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Team Metro: The 2009 APTA Rail Rodeo champs are flanked by APTA and Metro Rail officials as they take the APTA stage in Chicago for the crowning achievement photo op. Pictured are, second from left, George R. Kennedy, Director, Rail Vehicle Acquisition and Maintenance Operations; Transportation Instructor Gerald Harper; Maintenance Instructor Gary Dewater; TOS Esther Pippins (in checkered dress); Top Operator Robert Rodriguez (center, back row); Maintainer Glen Abraham; Maintainer Ronnie Burt; Rail GM Mike Cannell; Maintainer Eric Czintos, and, far right, Duane Martin, Director, Rail Transportation Operations. *Photo courtesy of APTA.*

Metro Rail Train Team Wins International Rail Rodeo

- **Solid Gold:** Metro train operator and maintenance crew hold on to championship title for the second year in a row. They join the 2009 championship Metro bus team in the APTA International winner's circle.

(June 16, 2009) Making Metro the team to beat for the second year in a row, the Los Angeles Metro championship rail team won the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) International Rail Rodeo held June 13 at the Chicago Transit Authority yard in Skokie, Illinois.

The repeat victory makes 2009 a solid gold year for Metro, whose championship bus team won top honors in the APTA International Bus Rodeo in May, for the second time in three years.

Joining Metro's championship bus team in the APTA International winner's circle, the top-scoring Metro Rail train team won the Rail Transit Team Achievement Award at the 17th Annual American Public Transportation Association (APTA) International Rail Rodeo.

The Los Angeles Metro team, racking up the highest rail operator and maintainer team combined score with 1,410 points, walked away with the championship title. Contestants from 11 rail systems around the nation competed for top honors.

Operator Robert Rodriguez and Rail Equipment Specialists Eric Czintos,

Ronnie Burt and Glen Abraham made up the winning team.

Troubleshooting and problem solving

The Maintainers Competition judges the ability to troubleshoot maintenance problems. The Metro team earned second place in this competition. The high-scoring team members were Eric Czintos, Ronnie Burt and Glen Abraham of Los Angeles Metro. The maintainer team was accompanied by coach and maintenance instructor Gary Dewater.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority took first place and Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon placed third.

It was a triumph for the returning champion maintainers, who won first place at the 2007 and 2008 APTA International competitions.

The top-scoring team scored the highest game points in the safety, HVAC (air conditioning repair) and written test events.

Rail GM Mike Cannell attributes the rail maintainer team's achievement to hard work and a great deal of experience. Veteran competitors Ronnie Burt and Eric Czintos have teamed up every year since 2003, when they took first place in the International Competition held in San Jose.

No stranger to competition

Championship competition is no stranger to Operator Robert Rodriguez.

The veteran competitor Robert Rodriguez came in a close second to the Sacramento Regional Transit District team. Rodriguez has competed at the international level on numerous occasions since 1997, according to coach and rail transportation instructor Esther Pippins.

Rodriguez and teammate Tu Phan took home the gold in two of the previous international competitions.

First place in the Operators Competition went to the Sacramento Regional Transit District team and the Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (Tri-Met) team placed third.

The APTA International Rail Rodeo Competition is designed to encourage excellence and professionalism in rail transit operations.

--from Gayle Anderson