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UPDATE: Nov. 6, 2009 Technical issues delay launch of new Metro website Launching the new metro.net website has been postponed, due to serious technical issues with the web server. As we posted yesterday, Metro was planning to have a new version of its website up and running Friday. Instead web traffic is being re-routed back to the agency's old website while the web tech staff is working to fix the problem. We apologize for any inconvenience this has caused.

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Guarded by Batman himself, the by-now familiar red six-pack carriage leads the parade to the candy bash in the West Patio Plaza on Thursday. Below, Gateway Child Care Center Director Marla Minden and entourage settle in for special treats at the Customer Call Center party hosted by Customer Relations. *Photos by Gayle Anderson*



Halloween Event Brings out Princesses, Super Heroes and a Tiny Banana

By Gail M. Harvey
Special to MyMetro.net

(Nov. 3, 2009) Super Heroes and princesses dominated the 5th Annual Halloween parade this year with Metro Customer Relations staff again hosting the event.

Gateway Child Care Center Director Marla Minden said she was thrilled to have the children participate in the Oct. 29 adventure that brought

out some 84 children.

"This is adorable. I had no idea it was to this magnitude," Minden said, noting that she took her job over the summer.

The parade has grown in popularity every year with parents and Metro employees coming out to watch the children parade around the plaza. This year's costumes included popular characters, and perhaps one of the cutest had to be the tiny banana outfit worn by Audrey Davis, daughter of Walter Davis, Transportation Planning Manager V.

Kindergarten teacher Mariano Blanco said his students couldn't wait to attend.

"They have been excited since yesterday. We had a pumpkin patch and they were waiting for this Halloween parade," he said.

At the Center, Chief Communications Officer Matt Raymond appeared as Darth Vader, welcoming the children to the party in his best Vader aqua lung-like voice.

"It's always fun to hang out down here. This is one of my favorite times of the year," he said.

As in the past, 23 photos of decorated cubicles in the Call Center were given to Minden before the event and then displayed for the children, who picked three winners.

The children awarded prizes to three Customer Information Agents – Maria Alamilla, who received 1st Place for her Batman creation; Yvonne Macias, who was awarded 2nd Place for her Super Heroes; and Maria Puentes received 3rd Place honors for her display of the most super heroes.

Host Gail Harvey, Director of Customer Relations, presented the Management's Choice Award to Customer Information Agent Jorja Jones, whose cubicle was the most uniquely decorated with her display of "My



The tiniest banana prize went to Audrey Davis, here asleep in her father's arm after a grueling round of candy picking. The little banana was accompanied to the annual bash by father Walt Davis, Transportation Planning Manager V, mother Amy, and Audrey's two sisters, Anna Bella and Amelia.

^ **SLIDE SHOW** With the exception of just one time when the Halloween holiday fit into the Metro work week a bit off schedule, amateur photographer **Brian Mahaffey**, a senior contracts administrator, never misses the annual Halloween candy raid at Metro. Mahaffey, always on the look out for things that 'catches his eye,' got a lens-full this time around as he captured a parade of candy-seekers in the full sunshine of the West Plaza patio.

Super Heroes of America – The Military Forces”.

“What better way to honor heroes than to honor those who risk their lives everyday for our safety,” said Jones, “This is my way of saying thank you family, friends and co-workers for all that you do.”



Customer Information Agent Jorja Jones decorated her work station with a display entitled of “My Super Heroes of America – The Military Forces.”

The Agents who participated in the costume contest were judged by Karen Kern, Lou Bendijo-Wong and Ron Jue, who selected three winners in the following categories: The most original costume that best represented the theme was Batman worn by Alamilla; the most creative/unique costume was Spider Woman worn by Carmen Barocio and the scariest – though not really scary - was Little Red Devil worn by Alicia Vasquez.

“This event is about our Kids, who are the primary focus for this entire program,” said Alonzo Williams, Communications Manager, “They do a great job of selecting the three best decorated cubicles, presenting prizes to the winners and pulling winning tickets for trick-or-treat gifts for the Agents.”



Gail Harvey and Darth Vader, here disguised as Communications Chief Matt Raymond, (at left, back row) congratulate the winners of the costume and work station contest. Customer Information Agent Jorja Jones' military

theme won the Management Choice Award. The most original costume that best represented the theme was Batman worn by Maria Alamilla; the most creative/unique costume was Spider Woman worn by Carmen Barocio and the scariest – though not really scary - was Little Red Devil worn by Alicia Vasquez.

The kids, said Harvey, “got to do what they came for – to get more goodies and the Agents had plenty to give. Just to make sure everyone got something, the Morale Committee members made 85 special trick-or-treat bags for distribution to kids who came and delivered the balance to the Child Development Center”.

Morale Committee Agent members Patricia Diaz, Jackie Exeart, Harriet Petitt, Virginia Sanchez, Marie Tervalon, Steven Texada, and Sr. Departmental System Analyst Paula Grigsby coordinated the event and assisted both Williams and Harvey.

“Thank you to all of our agents who were active in putting this together and other staff members who worked with us. It’s a good team effort,” said Harvey.

“But the most important people we want to thank are you little ones.”



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Supervisor Shaw Helps Needy with Beauty Contest Win

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Nov. 3, 2009) Metro Transit Operations Supervisor Gina Shaw casually entered the Miss Belize America Contest last summer, encouraged by her father, Div. 3 Bus Operator Harry Shaw.

"I didn't even go into it thinking I was going to win," she said, adding that, at most, she expected to sing a gospel song, strut the runway in a swim suit and help contest organizers raise money for needy families in the small Central American country.

But as fate would have it for those who never expect to win anything, Shaw drew two prizes.

"I was surprised because they not only had 'Miss Big, Bold and Beautiful', they also had a 'Miss Popularity', and I won both," she said.

Still in disbelief about her big win, Shaw wasn't completely convinced until the Master of Ceremonies placed the official crown on her head and presented her with a 3-foot trophy.

"They had pictures of me with my mouth open" when they announced the vote tally, she said.

Along with her \$500 grand prize, Shaw also won a trip to Catalina Island and was asked to represent the people of Belize, a request she proudly accepted since it's the birthplace to both her parents.

The 12-year Metro employee who started out working at the windows of Division 18 and 5, now holds the Miss America Belize title for the rest of the year and will help raise money to send clothing and other necessities to the underprivileged in Belize.



Westside/Central Sector Transit Operations Supervisor Gina Shaw set aside her Metro uniform to don a crown when she was named "Miss Belize America" last summer.



Shaw said she participated in the contest at the urging of her dad, Harry, a Div. 3 Bus Operator.

“I just went into it because my dad asked me to,” she said, noting that her dad’s been on sick leave, but was still all smiles when he learned that she’d won the contest.

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Memorial Service scheduled for Retired Mechanic Tom Ferrero

- Memorial service will be held Saturday, November 14, at noon at the St. Francis de Sales Church, located at 13370 Valley Heart Drive, in Sherman Oaks (91432). Information: 818.784.0105 [Directions](#)

(Nov. 4, 2009) A memorial service is scheduled Nov. 14 for retired mechanic Thomas Frank Ferrero. Mr. Ferrero died from complications of a stroke on Oct. 6. He was 57 years old.

A 25-year employee, Mr. Ferrero was hired April 4, 1980, as a service attendant and promoted to mechanic "C" in 1986 and mechanic "B" with nine months. He reached mechanic "A" status in 1990. At the time of his retirement in April 2004, he was employed at the Regional Rebuild Center (RRC, now MSSC).

Close friend Alfred Lozano, now Division 10 Equipment Manager, was Mr. Ferrero's supervisor at RRC for five years. Lozano remembers "Tom" as a mechanic who was extremely capable on the job.

"He did his assignments, had no complaints. He was quiet, reserved," said Lozano.

Off the job, Ferrero was a man who loved the outdoors and the two friends shared good times on camping and hunting trips.

Mr. Ferrero was born Jan. 5, 1951. He lived in Van Nuys at the time of his death. He is survived by two grown children, Daniel and Jennifer.



Thomas Ferrero

High school graduation photo circa 1968

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Strength in numbers: Metro's legion of volunteers and community partners regroup in the West Plaza patio after volunteer appreciation confab in the Board Room.

Volunteers Take Metro to the Communities in One-on-One Campaign to Increase Ridership

By Rich Morallo

Volunteer Coordinator/Community Relations

(Nov. 5, 2009) Twice Rey Coutts rescheduled his travel plans for flying out to an NFL football game so he could deliver supplies to a Metro community event. Tess Fitzpatrick and Rosemarie Ordenes brought their families to public festivities so they could spend time with spouses and children and promote Metro as well.

"I celebrated my last birthday behind a transit information table," said Bob Thomas.

Rey, Tess, Rosemarie, Bob and other Metro volunteers made personal sacrifices to keep to their commitment and talk up public transportation in the community.

This past year, the volunteers traveled to 125 weekend neighborhood venues in Los Angeles County – including Bob's Saturday trip to Lancaster – and reached about 350,000 residents.

The volunteers, coming from different departments and divisions throughout the agency, contributed more than 1,000 personal hours to encourage people to use buses and trains.



