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## Customer Service Agent Welcomed Back After Tackling Illness

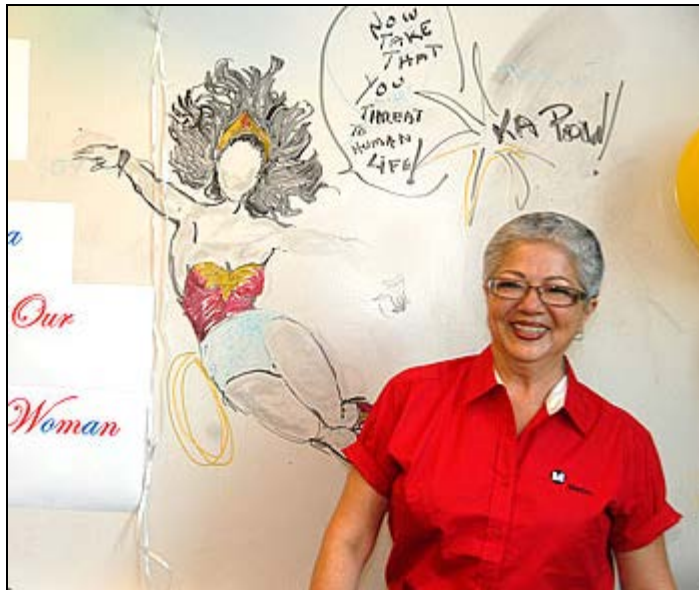
By Laura Kloth  
Staff Writer

Nowadays, when she looks up to the sky, Customer Service Agent Maria Elena Diaz really takes in the spectrum of colors and surrounding views.

"Everything is so much more beautiful," she says with an impressive smile.

"Cancer has a funny way of waking you up, and when you become a breast cancer survivor, you can't help but recognize each day as a gift," Diaz explains.

Diaz returned to work in August after having been on sick leave for nearly a year. She was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer in 2008 and underwent surgery followed by extensive chemotherapy and radiation treatments.



Wonder Woman: Customer Service Agent Maria Elena Diaz is welcomed back to work after a nearly year-long absence.

*Photos by Gayle Anderson*



Co-workers threw a surprise potluck breakfast to welcome Maria Elena Diaz back to work Aug. 30. Pictured here with Diaz, from left, are Tom Horne, Martin Buford, Marie Tervalon, and Gail Harvey.

**A heartfelt welcome**

Co-workers welcomed Diaz last month with a heart-warming brunch complete with Mexican food and a poem by Customer Relations Clerk Don Patterson.

Customer Programs and Services Customer Relations Director Gail Harvey said she was happy to have her "feisty" bilingual agent back at work because she was missed by the department. Diaz, who is bilingual, handles calls from patrons with reduced fares.



*"Your reason for leaving you did not reveal.  
Ah, Maria you are loved by us all.  
We asked did a tragedy befall?  
Since you have returned,  
We could cast those thoughts aside.  
We can now honestly say,  
It feels good to have you by our side."  
—From a poem by Don Patterson*

Customer Relations Agent Marie Tervalon said she thought about Diaz often.

"Just seeing her -- she just gives us so much inspiration. She's always up, and we just had to welcome her back," Tervalon said.

Diaz clearly remembers the day she received the bad news. It arrived following a routine exam in an almost matter-of-fact manner, where her doctor bluntly announced that her tests concluded she would need surgery and further treatment.

**Tears and awareness**

Diaz, who has two grown sons, remembers feeling terrified and cheated.

"I was leaving the doctor's office and alone I'm in my car. I just started crying. I was so scared," she said. It took a while to accept the news. "I prayed a lot," she said and then decided, "You know, I'm going to enjoy every day of my life the most I can, and do the best of it."

After her Sept. 2, 2008, surgery and treatments, Diaz said she began reading about the possible causes and prevention of cancer.

"All the things that we eat, that's what is killing us. All this fried food, all these hamburgers, fried chicken, canned food, TV dinners," she said.



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and Diaz wants to remind women that she is living proof that routine mammograms do save lives. She notes that the year before she was diagnosed with cancer, her exam revealed only healthy tissue.

Diaz said she stuck to a regimen of breathing exercises, created a healthy

menu complete with specialized filtered water, and spent time with family and friends.

"I tried not to think a lot about it, and I had high hopes and a lot of faith," she said, reflecting back on the experience. "In my mind, I was thinking, I'm going to be better. It's going to be fine and I'm going to be ok. And I guess all that positive thinking -- it helps you a lot."

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**Congestion Busters:** Illuminating a stellar effort in unraveling the region's huge traffic knot, gleaming Lucite trophies in the shape of a traffic cone pylon went to six reporters who report on the daily traffic grind for numerous broadcast outlets. And the winners are, from left, Vera Jimenez, Southern California's most-watched early morning TV traffic reporter; Tori Scott, who reports on KSB, KTMQ, KYMT, KSGN; Tiffany Brazil-Galea'l, who reports on KLCA, KIXA, KJILL, KYMT, KSPA, KTMQ, KSLY, I Heart Radio; Mark Wheeler of KLOS; Arianna Ortiz, who reports on KRTH, KFWB, and California Highway Patrol Officer Vince Ramirez, who reports traffic conditions on FOX 11 Morning News, Univision 34 morning news, Primera Edicion of Univision 34, 6 p.m., and on radio stations KWRM Radio Mexico mornings; KFRN 1280 Family Radio, La Poderosa 1550 and on the Internet Real Time Traffic internet show on Myfoxla.com for Fox network. *Photos by Gayle Anderson*

## Gearing up for Rideshare Week, Southland Transit Agencies Show Traffic Reporters Some Respect

In the news: [Golden Pylon Awards put a positive spin on traffic](#)  
*Los Angeles Times 10.1.09*

(Oct. 1, 2009) The annual Golden Pylon Awards spotlight true-grit traffic reporters whose on-air traffic talk keeps the region's traffic moving by promoting rideshare options such as carpool lanes, vanpools and public transportation. The awards are prelude to Rideshare Week, which begins Monday.

The event is sponsored by five regional transit agencies: Metro, Orange County Transportation Authority, Riverside County

The Golden Pylon Awards is a traditional prelude to Rideshare Week – a statewide campaign aimed to encourage thousands of commuters to 'share the ride' to help reduce traffic and smog. Rideshare Week begins Monday.

Transportation Commission, San Bernardino Associated Governments and Ventura County Transportation Commission.

Traffic congestion continues to rise in American cities of all sizes, according to the Texas Transportation Institute's 2009 Annual Urban Mobility Report, the nationally known study of mobility and traffic congestion on freeways and major streets in 90 cities.

The 2009 mobility report notes that congestion in the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana region, which chokes 61 percent of the freeway and major arterial system during the 8-hour peak periods and causes the average peak period traveler to spend an extra 70 hours of travel time and an additional 53 gallons of fuel per year.

Congestion also costs the solo driver an estimated \$1,480 in cold, hard cash and hits the region up for \$10.3 billion annually.

—from Gayle Anderson



Metro Commute Services Director David Sutton presents 'commuter's choice' award to CBS 2 News Traffic Reporter Vera Jimenez. In background, emcee Alan Holmes of the Ventura County Transportation Commission. Below, KFWB Traffic Reporter Arianna Ortiz shows off her gleaming Golden Pylon to last year's winner KLOS Traffic Reporter Doug Dunlap.



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MSSC vanpoolers save time, money and stress and have a good time doing it, says Vanpool coordinator George Neiro. Pictured above are, foreground, Oswaldo Gonzalez, Oscar Ramirez, Lenny Grech. Back row, from left, vanpool coordinator George Nerio, Justin Elenes, Ricardo Flores, and Richard Gapko. At right, vanpooler James Gappa and vanpool coordinator William Bernard.



## Take Rideshare for a test drive Sign up in time for Rideshare Week Oct. 5

By Terree Holman  
*Employee Transportation Coordinator*

(Oct. 1, 2009) National Rideshare Week is approaching and now is the time to join Metro's annual celebration of commuters who rideshare to work during the week of Oct. 5-9. If you don't already rideshare, this is the perfect time to try it. Along with all the benefits of using alternatives to driving alone, you can win prizes!

Metro's Employee Rideshare Program will be conducting drawings to win great prizes for employees that pledge to rideshare to work at least one day during the week of Oct. 5-9. You can be new to ridesharing or already carpooling, vanpooling or using



Give ridesharing a try, says Corporate ETC Terree Holman. Join in the fun, games and prizes during the week of October 5-9. [Pledge online](#) at Metro.net or

public transportation. [Pledge online](#) at Metro.net or visit the Employee Transportation Coordinator (ECT) at your site.

visit the Employee Transportation Coordinator (ECT) at your site. For more information, contact [Terree Holman](#), at (213) 922-4863.

You can also fill out a pledge form by visiting the Rideshare booth on Wednesday, Oct. 7, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Gateway Building between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.

What are the benefits of ridesharing? There are some valuable gains to be made:

- Receiving the Metro employee subsidy of up to \$120 a month towards commuting by public transportation or vanpool,
- Escaping the stress and hassles of driving in traffic,
- Having more time to sleep, read, do crosswords or Sudoku,
- Contributing to a cleaner environment,
- Reducing wear and tear on your car, and
- Saving money!

If you need more to convince you to give ridesharing a try, let two current participants in Metro's Employee Rideshare Program speak to their experiences:

Thirty-year employee George Nerio, a Mechanic A at MSSC, has been coordinating a Metro employee vanpool for over five years. Prior to starting a vanpool, he drove alone from Riverside which was 60 miles each way, or 120 miles a day or an amazing 600 miles a week! When asked why he decided to try vanpooling, he said, "You save money for one thing, wear and tear on your car, and you save yourself the stress of having to drive in traffic." He said he usually drives the van in the morning but another participant drives home and added, "It's a good way to travel; I'm satisfied and would recommend anyone to do it."

William Bernard, a vanpool coordinator for three years, is a Bus Body Repairer A/Relief Leader. He explained that he was initially reluctant to give up driving alone because "you get to do what you want, and listen to music you like." But commuting 57 miles one way from Moorpark led him to try vanpooling and discover the benefits of "saving a great amount of money, having time available to sleep and joking around with the guys."

