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(web)[Archives](#)[Events Calendar](#)[Research Center/
Library](#)[Metro Classifieds](#)[Bazaar](#)

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CEO Art Leahy, center, gave the commencement speech at the recent graduation of 14 new train operators and congratulated one and all.

Reporting for Duty: Rail Graduates Get Safety Reminders

- New grads will assist with the opening of Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(May 21, 2009) Preparing to step into their new positions, Metro's newest rail operations graduates received some safety reminders from rail manager and top boss -- CEO Art Leahy.

Citing Metro's "landmark" openings for the Red, Blue and Green lines, Leahy reminded the graduates that the grand opening of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension will be equally monumental.

"Metro is no longer just a bus company. It's a transit company. We don't have a rail company or a bus company. We have a transit company," Leahy told the group of 14 graduates at a luncheon and certificate presentation May 15.

When Metro Rail GM Mike Cannell took the podium to welcome the new train operators to Metro Rail, he opened with a smile, telling the graduates about how a charismatic operator became the standard bearer of a "good attitude" campaign.

On board a Metro Gold Line train, Cannell enjoys



CEO Art Leahy: "We're all in this together."

the running commentary of Metro Rail Operator Ruben "Running Wolf" Hernandez, who often treats his customers to impromptu safety presentations on his Metro Gold Line runs.

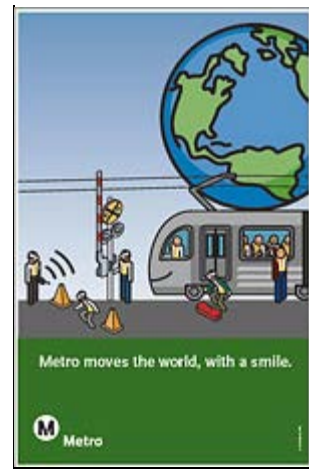
During that first trip, Cannell looked around and noticed the diversity on board could very well represent the whole world. And, because of Running Wolf's camaraderie, they were all smiling.

So, along with a graduation certificate, Cannell now hands out a poster of an illustration of a smiling Metro train carrying a globe of the world and smiling passengers on board framed by the slogan "Metro moves the world, with a smile."

It's a recurrent theme that Cannell uses to remind new graduates to make the trip on Metro Rail not only safe and courteous, but a very pleasant experience for Metro customers.

Rail Division Transportation Manager Davide Puglisi said everyone has been paying more attention to Metro because the agency has "gained the confidence of the riding public." He added, "We're fast. We're clean. We're safe."

Puglisi said the Eastside Extension will run through a neighborhood that hasn't had train service in 40 years. "The community isn't used to seeing our big trains going down the street at 35 miles an hour, " he said.



Rail GM Mike Cannell gave graduates a poster of a smiling Metro train carrying a globe of the world and smiling passengers on board framed by the slogan "Metro moves the world, with a smile."



Class of May '09: Back row from left, Director of Rail Transportation Operations, Duane Martin, and graduates Zouheir Mohtadi, Jesus Valdez, James Brook, Jerry McCoy, Christopher Cline, Bertrand Ball, Joseph Cuevas, Jose Gallardo. Middle row: Keith Lee, Sixto Valadez, Donna Quay, Charletta Berry, Irma Junyk, Christopher Parker. Instructors are, front row from left, Hector Gutierrez, Will Johnson, Cristobal Medina, Arnold "A.J." Johnson and Luis Canal. Not pictured: Instructors Esther Pippins and Gerald Harper.

While it is yet to be determined where the 14 graduates will be permanently assigned, 12 of them will work as switch attendants along the alignment of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension. The two remaining

graduates will return to bus duties until a rail position becomes available.

Among the graduates is Jesus Valdez, a 19-year employee, who worked as a rail operator from 2000 to 2005 and decided to return. Valdez said he was excited about coming back and being able to work on the new project. "Safety is No. 1 here for our operation and customers," he said.



It's official: Rail GM Mike Cannell with graduates Charletta Berry, left, and Jesus Valdez, right.



Graduate Charletta Berry, who joined Metro in the mid-90s said she switched to rail to do something different. Certified on the Metro Red Line, Berry thanked her instructor Arnold "A.J." Johnson for being so patient during class.

Graduate Donna Quay, a 29-year bus operator, said she decided to move from bus to rail because it was a good time in her life since her children are grown and married.

"I had a very nice run. I liked it. You know, you just get to a point where you need to do something different," Quay said.