Metro executives led by Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers and Deputy Executive Officer for Regional Communications Lynda Bybee thanked the volunteers for a job well done at the Metro Board Room. South Bay/Gateway Cities General Manager Dana M. Coffey and San Fernando Valley General Manager Richard Hunt along with Division 7 Assistant Transportation Manager Alicia Walker joined the congratulatory line-up.

Last Friday, Metro executives led by Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers and Deputy Executive Officer for Regional Communications Lynda Bybee thanked the volunteers for a job well done at the Metro Board Room. South Bay/Gateway Cities General Manager Dana M. Coffey and San Fernando Valley General Manager Richard Hunt along with Division 7 Assistant Transportation Manager Alicia Walker also thanked the volunteers.

Deputy Executive Officer for Public Relations Marc Littman and Community Relations Manager Helen Ortiz-Gilstrap talked about the achievements of Metro Speaks, the agency's speakers bureau during the program.

A highlight of the program occurred when Metro volunteer and Division 8 mechanic Marilyn Archie provided the entertainment with a Whitney Houston song.

One of six emcees for the program, Yvonne Price, welcomed the group including Metro Partners, the staff who provide logistical and material support for the volunteers, and the Community Partners, neighborhood and agency representatives who invite and work with the volunteers at fairs and festivals.

Emcee Rey Coutts, along with Tess Fitzpatrick, Bob Thomas, Roberto Burris and Edith Goff-Youngblood saluted the volunteers as "weekend warriors."

Credit Roll:

Community Partners: Wajeha Bilal - Watts, Harold Brown and Deborah Brown - Time Warner, Tori Hill - Expo, Nicole Honaker-Hwang - Balboa Park, Mark Johnson - CityLites, Cynthia Manker - Inglewood Today Magazine, Ara Najarian and Sara Elena Loaiza - City of Cudahy, and Jesus Ojeda - Metrolink

Metro Partners: Dan Colonello - Mail Services; Fran Curbello - Communication Services; Deputy Gary Debondt - Transit Services Bureau; Tony Jusay - Bike Program; Lt. Jacob Lopez - Metro Security; Raul Naranjo - ITS; Helen Ortiz - Public Relations; Tom Rodriguez - Copy Center; Claire Fitzgerald, Tom Horne, Marie Tervalon - Customer Relations, Bronwell Trice - Community Relations; Alicia Walker - Division 7; and Myrine White, Lynda Reed, Jackie Anderson and Gary Shiroishi - Metro South Bay.

Metro Volunteers: Tony Banash, Rachel Bird, Cheryl Brown, Robert Burris, Victor Castaneda, Patricia Chen, Rey Coutts, Shalitha Davis, Evelina Del Castillo, Marlene Dietrich, Dixie Dorsett, Kathy Drayton, Elsa Edejer, Erica Erwin, Loretta Ferem, Tess Fitzpatrick, Teresa Fong, Bedford Gaines, Elizabeth Garcia, Arlene Garcia, Jennifer Gill, Jes Godinez, Edith Goff-Youngblood, Dwight Graham, Veronica Hargrove, Joane Harper, Fernando Hernandez, Caroline Howard, Dana Jones, Cris Liban, Jose Melendez, Martha Mengistu, Bill Moore, Rosemarie Ordenes, Fanny Ortiz, Elizabeth Palacios, Charles Pinkett, Sanyal Prabal, Yvonne Price, Valene Rader, Sue Le Roux, Sndra Sandoval, Wally Shidler, Michael Staley, Elizabeth Streegan-Chriss, Linda Tam, Bob Thomas, Alice Tolar, Eugnio Villacorta, William Walker, Norman Ward, Angela Watkins, Tonya Yates and Cory Zelmer.

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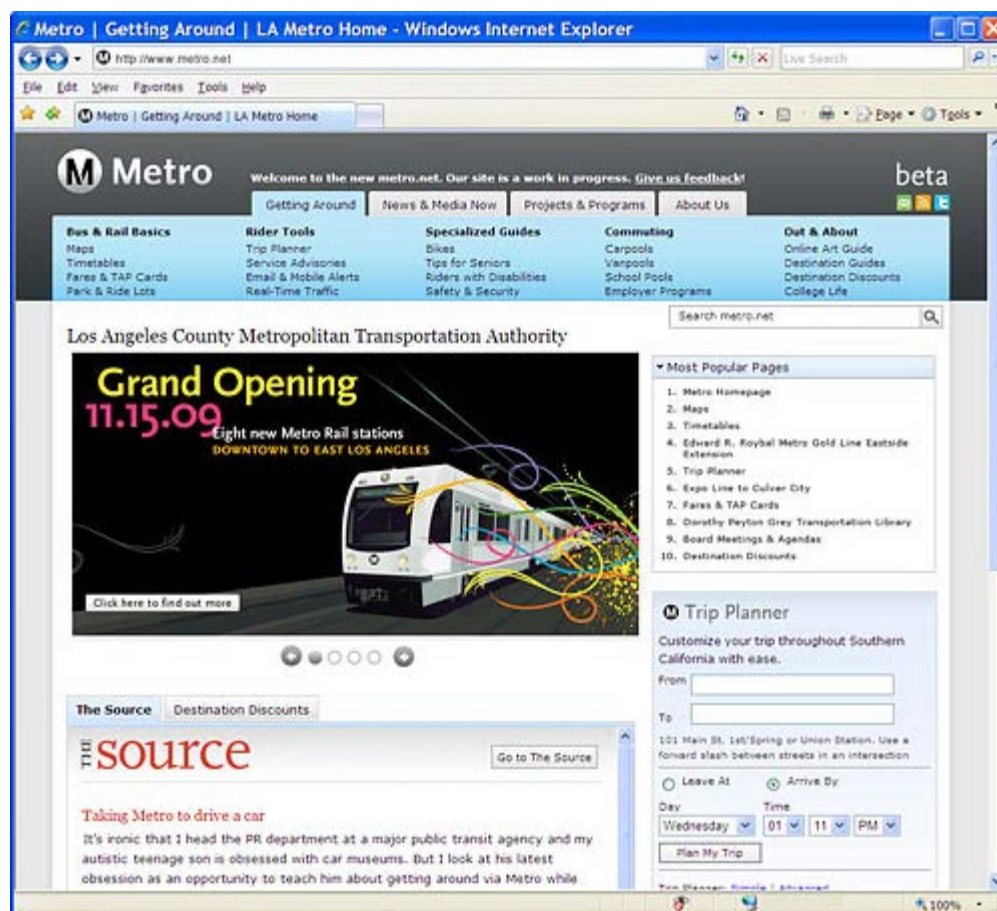
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UPDATE: Nov. 6, 2009 Technical issues delay launch of new Metro website. Launching the new metro.net website has been postponed, due to serious technical issues with the web server. As we posted yesterday, Metro was planning to have a new version of its website up and running Friday. Instead web traffic is being re-routed back to the agency's old website while the web tech staff is working to fix the problem. We apologize for any inconvenience this has caused.



- Metro's new website makes the technology leap to state-of-the-art design and function

(Nov. 5, 2009) After months of intense rebuilding work by the Communications staff, *metro.net* will have a crisp, fresh design and will offer more access to a broad menu of useful transit information. The redesigned website will replace the existing site, which first launched in 2003. This is the first phase of the website rebuild

project.

Touting the new site, Metro Chief Communications Officer Matt Raymond said, “We want to take the lead with a cutting-edge website that is easy to use and easy to navigate through information.”

Metro’s updated website also features a new online publication called *The Source*, which provides “daily transportation news and views” about Metro.

The website was developed using a unique, open-source content management system that offers more dynamic web pages and a host of new features including:

- Enhanced navigation capabilities
- Interactive maps and multi-media components
- Updated daily news and information posts
- Added links to access *The Source* and a variety of useful transit information
- Improved maintenance tools
- “Most popular” page listings compiled from user metrics

The overall strategy for marketing the new website includes banner advertising on other websites and e-blast announcements to Metro subscribers.

New features will be phased into the new site, such as improved ADA compatibility; enhanced mobile applications that allow



New Features (Phase 1):

Design and Architecture

- New information architecture: Metro information and content organized in a customer-focused (design)
- New global navigation: robust set of menus designed to easily surface core information and quick links to customers
- New look and feel: clean and modern visual design and user interface design to highlight important projects and hierarchy of information.
- Accessibility: website was designed and built to be ADA web compliant for visually impaired customers

Web Technology

- New CMS and web technology: utilizing a powerful web framework and CMS to easily allow site maintenance
- Additional trip planning options: Google Maps
- Improved functionality: container boxes aggregating information from various sources (Metro’s and others)
- Flash interactive maps, photo slideshows, project timelines

Web 2.0 features

- Blogs (*The Source* and developer site)
- RSS integration and syndication
- Pulling in Metro’s Twitter headlines
- Initiated keywords and tagging feature

access to *metro.net* from personal, handheld devices including iPods, Blackberries and iPhones; an easy-to-use regional Trip Planner; HTML and interactive timetables, improved mobile alerts and email advisories, and project tracking (including Measure R, ARRA, and Metro construction projects).

"These improvements are just the beginning of our longer term strategy to provide greater transparency, reporting and accountability for all of Metro's taxpayer-funded transportation projects," said Raymond.