Give ridesharing a try. Join in the fun, games and prizes during the week of October 5-9. For more information, employees may contact the Corporate ETC, Terree Holman, at (213) 922-4863.

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Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger joined federal, state and local officials at a news conference held in Union Station to announce California's request for more than \$4.7 billion in federal stimulus funding for engineering, design and construction of the state's high-speed train system – nearly a \$10 billion investment when state, local and private matching funds are added. The Governor submitted the state's application Oct. 2 for a share of \$8 billion set aside for high-speed train development under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. *Photos by Juan Ocampo*

## Metro Unites with Governor, Statewide Coalition to Seek Federal High-Speed Train Funds

- [Check it out](#): Metro's High-Speed Train website - LA to Orange County

By Dave Sotero  
*Media Relations*

(Oct. 6, 2009) Metro joined Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger Oct. 2 as part of a statewide coalition of transportation, labor, environmental groups, public officials and others to seek \$4.7 billion in stimulus funding to begin building California's high speed train network as early as 2012.

There is currently \$8 billion set aside for high-speed train development under the Obama Administration's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Unlike other states, California is well positioned to double the value

of a federal contribution with matching funds from its own high speed train bond measure passed in 2008 and other local and private matching funds, bringing potentially \$10 billion in investment for the state's high speed train development efforts.

The state is proposing the only true high-speed train capable of traveling more than 200 miles per hour and is further along in planning than any other similar project in the country. According to the California High Speed Rail Authority, California will soon have the environmental reviews it needs, and can break ground before the federal government's 2012 deadline. Additionally, the statewide project is expected to create nearly 130,000 jobs and pump billions of dollars into the state's economy.



Civic leaders from Anaheim to Los Angeles share podium with Governor Schwarzenegger in support of initiative.

**L.A. to Anaheim Segment**

California's application includes \$2.19 billion for Los Angeles to Anaheim, including high-speed train facilities at Los Angeles Union Station, Norwalk Station, and the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center (ARTIC); right-of-way acquisition, grade-separations, utility relocation, environmental mitigation, earthwork, guideway structures, tunneling, and track work. Jobs created in this corridor are estimated at 53,700.

Last July, the agency's Board approved its support for the development of the California High Speed Rail initiative as well as the first Los Angeles to Anaheim segment.

Both Metro and California High Speed Rail Authority will work together to establish high-speed train service in the Los Angeles Corridor utilizing, among others, Metro-owned facilities and rights-of-way. Metro will ensure full integration of all of its public transit services serving Union Station.



CEO Art Leahy notes Metro's role in the development of California High Speed Rail at news conference.

"Passenger rail ridership for the proposed L.A. to Anaheim high speed rail corridor could some day rival the Washington to Boston train service in the Northeast Corridor," said Art Leahy, Metro CEO. "Here in Los Angeles, Metro is dedicated to working closely with its corridor cities and the California High Speed Rail Authority to create a mutually beneficial and fully integrated high speed train service that will greatly enhance mobility options between our own densely urbanized metropolitan areas."

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TOS Marvin Kidd: No '10-59s' on his watch. He has a passion for helping disabled patrons use public transportation.

*Photos: Gayle Anderson*

## TOS Kidd Recognized for Assisting Metro Patrons

By Laura Kloth  
*Staff Writer*

Transit Operations Supervisor (TOS) Marvin Kidd says he was just doing his job when he assisted two wheelchair users and their blind companion as they were trying to get home following a rally in downtown Los Angeles last June.

Kidd's efforts apparently made such an impression on one of them, Ken Schaap, that he quickly penned a letter to Metro CEO Art Leahy to let him know how grateful they were for Kidd's assistance.

"Both companions with me are wheelchair bound. I am blind," reads Schaap's letter written on Dayle McIntosh Center letterhead, an organization that specializes in providing resources and advocacy for the disabled.

"We got carried away with the rally and the next thing we knew we were almost alone," wrote Schaap. "With two manual wheelchairs and an old, blind guy, we were in trouble. Metro to the rescue."

Kidd was driving by in a Metro van when he spotted the trio.

"A lady came up to me in a

wheelchair and said she wanted to get back to where she started," Kidd explained later. "I said, 'OK, go down here and catch a bus and it will take you right to the corner.' "

Schaap's letter reads: "When we arrived at the bus, much to our surprise, Mr. Kidd was there. He helped us on the bus. Three stops later, we had to get off and there was Mr. Kidd to help us again. He helps us get to the parking lot."

"To some," he wrote, "these kind deeds may not seem like much, but to me and my companions, they were God sent. Mr. Kidd was so courteous and kind beyond the call of duty in helping us. My partners and I felt that someone should know about these kind deeds. We formally thank Mr. Marvin Kidd and compliment you, Mr. Leahy, on your choice of supervision."



Wrote one patron in a letter to Metro: "Mr. Kidd was so courteous and kind beyond the call of duty in helping us."

**A passion to help**

Kidd, a former bus driver for children with special needs, said he has a passion for assisting disabled patrons.

"My mom is confined to a wheelchair. I look at it like this. Those three individuals that I helped -- one of them could have been my parent. So I would like for the supervisors to do the same thing if they see my parent out there. That's how I look at it," he said.

Originally addressed to Leahy, the letter made its way to Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers and other senior-level executives, including DEO of Operations Michael Greenwood who promptly praised Kidd for his efforts and presented him with a framed version of Schaap's letter and an official commendation letter from Metro.

**A duty to serve**

As a TOS, Kidd is responsible for accident investigations, answering complaints and most importantly, according to him, handling wheelchair "pass-ups," called "10-59s."

A "10-59" occurs when an operator is forced to pass-up a wheelchair passenger when either the bus's wheelchair ramp is malfunctioning or the bus is at full wheelchair capacity. Kidd is responsible for insuring the wheelchair patrons gets picked up as quickly as possible.

"I just try to get over there and assist them and try to get them on the next one. A lot of them, they're trying to go to doctor's appointments," he said.

"They didn't have to write nothing about me," said Kidd, referring to the commendation. "I wasn't even looking for that. My duties were to just make sure that they get to where they needed to go."

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[Check it out:](#) Flip through Metro's Flickr site to travel through the eras.

**Metro’s Flickr photo archive documents transportation history through images**

By Kenn Bicknell  
*Metro Librarian*  
Special to myMetro.net

Metro’s Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library and Archive is seeing tremendous success during the first year of uploading its digital historic photo collection to Flickr, the world’s largest photo-sharing website.

In just 11 months, nearly 5,000 photos have been made available with more than 382,000 views recorded, while the library has received positive feedback from a variety of new Metro library “fans,” who have featured some of the now-available Metro images in numerous popular blogs and publications.

Since the library began uploading photos to Flickr, users have identified individuals in the photos, locations where photos were taken and provided information about events, equipment and other historical facts.

Users can view others’ comments and promote dialogue and education while viewers benefit from a peak at a retrospective of Metro’s rich history.

Using Flickr not only dramatically increases the number of people who can see Metro’s unique collection; it utilizes many social networking tools such as keyword tags (metadata) which lead users to other photos with similar

tags.

Over the past several years, social networking sites like Flickr, Facebook and Twitter have proven to be a useful sharing tool for private and public organizations with photo-sharing websites such as Flickr giving individuals and groups the opportunity to reach many more people than they could through their own website.

High-profile web-hosted access raises awareness that special collections such as Metro's exist, promotes their use, allows people to participate in identifying aspects of the photographs and is an important part of community outreach for the library and archive.

Photographs preserved on the Flickr site can also be saved in more than one photo set, so users have a better chance of finding relevant images whether they are searching for a topic, location, or time period.

The archive has also benefited from linking to photographs from other providers on Flickr that relate to Metro and its predecessor agencies – the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC) and the Southern California Rapid Transit District (SCRTD).

This can add an extra dimension to the experience of searching for historical information about the transportation history of the Los Angeles area.

Metro's Library staff makes every effort to connect the library's collection with potential users – current employees, retirees, historians, students and others in the transportation community – and encourages them to share their memories and enhance information about the Metro photo collection on Flickr.

Metro's Flickr site is accessible at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/metrolibraryarchive> and those without Internet access are welcome to visit the Library on the 15<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Gateway Headquarters building and browse the collection.


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**Recognition:** CEO Art Leahy, Chief Operating Officer Carolyn Flowers and Operations Committee Chair Rita Robinson pay tribute to the heroic acts of two Metro Bus Operators at the Operations Committee Meeting held Sept. 17, 2009. *Text and photos by Gayle Anderson*

### Venice Division

[Bus Operator Melvin Braxton](#)

### Carson Division

[Bus Operator Kenya Allison](#)


From left, CEO Art Leahy, Operations Committee Chair Rita Robinson, 40-year veteran Operator Melvin Braxton, Venice Division Transportation Manager Cheryl Brown and Chief Operating Officer Carolyn Flowers.

## Operator's professionalism prevails over panic on PCH

Beaming with pride and gratitude, Venice Division Transportation Manager Cheryl Brown was eager to report on Operator Melvin Braxton's act of heroism Aug. 24 sparked by an entanglement of a Line 534 bus, a fallen tree and live wires splayed across a traffic snare on Pacific Coast Highway. Brown said Braxton's Line 534 coach was in service on PCH when he noticed a tree had fallen into his lane. As he followed the flow of traffic trying to detour around the tree, the bus came into contact with live wires felled by the tree. As sparks began to fly, Braxton immediately eased the bus to full stop and calmed the passengers while he assessed the situation and determined safety measures. "I want to thank Operator Braxton for putting all those years of experience into play," said Brown. "He made sure a potentially fatal accident did not occur." This Metro hero did not go unsung. The incident was reported by KABC Eyewitness News. More importantly, the 'no injuries to passengers or occupants of traffic-jammed cars' made the five-hour traffic delay a relief. By the way, Metro veteran Melvin Braxton will celebrate 40 years of service in December, said Brown, who noted Braxton has been at Venice Division so long that some want to

rename it to the Melvin Braxton Division. Said Operations Committee Chair Rita Robinson to Operator Braxton, "Congratulations on your service to MTA and the citizens of Los Angeles."

