


[Home](#)
[CEO Hotline](#)
[Viewpoint](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Archives](#)
[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

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

Metro Info

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

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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, "Congratuations on your service to MTA and the citizens of Los Angeles."



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

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**