Visitors are encouraged to provide public feedback on the site by completing a customer survey available on the homepage.

"*Metro.net* should be available to anyone who wants to access our information anytime and anywhere they want it," Raymond said.

Metro's existing site has been one of the most widely accessed transportation websites in the entire country. The site currently averages about 500,000 unique visitors per month who hail not only from Southern California, but also from more than a hundred countries including Canada, Japan, Australia, Germany, Spain and Taiwan.

--from staff reports

Customer favorite lists compiled from user metrics

- Customer polls for feedback on site improvements

New Content

- The Source: news & views
- Measure R map and info
- Gold Line Eastside Extension info
- Construction projects (e.g. Orange Line Extension)
- New developer resources site
- New maps, including interactive

Features still to come:

- HTML and interactive timetables
- Improved Search results
- Improved regional Trip Planner
- Deeper integration of Google Maps
- Additional interactive maps
- Additional RSS syndication (more sections and pages of site will be subscribable)
- Useful email, mobile alerts and advisories
- Site available for mobile devices (iPhones, Blackberries, Symbian, etc)
- New visual content and media (photography, photo galleries, video, etc.)
- Documentary photography of construction progress
- Interactive safety education programs
- New editorial content
- New rider offers and contests

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Metro's New Website Enhances ADA Component

- **New Easier-to-Use Web Tools Aid Disabled Users**

By Michael D. White
Staff Writer

The work that went into the launch of the new *metro.net* website was challenging in more ways than one.

In addition to the technical aspects of creating a new *metro.net*, the Metro web team had to make sure that the new site complied with the mandates of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

The ADA has dramatically impacted how government agencies like Metro utilize the Internet to serve the public and clearly outlines the guidelines on how public agency websites must "increase the convenience and speed in obtaining information or services" for individuals with a broad range of physical disabilities.

More specifically, Section 508 establishes standards addressing a certain level of accessibility that electronic and information technology must meet for those with disabilities.

In addition, the team was tasked with meeting the requirements of the Priority 1 and 2 levels of the Worldwide Web Consortium's Accessibility Guidelines. While not law, the guidelines are universally followed as they are much more comprehensive and detailed on the wide myriad of content on today's internet.

Assistive technologies

The initial challenge for the Metro web team, says Metro Webmaster Joe Simpson, centered on "dealing with a complex site that had grown to more than 8,000 pages in size over so long a period of time."

Non-compliant websites create unnecessary barriers for people with disabilities because their designers haven't implemented "assistive technologies" into their web pages that can help someone who, for instance, cannot see a computer monitor or use a mouse, he says.

Such tools include screen readers which help the blind by "speaking" the

text that would normally appear on a monitor and voice recognition software which gives others who have difficulty using a computer mouse the ability to control their computers with verbal commands.

Such technologies, says Simpson, "give the trio of formats used on the *metro.net* site – Acrobat, InDesign and HTML – an additional layer of information so the bus timetables, "Riding Metro" information, Trip Planner and Customer Comment Form can be instantly and easily accessed by the disabled."

Above and beyond

Successful ADA compliance also called for coordinating input including testing and evaluation from several Metro departments including Creative, Operations and Communications and an outside consulting firm, he says.

Coordination efforts, he says, were channeled through Metro Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers, Chief Communications Officer Matt Raymond and ADA Compliance Administrator Chip Hazen.

One source of critical input was Metro Scheduling Systems Project Leader Agustin Moreno, who was involved from the beginning of the project in the selection and testing of the technology used to make *metro.net* more accessible to those with visual limitations.

"What impressed me the most about the entire effort was that no one was satisfied with doing just enough to get by," says Moreno, who has been blind since the age of 16. "Everyone involved was committed to going above and beyond to make the site the best it can be for everybody. It was a fine example of the team's commitment to going above and beyond to help people with serious needs."



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Champions for Change: Metro staff members worked closely with Brendon Sher, strategic business consultant for the Los Angeles Community College District, to develop a new training program to increase employee awareness of sustainability. Pictured are, from left, Sher, Krishniah Murthy, Deputy Chief Officer, Capital Management; Marion Jane Colston, Director, Strategic & Organizational Planning; Cris Liban, Environmental Compliance & Service Manager, and Cynthia Shaver, Senior Development Training Specialist. Not pictured, Board Member Pam O'Connor. *Photo: Gayle Anderson*

Metro's Sustainability Training Program Earns National Honors

- National Transit Institute Awards 'Model Program of the Year' to Metro's 'Champions for Change' – a training program designed to teach staff how to achieve transportation agency's sustainability goal.
- See myMetro.net report from the first training session March 12, 2009: [Sustainability 101: What is your Personal Initiative?](#)

(Nov. 5, 2009) Metro took top honors at the National Transit Institute (NTI) awards for a comprehensive and ground-breaking sustainability training program geared to employees charged with developing "best practices" to achieve sustainability goals.

Metro was presented with the 2009 Model Program Award during the Transit Training Awards ceremony, as part of the NTI Transit Trainers' Workshop held in Cleveland, Oct. 25–28. Training program director Marion Jane Colston, Strategic & Organizational Planning, and coordinator Cynthia Shavers, Senior Development Training Specialist, attended the national

workshop and accepted the award on behalf of the sustainability team.

Each year, awards are given to transit trainers who make outstanding contributions to their organizations. The awards are based on nominations from peers and serve to underscore the importance of quality training in the transit industry. This year's awards honored Metro in Los Angeles; Pierce Transit in Lakewood, Wash., and MV Transportation of Fairfield, CA.

After hosting two Sustainability Summits under the leadership of former Board Chair and current Board Member Pam O'Connor, Metro moved to the forefront as a regional transportation sustainability leader in Southern California, said Colston.

The agency implemented a comprehensive Environmental Policy centered on sustainability, and formally adopted the key strategic goal to "sustain the environment with efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions." To begin to reach this goal, Metro developed a new training program designed to increase employee awareness of sustainability concepts and explain how they impact the agency and its employees, clients and customers.

Entitled "Champions for Change," the training program enabled staff to understand the value of the effort, not just as a directive from management, but as a way to keep Metro environmentally safe and economically viable.

Colston worked with LACCD's Felicitio Cajayon, Dean of Resource and Economic Development, to obtain a grant from the Chancellor's Office to fund the development of the program at no cost to Metro.

The course provides information on what "sustainability" actually is, and what employees can do at work and in their personal lives to not deplete the earth's resources, and become champions for change. The "3Rs" — Reduce, Reuse, Recycle — are highlighted as well as Metro's other climate change and environmental policies. The course also explores how Metro is addressing these concerns through greener fleets, green building and construction practices and procurement activities.

Participants received actual "green" components such as wildflower seeds embedded in their name tents and Certificates of completion printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper to reinforce concepts presented in the course, said Colston.

"This program is an embodiment of how a simple idea can spark significant change," said Cris Liban, Environmental Compliance & Service Manager. "Through this training, our employees learn principles and actions they can apply in their personal lives. In this way Metro facilitates effective climate change management one personal sustainability initiative at a time."

Over 350 Metro staff members had completed the training by August 2009, and Metro anticipates on having another 300 staff complete the training by June 30, 2010.

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For Many, Gold Line Extension Will Mean More than Transportation

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

Depending on who you ask, the Nov. 15 opening of eight new stations along the Metro Gold Line will be welcomed in a number of different ways.

Be it spectator, volunteer, Metro Board member or employee, everyone can agree: the opening will be a monumental change for East Side neighborhoods, and the way people travel from there around the city.

No one knows that better than those who have watched closely -- among them Los Angeles City Councilman and Metro Board Member Jose Huizar.

"This is extremely exciting. I grew up in Boyle Heights. I still live in Boyle Heights and the way I see it, this is going to connect not only people who want to go to work and have an easier access for transportation, but the young people who live in our community," Huizar said during an Oct. 30 media preview ride that started out at Union Station.

Huizar recalled being in law school when he first began participating in the project.

"It's going to open up a whole other world for them [young people]. I remember growing up there. Sometimes you don't get to cross this bridge over the river," he said. "And for young people, they're going to have easier access to get around Los Angeles, not to mention the benefits to the environment, and also the economic development opportunities all along the line are going to exist for some areas that haven't had the type of care and attention that they deserve."

Erica Cornejo and Erik Sarni, both reporters for the *Voice*, a Boyle Heights

Photos by Laura Kloth



Los Angeles City Councilman and Metro Board Member Jose Huizar remembers getting involved on the Extension project while a student in law school.



RAC member Armando Ybarra says he was proud to have participated in the Gold Line Extension project and wishes more people had joined in.

community newspaper, joined the throng of reporters at the media preview, and smiled as they prepared to board the shiny new Gold Line rail cars.

Sarni, a videographer, said he wanted to cover the event for his paper, and to create a video for Youtube.

"It means a lot to us because finally they put rail on East Side. So finally, we could connect, and we could transit all over downtown L.A., Long Beach, the airport, Pasadena, and Universal Studios," he said.

Cornejo, who plans to write a story about her adventure, agreed.

"It's great, it's great. I do a lot of shopping in East L.A. I'm just happy for the community to be able to have this transportation. I ride the bike a lot, and I know that we're going to be able to take the bike on the rail. We're happy about that," she said.

