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Cris Liban, Manager of Metro's Environmental Compliance and Services Department, challenges Metro employees to be 'champions of change' during Metro's awareness training pilot program developed by Organizational Development and Training Department.

Sustainability 101: What is *your* Personal Initiative?

By Rich Martin
Web Content Editor

(March 12, 2009) Sustainability efforts are in overdrive at Metro, with a vigorous campaign underway to educate workers about ways to rethink old habits and limit activities potentially harmful to the environment.

A recent meeting, featuring a presentation by Brendon Sher of Santa Monica College and the Los Angeles Community College District, focused on the potential effects of man-made environmental problems and the critical need to act to alleviate their impact.

More than 30 representatives from various departments participated in an "awareness training session" during which Sher urged people to be "champions for change."



Consultant Brendon Sher led the class in exercises to develop a Personal Sustainability Initiative (PSI) in the workplace.

Citing recent legislation mandating energy efficiency, Sher noted that Metro is making great strides in moving towards sustainability.

Sustainability, defined as “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to not deplete the Earth’s resources at a rate that the Earth cannot replenish.”

The “three Rs” of the campaign, he said, are to reduce consumption as well as reuse and recycle materials with the benefits sustaining humanity, health and wellness, and saving money because of enhanced efficiency.

Cris Liban, Manager of Metro’s Environmental Compliance and Services Department, said, “This is the campaign from the bottom up - making sure the word gets out about sustainability.”

It’s important that Metro is “recognizing that we can contribute a lot to clean air,” Liban said, adding the agency has been doing that for some time now.



Organizers teamed up to present compelling lessons in good practices for the workplace. From left, OD&T Director Marion Colston, OD&T Training Specialist Cynthia Shavers, Brendon Sher and Cris Liban.

Metro’s sustainability effort formally started with the December 2006 formation of the Clean Air Task Force. That group has continued its work with the approval of the Metro Sustainability and Energy Policy in June 2007 and the support of the Board of the Ad Hoc Sustainability and Climate Change Committee that first convened in September 2007. “It’s just snowballed from there,” said Liban.

Another major component of the sustainability effort flows from the top down, Liban said, as managers “think within their own departments” about changes they can implement with their own

staffs.

Metro has been involved in green efforts for several years and has gained a well-deserved place as a transportation industry leader in implementing efficient and cost-effective sustainability projects and programs.

Metro was the first transit agency in the country to use compressed natural gas (CNG) buses, and operates one of the largest – 2,500 and growing – CNG-powered fleets in the nation.

Construction of the landmark Metro San Gabriel Valley headquarters exceeded the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Gold Standard for “green” compliance, while the Metro Bus yards in Sun Valley, Chatsworth and Carson have impressive solar panel arrays that significantly reduce energy waste and expense.

Other sustainability efforts underway throughout the agency include utilizing recycled materials such as paper and ink cartridges, lessening the use of copiers, turning off computers and other equipment at days end, and the purchase of fixtures that lessen the use of electricity and water.

What happens next on the sustainability front?

Liban also said training of Metro workers is ongoing. “We are going to reach out to at least 300 of our employees” for sustainability education with Sustainability Summit planned for May 6-7.

Last year, the Metro Board of Directors mandated a baseline carbon footprint report, a document that was released in December. A follow-up report, planned for completion at the end of June, will show what Metro has accomplished in terms of achieving its sustainability goals and include a list of sustainability indicators that can be used to measure progress.

A survey will also soon be rolled out to “look at how we have progressed as a region,” said Liban. The new survey is a follow-up to one conducted in the spring of 2008 that established sustainability baselines for all 88 cities and other municipalities in Los Angeles County.