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

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- [Policies](#)
- [Training](#)
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November 14, 2009: Metro Gold Line train breaks through banner, then a shower of confetti, at official dedication of new light rail to East Los Angeles. *Photo by Gary Leonard*

2009 in Review: Growth, Transitions and Farewells

The Year in Review					
January	February	March	April	May	June
July	August	September	October	November	December

Compiled by Michael D. White
Staff Writer

Metro's memories of 2009 were marked by a year of growth, transition and some farewells. The transit agency saw the inauguration of several new bus and rail services, major progress on a number of Measure R-funded projects and employees also greeted a new CEO.

The year's highlights included receiving nearly \$235 million in federal funding for a host of transit projects, the opening of the Gold Line Extension to East L.A., and the installation of a state-of-the-art solar panel array at Metro's Support Services Center in downtown Los Angeles.

A record \$3.9 billion budget for FY09 was approved to fund the agency's operational requirements, and later in the year the Metro Board approved its Long Range Transportation Plan which contains an ambitious list of projects for the next 30 years.

Here's a month-by-month retrospective of some of Metro's 2009 highlights.



January 27, 2009: The first light rail car to run the full length of the six-mile Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension alignment left Union Station Tuesday morning, Jan. 27, but not under its own power. Towing was done by a small truck on rails. The trip was part of a clearance test in which the train car was towed, rather than self-powered, at approximately 5 m.p.h. so that it could easily stop on short notice. *Photo: Gary Leonard*

January

The first train car was tested on the full six-mile length of Metro's Gold Line Eastside Extension alignment. The event was a major milestone in the eventual completion of the \$898 million project, which broke ground in 2004. The test was done to verify proper clearance between the rail car and surrounding equipment and facilities, including 1.8-mile-long twin tunnels under Boyle Heights.

Metro played host to a regional Technology & Innovation Symposium to discuss transportation demand management issues in an effort to generate interest in how technology and innovation can bring about a greener, more livable and less congested Southern California. The day-long event, attended by transportation executive from around the state, provided a forum for the discussion of a variety of issues including traffic congestion remediation, the future of public transportation, housing and trends in technology and alternative energy options.

Metro partnered with the Los Angeles Community College District to create the new Institution Pass. The unique I-TAP program allows students to purchase Metro's TAP card at a discounted rate of \$15 if they are enrolled in a minimum of 12 units at any one of the District's nine junior colleges.

In an effort to improve safety and accessibility, Metro launched a program requiring that all wheelchairs and scooters be properly secured on Metro buses. The motivation behind the "Wheelchair Marking and Tether Strap Program" is to keep wheelchair users safe as they ride and streamline the time it takes for operators to secure the devices properly.



February 1, 2009: U.S. Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano congratulates Metro's Bicycle Planning Manager Lynne Goldsmith at dedication of the Whittier Greenway Bike Trail.
Photo by Jennifer Gill

February

Metro stepped up its "Look, Listen and Stay Alive" safety campaign to educate residents of East Los Angeles on how to live safely around a transit right-of-way. The agency announced plans to begin safety awareness sessions for Eastside residents in five public libraries, three main hospitals and religious and community centers in March and April. Metro Community Relations representatives had already visited 60 schools from Kindergarten to 12 grade around the service area and delivered door to door around 85,000 information flyers on how to take personal responsibility and be aware of their own safety when riding Metro's 2,500 buses and 73 miles of Metro Rail throughout Los Angeles county.

A new emergency service alert was created on *metro.net* to alert passengers when major, unscheduled delays occur on Metro Rail. When activated by Rail Operations, the emergency web service alert appears as a ticker on the homepage. The ticker provides timely information about impacts to service, bus bridge options and when service is restored. The new web service alert is updated directly from Rail Operations when service delays reach 20 minutes or more with ticker alerts displaying multiple alerts on different rail lines simultaneously, if necessary. Once posted, the alerts can be viewed by at least 5,000 different mobile devices in addition to the website.

The Metro Bicycle Club joined Bike Planning Manager Lynne Goldsmith in dedicating the Whittier Greenway Bike Trail, L.A. County's newest bicycle and pedestrian trail. The four-and-a-half mile trail was the result of years of planning and collaboration among local, state and federal agencies, and is considered one of the best bikeway projects in the entire county. Metro earmarked \$9 million in bikeway funding over a three-year period for the project, which included the acquisition of right-of-way and actual construction of the bicycle and pedestrian path.



