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## Resources

[► Safety](#)[► Pressroom \(web\)](#)[► Ask the CEO](#)[► CEO Forum](#)[► Employee Recognition](#)[► Employee Activities](#)[► Metro Projects](#)[► Facts at a Glance \(web\)](#)[► Archives](#)[► Events Calendar](#)[► Research Center/Library](#)[► Metro Classifieds](#)[► Bazaar](#)

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[► 30/10 Initiative](#)[► Policies](#)[► Training](#)[► Help Desk](#)[► Intranet Policy](#)

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## Metro Joins Caltrans Academy Students on Transportation Expedition

By TAWNY GESTUVO  
*Contributing Writer*

(May 28, 2009) Learning by touring and exploring could have been the theme for this year's Transportation Field Academy.

In partnership with the Caltrans Division of Transportation Planning, Office of Professional Development (OPD), Metro's Organizational Development and Training Department (OD&T) helped host Caltrans District 7's (Los Angeles) third annual Transportation Field Academy April 26 through May 1.

The group toured new urban developments, transportation systems, and communities in Los Angeles. The students also observed aeronautics, goods movement, and rail operations, as well as transportation planning and transportation systems information activities.

The five day academy was moderated by Office Chief of Caltrans OPD, Chris Hatfield and the OPD team, Lonora Graves and Lisa Franco-Gutierrez, who provided high energy days filled with planning oriented activities for transportation planners and engineers from Caltrans and other partner agencies.

## Metro plays a major role

Until three years ago, the field academy was conducted for the most part at Caltrans headquarters in Sacramento, California. Then Leann Williams and Melanie Bradford-Jefferson from Caltrans District 7 and Metro's Director of Organizational Development & Training Marion Jane Colston made it possible for Metro to play a major role in the intense, week-long training regimen.

"We have the field academy in order to reach out to more of Caltrans



Field Academy Students wait for a bus to LAX after having lunch at Metro Headquarters and seeing a presentation on the Metro Orange Line by Transportation Planning Manager Martha Butler.

planners and expose them to other statewide projects,” said Bradford-Jefferson, an associate transportation planner at Caltrans.

“They wanted to see Metro’s transit-oriented developments here in Los Angeles, I told them, tell me what you need and I’ll work with you,” Colston said.



Students got a sneak peek at the Solair Western, a transit oriented development which is nearing completion here.

With a few segments dedicated to Metro’s operations and joint ventures, attendees were able to sneak a peek inside the Wilshire and Western transit oriented development (TOD) Solair Wilshire. The 22-story tower is a Metro-KOAR transit-oriented joint development project designed to reduce automobile use by centralizing residences and retail businesses in close proximity to Metro transit lines.

**Structure and planning**

Colston reflected on a field academy she attended in Emeryville, Calif., and noticed the difference of Bay Area TODs to those in Los Angeles.



As part of their tour, students cruised through the LAX hangars and cargo terminals.

Before Metro became actively involved in providing the academy with presenters she and a few members of her staff attended a training session to see exactly how their curriculum was being structured.



Bradford-Jefferson said that each academy is designed to highlight and give planners insight on what is special to each district.

With cooperation from multiple local agencies and professionals in the private sector, the academy provided an open forum

for attendees to discuss and apply concepts first hand.

The group was encouraged to see how various grants and projects have been implemented as a result of their efforts.

Al Dias, a Caltrans District 6 (Fresno) transportation planner, acknowledged the interdependence of various modes of transportation to move both people and goods.

“The transportation system is seamless,” he said. “We need our local partners to meet the public needs. We (all inclusive) cannot build ourselves out of congestion, as density levels increase, mass transit must be developed.”

- Tawny Gestuvo is an Intern in Real Estate Administration.