Armando Ybarra, a Review Advisory Committee (RAC), said he was proud to have been part of the process, and was in awe of the impact it will have on the whole basin.

Ybarra said his only regret was that more people in the community didn't get involved.

"I wish more people had given more input. This is for you, for our children, for our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren because let's be honest, we're pioneers for something for the future, and this is an investment," he said.

"I would like to see eventually for these lines to extend all the way to La Habra, La Mirada, all over the San Gabriel Valley," he added. "Hopefully, somebody will pick up the torch because it's a big project. It's time consuming, but it's ok. I look at it as the least I can do for the benefit of the masses, and the future generations."

All agreed the new extension would bring Los Angeles closer together.

"Just standing on this platform right now, you see people of all incomes and races, walking with each other talking with each other. I think all of that is good for the city," said Huizar.



Erica Cornejo *Voice* Reporter said the new Extension would bring more options to many commuting from L.A. and back to the Eastside.



Voice newspaper reporter and videographer Erik Sarni was excited about joining other media at the preview ride, and was happy to document the ride for YouTube.

- See *myMetro.net* report 10.26.09: [Public Grand Opening Set for Sunday Nov. 15](#)

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Veteran Scott Remembers Friend, Tours, Duty

By Rich Morallo
*Transit Operations
Community Relations*

(Nov. 10, 2009) John Scott's military career began in 1961 when, fresh out of high school, he enlisted in the United States Navy at the age of 19.

"I wanted to get away from the dairy farms of Imperial Valley," said Scott, Metro's Rail Fleet Service Warranty and Quality Assurance Manager.

Through his 30 years in the Navy, Scott earned a degree in mechanical engineering and worked his way up the ranks to Chief Warrant Officer 4.

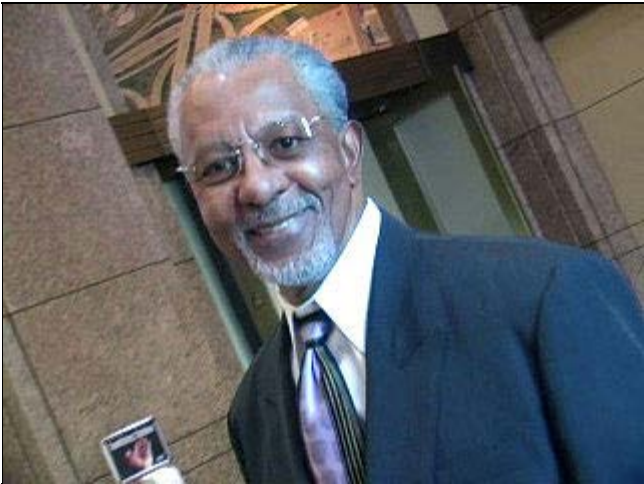
He sailed all over the world visiting Hawaii, China, Japan and Korea, while other tours of duty found him in San Diego, Philadelphia and Washington State working on the boilers, engines, generators and auxiliary diesel power and sea water distilling plants as the main propulsion officer aboard three different ships.

Before retiring in 1991, Scott served as the Quality Assurance Officer and head of the safety and facilities department at the Long Beach Naval Shipyard.

When Scott looks back on his naval service, the Metro manager mostly thinks about the seven tours he served in Vietnam.

"A tour for us lasted between six and nine months, so I spent about four years in Vietnam," explained Scott.

Scott recalls sitting on the fantail of his destroyer, watching as the ship discharged salvos of five-inch rounds into the shoreline three miles away. "The bombardment would last hours and sometimes days," Scott said.



John Scott, Rail Fleet Service Warranty and Quality Assurance Manager, enlisted in the U.S. Navy at age 19 in 1961 and retired in 1991 as the Quality Assurance Officer and head of the safety and facilities department at the Long Beach Naval Shipyard.

Scott also remembers his best friend in Vietnam, a gunboat "driver" named Oscar.

"He and I were very close. We always spent time together and went on liberty in Hong Kong and the Philippines," reminisced Scott.

Scott's friend - "a daredevil, not afraid of anything" - was killed by offshore fire while on a river patrol, said Scott quietly.

"My Veterans Day message to my brother and sister service members is to enjoy life, enjoy your families and support each other," he said.

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SLIDE SHOW ^

Archive photos from a presentation by Rich Herpers and Rod Oden. Event photos by Gayle Anderson.

WWII Veteran Leads the Charge at Metro SGV Traditional Veteran's Day Celebration

(Nov. 10, 2009) Metro employees, many veterans among them, along with families and friends, presented a spirited and patriotic gathering at the traditional Veteran's Day celebration, held Nov. 10 at Metro San Gabriel Valley.

The hour-long ceremony included special guest speakers and a birthday party for the United States Marine Corps, which celebrated its 234th birthday on Nov. 10.

Hailed by Metro San Gabriel Valley GM Jack Gabig as the "mover and shaker" behind the annual San Gabriel Valley Division's Veteran's Day event, Maintenance Manager John McBryan, a Marine Corps veteran who served in Viet Nam, welcomed all veterans in the spirit of the day.

The purpose of the event, said McBryan, is to "respect and honor all veterans, some of those who have lost their lives."

Ceremony highlights

McBryan handed out red poppy pins, traditionally used to honor veterans killed in war. The tradition became standard during World War I, said McBryan. Wearing the poppy, he said, symbolizes the fields of poppies that grew over the graves of Napoleon's soldiers.

Speakers included 86-year-old WWII veteran Robert Torres, Sr., a member of the U.S. Army Air Corps who served in the South Pacific. He was accompanied to the event by his two sons, who both work for Metro. Robert Torres, Corporate Safety, Safety systems manager, and Carl Torres, a transportation planning manager located at Metro San Gabriel Valley, stood side by side with their father.

Torres Sr. had many tales of the Pacific to share, remembering harrowing photographic missions in the bombardier's pit aiming his hefty camera, instead of a gun, at enemy territory.

One year at Christmas time, he recalls, he was getting comfortable in his tent, which he had fortified with a table that encircled the tent. The table had become a popular spot for soldiers to sit and write letters or read.

Toyko Rose had promised a surprise for the troops, he said, and sure enough, at midnight the camp was attacked by fighter planes. Everybody ducked into the fox holes except Torres, who'd rather die with his boots on than get in a hole with a bunch of spiders and other creepy crawlies. But as he dived into his tent, he cut his lip on the table. When the attack was over, he was the only one injured.

Metro SGV GM Jack Gabig and East Valley Maintenance Division Manager Sal Llamas, a veteran who served with the U.S. Marines in Iraq, also gave patriotic remarks. "I was at Division 7 when I was called up to service," said Llamas, "and the Metro family was so caring to my wife and family and me with support and letters. I can't thank you enough."

Invited and heartily encouraged by McBryan, U.S. Army and Army Reserve Command Sgt. Major Rivers Jacques and U.S. Army Capt. Jesus Rivera stepped up to the podium in fine form.

A highlight of the event was the singing of the National Anthem by Casey Faust, daughter of Metro SGV Administration and Financial Service Manager Paula Faust.

-- from Gayle Anderson

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Miles Walked, Promises Kept:

Metro's own Mitigation team tends to community needs while Metro builds a railroad

(Nov. 13, 2009) As construction of the Metro Gold Line's new extension got under way, Metro's own Mitigation team – handily managed by Community Relations Manager Yvette Rapose – worked hand-in-hand with area businesses and residential neighbors to keep the project progressing smoothly.

Say you're a business owner situated along the Extension's six-mile alignment.

You've got a broken fence, your utilities have stopped working, maybe your sidewalk has suddenly sprouted orange safety cones and barricades and you're afraid your competition will start to pull your customers away?

Solution: The Community Relations Mitigation Team.

"The Mitigation team sets the standard and maintains quality control for how our contractors interact with the public," says Rapose. "We also work hand-in-hand with project management to insure the mitigations that we promised during the planning process are executed or completed as per the environmental documents."

Unofficially, the team is on call 24-hours to provide assistance.

"We mitigate for noise, dust and any other related construction impacts," she says. "If a contractor has to work around the clock, then we make sure the work that must continue has the least level of noise possible."

Problems solved



Mitigation team is on the job at Mariachi Plaza in this photo taken Feb. 5, 2009. Clockwise from front and center: Yvette Rapose, Cristina Cornado, Perla Berry, Olga Arroyo, Lorena Hernandez and Olga Lopez.

One example involved a restaurant owner who lost parking on First Street, and then began losing customers.

"We helped set up the business a little differently. If customers couldn't come in the door as before, why not try serving take-out style?" said Rapose. The mitigation team helped the restaurant owner market the new service and kept his customers coming back.

"The job is finding creative solutions for perceived impact related to construction," she said. "It's getting business owners to perceive their situation in a new light."

Similarly, when parking was removed at First and Boyle, businesses there didn't have rear parking. The solution was only one street away.

"We discovered Pennsylvania Avenue, a wide street in the middle of the neighborhood."

The Mitigation team collaborated with the appropriate city departments and ended up getting the parking on Pennsylvania converted to angled parking. The new arrangement yielded 22 parking spaces, more than had been lost.

Typically, the main street shops and businesses in the area are 'mom-and-pop' enterprises. Rapose recalls a uniform shop run by an older woman, who had been providing uniforms for medical technicians, law enforcement officers, security personnel and others for years.