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From left, CEO Art Leahy, Operations Committee Chair Rita Robinson, Operator Kenya Allison, and Chief Operating Officer Carolyn Flowers.

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### **Knew how to handle blowout on the freeway traveling 55 mph**

South Bay General Manager Dana Coffey said matter-of-factly to the members of the Operations Committee: "I could be standing here trying to figure out what happened and the casualties that could have been. Instead, I'm here telling you about how Operator Kenya Allison calmly brought a bus with passengers to safety after a blowout in the middle of a freeway."

Seems like Operator Allison was rolling down the 110 Freeway in her Line 446 40-ft bus just after midnight on July 14 and was just about to enter the Manchester Transitway when the left rear tire blew.

As reported in myMetro.net in August, passengers looking out the left window could see the rubber separate from the bus and sparks flashing from the rim grating on the road. Traveling at 55 miles-per-hour, Allison managed, amazingly, to focus on keeping her six passengers and herself safe.

The intranet article, by TCAP Intern Casandra Escobedo and Rich Morallo, Community Relations Manager, said that Allison was also concerned about the safety of the moving vehicles around her. She steadied the steering and kept the bus traveling straight ahead and waited until the rumbling coach had slowed down before finally stepping on the brakes. The bus, amazingly, slid right into the regular pickup location for passengers at the station.

The calm and collected Operator said the Metro's Bus Drivers Training

program prepared her for such an incident. "If I hadn't known what to do, we would have had a disaster," she said. "I just did what the TOS (Demetrius Jones, now Asst. Transportation Manager at Division 18) told me to do." Never dreaming that she would find herself in the same situation, Allison had asked how to handle a blowout on the freeway. Jone's answer: Stay calm, keep the bus in a straight line, never hit the brakes. "And that's exactly what I did," Allison told the committee. Listening intently, Board Member Mike Antonovich commended Allison for her actions and said, "Your actions are heroic and hopefully others will know what to do, as well, if they have the misfortune to be in this situation." To which Operations Committee Chair Rita Robinson responded, "Thank you for asking the right questions. We have all learned a lesson from your heroic action."

See [myMetro.net report](#) 8.18.09: **Operator Keeps Passengers Safe after Freeway Blowout**

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## Ready to Roll

- West Valley Division Mechanic Dave Sweany is among 4,000 would-be owners already on the waiting list for the Aptera, a three-wheeled, all-electric and hybrid vehicle being made in San Diego County



## Metro Mechanic Gets Charged Up for New Ride

By Laura Kloth  
Staff Writer

(Oct. 8, 2009) Metro West Valley Division Mechanic Leader Dave Sweany can't wait to try out his new ride.

Sweany, a hybrid vehicle enthusiast, is among the first 4,000 people across the world who deposited \$500 to purchase an Aptera, a high-tech three-wheel hybrid vehicle.

Produced in Southern California, the futuristic vehicle is often described as a cross between a motorcycle and a car.



View at [myFoxla.com](#)

Metro Mechanic Dave Sweany on Fox 11 News report: "It's definitely a real car and worth the wait to get."

Can't hook up at work? Check it out on myFoxla.com at  
[http://www.myfoxla.com/dpp/news/scitech/Are\\_Drivers\\_Ready\\_for\\_the\\_Aptera\\_20090603](http://www.myfoxla.com/dpp/news/scitech/Are_Drivers_Ready_for_the_Aptera_20090603)

The first batch of Apteras will be completely electric and are expected to be available to buyers in November. However, Sweany will have to wait for his car - a electric/gas fueled hybrid - until the second batch of Apteras are delivered sometime in 2010.

"This is a real thing. It's not a hoax," Sweany said, noting that he personally conducted extensive research on the new vehicle and even put a sledgehammer to the body to test it.

Made almost completely out of heavy duty composite material, the Aptera is expected to have a price tag of between \$25,000 and \$40,000 and is among the latest green hybrid vehicles available to consumers who want fuel efficiency at a somewhat affordable price.

With its futuristic yet practical ability, Aptera company officials hope their creation becomes the next Honda-like vehicle for the middle-class consumer.

Source: myFoxla.com



Electric vehicles like the Aptera are the future, he predicts.

"We're in an era of big change. They (auto manufacturers) could've done a lot of these things in the 70s, but chose not to and now they are trying to play catch up," he said, adding that he's already checked out Metro's hybrid buses currently being tested.

The new buses, he said, are "amazing" not only for the fuel economy and power, but also for their easy handling.

The sleek, futuristic Aptera – named from the Greek word meaning "wingless" – depends on lithium batteries, while Metro's hybrid buses run on ultra capacitors, a high-powered, energy dense electronic unit that provides power during acceleration and then quickly recharges itself during normal braking.

The Aptera's design team claims the vehicle can travel 100 miles on a standard 100 volt, eight hour charge. Not only will the car save on gasoline, it is equipped with airbags and air conditioning.

Sweany has a passion for gadgets that's evident in his love for radio control aircraft and the time he devotes as a board representative of the San Fernando Valley Flyers – a group of fellow remote-control model aviators, which last year, boasted some 350 members.



Sweany put his own alternative vehicle on display at the Metro Bus Rodeo Car and Motorcycle Show: a radio-controlled Ultimate flying plane.

Sweany was interviewed about his Aptera purchase as he displayed his radio controlled Ultimate flying plane on a recent segment on the FOX 11 news.

"I've been flying since I was knee high to a grass hopper," he said adding that he grew up in the desert where not too many hobbies were available.

A 27-year Metro employee, Sweany says he's excited about the Aptera for several reasons but mostly because his new ride will need very little maintenance. And while he relishes his career as a third shift Metro Mechanic Lead, Sweany says he looks forward to the idea that he will only need to worry about changing the tires and brake pads. "No more tune ups and oil changes. I just want to get in and go and fly by gas stations," he said.


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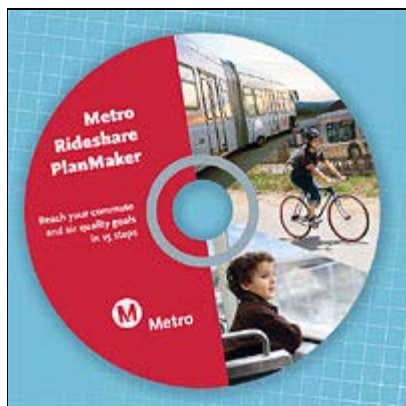
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AQMD Board Member and Long Beach City Councilwoman Tonia Reyes Uranga, at right, presents the environmental agency's Clean Air Award to Metro Commute Services for innovative Rideshare PlanMaker, a DIY kit for employers with step-by-step instructions on how to create and manage a successful Rideshare program at the worksite. Accepting the award Oct. 2 is, from left, Metro Board Member Pam O'Connor, PlanMaker project developer Rita Linsey, Commute Services sr. account executive, and David Sutton, Metro Commute Services director.

## Metro Wins AQMD Award for Rideshare Public Education Tool on Air Quality Issues

(Oct. 8, 2009) Metro is the recipient of the Public Education on Air Quality Issues Award from the Air Quality Management District (AQMD) for its Rideshare PlanMaker compact disk and web link. The prestigious 2009 Clean Air Awards were handed out Oct. 2 at the Millenium Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles.



[Check it out:](#) The complete Metro Commute Services PlanMaker Rideshare DIY kit is also online at

Metro's Rideshare PlanMaker has 15 recommended strategies on how to help Employee Transportation Coordinators (ETCs) implement a rideshare program at their worksite.

Many of the strategies are turnkey program offered by Metro such as transit pass programs, survey assistance and processing, ride matching for car or vanpool information, the Guaranteed Ride Home program., incentives such as free gift cards and subsidies of up to \$400 a month for vanpools.

The user-friendly CD includes forms, brochures and other collateral materials

metro.net.

downloadable from the internet, clip art and flyer examples that reduces printing costs and paper waste. The Metro Rideshare PlanMaker is a one-stop center for ETCs to plan an effective and successful rideshare program that meets AQMD requirements.

Metro's Rideshare PlanMaker compact disk was distributed to 2,300 employers and organizations last year at Metro transportation coordinators workshops and the Southern California Association of Commuter Transportation's Annual conference and by mail. The PlanMaker is also available on-line.

"The Rideshare PlanMaker is the only resource I know of that makes it easy for an employer to comply with air quality regulations while providing a high quality, low-cost rideshare program for their employees," said David Sutton, Director of Metro's Commuter Services.

AQMD is the air pollution control agency for Orange County and major portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties. Metro is the leader in operating the largest fleet of clean compressed natural gas buses in the country. For more information on Metro's Rideshare PlanMaker go to [www.metro.net/riding](http://www.metro.net/riding) metro.

*--from Helen Ortiz-Gilstrap  
Media Relations*

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A landing dock for the space station? No, this clean-as-a-whistle paint booth reflects the green efficiencies of Division 3's new Annex Building. The 12,500-square-foot structure, built with steel frame and masonry wall, houses the functions of facilities maintenance, non-revenue repair, air conditioning repair, body repair, paint booth, welding and tire services. *Photos: Gayle Anderson*



## North Los Angeles Division Opens 'Green' Maintenance Annex Building

- Officials Counting on New Facility to Take the LEED

By Laura Kloth  
*Staff Writer*

(Oct. 13, 2009) North Los Angeles Division 3 officials proudly unveiled Metro's new \$4.2 million "green" maintenance annex building Monday, saying they hope that the new facility will receive the LEED silver certification in the next few months.

Among those attending the Oct. 12 ribbon cutting event for the 12,500-square-foot steel and masonry structure, were CEO Art Leahy, Duarte City Council and Metro Board Member John Fasana and event host Jack Gabig, General Manager of Metro San Gabriel Valley.



Among those attending the Oct. 12 ribbon cutting event for the 12,500-square-foot steel and masonry structure, were Division 3 mechanics, CEO Art Leahy, far left; Duarte City Council and Metro Board Member John Fasana, center; Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers, center, back row; Maintenance Manager Cliff Thorne (cutting ribbon) and event host Jack Gabig, General Manager of Metro San Gabriel Valley, far right.

