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Green is busting out all over on Earth Day at Metro Headquarters.

LA Spotlight 'Conversation' Picks up Regional Pace for Climate Action

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(April 23, 2009) Earth Day at Gateway proved a success with hundreds of visitors -- Metro employees included -- taking time to learn more about sustainability during the county-sponsored National Conversation on Climate Action.

CEO Art Leahy welcomed event-goers Wednesday by saying that it was very fitting that the national event was held at Metro Headquarters, which has become a "bustling transit hub" thanks to the ongoing efforts of Metro leaders and staff.

Leahy recalled how as a young bus driver and student 38 years ago, he would end his route at a "virtually abandoned" Union Station where he'd find a place to study.

"Today it's bustling. Because of the MTA, there has been some revolutionary changes in Los Angeles," Leahy said, followed by increased transit services in Long Beach, Pasadena, and now the westside.

"We work very hard to provide



CEO Art Leahy welcomes ecologically-minded visitors to Earth Day 'conversation.'



Event organizers Howard Choy, LA

transportation services that will help us clean up the environment and, of course, encourage economic prosperity," he said.

Leahy reminded attendees that Metro has the largest clean air fleet in the country with more than 2,500 CNG buses and many other green transportation efforts.

"That's quite an accomplishment. It really reflects a commitment that goes back 10 or 15 years by the MTA and the board," he said.

New "green" policy approved

One of those efforts was made when the Metro Board Thursday approved a [comprehensive environmental policy](#) which addresses various sustainability efforts pertaining to energy conservation, water use, material recycling, waste management and emissions, among other measures.

Environmental Compliance and Services Department Manager Cris Liban, one of the overseers of the policy, said he was pleased the measure passed without a hitch.

"We thought we were going to have some issues because it's very comprehensive," he said.

"Our intent is to make sure that we have a platform for all initiatives for all the departments," and he said it was a "good start for greening of the whole agency."

When it was initially proposed, he said department leaders said "it was the right thing" for Metro to have.

"Everyone embraced this. I'm very, very glad that we have forward thinking chiefs around here," he said.

Metro will host the second Sustainability Summit at Metro Headquarters on May 6. The summit brings government in Los Angeles County together to take action for development of a more sustainable transportation and land use system for the region.

A nationwide event

Los Angeles County Supervisor and Metro Board Member Don Knabe also welcomed visitors on Earth Day saying, "This is a great day. You know it's sort of

County Internal services, Metro's Helen Ortiz-Gilstrap and Mi Kim, LA County Regional Planning.



Metro's newest green shoot – a \$660,000 hybrid bus complete with a couple more feet of room and the new TAP card stand-alone validator.



Build your own sustainable city at the interactive display model of Transportation Planning Manager James Rojas.



Transportation Planning Manager Lynne Goldsmith discusses 'Bike to Work Day' May 14 with Sumi Gant, who manages Long Beach Transit bike program.

interesting to sort of look out and then realize all across the nation that at this very moment in time, others are engaged in the same conversation."

As the overseer of the largest county in the U.S. with 10 million-plus residents, Knabe said, "We're very strong supporter of not only the environment, but obviously of the economic development side."

He referred to a Kenyan proverb that tells adults the earth was not given to them by their parents, it was loaned to them by their children.

"I think that sentiment should resonate throughout the day as each of us are gathered here in nationwide conversations.

"Obviously what we do today sets the tone for the future generations and the history of America, and I think that's important. We're expanding our conversation."

Knabe joked about the looks he received from his wife as he prepared for the day.

"My wife looked at me this morning and she said, 'What are you doing?'

And I said, 'Well babe, it's Earth Day, it's Denim Day, too.'"

Denim Day, also held on Wednesday, was created as a campaign to raise awareness and educate the public about violent crimes like rape and sexual assault.



Los Angeles County Public Works employee William Moreno distributes container for diabetics to safely discard used needles and gave away more than 100 reusable "brag" bags by mid-morning to anyone who could prove they took public transit Wednesday.



Jim Gilmartin, Los Angeles County Internal Services Division, Fleet Services, shows the converted Toyota Prius used by the county. The base-priced \$25,000 vehicle cost an additional \$15,000 to convert into a plug-in giving the user a 30-mile range or just enough for a daily commute.