Now construction was partially blocking the sidewalk and she was afraid her customers couldn't stop by on their lunch hour.

"Again, we were put on order to come up with a new way to conduct business," said Rapose. "The solution was to set up a website where her customers could order uniforms. Now, we knew she wasn't computer savvy, so rather than setting up an online shopping cart that involved banking relationships and security, we made an order form online that could be faxed directly to the shop."

Responsibilities and challenges

The Mitigation team hit the ground running at the start of construction in July 2004.

"Public outreach comes first. That means weekly meetings at the construction field office to review any planned activities that might have an impact on a public right-of-way. If so, we saturate the impacted area with notices," said Rapose. "We maintain communication channels with stakeholder groups in the community, including elected officials and the media."

The biggest responsibility and challenge, she adds, is construction impact mitigation.

"We become technical experts. We come to know the activity inside and out because we're the ones that have to explain what's going on.

"Picture this: You have a house. We're in the street relocating gas and water lines. We need to make sure your gas and water lines are working. How? We actually check in homes, door to door. We coordinate access to the home with the resident and go right in there and check the plumbing and the stove and the water to make sure we relocated your line as we

should have," she said.

New mitigation efforts are under way, and the team is tending to other communities in construction areas: the Orange Line Chatsworth Station, and the I-405 widening.

But on the eve of the official opening of the Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles, Rapose drives down First Street and sees welcome signs everywhere.

It's a new day on the Eastside.

There's not an orange cone in sight; the barricades are gone, a light rail train glides between beautiful stations and, most importantly, the smiles on local faces are wider than ever, thanks to Rapose and her hardworking Metro Mitigation Team.

--from Gayle Anderson


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The Metro Rail Safety Ambassadors help residents navigate tricky spots on the line, and run interference for law enforcement working to discourage pedestrians from jaywalking. Community Relations Manager Barbara Burns, center, coordinates the effort. Next to the left is organizer Carlos Valdez, Sr. Community Relations Officer. *Photos: Gayle Anderson*

Metro Rail Safety Ambassadors Deliver the Safety Message to Eastside Community

- One by one: [Who is where](#)

By Gayle Anderson

(Nov. 13, 2009) The Veteran's Day holiday proved to be the calm before the storm for teams of Metro Safety Ambassadors staking out the six-mile alignment before the Sunday's public grand opening of the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension.

"It's very quiet," said Ambassador Yandell "Sunny" Lister, "Everybody is obeying the law and paying attention to the lights."

Along First Street and Third Street to Atlantic Boulevard, neighborhoods in Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles appeared deserted.

Except for pockets of Metro crews in hard hats and safety vests installing new traffic signs, there was hardly a sign of the approaching storm of trains, officials, exuberant riders, pedestrians and traffic gathering on the horizon for the landmark event.

But rain or shine, the stout-hearted Metro Rail Safety Ambassadors, who deliver Metro's rail safety message to hundreds of community members, expect the front line on safety to hold when the long-awaited light rail line opens.



Ambassadors Sunny Lister and Ronnie Scott at East L.A. Civic Center Station.

Lister is one of 24 Ambassadors working in shifts from 6:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the weekends. The number of safety ambassadors doubled this month from the original 12 who began one-on-one rail safety lessons in the spring.

Under the direction of Community Relations Manager Barbara Burns, the ambassadors conduct a relentless one-on-one campaign for safety around the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension.

The safety ambassadors help residents navigate tricky spots on the line, and run interference for law enforcement working to discourage pedestrians from jaywalking.

"Metro wants the public to have a safe experience with light rail," said Metro CEO Art Leahy. "A train with cars that weigh more than 100,000 pounds can't stop on a dime so motorists and pedestrians must pay attention. The ambassadors are the face of Metro. They're teaching people how to watch for trains, observe the warning lights and signage and act responsibly around the trains."

Leahy said the agency has gone to great lengths to ensure safety. A \$4.5 million investment in additional safety enhancements was approved by the Board in October. The new funding paid for additional safety ambassadors and will also pay for nearly two miles of a 4 ft. centerline fence to be built down the entire alignment, in addition to more signals, and more traffic signs.

Every trained safety ambassador is a retired Metro professional – a former train or bus operators or retired security officer.

The safety ambassadors must make sure that pedestrians learn the sounds of trains, look at the bells and whistles, learn how to cross the tracks properly in the crosswalks, and understand the speed of trains.

"People walking across the tracks were my biggest challenge," said Ambassador James Bernard, who attended the three-hour light rail safety course at seven that morning. "We get to them before they start walking across. We take them over and show them where the safety zone is, and they walk away saying 'thank you, thank you!'"

Ambassador-at-large Ronnie Scott was happy to see the new left-turn signal at the Mednik and Third Street location.

"Atlantic is not that bad but Woods Avenue to the west has five intersections going. That's a lot of skateboarders to keep track of," said Scott, shaking his head. "They're learning. When they see us, they pick up their skateboard and walk across the street like they're supposed to."

Ambassador Lorne Currie, who joined Metro in 1983 as a bus operator and helped open the first segment of the Metro Gold Line as a train operator, retired in 2007.

"Here's the challenge," said Currie, "There's a brand new rail system in your back yard and you don't know anything about it – how to cross it, how to drive with it, what direction to go."



From left:
Kirk Davis,
James
Bernard,
Ronnie Scott
and Gregory
Ferris confer
at Indiana
Station

Inform, witness, and report

"The ambassadors are there seven days a week and are our contact in the field," said LASD Ret. Lt. George Grein, currently called back to duty as law enforcement liaison between Transit Security Bureau and Metro. "It's like a real-time Neighborhood Watch. Their weekly report informs the patrol staff and deputies on motorcycles on enforcement in areas identified with problems."

Since establishing a presence in May, Grein said the TSB has issued some 1,800 citations and more than 100 warnings to pedestrians and drivers in areas identified by the Safety Ambassadors.

As the Ambassadors advance to the front line, they are backed by a groundswell of safety support that began shortly after construction took root in 2007.

The comprehensive safety program canvassed the entire community, including training sessions at all 60 schools within a five-mile radius of the alignment, senior citizen centers and civic groups and organizations.

Additional safety training was conducted within the community in the summer, when the staff visited recreational centers, youth groups, staged 'brown bag' lunchtime training sessions at local hospitals, and conducted 10 safety training sessions at local libraries, which were advertised in newspapers.

New this month, an illustrated signage fold-out in five languages prevalent in the area -- English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese and Japanese -- is being distributed. The manual was inspired by Ambassadors who reported concerns that some drivers didn't recognize the international symbols used on traffic signs.

And when trains begin picking up passengers, rail cars will advertise safety basics from train-length ads attached to the exteriors.

In a report issued Oct. 6, an independent panel of rail transit safety experts concluded that the new Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles has been designed and built to operate safely.

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.

In their final recommendation, the panel asked Metro "to continue the Ambassador program for several weeks beyond the start of revenue service."

But are the safety lessons sticking? The Ambassadors say yes. The community is definitely responding.

"I believe we made a difference so far. The signaling system makes it safer. Everybody is getting on board. The people are welcoming and friendly now," Lister said.

METRO RAIL SAFETY AMBASSADORS

Ronald Autry, Pico/Aliso * **Michael Barnes**, 1st & Alameda * **James Bernard**, 3rd & Rowan * **Hilarie Berry**, Pico/Aliso * **Gene Campbell**, 3rd & Mednik * **Rogelio Chacon**, 1st & Indiana * **Hugh Cooper**, Alameda & Temple * **Lorne Currie**, 1st & Indiana * **Kirk Davis**, 1st & Indiana * **Henry Dixon**, El Mercado * **Askia Faheem**, 3rd & Mednik * **Gregory Ferris**, 1st & Indiana * **Harold Fields**, 1st & Alameda * **Cary Hogan**, 3rd & Rowan * **Francis James**, 3rd & Rowan * **Yandell "Sunny" Lister**, 3rd & Mednik * **James McDuffie**, 3rd & Indiana * **Bruce Montgomery**, Alameda & Temple * **Sara Moore**, Pico/Aliso * **Mike Moran**, El Mercado * **Narciso Polanco**, El Mercado * **Sheree Sanders**, Pico/Aliso * **Ronnie Scott**, 3rd & Indiana * **Walter Shelby**, 1st & Alameda



Now 24 strong, the Metro Rail Safety Ambassadors stake out the new six-mile alignment to conduct personal safety campaign with residents and visitors to East Los Angeles.


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Operator Egriselda Molina will put the Eastside Extension through its inaugural paces to break through cascades of ribbons at East L.A. Civic Center ceremony on Saturday. VIPs will board the official Metro Gold Line Inaugural Train at Union Station. Photo: Gayle Anderson

Momentum Builds for Gold Line Eastside Extension Opening

- Metro Employees, Community Excited about Riding New Train
- **Online [Opening Celebration Sunday, Nov. 15](#):** Free Rides, the First Ever Boyle Heights Block Party and Mariachi Festival and Other Community Festivities Planned for Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

To say neighborhood residents are excited about Sunday's opening of the Gold Line East Side Extension might be a slight understatement.