"This facility, most importantly, will help us to continue to improve our service to the surrounding communities by improving our bus reliability and appearance, and comfort of our fleet," said Gabig.

According to Tim Lindholm, Director of Metro's Capital Projects/Facilities Department, the building was awarded 37 points toward LEED certification because it adheres to the Leadership and Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) guidelines set by the U.S. Green Building Council.

**Earth friendly**

Some of the building's "green" features included generating 75 percent of the construction debris as recyclable material, purchasing local or sustainable materials to reduce shipping emissions, using Amazon-friendly wood products and special paints along with near-ceiling level windows that utilize more daylight to reduce energy costs.

Overall, Metro spent \$100,000 toward the facility's green objectives, and Lindholm predicted that amount would be recaptured



Director of Metro's Capital Projects/Facilities Department Tim Lindholm: Lower utility bills will recapture \$100,000 spent towards the facility's green objectives.

with lower utility bills in coming years.

"When people say that a green building is cost prohibitive, or it costs too much, or is too complicated, it's just not true. It's very easy, actually," Lindholm said.

The new annex, which comprises the second phase of a \$19 million master plan for the division, is expected to house the facility's maintenance, non-revenue AC and body repair activities, as well as a paint booth and welding and tire maintenance operations.

Noting that both he and his parents worked out of Division 3, Leahy opened his remarks by saying, "It's only right and appropriate that Cypress Park and Highland Park should have the best facility in the system, don't you agree?" Leahy then praised the maintenance employees for their ongoing efforts in keeping Metro's fleet clean and safe.

"Last time I checked buses and trains don't maintain themselves...So that means that we're dependent upon you, and the bus operators are dependent upon you-- by extension so are the taxpayers and the customers who are very important. So thank you everybody from maintenance," he said.

#### **An all-hands effort**

The maintenance staff, added Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers, "had to work around the construction of this new facility. And they did a marvelous job of continuing to get the business done, and get our fleet out everyday in a reliable manner, while all this construction was going on."

Fasana agreed saying that the new building would help Metro serve its patrons.

"We know most importantly that it's going to help you continue to deliver excellent service to our customers, to our riders," Fasana said thanking all those involved in making the new facility a reality.



At the speaker's podium: Duarte City Council and Metro Board Member John Fasana and event host Jack Gabig, General Manager of Metro San Gabriel Valley. Below, CEO Art Leahy.




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Click on image above for interactive step-by-step directions, where you can also play Play 'Beat the Quake' to test your earthquake knowledge and skill at [dropcoverholdon.org](#).

- **DROP** to the ground (before the earthquake drops you!),
- Take **COVER** by getting under a sturdy desk or table, and
- **HOLD ON** to it until the shaking stop

## Thursday, 10.15 at 10:15: Get Ready to Shake Out!

### Metro will participate in the Great California Shake Out

- [What to do:](#) The American Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offer advice on earthquake preparedness.
- Check it out at [www.shakeout.org](#)

(Oct. 13, 2008) The [Great California Shake Out](#) will go off this Thursday at 10:15 a.m. sharp. In an all-staff memo to employees, CEO Art Leahy directed that "employees who are able should perform a "drop, cover, and hold on" drill at that time at their desk."

The exercise is billed as the largest earthquake preparedness activity in U.S. history.

According to the Shake Out website, "millions of people in homes, schools, businesses, government offices, and public places all over California will 'Drop, Cover, and Hold On,' " the standard exercise for protecting oneself from falling objects released by a temblor.

Last year, 5.5 million Southern Californians participated in the drill. It has since expanded to the entire state and organizers are aiming for 10 million participants this year.

"It's very important for employees to participate because in a stressful situation, such as a seismic event, staff may begin to panic and forget something that hasn't been practiced," said Phyllis Meng, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor. "Practicing for emergency events will train the employees in what to do during and following the event."

One thing to do may involve staying put, experts agree. During an

earthquake, many people are injured by falling building pieces. Often the safest place to be is inside a high-rise, particularly near the core of the building.

As predictions of 'The Big One' increase awareness, the Great California Shake Out hopes to encourage California residents to cover and protect themselves at the first jolt of a quake, without waiting to learn if the earthquake is large. By the time of that realization, it might be too late to protect yourself.

Meng reminds Metro Headquarters employees to "Drop, Cover and Hold On" whenever they feel an earthquake. She also reminds employees to move away from windows, even though the building's windows hold safety glass designed to crumble rather than fragment.

"If you are in an elevator, sit down and hang on," she adds. "Sometimes that's all you can do."

And, following an earthquake at Metro Headquarters, Meng recommends a little patience.

Even though your area might seem unaffected, Building Services must inspect each floor and all the equipment throughout the building, including equipment on the roof. Elevators must be inspected before they can begin carrying passengers again. Those inspections take time.

*-- from staff reports*

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### Five things to remember when an earthquake strikes Metro

- Don't panic; do not run outside!
- If time allows, get under your desk or in another protected area, duck and cover.
- Wait for instruction from your floor warden or supervisor.
- Remember that earthquakes often come in groups.
- If you are instructed to evacuate, remain calm and proceed in an orderly fashion.

The [American Red Cross](#) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency ([FEMA](#)) offer advice on earthquake preparedness:

### When an earthquake hits when you are home

#### Before

- Stock at least a three-day supply of food, water (one gallon per person per day) clothes (at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person), first aid and medical supplies, eyeglasses, extra cash (including coins), sanitation supplies, bedding, tools, a portable radio with batteries and other items your family will require.
- Conduct earthquake drills (including ducking under furniture) every six months with your family.
- Identify the safest places in each room in your home so you know where to take cover during an earthquake. This would be away from shelves, glass windows and heavy objects that might fall.
- Identify each way to exit your home and keep each route clear.

- Decide where and when to unite should you be apart when an earthquake hits.
- Choose a person out of the area for family members to contact if they become separated.
- Locate shutoff valves for water, gas, and electricity. Train each family member how to turn off utilities before an earthquake.
- Make copies of vital records and make photos and/or video of your valuables. Keep these records in a safe deposit box or with a trusted relative/friend in another city or state.
- Know the policies of the school or daycare center your children attend.

**During**

- Remain calm.
- If you are inside; stay inside.
- Protect yourself by ducking under a heavy piece of furniture or in a hall near an interior wall while covering your head and neck.
- Do not stand in a doorway. The door may injure you during the shaking.
- Stay away from appliances, large glass panes, shelves holding objects, and large decorative masonry, brick or plaster such as fireplaces.
- Keep hallways clear. They are usually one of the safest places to be during an earthquake. Stay away from kitchens and garages, which tend to be the most dangerous places.
- If you smell gas, do not turn on an electric light.

**After**

- Check for injuries and give aid.
  - Only use the phone for serious injury or fires.
  - Check gas and water leaks, broken electrical wiring and sewage lines. If you have turned your gas off, do not attempt to turn it back on! To safely re-establish service, you must call the Gas Company.
  - Check the building for cracks and damage.
  - Check food and water supplies.
  - Turn on radio or television for instructions.
  - Keep the streets clear for emergency vehicles.
  - Be prepared for aftershocks.
  - Remain calm and help others. If evacuating, post a message inside your home telling family members where to find you.
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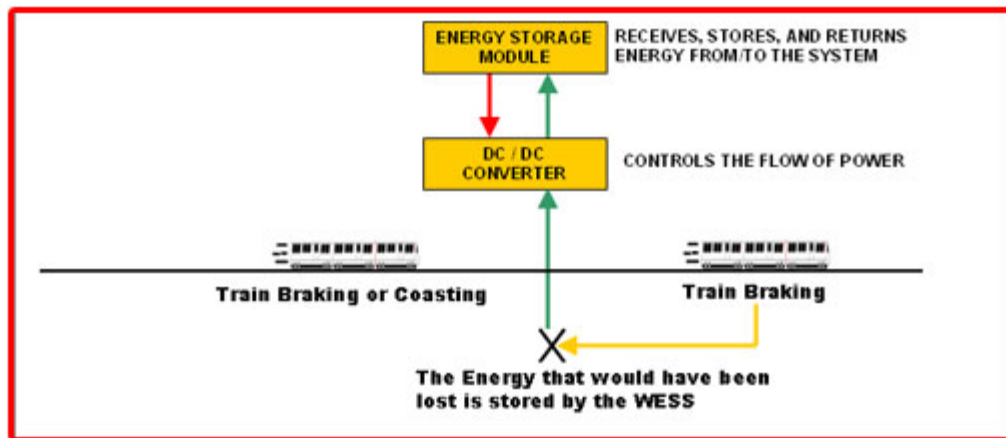
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## WESS operation puts the brake on energy waste



WESS flywheel technology is expected to capture regenerative braking energy when trains slow or stop and then transfer the energy back to the same train, or another train, when it starts or accelerates.

## Metro Systems engineering team gets \$4.5 million grant for wayside station system that receives, stores and returns energy

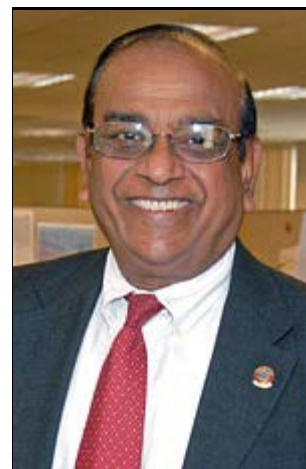
- Feds Provide Funding for Red Line Energy Savings Project

(Oct. 13, 3009) Metro has received \$4.5 million in federal stimulus funds to install a Wayside Energy Storage Substation (WESS) at the Westlake/MacArthur Park Metro Red Line station, officials announced.

