow a new half-cent sales tax, "Measure R," to be placed on the November ballot.

All Metro Rail lines and the Metro Orange Line set ridership records in July, and the Metro Bus system attracted more riders, as commuters and others scrambled to avoid \$4-a-gallon gas. The Metro Red and Purple subway lines, as well as the Metro Gold, Blue, Green and Orange Lines, all set weekday records in July 2008 over July 2007, as riders abandoned their cars. Metro Bus ridership was also up for the month compared to a year earlier.

Construction continued on the six-mile-long Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension project, slated to open for traffic in mid-2009. Two underground stations, six street level stations and plazas, elevators, escalators, train platforms and air exhaust shafts were nearing completion, while newly laid track on the 101 (Hollywood) Freeway bridge follows the bridge's curve between Union Station and the Little Tokyo/Arts District station.



Los Angeles Division 3 Operator Juan Navarro and Arthur Winston Division 5 mechanics Andrew Warren Jr., Rommel Vargas and Frank Forde emerged as champions in the Operators and Mechanics categories at the 2008 Metro Bus Roadeo, Sept. 20. They'll carry the agency's flag at the 2009 APTA Internationals set for next May in Seattle, Washington. The Arthur Winston Division mechanics team took the mechanics trophy for an unprecedented fifth victory lap.

## SEPTEMBER



[Remembering Donna Remata.](#) Image of employee Donna Remata, encased in a floral wreath, became a memorial to the friend and co-worker killed in the Metrolink accident on Sept. 12. Friends sent prayers and memories to [mymetro.net](#) web page dedicated to her memory.

Metro employees and friends mourn the loss of fellow employee Donna Remata, a storekeeper at Metro Headquarters who was among the 25 passengers and train crew members killed in a Metrolink train accident Sept. 12. Remata was aboard Ventura County Line 111 in car one. The Metrolink train that had departed Union Station at 3:35 p.m. en route to Moorpark collided with a Union Pacific freight train on the tracks about a mile and a half north of the Chatsworth Metrolink Station. The accident, which occurred at approximately 4:23 p.m., claimed 25 lives and left 135 injured, 40 critically.

The Metro Board addressed the tragic Metrolink crash at its September 25 meeting by unanimously adopting a motion recommending immediate safety improvements that it wants the Metrolink Board to pursue to prevent future train accidents. The motion's key recommendations were to immediately staff Metrolink locomotive cabs with two qualified engineers; implement "Automatic Train Stop" technology on trains already equipped to

handle the technology; and install video cameras and digital video recorders or equivalent technology to monitor engineers and other staff inside locomotive cabs.

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed AB 2321 into law, authorizing Metro to place a half-cent sales tax increase ballot measure before voters during the November 4 election. Measure R is expected to provide the local resources to finance new transportation projects and accelerate those already in the pipeline. Over 30 years, the measure is projected to generate \$40 billion for traffic congestion relief projects including bus and rail expansion, street and highway improvements, commuter rail upgrades and other transportation projects and programs.



**Metro San Gabriel Valley Gold**> Although the Metro San Gabriel Valley building was constructed to achieve a "silver" rating by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), the 'green' team surpassed expectations. Instead of the 'silver' rating, the building is taking home the LEED 'gold.' Metro CEO Roger Snoble and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa collected the trophies at the board meeting Oct. 23: A framed certificate proclaiming the rating from the U.S. Green Building Council and a glass medallion inscribed with the architectural and environmental achievement. Members of the 'green' team, a multidisciplinary group from Facilities, Contracts, Construction and the Metro San Gabriel Valley service sector, display the medallion before it goes on permanent exhibition at the SGV building. From left, Rudy Rey, Andi Wang, Mike Holguin, contractor Andrew Bart of W.E. O'Neill Construction, team leader Tim Lindholm, DEO Denise Longley (Contracts and Administration), Tom Lee, Metro SGV GM Jack Gabig, Paula Faust and John Jaramillo. Not pictured: Carlos Fabro.



**OCTOBER**

In the largest single allocation to a highway project in its history, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) has earmarked \$730 million in Proposition 1B funds to the I-405 Sepulveda Pass Widening Project. The decision means the \$950-million project is fully funded with Metro contributing \$13 million, the federal government \$130 million and the state providing an additional \$90 million to the project.

In an international competition involving some of the world's largest and best-known organizations, Metro was named one of five Best of Award winners of the 2008 Rebrand Award. Metro's work to create a new public image for the agency triumphed over competitors as diverse as the San Francisco Ballet and Delta Airlines. Entries included Fortune 500 corporations, small businesses, nonprofit organizations, economic development agencies, and cities and universities.

Construction crews reported they were well under way on work to repave two miles of the Metro Orange Line, replacing and upgrading the transit way pavement to accommodate traffic growth. In September, the popular line set a record of 27,987 average weekday boardings. Metro shared the cost of the work with Shimmick-Obayashi Joint Venture, the Orange Line's original contractor.



Marco Pedemonte, Equipment Maintenance Supervisor at the Arthur Winston Division, takes home a Leadership Award at annual "Night of Stars" awards presented by Chief of Operations Carolyn Flowers. Over 240 Metro employees were honored for outstanding performance and achievements over the past five years of service during the awards banquet held Oct. 17 in downtown Los Angeles.

**NOVEMBER**

Work on the six-mile Metro Gold Line extension to East Los Angeles that began in July 2004 was nearing completion, still within budget and on schedule for the grand opening in the summer of 2009. Installation of all rail tracks has been completed along with the tie-in to the Metro Gold Line to Pasadena. The new extension will feature eight stations, two underground and run from Union Station in downtown Los Angeles via Little Tokyo/Arts District and Boyle Heights to Atlantic/Pomona boulevards in East Los Angeles.

CEO Roger Snoble commended Metro employees for their work in promoting Measure "R", the half-cent sales tax to fund a myriad of public transportation projects across Los Angeles County. The measure on the November 4 ballot was approved by more than 67 percent of the electorate. "The voters of Los Angeles County have put their trust in us to deliver these important transportation projects and by their vote, they are confident that we can deliver," he said. "We must not let them down."

**DECEMBER**



Metro Board Director John Fasana, left, and Roger Moliere, Real Property and Development Chief, right, flank Los Angeles Mayor and Metro Board Chairman Antonio Villaraigosa at news conference held Dec. 15 to introduce Metro's TAP fare card. TAP, or Transit Access Pass, is a revolutionary new electronic fare payment system that will eventually unify all of Los Angeles County's transit operators through a single, reusable payment card. The goal is for transit patrons to pay for rides on Metro Rail and buses and local municipal buses with a single, rechargeable card.

Metro contractors completed work on repaving a portion of the Metro Orange Line transitway between the intersections of Topham Street/Victory Boulevard and Balboa/Victory Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley. The first phase of repaving began in October and was completed in early December. The second phase of repaving west of Balboa, which began Dec. 3, is now completed.



Roger Snoble announced Dec. 17 plans to retire as Metro CEO after seven years at the helm once his successor is on board. Los Angeles Mayor and Metro Board Chairman Antonio Villaraigosa called Snoble a "dedicated public servant who has provided solid leadership and a steady hand in restoring the credibility of the MTA while improving public transportation for millions of Los Angeles County residents and commuters." Also lauding Snoble was Los Angeles County Supervisor and Metro Board Member Zev Yaroslavsky, who said the retiring CEO "led Metro to new heights in the delivery of expanded, quality public transportation to the citizens of

Los Angeles County" and transformed the agency into an efficiently-run and effective transportation network "now recognized as one of the highest performing bus systems in the nation."

--Gayle Anderson contributed to this report

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