"This one is going to be big. It's a whole new part of town. The community is very excited out there," said Bruce Shelburne, Director of Scheduling and Service Development.

Equally excited are the 500-plus Metro employees including Service Attendants, bus and train operators, Customer Service Agents, and Metro officials who will be shepherding crowds at Union Station, as well as the Extension's eight new stations.

"We'll have people on the platforms, on the crosswalks, in the mezzanine, in the queue lines," said Shelburne.

Amid final preparations at the Extension's Atlantic station this week, Shelburne was tapped on the shoulder by at least 10 people who wanted to know more about the new train, and when they would get

to ride it.

"Everybody who walked by asked me something. They're all so excited for the train to be coming. That really is kind of a neat feeling," Shelburne said, noting that he's had a role in every new line opening since 1990 when Metro cut the ribbon on the Blue Line.

With three-car trains with as many as 150 passengers per car running all day Sunday, Shelburne estimates some 80,000 passengers will take advantage of the free ride day. "We've got capacity to carry over 100,000 passengers," he said indicating the trains will run about every eight minutes.

Safety and order

This week, Customer Information Agent Marie Tervalon assisted with the last-minute training of the Metro Safety Ambassadors who will move crowds safely around the four street level stations. "People are really gung ho about it in East L.A.," Tervalon said.

Customer Information Agent Jacqueline Exeart – who, like Shelburne, has also worked every Metro opening since 1990 – said that in the past, the crowds have been very orderly.

Her most vivid memory was seeing the reaction of the passengers when the new Metro Red Line train they were aboard doubled its speed through the tunnel on its way to Universal City, giving passengers a mini high speed rail experience.

"You get to meet a lot of people, not only transit users, but people who love trains," said Exeart. "You meet a lot of people who were here in California when they use to have rail, and are very impressed with the system. You hear all the stories about how California use to have trains, and why they took them out."

When it's time to board for the first time, she said, "It's just amazing how their eyes light up, and for the people in that community who know that now they can get from point A to point B."

Customer Information Officer David Ullrich remembers working the Metro Green Line opening and dealing with the "hoards" of people. "I worked mostly crowd control. It was crazy and it was fun," he said.

Timing, planning and rock 'n roll

Fortunately, Shelburne noted, this opening isn't happening on a blazing August day like the Metro Green Line did in 1995 when long lines of people waited while dignitaries gave speeches or the start-up of the Metro Blue Line when capacity was maxed out and not everyone got to ride the new train.

This time around, he said, a VIP event is scheduled for the Saturday before the opening and, because of the time change and single day offerings, the crowds will be more manageable.

Communications Manager Fran Curbello, who has organized events for every Metro rail opening, remembered the Metro Blue Line opening with this observation.

"There were throngs of people; it was standing room only. They [the visitors] really enjoyed it. I think trains were so new to people, I think

they saw it as an amusement park ride," she said.

For those planning to hang out at Union Station, Metro's own Blue Liners will join Tervalon to entertain guests at Union Station with classic rock songs rewritten to include the Metro Gold Line name.

So, lyrics like BTO's "Taking Care of Business" just might sound more like "Riding on the Gold Line...Every Day."

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Chief Operating Officer Carolyn Flowers Resigns

She Accepts Top Job as CEO of the Charlotte Area Transit System in North Carolina

(Nov. 17, 2009) Carolyn Flowers, Metro's Chief Operating Officer who oversees bus operations with an annual operating budget of \$900 million and more than 6,000 employees, has resigned from Metro to accept the position of Transit Executive Director and CEO for the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) in North Carolina.

In submitting her resignation, Flowers said she plans to stay at Metro until the end of the year "to assist in the completion of some important issues in this Board cycle."

Expressing both congratulations and regret, CEO Art Leahy announced the resignation of Flowers in an all-staff memo issued Monday. "Obviously, this a great loss to Metro, but it is a

"Leaving the friends and work family at Metro is my biggest regret. I will truly miss the dedication of the Operations team. They have been great to work with. I will sorely miss my staff; they have made my job easier. I will also miss the comrades on the management team. I will miss all my friends all over the agency. The messages that they have been sending me will stay in my heart always." -- Carolyn Flowers

significant opportunity for Ms. Flowers," Leahy said.

Flowers said that the decision to accept the position as CEO of a major transit agency was a difficult one. "I was not looking to leave the Metro family but I could not pass up a significant opportunity to pursue my long-term personal and career objectives," she said.

Challenges and accomplishments

Flowers' list of challenges and accomplishments in her Metro career is a long one.

As head of labor negotiations since 2007, Flowers was the chief negotiator in reaching recent labor agreements with Metro's four largest unions. The labor contract extensions are going to the Board in this cycle for ratification.

It is Labor Relations, as well as long hours devoted to Service Planning and Development programs, that she considers the most rewarding.

Her list of successes during her time at Metro include working on labor negotiation teams to establish better working relationships with labor partners; a reduction of accidents in the last two years; an increase in the number of accident-free days - with no lost time due to injuries - as well as a continued reduction in worker's compensation costs; implementation of wellness initiatives with UTU; and a significant reduction in customer complaints.

Challenges, on the other hand, were funding constraints and deficits, completing the consent decree, and matching service with demand.

"I will miss not being a part of the future implementation of Measure R projects. I will miss the topography of Los Angeles, and its cultural diversity. I wish I could be both places at once," she said.

The appointment of Flowers to head a major transit agency was announced in a press release issued Monday by the City of Charlotte.

The press release noted Flowers, who will report "will oversee county-wide transit planning and transit management activities including developing and promoting a long-term regional vision for transit services; managing existing transit services; designing and managing the future transit system, and providing oversight on in-house contracted transit services."

Carolyn Flowers is a veteran of nearly 35 years in financial management positions in industry and government.

Prior to her appointment in 2007 to Chief Operating Officer at Metro, Flowers previously served as Metro Executive Officer of Administration, and as Deputy Executive Officer of Finance in the Office of Management and Budget.

Flowers joined the agency in January 1993 as an administrative analyst in the Equal Opportunity/Contract Compliance department, before being promoted to chief administrative analyst in Bus Operations and Procurement.

During 1998 and most of 1999, she was head of the budget department for the City of Beverly Hills and returned to Metro in October 2000 as Deputy Executive Officer of Finance.

After completing an MBA in finance and marketing at UCLA, Flowers was a financial analyst and budget officer for more than five years at Rockwell International Automotive Operations at Michigan and Ohio offices.

She also worked for Wang Laboratories in Massachusetts for more than 10 years in financial management positions and as district sales administration manager for computer hardware and software.

A member of the National Forum of Black Public Administrators and the Women's Transportation Conference, she is a native of Los Angeles.

In 2008, Flowers was named "Woman of the Year" by the Los Angeles Chapter of the Women's Transportation Seminar and awarded several other honors including the American Stroke Association's Ambassador Award and a special recognition award by the greater Los Angeles African-American Chamber of Commerce.

-- from Gayle Anderson


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CEO Art Leahy is joined by Diversity & Economic Opportunity employees Sr. Rep. Jay Fiskus (a.k.a. Santa) and helpers, from left, Rep. Violeta Aguilos, Manager Tashai Smith and Asst. Admin. Analyst Elizabeth Garcia. *Photo by Michael D. White*

14th Annual Gift Giving Drive Has Now Begun...

- Employees Asked To Pick Up a Tag, Donate A Toy To Benefit Fred Jordan Mission

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Nov. 17, 2009) Accompanied by Santa and his elves, CEO Art Leahy was on hand Tuesday to help launch Metro's 14th Annual Holiday Gift Giving Drive benefiting Skid Row Kids at the Fred Jordan Mission.

Employees who wish to participate are being asked to pick up a tag at a table on the third floor from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. this week.

Some of the items requested include blankets, cars, dolls, sports balls, stuffed animals, backpacks, rain gear and canned goods. Organizers have set a goal of distributing gifts to 30 percent more children this year, including more gifts for middle school-aged children.

"Last year more than 5,000 toys and other items were donated," said Diversity and Economic Opportunity Representative Barbara Thomasson, who is assisting in coordinating this year's drive. "And this year, people have already started signing up early and bringing their gifts."

All unwrapped items must be delivered to the Diversity and Economic Department on the 13th floor by 4 p.m. on Dec. 11.

Deputy Chief Executive officer Paul Taylor joked that Leahy was the “Chief Elf Officer” as he signed up to help to launch the holiday charity effort.

“It’s wonderful. We’re all lucky that we can do this,” Leahy said after receiving his tag.

Once collected, the toys will be loaded onto Metro buses and delivered to the mission on Wednesday, Dec. 16.

Participating divisions and rail location employees can pick up their tags from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the MSSC, where the contact is Jim Montoya, and at participating rail yards where the contact is Amador Silva.



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Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca spent some 90 minutes visiting with Div. 1 bus operators Arnold Holguin, Ricardo Suarez, Wesley Yancey, Omar Moh, Asst. Manager Guillermo Goytia, Candelario Guandique, Al Chavez, Roberto Sarabia, Carolyn Jackson and Bernardo Gamboa.

Sheriff Baca Makes the Rounds, Addresses Operators’ Concerns

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Nov. 17, 2009) An interesting rumor got started soon after Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca paid a visit to Los Angeles Division 1 on East 6th Street.