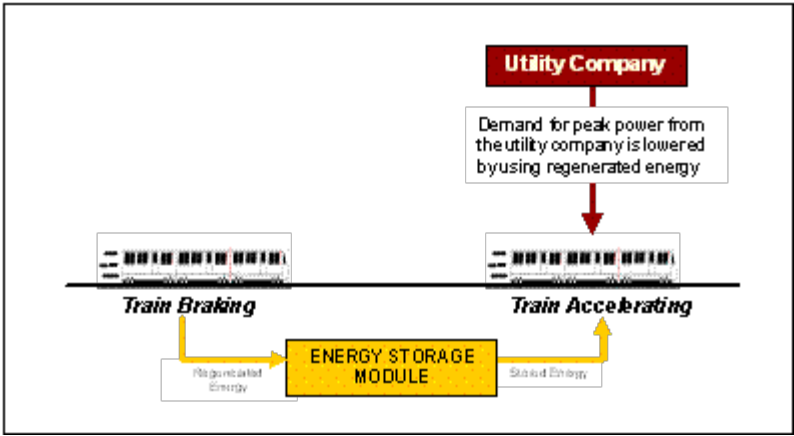
Metro was one of 43 transit agencies that will benefit from the \$100 million U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) grant awarded to pursue cutting-edge environmental technologies expected to help reduce global warming, lessen America's dependence on oil and create green jobs.

The funding was awarded thanks to the combined efforts of Metro's Construction Division Systems Engineering, Environmental Compliance and Services, and Planning and Government Relations departments.

The funding will pay for Metro's WESS flywheel technology which is expected to capture regenerative braking energy when trains slow or stop and then transfer the energy back to the same train, or another train, when it starts or accelerates, said Ram Krishna, P.E., Director of Project Engineering Systems for Metro.



Ram Krishna, P.E., Director of Project Engineering Systems for Metro.



The stored energy reduces the total power demand from the utility, which is critical during peak usage periods such as summer afternoons.

**How the System Works**

The WESS system is able to capture the energy regenerated by trains as they use their motors to brake. In effect, the motors are run in reverse to slow down and stop the train therefore producing free power using the trains’ inertia.

Once the energy is captured, the storage system would discharge the energy during the next peak power demand, which often is the same train when it leaves the passenger station a few minutes later.

This stored energy helps power the train during peak usage as it leaves the station, so that the standard utility power serves as a secondary power source. It also reduces the total power demand from the utility, which is critical during peak usage periods such as summer afternoons. Finally, it reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the transit system.



Conventional TPSS: TPSS systems receive AC high voltage power from utilities and convert it to DC power for operation of trains.



Battery WESS: The WESS system does not use high voltage AC power from the utilities. Instead, it “recycles” the DC power within the system.

**New Energy Storage Technologies**

Krishna was instrumental in bringing together the technology included in the winning proposal along with coordinating staff from Metro, VYCON, an L.A.-based energy storage systems company, and technical experts from Turner Engineering Corporation.

Other stakeholders in the project include the California Energy Commission, the Los Angeles City Department of Water and Power, Southern California Edison, Chevron Energy Solutions and Eaton Electrical Systems and Systems.

Krishna is a strong advocate of designing traction power systems that incorporate new energy storage technologies that can store this free energy

and put it to good use, and has assisted the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in exploiting the advantages of energy storage.

Energy storage technologies applied to rail systems, said Krishna, “will improve the environment, save power costs, support utility company’s peak power demands, and lower capital costs in new construction.”

Most transit traction power systems in the U.S., he added, “are missing an opportunity to save valuable energy.”

For example, he said, every time a train brakes and stops, it generates energy that often goes unused due to the lack of an energy storage device in the system. The result is wasted energy, typically converted into heat and dissipated into the air.

“Can we afford to throw away free energy? I say ‘no’,” he said.

*--from staff reports*

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Photos by Luis Inzunza



Metro Gold Line trains began pre-revenue testing in East Los Angeles Oct. 6.

## Independent Safety Panel Finds New Metro Gold Line Extension Designed/Built to Operate Safely

Eastside safety report online: [Panel Review of the Gold Line Eastside Extension \(PDF\)](#)

*Excerpts from News Release by Marc Littman*

(Oct. 15, 2009) An independent panel of rail transit safety experts has concluded that the new Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles has been designed and built to operate safely.

The report, released Oct. 6, comes as Metro begins testing trains and training operators for service.

CEO Art Leahy asked three renowned rail safety and operations experts from across the country, who have a combined total of more than 100 years of experience, to do a critical review of the Eastside Extension and advise if its safety features were sufficient.

In late June and early July of this year the panel spent a week studying every aspect of the new Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension including rides on test trains.



Metro Gold Line becomes an iconic member of the community.

"The operational characteristics of the Eastside Extension are not unlike many other light rail operating environments in the United States," according to the panel report.

"It has been designed to be a safe, efficient and effective extension of the Pasadena Gold Line. The at-grade crossings have incorporated design features to promote the safe movement of trains and motor vehicles through these intersections."

The rail safety panel also noted the street running segment of the Metro Gold Line extension, where trains operate in the middle of the street at no more than 35 miles-per-hour within the posted speed limit for vehicular traffic, is typical of many light rail lines in North America that operate without any crossing gates.

Safety experts also praised Metro's safety outreach program as "outstanding and a model for the rail transit industry."



Tunnel vision: Passing Metro Gold Trains exit and enter tunnel at Gless St.

However, the panel suggested additional safety enhancements such as installing fencing in areas where frequent jaywalking is observed, installing raised buttons or rumble strips and reflective pavement markers so motor vehicles don't accidentally intrude on the trainway, reduce warning sign clutter, and work closely with law enforcement to strongly enforce the *"Stop Here"* and *"Keep Clear"* requirements.

Metro is heeding the panel's recommendations. It also has deployed safety ambassadors to help educate the public and is putting in traffic enforcement cameras at 14 intersections. For weeks, Sheriff's and LAPD officers also have been patrolling the light rail alignment.

Additionally, Metro has been conducting a series of tests of multiple safety and communications systems and has now started pre-revenue operations that will familiarize operators with the station stops and procedures.

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## Employees Needed to Staff Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Opening

**UPDATE: 10.26.09** All shifts are full. Thank you!

- Deadline to sign up is Monday, October 26.

(Oct. 16, 2009) About 450 employees are needed to provide crowd control during the opening of the Edward R. Roybal Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension, tentatively expected to take place on Sunday, November 15, 2009. (Please note that no official opening date has been announced to the public at this time.)

The deadline for signing up is Monday, October 26. Employees may download the sign-up form [here](#). Print out and complete in full with the required signatures and return through interoffice mail to Danielle Boutier at MS:99.19.3 or fax to 213.922.5654.

Please note, employees planning to work need to have their supervisor's approval, and division employees will also need to have their division manager's approval to participate.

Employees who work at the opening will receive an Edward R. Roybal Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension staff T-shirt and a cap to wear as the opening event uniform.

Employees will be scheduled to work an 8 ½ hour shift which includes a 30 minute lunch break. Two hour mandatory training sessions will take place the week of November 2.

Represented employees will be paid according to the terms of their respective collective bargaining agreement.

Non-represented, non-exempt employees will receive compensatory time off in lieu of compensation for hours worked in excess of forty hours, which will be granted as time and a half for all hours worked over 40 per week. Non-represented, exempt employees will have straight time added to their TOWP bank.



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## Iris Kellybrew, Div. 2 Bus Operator Dies at 64

- Services are scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 23, at the Angelus Funeral Home, 3875 Crenshaw Blvd. in Los Angeles. Information: (323) 296-1151

(Oct. 20, 2009) Services will be held on Friday for Div. 2 Bus Operator Iris Kellybrew, 64, who died Sunday following a stroke.

Born on March 8, 1945, Mr. Kellybrew was hired in April 2006 as a bus operator contractor. He was promoted to part-time bus operator the following August and hired on full time one year later.

Deon Kellybrew said his father really enjoyed his job as a Metro bus operator and often shared stories about his daily routes. "He honestly loved his job," his son said.

Div. 2 Bus Operator Jacqueline Vanderbilt remembers Mr. Kellybrew as a "wonderful person" who loved dominoes, cooking and playing cards.

Vanderbilt said she met Mr. Kellybrew when they both attended a class at the Operations Central Instruction and, while he was often ill, he always said he was "feeling better."

Mr. Kellybrew suffered "a massive stroke" about a week before his passing and was living in Los Angeles at the time of his death. He is survived by seven children and several grandchildren.

Services are scheduled for 1:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 23, at the Angelus Funeral Home, 3875 Crenshaw Blvd. in Los Angeles. Mr. Kellybrew will be buried in his hometown of Dardinelle, Arkansas.



**Operator Iris Kellybrew**



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Metro execs get behind the wheel for CEO Art Leahy's crash course in Operations. All cones survived.

**Photos by Luis Inzunza**

**Slide show:** Use 'back' and 'next' buttons to view

Metro’s Executives Get a Chance at the Wheel

- CEO Art Leahy shares bus operating experience with staff

By Laura Kloth  
Staff Writer

(Oct. 15, 2009) Metro’s executive staff put aside their typical duties to get a little cross-training exercise this week with the opportunity to pilot a 45-foot Metro training bus at the request of their boss, Metro CEO Art Leahy.

“The important thing today is to understand and have some sense of what bus operators go through and what experiences they have,” said Leahy as he prepped his team at the 410 Center Street training lot.

“When you see them [operators] in the headquarters building, or if you go out to the division, they believe for the most part that we don’t have the slightest idea what goes on in their life. And you know what, they’re right, we don’t. But having some respect for the task they undertake is appropriate,” he said.

Leahy began his career as a bus operator some 38 years ago and has made it a point throughout his supervisory career to have staff experience actually driving a bus, said Special Assistant to the CEO Ron Schwartz.

“Thirty years ago, he made me drive one,” Schwartz said laughing and

wondering if it was really an “exercise in humility.”

When he was at the helm of the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), Leahy requested that that agency’s board members have the same experience, said Doug Middleton, Director Operations Central Instruction and Improvement, who worked under Leahy then.



But are they ready for extra board assignments? Only Instructor Vince Wilkes, at left, knows for sure.

Despite Tuesday’s rain and slick course conditions, the staff determined to stay focused as each took their turn maneuvering the 22,000 pound bus around the mini-training course.