March 5, 2009: At left, newly hired chief executive Art Leahy signs on the dotted line. At right, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa replaces Leahy's OCTA pin with a Metro one.

March

Arthur T. Leahy, one of the nation's leading transportation executives, was hired by the Metro Board of Directors to become the agency's new chief executive officer, effective April 6. Leahy replaced Roger Snoble, who retired his post after seven years at the Metro's helm. Leahy began his career in transportation in 1971 as a bus operator with the Southern California Rapid Transit District and, prior to his joining Metro, served as head of the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), where he oversaw the planning, financing and coordination of Orange County's freeway, street and transit development and overall management of the 12th busiest bus system in the country.

The Metro Board of Directors approved the purchase of 41 compressed natural gas (CNG) buses as part of the federally-funded Congestion Reduction Demonstration "ExpressLanes" Project. The project is aimed at testing pricing strategies to alleviate congestion, maximize freeway capacity usage, and fund additional transit alternatives on High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes along the I-10 (El Monte Busway) and I-110 (Harbor Freeway Transitway) corridors. Funding for this new project was being provided by a special \$210 million grant from the US Department of Transportation. The new 45-foot buses will be manufactured by North American Bus Industries (NABI) at a cost of \$28.4 million.



April 27, 2009: Energy-saving partners cut the ribbon for L.A.'s largest solar panel system installed at the Metro Support Services Center. From left, Chevron Energy Solutions CEO John Mahoney, LADWP CEO David Nahai, Metro CEO Art Leahy, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Los Angeles City Councilwoman Jan Perry and SoCal Gas Vice President Hal Synder. *Photo by Juan Ocampo*

April

A public-private partnership consulting services contract was awarded to InfraConsult LLC. The contract gave the company the go-ahead to identify, from the Metro Long Range Transportation Plan, viable transportation projects that could be the best candidates for public-private partnerships. Under the terms of the contract, InfraConsult LLC would supply strategy development and technical and financial services and identify transit and/or highway projects for Metro Board consideration and potential implementation.

Metro unveiled a groundbreaking energy efficiency and renewable power project with the installation of the nation's largest solar panel array at its Support Services Center (MSSC) in downtown Los Angeles. The array was lauded as the largest solar panel installation in the City of Los Angeles and was comprised of 6,720 individual solar panels generating 1.2 megawatts, or 1,200 kilowatts, of renewable, emission-free power. The new array was expected to cut the facility's annual \$1.1 million energy bill in half to approximately \$550,000 and was a public/private partnership between Metro and Chevron Energy Solutions.

The use of anticipated federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to acquire up to 150 new state-of-the-art, CNG-fueled buses was approved by the Metro Board of Directors. Some \$23.6 million was slated to purchase 50 32-foot CNG buses for addition to the fleet of buses operated by Metro's Contracted Services. The buses were slated to replace 33 diesel buses

and 17 propane-fueled shuttle buses that joined the contract fleet in 2001. The Board also approved the purchase option under an existing contract of up to 100 additional CNG-fueled buses for Metro's bus operation at a cost not to exceed \$60 million. Both bus procurements were awarded to North American Bus Industries (NABI) headquartered in Anniston, Alabama.

The Metro Board voted to fund the first phase of the I-405 Sepulveda Pass Widening Project, a critical regional transportation project that will add a northbound carpool lane on one of the region's most congested freeways connecting the San Fernando Valley with the rest of Los Angeles. The Board's decision established a "life of project" budget of \$1.034 billion to initiate construction. Completion of the project was forecast in four and a half years and was expected to create as many as 18,000 local construction jobs.