Baca, accompanied by South Bureau Transit Capt. John Witt and North Bureau Transit Capt. Pat Jordan, spent some time with operators in October, fielding questions and offering suggestions.

South
Bureau
Transit
Capt. John
Witt
joined Los
Angeles
County
Sheriff
Lee Baca
as he
made the
rounds
addressing
bus
operators



at
divisions 1
and 5.

Transportation Manager Sonja Owens said she was very grateful that the head of the one of the busiest law enforcement agencies in the country would take some 90 minutes to visit with her staff.

Others wondered if Baca was personally invited by CEO Art Leahy, who they'd heard had gone to the same school as the sheriff.

Was it true? Well only partly.

"The Sheriff and I each went to Franklin High in Highland Park, East Los Angeles College, Cal State LA, and the University of Southern California, but not at the same time," Leahy explained adding that Baca is a tad older.

So what was the reason for his visit?



Los Angeles
County Sheriff
Lee Baca
spoke to
operators at
the Arthur
Winston Div.
5 to answer
questions and
address
concerns.

"He's a great guy who understands Los Angeles and is very committed to providing great service to Metro," said Leahy. "I'm very pleased that we have such strong support from the Sheriff."

Baca also spent time at Arthur Winston Div. 5 recently, taking the opportunity to meet the staff and address more concerns such as how operators deal with the crowds of sometimes rowdy high school students and gang members who start trouble on the buses.

Witt said his people have worked closely with school authorities and have developed plans to improve deputy visibility and response times, adding his boss just wanted to reinforce the department's commitment to Metro and to its patrons.

"We have an excellent safety record. We take this very seriously," said Witt.



Div. 1 Assist. Manager Guillermo Goytia and Transportation Manager Sonja Owens were happy to host the sheriff.

Owens said when Baca asked questions, and he was very specific when he provided effective solutions. For example, when operators were asked if they preferred plain clothes deputies, most responded they preferred uniforms.

"The great thing about it is that not only did I get to meet him, but the operators got to meet him. He was down to earth and wanted to start building a bridge," said Owens. "It's different when the chief says 'We're going to get a committee. We're going to ride more buses'," Owens said.


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Rail General Manager Mike Cannell expressed appreciation for Gold Line employees, in particular the 254 rail workers who moved 75,000 passengers at Sunday's opening, at the Operations Committee meeting on Thursday. *Photo by Gayle Anderson*

Employees Thanked for Making Gold Line Opening Run Smoothly

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Nov. 19, 2009) Employees who helped launch the Edward R. Roybal Metro Gold Line East Side Extension received a huge pat on the back from CEO Art Leahy and other Metro officials this week.

"Thank you and congratulations," said Leahy Nov. 19 as he addressed several dozen rail employees who assisted in the start up process of the Gold Line Extension.

The Nov. 15 opening was officially deemed a success by Rail General Manager Mike Cannell who also expressed appreciation to his employees, in particular the 254 rail workers who moved 75,000 passengers at Sunday's opening.

The Extension unveiling brought out people from all areas including a woman, who Leahy said, confessed that she'd lived in Monterey Park for 40 years and had never been to the East Side.

"It really is another example of the MTA revolutionizing Los Angeles," Leahy said during the Operations Committee



CEO Art Leahy congratulates Board, staff in Tuesday's Daily Brief report ...

meeting today.

"Everybody associated with this did a great job," said Bruce Shelburne, Director of Scheduling and Service Development.

Shelburne's boarding predictions were right on target as he noted that one of the smartest decisions was to split up riders going from the Atlantic stop on one end to Pasadena on the other by making them switch trains at Union Station.

While some people wondered why they couldn't ride straight through, Shelburne said it was the only way to guarantee that everyone would get a chance to ride.

"It took a lot of effort to get folks through the station all day long. We got everybody to where they were going," he said.

The peak period came around 2 p.m. when some riders had to wait more than an hour to board a train.

The Union Station elevator stopped working for a while, but was quickly repaired. The elevator and escalator at the Mariachi Station also stopped working for a brief time, while buses were made available to transport riders who needed special assistance.

Leahy was very grateful to the employees who helped with crowd control at Union Station. "Union Station was one tough operation. It was more congested than when the Red Line opened," he said.

In coming weeks, Metro staff will study riding patterns on the new route to determine how the trains are being used and make further schedule adjustments.

During the weekend opening of the Edward R. Roybal Gold Line Extension to East Los Angeles, Metro carried 75,000 friends of the line to eight brand new stations on Sunday. As I traveled amongst them on the train and enjoyed the festivities at Union, Little Tokyo Arts, Mariachi and East Los Angeles Civic Center stations, I was filled with pride and moved by the history of the event that reconnected, by rail, one of our region's oldest neighborhoods and a place where our diverse ancestries first called home in Southern California.

I was fortunate to walk into this success --- a light rail line completed on time, within budget and without incidence and delivered into service of a deserving community, specifically due to the commitment of this Board and the outstanding efforts of staff throughout the agency.

In advance of the safety enhancements for the line recently approved by the board, additional safety measures were deployed on Monday morning with ten crossing guards positioned at the five schools closest to the alignment to assist students crossing Metro tracks. The guards escort children to and from school in the morning and in the afternoon and will be in place until June 20, 2010.

Additionally, traffic control officers have been stationed at key locations in the City and the County and will remain for the next two weeks to assist motorists crossing the tracks. The 24 Ambassadors remain on post from 6:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on weekends. In addition, over 200 bilingual Spanish/English warning signs have been posted on the right-of-way to ensure critical messaging is taking place.

Many residents throughout the area are enjoying the cultural richness of Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles for the first time as they have personally articulated to me and other staff riding the system.

Congratulations to the Board and the staff on this historic achievement!

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Chief Elf and CEO Art Leahy met with Holiday Gift Giving Drive task force committee members Susan Dove, foreground, and Veronica Hargrove for a momentum check on Wednesday morning. "We are so fortunate to live here and be able to do this," said CEO Leahy.

Gift-giving generosity begins to fill the Metro stocking for the Fred Jordan Mission Annual Christmas Party for Skid Row kids

(Nov. 19, 2009) Employees were crowding the gift-giving recruiting table this week as organizers were well into filling sign-up sheets with commitments from gift givers for Metro's 14th Annual Holiday Gift Giving Drive benefiting Skid Row Kids at the Fred Jordan Mission.

Employees who wish to participate can pick up a gift tag at a table on the third floor from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. this week. "If you miss us this week, come up to the 13th floor for your gift tag. It's never too late to share your holiday spirit," said Diversity and Economic Opportunity Representative Barbara Thomasson, who is assisting in coordinating this year's drive.

Participating divisions and rail location employees can pick up their tags from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the MSSC, where the contact is Jim Montoya, and at participating rail yards where the contact is Amador Silva.



Diversity and Economic Opportunity DEO Linda Wright signs on the dotted line with elf Jeanette Bell.

Popular gift items include blankets, cars, dolls, sports balls, stuffed animals, backpacks, rain gear and canned goods. Organizers have set a goal of distributing gifts to 30 percent more children this year, including more gifts for middle school-aged children.

All unwrapped items must be delivered to the Diversity and Economic Department on the 13th floor by 4 p.m. on Dec. 11.



Elf Linda Perryman deals the winning hand for the gift drive, enticing the spirited with festive decorations and a tempting bowl of holiday candy.

Once collected, the toys will be loaded onto Metro buses and delivered to the mission on Wednesday, Dec. 16 in preparation for the annual Fred Jordan Mission Christmas Celebration on Dec. 20.

Employees interested in volunteering with a Metro group to help distribute holiday cheer and gifts at the mission's celebration can contact Thomasson at 922-4526.

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Lee Denson, Retired Mechanic, Dies at 60

- Services are scheduled for 11 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 10, at the Strait-Way Apostolic Church, 102 East Kelso St.. in Inglewood. Information: Arturo Aguilar, (213) 383-1277.

(Nov. 19, 2009) Services will be held on Friday for retired Div. 2 Mechanic "A" Lee Denson, 60, who died Nov. 10.

Born on Aug. 13, 1949, Mr. Denson was hired in September 1979 as a service attendant. He quickly advanced to mechanic and was promoted to Mechanic "A" in March 1986.

Daughter TeAlomia Denson said her father enjoyed his job as a mechanic. He worked out of several divisions, including Arthur Winston Div. 5, Carson Div. 18 and Crossroads Div 2. He worked at Div. 2 from 1999 to the time of his retirement in September 2002.

In the early 90's, Mr. Denson was also a vanpool coordinator and driver for the Moreno Valley and Fontana area, said his daughter, and he was also part of the graffiti removal program.

"He really loved his place of employment," said Ms. Denson, noting he worked at Metro for 23 years. "And, among other things, he loved playing ping pong with his co-workers," she recalled.

Born in Los Angeles August 8, 1949, he resided in Fontana with his family at the time of his death.

Mr. Denson is survived by his wife, Sandy, and four daughters.



Retired Mechanic 'A'
Lee Denson

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Ron Reedy, 65, Remembered as a Friend, Great Metro Employee

(Nov. 19, 2009) Retired Metro employee Ron Reedy, who spent 35 years with the agency, died Nov. 18 at the age of 65 following an illness.