“It [the bus] has a lot of power,” said Vince Wilkes, Transit Operations Supervisor - Instruction. “I call this bus Shamu with a steering wheel.”

Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers raised her hand to go first and, although she’d already sat in the drivers’ seat at the recent Bus Rodeo, admitted being somewhat apprehensive, having dreamt about what sequence of buttons to push.

The Rodeo experience was a little more trying with the people and obstacles around it, Flowers said, “But I was worried about hitting other people’s equipment because this is like you’re driving a half a million dollar piece of equipment. I could take out millions of dollars around here just in one little error.”

After it was over, Flowers smiled and took a seat after getting a round of congratulatory applause.

“I’m thrilled to have had this opportunity, but you understand how complicated the job of a bus operator is to have to use one foot to depress the blinkers, and the other foot covering your brake, and having to make sure that you get your acceleration correct, and that you’re not jerking,” she said. “And then to look at your mirrors and then to know that you have passengers that you could affect.”

Chief Communications Officer Matt Raymond confidently looped around the obstacles several times, but, at one point, wondered if he had flattened a cone.

“Smooth, man,” Raymond gestured as he took his seat.

“The hardest thing is the perspective of the vehicle. These vehicles are really nice. Everything’s power, the brakes, the steering, so it’s just

figuring out where you are relative to what's around you," he said, indicating that L.A. traffic was his only previous training.

After Raymond's run, Rail General Manager Mike Cannell turned to his peers and proudly indicated, "I only killed one cone."

Leahy finished the day by taking his passengers around a few times going a bit faster than they had after commenting on the bus' impressive array of capabilities.

"When I started," he said. "We didn't even have a radio."

Others who took the challenge on Tuesday included: Chief Auditor Ruthe Holden, Chief Planning Officer Carol Inge, Chief Financial Officer Terry Matsumoto, Government Relations Officer Michael Turner, Chief Administrative Services Officer Lonnie Mitchell, Chief Real Property Management & Development Roger Moliere, Administrative Director Patricia Soto, Board Secretary Michele Jackson, Executive Officer-Administration Don Ott and Deputy Chief Capital Management Officer K.N. Murthy.


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## Soto Demonstrates Metro's TripMaster at URISA Conference

By Laura Kloth  
*Staff Writer*

(Oct. 20, 2009) A unique opportunity to display Metro's TripMaster capabilities arrived via an unusual route for Sr. Programmer Analyst Patrick Soto.



Sr. Programmer Analyst Patrick Soto touted TripMaster current and future capabilities at the recent Urban Regional Information System Association (URISA) National conference in Anaheim.

Soto already had plans to attend this year's Urban Regional Information System Association (URISA) National recent conference in Anaheim, but when he learned that conference organizers wanted him to speak about his work on the TripMaster software package and how it's used to power Metro's widely used Trip Planner, he was pleasantly surprised and more than eager to oblige.

Soto, a certified as a Geographic Information System (GIS) Professional, figured URISA attendees, who typically include a number of GIS experts, would serve as the perfect audience to show what TripMaster could do.

According to Soto, TripMaster can be used not only as a portable "Open Source" web application, but it's development also evidenced what can be accomplished when "interdepartmental and inter-regional agencies" collaborate to transport transit riders safely across Southern California.

During his presentation, Soto explained that TripMaster provides Transit Telephone Information Centers and direct transit users with various travel options for people using public transit.

"It is an integrated, multi-modal, multi-carrier public transit itinerary planner," that just in the past year has served up more than five million transactions (itineraries) each month, Soto told his audience.

## A legal metamorphosis

Soto, an 18-year Metro employee, first worked on TripMaster in 2003, and was recognized along with several other Metro employees for implementing a number of money-saving changes to the software package after the technology experienced a legal metamorphosis and Metro took expanded control over its development.

Heading the effort to reconstruct the software was Sr. Departmental System Analyst Douglas Anderson, who headed a team made up of staffers from Metro's ITS & Customer Relations departments.

TripMaster is referenced by public transit users in four counties in addition to Los Angeles - Ventura, San Bernardino, Orange and Riverside – integrating the routes and schedules for 70 transit service providers.

The technology, Soto said, could potentially be utilized in as many as ten counties.

**No media glitter and glitz**

Answering the question of how does TripMaster compare to Google's transit trip planner, Soto said, simply, that Google is in the media business while Metro's goal is operating and maintaining an efficient public transportation system.

"If we do it wrong, they'll call our board. If Google does it wrong, who are they going to call?" he said. "The point is if I get someone's college student or their mom on the bus from Point A to Point B, and do it properly, safe, courteous, reliable, on time and clean. That's what this is about."

Overall, Soto said he was pleased with the audience's response and "surprised at the level of interest." URISA officials have invited Soto to speak on the subject at the upcoming "GIS-Transit 2009" Conference.

"I am proud to say TripMaster is valued as an example of 'leading practices' in the industry," he said.


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## Take Heed: October is Cyber Security Awareness Month

Identity theft is rampant, says Chief Information Officer Elizabeth Bennett. Drawing on information from the California Office of Information Security, Bennett puts cyber-safety at the office and at home in perspective. Before an e-mail with a virus attached can reach your desktop, ITS has taken an abundance of precautions to protect you and the Metro network from an equal abundance of security risks. The bad news: Identity theft is more likely to happen at home. Read on to find out why cyber security is important and what steps you can take to stay safe.



(Oct. 22, 2009) With reports of cyber crime increasing daily, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has proclaimed October 2009 as [Cyber Security Awareness Month](#).

Days after the Governor's proclamation, two news services ran these headlines:

- Wed, October 07, 2009 — IDG News Service — The head of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation has stopped banking online after nearly falling for a phishing attempt. In June -- the latest month for which figures are available -- the Anti-Phishing Working Group counted nearly 50,000 active phishing Web sites, the second-highest number it has ever recorded.
- Wed, October 07, 2009 — [Computerworld](#) — Scammers have grabbed the Hotmail passwords that leaked to the Web and are using them in a plot involving a fake Chinese electronics seller to bilk users out of cash and their credit card information, a security researcher said today. The saga of the compromised accounts started last week, when [more than 10,000 Windows Live Hotmail passwords](#) were posted to the Internet. This week, details of another [20,000 Hotmail, Google Gmail and Yahoo Mail accounts](#) went public.

First things first, says the California Office of Information Security. Learn the lingo, recognize the risks and take control of your cyber-responsibility. Here is an easy-to-digest primer followed by the information agency's [top ten cyber security tips](#).

## What is Cyber Security?

It seems that everything relies on computers and the Internet now — communication (email, cell phones), entertainment (digital cable, MP3's), transportation (car engine systems, airplane navigation), shopping (online stores, credit cards), medicine (equipment, medical records), and the list goes on. How much of your daily life relies on computers? How much of your personal information is stored either on your own computer or on someone else's system? Cyber security involves protecting that information by preventing, detecting, and responding to attacks.

## What are the risks?

There are many risks, some more serious than others. Among these dangers are viruses erasing your entire system, someone breaking into your system and altering files, someone using your computer to attack others, or someone stealing your credit card information and making unauthorized purchases. Unfortunately, there's no 100% guarantee that

even with the best precautions some of these things won't happen to you, but there are steps you can take to minimize the chances.

For starters, never even answer an e-mail from a bank or institution wanting to "update" your personal and financial information, such as your social security number, birth date, full name, etc. This is a blatant example of an attempt to steal your identity. Banking and other institutions are required to use the U.S. Post Office to request information like that.

**What can you do?**

The first step in protecting yourself is to recognize the risks and become familiar with some of the terminology associated with them:

- *Hacker, attacker, or intruder* - These terms are applied to the people who seek to exploit weaknesses in software and computer systems for their own gain. Although their intentions are sometimes fairly benign and motivated solely by curiosity, their actions are typically in violation of the intended use of the systems they are exploiting. The results can range from mere mischief (creating a virus with no intentionally negative impact) to malicious (stealing or altering information).
- *Malicious code* - This category includes code such as viruses, worms, and Trojan horses. Although some people use these terms interchangeably, they have unique characteristics.
- *Viruses* - This type of malicious code requires you to actually do something before it infects your computer. This action could be opening an email attachment or going to a particular web page.
- *Worms* - Worms propagate without user intervention. They typically start by exploiting a software vulnerability (a flaw that allows the software's intended security policy to be violated), then once the victim computer has been infected the worm will attempt to find and infect other computers. Similar to viruses, worms can propagate via email, web sites, or network-based software. The automated self-propagation of worms distinguishes them from viruses.
- *Trojan horses* - A Trojan horse program is software that claims to be one thing while in fact doing something different behind the scenes. For example, a program that claims it will speed up your computer may actually be sending confidential information to a remote intruder.

[top](#)

**Top Ten Cyber Security Tips**

TOP 10 simple, easy, and basic things that everyone can and should do to protect their computer systems and data from harm by various cyber attacks and other types of security incidents that can cause damage, consume computer resources, or expose confidential information.

**Use and regularly update firewalls, anti-virus, and anti-spyware programs.**

There are many types of Internet security and safety issues that you should defend against. One of the most effective ways of defending your computer is to use a firewall and up to date

anti-virus and anti-spyware products.

A firewall works by filtering information coming from and going to your network/computer and/or the Internet. It identifies and rejects information that comes from a location or source known to be dangerous or contains information that seems suspicious.

Anti-Virus programs can stop Viruses, worms, and Trojan horses, which are malicious programs that can cause damage to your computer and information on your computer. Those malicious programs can also slow down the Internet access and might even use your computer to spread themselves to your friends, family, or co-workers.

Spyware is a general term used for software that performs certain behaviors such as pop-up advertising, collecting personal information, or changing the configuration of your computer, generally without appropriately obtaining your consent. An anti-spyware program helps stop such misuse, but they need to be kept up to date in order to detect the newest identified threats as well. Configuring your anti-virus and anti-spyware products to automatically update their identification files on a daily basis is highly recommended.