May 5, 2009: In the APTA International winner's circle for the second time in three years, the championship Metro Bus team is awarded the coveted Grand Champion Awards in Seattle. Pictured are, from left, North Los Angeles Division Bus Operator Juan Navarro, Metro South Bay GM Dana Coffey, the Arthur Winston Division champion maintenance team of Frank Forde, Rommel Vargas and Andrew Warren Jr. At far right is APTA President William A. Millar. The award recognizes the bus operator and maintenance team that has the highest combined score carved from the grueling obstacle course for operators and the mind-boggling tests of mechanical skills that matches mechanics against the clock to find and fix mechanical defects. *Photo by Heather Trimm, courtesy of APTA.*

May

Speaking at a Metro Safety Fair at the East Los Angeles Civic Center, County Supervisor Gloria Molina Metro, Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina asked the Eastside community to take personal responsibility and work with Metro in practicing safe activity around the light rail trains being tested on the new six-mile Metro Gold Line Extension. Slated for completion later in the year, the project, to date, had gone nearly 4 million working hours without a day lost for any accident or injuries.

KOAR Wilshire Western, LLC and Metro announced the completion of a major new joint development project at the Metro Purple Line's Wilshire/Western station. The \$160 million, 2.6-acre "Solair Wilshire" project features a 22-story contemporary glass-walled building that contains 186 for-sale residential units and 40,000 square-foot retail plaza, as well as a large Metro bus layover facility. "Solair Wilshire" is the second mixed-use project and the first high-rise development to be built for the Koreatown / Wilshire Center community along the Metro Purple Line.

The Metro Board approved a \$3.9 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2009-10 that began on July 1, 2009. The spending plan was a half a billion dollars or just under 15 percent more than the preceding FY budget. The increase was largely due to a spate of new highway and transit building projects such as construction of a 10-mile northbound carpool lane on the I-405 freeway, the

start of construction on a four mile extension of the popular Metro Orange Line busway from Canoga Park to Chatsworth and several advance planning studies for new transit projects throughout Los Angeles County. Altogether, the agency had \$636 million in new programs slated for completion or start-up in FY10, funded largely with federal stimulus funds and the new Measure R transit sales tax that kicked-in starting July 1.

Metro Rail Team's repeat victory at the APTA International Rail Rodeo makes 2009 a solid gold year for Metro, whose championship bus team won top honors in the APTA International Bus Rodeo in May.



June 13, 2009: The 2009 APTA Rail Rodeo champs are flanked by APTA and Metro Rail officials as they take the APTA stage in Chicago for the crowning achievement photo op. Pictured are, second from left, George R. Kennedy, Director, Rail Vehicle Acquisition and Maintenance Operations; Transportation Instructor Gerald Harper; Maintenance Instructor Gary Dewater; TOS Esther Pippins (in checkered dress); Top Operator Robert Rodriguez (center, back row); Maintainer Glen Abraham; Maintainer Ronnie Burt; Rail GM Mike Cannell; Maintainer Eric Czintos, and, far right, Duane Martin, Director, Rail Transportation Operations. *Photo courtesy of APTA.*

June

Hours of tedious, complex work by the Metro planning staff paid-off when the announcement was made in Washington, D.C. that nearly \$235 million in federal American Reinvestment and Recovery Act stimulus funds would be tagged to help pay for several major Metro transit projects.

The signing of the ARRA in February set off a chain reaction across the nation as local transportation agencies scrambled to identify shovel-ready projects that would meet ARRA criteria. The process was intensified by a very tight timeline, but an intense effort by Metro staff assured that all of the proposed projects submitted were quickly approved. The projects included the overhaul of 400 Metro buses over five years old; the widening of staircases for emergency egress and improved pedestrian access at the 7th Street/Metro Center station; the replacement of fiber optic equipment for the Metro Rail system; and the replacement of 18 aging Metro Blue Line traction power substations and modifications of CNG fueling facilities.

Metro Bus Operator Jose Recinos was honored for his courage and devotion to duty when he led his passengers to safety after his bus was seriously damaged by rioters following the Los Angeles Lakers' NBA playoff victory. After attacking the Line 33 bus and breaking out all its windows, the mob stormed the rear of the vehicle giving Recinos and his passengers a chance to escape.



June 25, 2009: CEO Art Leahy leads photo op of Metro employees at ground-breaking of Metro Orange Line extension to Chatsworth. *Photo by Scott Harms, Los Angeles County*

Construction began on the first official Measure R-funded construction project when ground was broken on a four-mile extension of the Metro Orange Line in the San Fernando Valley. The extension of L.A. County's premier dedicated busway began at the line's current terminus in Canoga Park and, when completed, will extend four miles north to the Metrolink/Amtrak Station in Chatsworth and is designed to create a vital connection between Metro Orange Line service and the broader inter-urban rail system spanning all of Southern California.