Remembering his co-worker and good friend, Div. 15 Transportation Manager Gary Spivack said Mr. Reedy was very much like Will Rogers. "He really acted like he never met a person he didn't like," Spivack noted.

Mr. Reedy retired from Metro for the second time in 2008 following his career with the agency where he began as a bus operator in 1973.

"He was a manager for just about every division that we had and was at Division 7 twice, and then at 15," Spivack said.

Mr. Reedy also worked in the executive offices when Metro formed part of the RTD. He retired after 30 years at Metro in 2003, only to return the same year, and retire again in 2008.

Mr. Reedy's positions with Metro included serving as an Assistant Transportation Manager at Sun Valley Div. 15, and a Transportation Manager at West Hollywood Div. 7.

"He was a great guy and I learned a lot from him," Spivack said. "He did something very special for me once," remembering when Mr. Reedy was kind enough to postpone his retirement from Division 15, when Spivack fell ill and needed assistance. "He was a great friend."

Services will probably be held following the Thanksgiving holiday at the National Cemetery in Riverside to honor Mr. Reedy's naval career which included a deployment to Vietnam.

"Since I started here, not only have I learned from some wonderful mentors, but I've learned to better myself by learning from people's mistakes," said Mr. Reedy when he retired from Metro for the first time.

"I have helped many people just by listening to their problems, and offering my advice," he said. "Sometimes people just want someone to talk to, and I'm there for them."

Spivack said Mr. Reedy enjoyed his home life. "His house was his pride and joy as well as being able to spend time with the family," Spivack said.

Mr. Reedy is survived by his wife, Nikki, five children and several grandchildren.



Ron Reedy



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Chief Planning Officer Carol Inge to retire at the end of the year. Photo: Gayle Anderson

Exiting Planning Chief Carol Inge Says She'll Miss 'Professional, Capable' Staff

• Farewell event is Thursday, Dec. 17

By Michael D. White
Staff Writer

(Nov. 24, 2009) It might just be a little more than simply curious that Carol Inge, Metro's soon to-retire Chief Planning Officer, doesn't really have any retirement plans.

That is, unless you count spending some quality time with her two high school-age kids, joining a gym, learning Spanish and volunteering for some heavy-duty community service work. "I've no burning desire to go out and start a consulting business," says Inge, who joined

Metro in 1987 as a planner and assumed the position of Chief Planning Officer in 2006. "You can never say what doors might open in the future, but, for now, I know I'll be busy enough. I'm content with my 'no-plans' retirement plan."

Metro employees are invited to join Inge at a farewell cake and punch event from 2 to 4 p.m. on Dec. 17. in the Metro cafeteria.

A Southern California native, Inge graduated from North Hollywood High School before traveling across the country to Massachusetts where she earned her undergraduate degree at Wellesley College, one of the elite group of women's colleges known collectively as the "Seven Sisters."

A return to the Southland and volunteer work at the Ecology Center of Southern California led to what she calls her "passionate" interest "in how the form of the city shapes people's daily lives."

"I was fascinated to study how people and the communities they live in can be impacted by the physical form of the city," she says, recalling the learning path that led her to one of the top posts in one of the country's largest mass transit agencies.

A Master's degree in Urban Planning from UCLA led to increasingly responsible planning positions with the cities of Inglewood and Huntington Beach and then Metro, where she's spent the last three years responsible for a staff of more than 100 specialists overseeing the strategic transportation planning for the entire county including the programming of capital funding and grants for Metro projects and local city transit projects

and the preparation of complicated transit feasibility and environmental impact reports.

"The thing that I've treasured the most here at Metro is working every day with professional and highly capable people who know their business and are committed to the successful completion of the projects they work on," says Inge.

A transportation project – any transportation project, she says – "is made up of a huge number of extremely detailed components that call for maintaining communication between Metro's construction, engineering, communications, legislative, operations and other teams with the Project Managers pulling it all together. It isn't easy, but it goes a lot smoother when you can consistently count on the people you're working with."

What Metro project was the most challenging and gave her the most satisfaction when it was completed?

"There've been many, but the one that immediately comes to mind is the completion of the Metro Orange Line in the San Fernando Valley," says Inge. "There were some huge challenges, but the most delicate was addressing community concerns. Once the project opened it was gratifying to see how successful it was."

"All in all, I've had a wonderful experience at Metro. I'll miss it all," she says, remembering there's one more critical piece to her "No Plans" retirement plan.

That'd be cleaning out her garage.

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Good Fellas Juan Hernandez and Johnson Tran keep things moving at East Valley Division 15.

Photos: Gayle Anderson

Div. 15 Good Fellas Club Creates Second Home for Operators

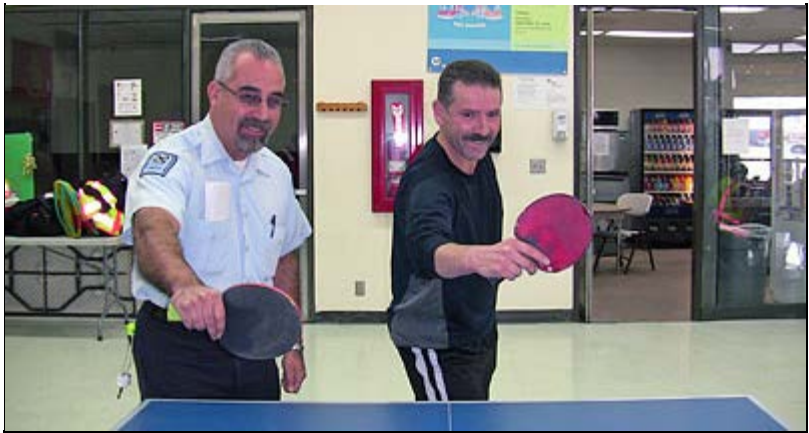
By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Nov. 24, 2009) "Funny what a dollar a paycheck could amount to," said Metro Bus Operator Johnson Tran as he recalled how the Good Fellas Club got started at East Valley Div. 15.

The Metro-sanctioned Good Fellas Club was formed a couple of years ago when Tran and a few other Div. 15 employees thought it would be a good idea to collect money to purchase some home-away-from-home essentials for operators who spend a great deal of time at Metro.

With some employees working split shifts, "most of us stay here and don't go home," said Bus Operator Juan Hernandez.

When the first collection came in, almost 500 new Good Fellas had contributed about \$2,000 and when Tran asked what should top the list of absolute "gotta haves" the decision was unanimous – Direct TV.



Operator Ramiro Flores, left, warms up with a challenger for a ping pong game. Below, the top 'gotta have' rules the lounge.



With additional funds, members collected enough funds to purchase a plasma TV, ping pong, pool and foosball tables. Soon, some members expressed an interest in pumping-up their inner Schwarzeneggers by fully equipping a workout room.

"Now we're working on the gym" Tran said, noting that the workout room was created in an unused patio that's now home to a treadmill, an elliptical climber, a Bowflex machine and other pectoral necessities.



The workout room was created in an unused patio that's now home to a treadmill, an elliptical climber, a Bowflex machine and other pectoral necessities.

A balance between the fit and the perhaps less muscularly-inclined was achieved with additional revenues generated by twice-monthly hot dog cookouts or barbecues. The Good Fellas have also hosted their own pool tournament charging a \$20 entry fee with a trophy to the winner.

The club holds regular meetings, votes on all purchases and present an

accounting of funds on a monthly basis.

"We try to get a meeting together, and decide how to handle events. We work on it," Hernandez said.

With the support of Transportation Manager Gary Spivack, the division also created a quiet room where operators could nap in-between shifts to stay safe on the road during those very long working days. "If operators have enough sleep, it could save an accident out there," Tran said.

Spivack says he's been behind the club all the way. "It's been the biggest morale builder that we've ever come up with. I'm all for it. They come into the office all the time with ideas and things they want to check around, and I just enjoy working with them," Spivack said.

Coming up with a club name was very spontaneous and had nothing to do with the Martin Scorsese film of the same name, Tran jokes.

"We talked about what we would call ourselves, and someone asked: 'How about the Good Fellas?', and everyone liked the name, so it stuck," Tran said.



Operators shake off the road with a fast game of foosball. Active members of the Good Fella's Club include Miriam Pereira, Tarus McCall, Pablo Murillo, Nicole Jiho, Ramiro Flores, Margarita Morgan, La La Martinez, Jose Erazo, Mario Benitez, Efrain Serrano, Juan Hernandez, David Austria, Herlinda Rojas, Elio Sanchez, Helman Cruz, Aldo Aleman, Nelson Cartagena, Gloria Reyes, club founder Johnson Tran, Roberto Rodriguez, Rita Durkee, Daniel Magana, and Ada Hernandez.

"The next project we're going to do is try to build a library," he said.

The project will involve setting up shelves and asking employees to contribute magazines, books, whatever they can share.

"This is like our second home. We're like a big, big family. We try to make it comfortable for everybody," he said.

Other Metro-sanctioned clubs include: the African-American Employees Association; Lunch Walkers @ Metro; Metro Cycling Club; Metro Choir; Metro Crocheters & Knitters Club; Metro Yoga; Metrophonics; and Toastmasters.