For more information visit:

- > <http://www.msisac.org/localgov/info/firewall-guide.pdf>
- > <http://www.msisac.org/awareness/oct05/csab05.pdf>
- > [http://www.staysafeonline.com/toolbox/fundamentals/defend\\_yourself.html](http://www.staysafeonline.com/toolbox/fundamentals/defend_yourself.html)
- > <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-005.html>
- > <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-016.html>

## Properly setup and patch operating systems, browsers, and other software programs.

Whenever security updates or service packs become available for your operating system or programs, it is very important to promptly download them and patch your operating systems and programs. These patches are created to protect systems against potential attacks. Be aware that attacks sometimes occur before updates are released. Make sure you update any software you use for browsing the Internet (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Netscape, etc.) because Internet-based browsing attacks are becoming more common and more dangerous. Other software programs that communicate or interact with the Internet, like e-mail, Web servers, and remote desktop software are especially susceptible to attacks and should be kept current on patches and version levels.

For more information visit:

- > <http://www.msisac.org/awareness/oct05/csab05.pdf>
- > <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST05-001.html>
- > [http://www.staysafeonline.com/toolbox/fundamentals/keep\\_up-to-date.html](http://www.staysafeonline.com/toolbox/fundamentals/keep_up-to-date.html)

## Passwords and authentication methods.

Passwords and other authentication methods are ways systems verify that you are who you claim to be. If someone authenticates as you, the system will think it's you. That person can do anything you can do on your computer and the system will log their actions (such as deleting files, sending malicious e-mails, or browsing to inappropriate sites) under your access credentials. Don't share your passwords and access codes, don't store them in unencrypted files, and don't write them down unless you then place them in a locked, secured location. Default passwords, names and dictionary words, even in different languages, can be easily guessed or cracked so use complex passwords that are at least eight characters long and have numbers, letters, and special characters in them. Passwords aren't much use if you cannot remember them, so use a pass-phrase instead. The phrase "Would you like 3 scoops of ice cream?" can become the strong password "Wul3\$o1c?" See myMetro.net report 8.25.09: [Password protected](#)

For more information visit:

- > <http://www.msisac.org/awareness/oct05/csab05.pdf>
- > <http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/privacy/password.msp>
- > <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-002.html>

## Lock your workstation/laptop when you leave it and configure it to automatically lock after a short period of

## **inactivity.**

One of the fastest ways to compromise a system is to simply walk up to an unattended, unlocked workstation or server and access the system so be safe and lock your system when you leave it. It's also very easy to get sidetracked and stay away from your desk longer than you anticipate so configure your system to automatically lock after a short period of inactivity. It is an easy way to help protect your account and the items you have access to. Lockout after fifteen minutes of inactivity is recommended and shorter periods for critical systems.

For more information visit:

- > <http://www.msisac.org/awareness/oct05/csab05.pdf>
- > <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-003.html>

## **Backup important files regularly.**

There are many ways you can lose information on a computer – a destructive virus, a power surge, lightning, floods, a big magnet, or sometimes equipment just fails. If you regularly make backup copies of your files and keep them in a separate place, you can get some, or even all, of your information back in the event something happens to the originals on your computer.

For more information visit:

- > <http://www.msisac.org/awareness/oct05/csab05.pdf>
- > [http://www.staysafeonline.com/toolbox/fundamentals/backup\\_basics.html](http://www.staysafeonline.com/toolbox/fundamentals/backup_basics.html)
- > <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-003.html>

## **Be cautious when using the Internet.**

Browsing to non-work related sites can increase the risk of becoming infected with spyware, viruses and other malicious code. Download files and install programs only when you are authorized to do so, and only when there is a real need. Know with whom you are dealing on the Internet – anonymous doesn't necessarily mean safe, and many criminals are very good at impersonating real financial organizations like banks and credit card companies. Never share personal or confidential information if you are not the initiator of the transaction. Never share sensitive or confidential information over an unencrypted Internet connection.

For more information on safe browsing tips visit:

- > <http://www.msisac.org/awareness/oct05/csab05.pdf>
- > <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-013.html>
- > <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-012.html>

## **Messaging security – e-mail and instant messaging.**

E-mail and instant messaging (IM) are wonderful tools but they can be used or misused in a variety of ways. Do not send confidential or sensitive information, like Social Security numbers, account numbers, or secret information through unencrypted e-mail or IM. Do not open a message or an attachment from an unknown sender. If you share personal information with others as a result of answering spam or phishing messages, your identity can also be stolen.

For more information visit:

- > <http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/email/attachments.mspix>
- > <http://onguardonline.gov/phishing.html>
- > <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/ddd/index.html>
- > <http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org/>

## **Review your computer security.**

Evaluate your computer's security periodically and apply appropriate repairs, upgrades, and replacements. If you don't maintain your system's security by keeping it up-to-date, it will eventually be exposed to serious security threats.

For more information visit:

> [http://www.staysafeonline.com/toolbox/how\\_to/index.html](http://www.staysafeonline.com/toolbox/how_to/index.html)

## Responding to a cyber incident.

Learn how to recognize cyber attacks and know what to do if things go wrong. Remember that rapid response can be crucial, so when things do go wrong or you encounter a suspicious security-related event, report it immediately to the ITS Help Desk, x24357.

## Remember that cyber security is everyone's responsibility.

Just like one leak can sink a boat, one data leak, one security breach, or one malicious worm can sink an organization. By protecting yourself and the systems entrusted to you, you are protecting your co-workers, your entire organization's network and data and, ultimately, the citizens who are depending on you.

Material for this article was contributed by the California Office of Information Security.

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## Metro Introduces Online Transportation News/Feature Service on Metro.Net

*From a Metro News Report by Marc Littman*

(Oct. 22, 2009) In response to a dramatic shift in how the public gets information, Metro has introduced a new real-time online transportation news and feature service on metro.net called *The Source*.

With contributors like Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Steve Hyman and car-less in L.A. blogger Frederick Dennstedt a.k.a. Fred Camino, *The Source* is updated throughout the day with key developments and unique viewpoints that will help the public keep tabs on what's being done to keep L.A. County moving and how taxpayers' transit sales tax dollars are being spent. *The Source* will showcase a steady stream of real time news about Metro and critical transportation issues as well as feature stories packaged with video, photos and other compelling visuals.

There are fewer reporters covering Metro as newspapers and electronic media cut back and that has created an information vacuum at a time when the public, more than ever, needs to be both informed and engaged in what's happening with Measure R, the new half cent sales tax measure approved by county voters last fall, Metro's Long Range Transportation Plan, federal stimulus funds, high speed rail, the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension opening, congestion relief efforts on the highways, state and federal legislative developments and other important projects and programs.

*The Source* will be frequently updated with breaking news and Metro system service alerts. There also will be some posts in Spanish plus car-less lifestyle features, visuals and interactive elements, supported by Metro staff and credible freelance journalists with transportation expertise who can explain and lend context to complex transportation issues.



Pulitzer Prize-winning  
journalist Steve Hyman



Car-less in L.A. blogger  
Frederick Dennstedt  
a.k.a. Fred Camino



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**Next Stop: East L.A.** The train starts here. Officials break ground for the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension on July 14, 2004.

## Public Grand Opening of Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles Set For Sunday, Nov. 15

- Local, state and federal officials will take an inaugural ride following an official ceremony the day before on Saturday, Nov. 14.

By JOSE UBALDO  
*Media Relations*

(Oct. 26, 2009) Following five years of construction and coming in on budget with a flawless 4-million plus hour construction safety record, the Edward R. Roybal Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension from Union Station downtown to East Los Angeles will open to the public on Sunday, Nov. 15.

The six-mile Eastside Extension light rail segment will have eight new stations, two of them underground at Soto and Mariachi Plaza, and 1.7 miles of underground track. It will link the existing Metro Gold Line to Pasadena with Little Tokyo and the Arts District in downtown Los Angeles, before traveling east along 1st Street through Boyle Heights to East Los Angeles. When it opens it will bring the Metro Rail system to a total of 79 miles of rail -- all built during the past 20 years.

The Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension will be supported by a confluence of buses to further extend its reach into the neighborhoods. More than 20 bus lines -- including those serving L.A.'s downtown Union Station -- will connect the Eastside Extension with greater Los Angeles County.

Atlantic Station, for example, is the location of a mini-bus hub for East Los Angeles and is served by six lines. Other stations, such as Indiana Station, are served by local buses as well as municipal carriers including Montebello Transit.

Groundbreaking for the line, which was constructed by Eastside LRT Constructors, was in July 2004. The project has posted an exemplary safety record -- more than 4 million construction hours without a lost-time work injury -- making it perhaps the safest major public works project in U.S. history.

Ridership on the extension is expected to grow steadily, reaching 13,000 average weekday boarding passengers by the end of the first year of operation.

Free rides on the entire Metro Gold Line from Pasadena to East Los Angeles will be offered on opening day Sunday, Nov. 15. Community celebrations also are planned around some of the stations. Details will be announced shortly.

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## Board Approves 30-year Blueprint for Transportation Development

- [The Source](#): Steve Hymon reports live from the Metro Board Room during today's meeting.

*From a Metro News Report by Rick Jager*

(Oct. 22, 2009) The Board of Directors today approved the 2009 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that will guide transportation development in the county through the year 2040, a period in which the county is expected to experience unprecedented growth.

The population of Los Angeles County is projected to grow by almost 3 million people over the next 30 years. The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) examines the impacts this growth will have on the mobility of the county, which includes increasing demand on streets, highways, buses and trains, and it recommends what can be done to address those impacts within anticipated revenues.

The LRTP also includes new funding resources that include monies generated by the passage of Measure R, a new half-cent sales tax for LA County as well as federal stimulus dollars that will flow to the region under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

The LRTP anticipates the collection and distribution of \$298 billion countywide through FY2040 from all local, state, and federal transportation funding sources. The funds will be used for transit services, highway maintenance, and for the development of numerous transit and highway transportation improvement projects all over Los Angeles County. Countywide bus and rail operations accounts for \$106.5 billion (36%) of the uses forecasted by the plan and bus and rail capital uses account

for \$57.6 billion (19%) of the plan. Highway maintenance and improvements make up \$94.4 billion (32%). Debt service accounts for \$26.9 billion (9%) of the plan and other uses \$12.6 billion (4%).