The Los Angeles Metro Rail Train Team won solid gold for the second time in three years at the American Public Transportation Association's 17th Annual International Rail Rodeo in Chicago. The team – Metro Rail Operator Robert Rodriguez and Rail Equipment Specialists Eric Czintos, Ronnie Burt and Glen Abraham – chalked up the highest rail operator and maintainer team combined score with 1,410 hard-earned points to beat contestants from rail systems across the country. Competition judges the teams' ability to successfully troubleshoot a number of diverse maintenance problems with the top-scoring team scoring the highest points in the safety, HVAC (air conditioning repair) and written test events.

July 3, 2009: U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood: New light rail extension is a 'model for America'

Use controls to play and adjust sound. TRT: 2:02

July

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood toured the new Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension calling the project "a model for the nation." LaHood was accompanied on his tour by Reps. Lucille Roybal-Allard and Grace Napolitano, Los Angeles County Supervisor and Metro Board member Gloria Molina, Los Angeles City Councilman and Metro Board member José Huizar, Metro Board member Richard Katz and Metro CEO Art Leahy among other officials.

Metro bus operators Donald Dube and Jack Bailey were recognized at the monthly Metro Board of

Directors meeting for 50 years of service. Dube, hired Nov. 1, 1958, intended to stay at the wheel for six months or until he could afford to return to college to become an aeronautical engineer, while Jack Bailey came on board the Los Angeles MTA on July 6, 1959 at the West Hollywood Division and "never looked back."

The Metro Board voted to support the development of a high-speed rail line linking Los Angeles and Orange County. Construction on the rail project could begin as early as 2012 with operations starting in 2018. The decision officially brought Metro on board as a strategic partner in a broad-based coalition of transportation and other agencies statewide committed to building a state-wide 800-mile network of trains whose maximum speeds can reach up to 220 mph.

August 20, 2009: Test results from exploratory drilling in West Los Angeles will determine below-ground soil conditions for subway planning

August

Joined by a number of local elected officials from Los Angeles County and nearby cities, Metro Board Chair Ara Najarian announced the completion of exploratory drilling in West Los Angeles as a key part of the planning and environmental process for the proposed Measure R-funded Westside Subway Extension. The subway project is expected to have major benefits throughout the community. The Westside has been identified as the county's second highest job density center after downtown Los Angeles.

Metro began the installation of traffic enforcement cameras at 14 intersections along the light rail alignment of the new extension of the Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles to help promote safe driving habits and reduce accidents caused by motorists illegally crossing the tracks against signals.

Four Metro Red/Purple Line subway stations were fitted with turnstile fare gates to monitor passenger traffic moves smoothly while still achieving the goals of preventing fare evasion and improving transit station security. The barrier system was designed to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Following the initial installation, Metro said it would review the process, correct flaws and then begin the installation of 379 fare gates in all stations on the subway, the Metro Green Line and key light rail stations on the Metro Blue and Metro Gold lines. Completion of the project is expected in six to eight months in early 2010.

September

In a move that places Los Angeles County in contention to receive its fair share of future federal rail funding, the Metro Board voted to pursue long-term funding agreements with the U.S. Department of Transportation to complete the Westside Subway Extension and Regional Connector projects. Both projects are aimed at providing critically needed transit linkages for existing transit riders traveling to, from and through some of the most densely populated and commercially significant areas of Los Angeles County.

Metro unveiled a campaign to help its transit patrons avoid getting the flu and other illnesses by providing simple, common-sense precautions they can take in their daily lives. Throughout the month of September, Metro rolled out several efforts under its Flu Prevention Action Plan that communicates flu avoidance information to riders in as many agency channels as possible including the placement of rail posters at station ticket vending machines, the addition of flu precaution tips to car cards posted inside buses and trains and the distribution of informative "Take-One" brochures at bus stops, train stations and Metro Service Centers.

More than 600 people attended a ceremony at the new Metrolink Memorial Plaza in Simi Valley marking the unveiling of a monument honoring those who died in the Sept. 12, 2008 Metrolink crash. Among those commemorated was Metro Storekeeper Donna L. Remata, who was among the 25 people killed when their Metrolink commuter train collided head-on with a Union Pacific freight train.