Some components of the recommended plan's transportation program include:

- Completion of the Eastside light rail project
- Completion of the Exposition Light Rail project to Culver City
- Phase II Exposition light rail to Santa Monica
- Wilshire Boulevard Bus Rapid transit
- Downtown Regional Connector (Blue & Gold Line connection)
- The Crenshaw Corridor Transit project
- San Fernando Valley North/South Metro Orange Line Canoga Extension
- San Fernando Valley East North/South Rapidways
- Eastside Light Rail Access (Pedestrian & Bicycle link)
- Gold Line Foothill Light Rail Extension (Segment including vehicles & yard)
- Green Line Extension to LAX
- Westside Subway extension to Fairfax/Century City/Westwood
- Gold Line Eastside Extension
- Green Line Extension Redondo Beach Station to South Bay Corridor
- San Fernando Valley I-405 Corridor Connection
- West Santa Ana Branch Corridor
- California High Speed Rail (Los Angeles County)
- Some examples of highway projects in the LRTP include:
  - I-405 northbound carpool lane from I-10 to US-101
  - I-405 carpool lanes from SR 90 to I-10
  - I-5/State Route 126 interchange reconstruction phase I & II
  - SR-60 carpool lanes from I-605 to Brea Canyon Road
  - I-5/SR-14 carpool lane direct connector
  - I-5 carpool lanes from SR-118 to SR-170

I-5 carpool lanes from SR-134 to SR-170

- I-10 carpool lanes from I-605 to Puente Ave & from Puente to Citrus avenues
- I-5 Carmenita Road interchange improvements
- I-5 carpool and mixed flow lanes from I-605 to Orange County Line
- I-710 South and Route 710 North Gap Closure projects
- Other highway improvements in various parts of the County

The LRTP also encourages more ridesharing, walking and bike riding, telecommuting and improved management of truck traffic and goods movement.

The LRTP is built on strategic financial projections of revenues from federal, state and local taxes and subsidies, as well as revenues from passenger fares, advertising, real estate rentals and other sources.

The approval of the 2009 LRTP does not constitute final Board action on individual projects. Projects will return to the Board for further action at key milestones in the planning, environmental and project development process. The LRTP document itself will be made available for public distribution in Fall 2009.

Board approval of the Long Range Transportation Plan means the plan will now be submitted to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the designated planning organization for a six-county region, for inclusion in SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

The RTP demonstrates how Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Riverside, San Bernardino and Imperial counties will meet federal mandates, particularly air quality requirements. Only projects and programs included in the RTP are eligible for federal funding.



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Trumpeter to Herald  
2010 Royal Court in the  
Pasadena Tournament  
of Roses Parade

- Robert Ullrich's excellent trumpeting landed him a spot in the 2009 Rose Parade last year, and this year, he'll announce the Rose Queen and Royal Court.

- Temple City High School senior, son of Customer Information Officer David Ullrich, chosen to march with Herald Trumpets in the 121st Rose Parade on New Year's Day

By LAURA KLOTH  
Staff Writer

(Oct. 27, 2009) Customer Information Officer David Ullrich remembers how his 17-year-old son Robert was introduced to music.



Robert was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade when Ullrich spotted a dusty old trumpet in a pawn shop selling for \$45. Deciding to purchase it, Ullrich figured if his young son lost interest later on, he wouldn't lose too much money.

Over the years, Robert began playing day-in and day-out and subsequently decided to join the Temple City High School Band.

"He loves it. He enjoys it. I've never had to force him to play it," said Ullrich.

Customer Information Officer David Ullrich, left, says son Robert will likely make music his career.

So it was no surprise that Robert was almost speechless this month, when he received a letter from Pasadena City

College Tournament of Roses Honor Band saying that he'd been selected to play with the Herald Trumpets in the 2010 Rose Bowl Parade.

"Congratulations," the letter read. "As a result of your outstanding audition, you have been selected to perform with the Herald Trumpets in the 2010 Tournament of Roses Parade. As a member of this group you become a part of a yearly tradition dating back 81 years."

The Herald Trumpets consist of nine musicians who play fanfare trumpets and a snare drummer announcing the arrival of the Rose Queen. More than 600 high school students audition every year for the 200 parade spots in the Tournament of Roses Honor Band with only 10 chosen for the Herald Trumpet unit.

The Herald Trumpets also get to perform at the Rose Queen breakfast in November and other Tournament of Roses events.

Robert auditioned last year and participated in the last parade as a band member.

Ullrich says his son is very excited about his top spot and, to prepare for it, he and other band members will be rehearsing on a daily basis during winter break, as well as every Sunday in November and December.

The band is expected to march some six miles down Colorado Boulevard on Jan. 1.

Today, Ullrich smiles when he remembers that dusty trumpet and how it led to Robert's passion for music and his plans to attend Cal State-Long Beach and finish up at USC. Robert was also recently nominated to become president of his high school band.

"It's turned into something where this is what he wants to do for a living," his father said.

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With a degree in history, Sheriff's Civilian Crime Analyst Michael Morris says his education and research skills have been a plus in his job.

## Transit Service Bureau Sleuth Fights Crime with Data

By Laura Kloth  
*Staff Writer*

(Oct. 29, 2009) As a college history major, Michael Morris says he never imagined that one day he'd be pouring over criminal databases to help solve crimes committed on Metro's trains and buses.

Now working as a crime analyst with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Transit Service Bureau, Morris' history and research skills have come in pretty handy on the job.

Overall, Morris notes, Metro's trains and buses are very safe, but when crimes do occur, his job is to assist detectives by fine-tuning police collected data to catch

the criminal.

While detectives are busy with legwork – interviewing victims and witnesses, and completing reports, Morris, a civilian employee, is busy sifting through police databases and examining statistics to hone in on areas where crimes are occurring.

"A lot of times, the deputy is out on the street concentrating on their one area, and they may not see a bigger picture of what's happening around them because they're focused on getting out there, stopping the bad guys," he said.

### Patterns and conditions

Part of Morris' work is examining crime patterns such as time of day and specific conditions and asking questions such as what are the suspects taking - phones, wallets, briefcases - and where are they most active? Are they committing crimes alone?

"Basically what we're doing as crime analysts is using information about previous events to forecast when the suspects are most likely to hit again," he explained.

"We'll give the deputies a predicted window of day and time where the culprits will likely strike again. They may not hit there at all, or you might get lucky and they do hit," he said. "I look for patterns and series in crimes."

Morris' assistance proved helpful earlier this year when he helped nab a robbery suspect who victimized a juvenile patron on a Metro bus.

"He (the victim) did a great job of giving us a description of the suspect. The suspect had very distinct tattoos on his face and head. And so I went into the department databases and searched for those tattoos, and came up with a possible suspect," he said.

Detectives used the suspect's photo along with five other mug shots to create a "six-pack" of evidence presented to the victim, who was able to provide a positive identification.

"The suspect's name was placed on a wanted list to be seen by other law enforcement officials, and he was picked up and subsequently charged," Morris said.

"Crime analysts are being utilized more because of technology, he added, noting that the amount of information and enhanced databases have created a greater need for them.

### **Research and evidence**

A former document control handler at an engineering firm, Morris decided to switch careers a few years ago after spotting a job description for an intelligence analyst on the FBI website.

Morris said he decided to attend Cal State-Fullerton to study crime analysis, and then completed an internship in the Special Victims Bureau and Commercial Crimes Bureau with Los Angeles County. A job at the Crime Assessment Center at the Sheriff's Department headquarters opened up followed by the move into transit.

"It's very exciting when you help catch somebody," he said. "My history degree has really helped me here with research and evidence. It's actually been really good for me."


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Employment records and Verification Specialist Claudia Kwon handles requests for information in the busy record center located on the plaza level of Metro Headquarters. Standard response time is listed as 3 to 5 days but most responses are mailed out within 24 hours.

*Photos: Gayle Anderson*

## Legal firewall around HR's employment verification procedure safeguards employee information

(Oct. 29, 2009) Metro receives many calls from prospective employers, financial institutions, and other businesses seeking verification of employment-related information regarding current and former Metro employees.

While the majority of these calls are received and responded to by the Human Resources Department, occasionally Metro employees outside of HR are directly contacted to provide employment verification or references.

Because there are legal implications with regard to what is protected employee information, the Human Resources Dept is providing Metro managers, supervisors, and employees with guidelines on this matter, reported Carmen Mayor, Human Resource supervisor.

### Let HR do the work

All inquiries or requests to verify employment and/or provide reference information, whether received by telephone or in writing, should be directed to the Human Resources,



Employment records and Verification Specialist Mary Lou Hernandez processes one of many reference checks that pour into the record center by telephone, mail, e-mail and hand delivery.

### take note:

- All inquiries or requests to verify employment and/or provide reference information, whether received by telephone or in writing, should be directed to the Human Resources, Employment Verification Desk at (213)

Employment Verification Desk at (213) 680-1110. Requests are processed by HR Records staff. Written requests should be forwarded to HR Records, MS: 99-PL-1.

680-1110.

- Do not use Metro letterhead stationery to write a personal reference. A personal reference is personal, and not a reference on behalf of Metro.

**Employees must authorize request for additional information**

Once the request is received, Human Resources provides only the employee's job title and dates of employment. If the employee has authorized the request for employment verification or reference information with a signed release, then HR provides additional information as required such as salary, etc.

**Keep personal references personal and not on Metro letterhead**

"We realize there may be times when Metro managers, supervisors and/or employees would like to provide a personal reference for a current or former employee," said Stefan Chasnov, DEO, Human Resources. Those who choose to respond personally to a request for a reference are advised that a personal reference should never be written on Metro letterhead stationery. It should be clearly understood that the personal reference provided is in fact personal, and not a reference on behalf of Metro.

"Metro could be legally liable for providing false or inaccurate information about Metro employment, if an employee knowingly provides false information about another Metro employee in response to an employment verification or reference request," said Chasnov. In that case, the employee could be subject to disciplinary action, he noted.

If you have additional questions, contact Carmen Mayor, 213.922.5214.

*--from staff reports*