October 2, 2009: 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. *Photo by Juan Ocampo*

October

The Metro Board approved the 2009 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that will guide transportation development in the county through the year 2040. The plan examines the impact that forecasted population growth will have on the region's transportation infrastructure and recommendations what can be done to address that impact within anticipated revenues. 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.

Italian rail car manufacturer AnsaldoBreda S.p.A. declined to sign a contract with Metro to exercise an option to provide 100 additional light rail cars to meet the agency's operating needs for new rail lines in Los Angeles County. As a consequence, Metro went ahead with seeking industry-wide bids on new rail car procurement. Negotiations between Metro and the company had gone on for over a year and, if all goes according to schedule, next spring the Metro Board will award a contract for new rail cars. AnsaldoBreda S.p.A. would be eligible to bid on the new contract along with manufacturers from around the world.

Metro was honored with the award of the Public Education on Air Quality Issues Award from the Air Quality Management District (AQMD) for its "Rideshare PlanMaker" compact disk, which profiles 15 recommended strategies on how to help Employee Transportation Coordinators (ETCs) implement a rideshare program at their worksite. The agency also received the 2009 Model Program Award from the National Transit Institute (NTI) for its comprehensive Environmental Policy centered on sustainability and the key strategic goal of "sustaining the environment with efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

An independent panel of three renowned rail safety and operations experts from across the country released a report concluding that the new Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension "has been designed and built to operate safely." In late June and early July, the panel spent a week studying every aspect of the new transit route including rides on test trains. "The operational characteristics of the Eastside Extension are not unlike many other light rail operating environments in the United States," the report said. "It has been designed to be a safe, efficient and effective extension of the Pasadena Gold Line," the panel said, praising Metro's safety outreach program as "outstanding and a model for the rail transit industry."

In response to a dramatic shift in how the public gets information, Metro 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 Hymon and *Carless in L.A.* blogger Frederick Dennstedt a.k.a. Fred Camino, *The Source* aims at supplying the public with 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.

Metro 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. The agency was one of 43 transit agencies across the country picked to benefit from the \$100 million U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) grant awarded to pursue cutting-edge environmental technologies. 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.



November 14, 2009: Federal, state and local elected officials, along with Metro executives and community leaders, gathered at the new Metro East LA Civic Center Station for the official dedication ceremony of the Edward R. Roybal Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles.

November

Metro Chief Operating Officer Carolyn Flowers announced her decision to leave Metro saying that she had accepted an offer to assume the post of Transit Executive Director and CEO for the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) in North Carolina.

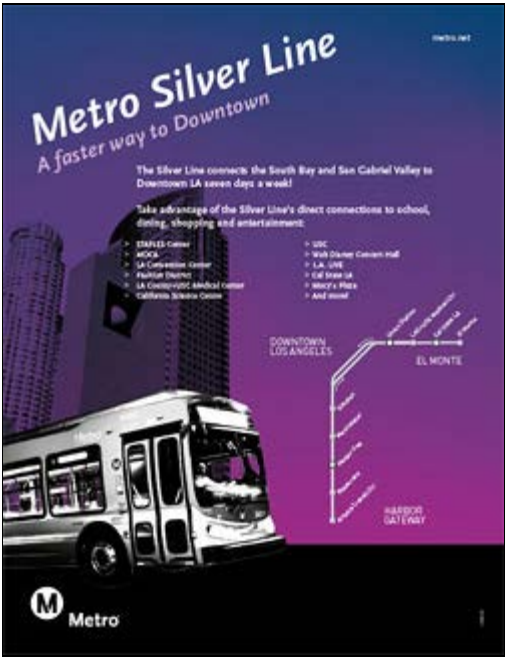
After 22 years at Metro and its predecessors, Chief Planning Officer Carol Inge announced her

retirement.

Years of planning and construction work came to a dramatic climax as a score of federal, state and local elected officials, along with Metro executives and community leaders, gathered at the new Metro East LA Civic Center Station for the official dedication ceremony of the Edward R. Roybal Metro Gold Line to East Los Angeles. Under construction for five years and coming in on budget with a flawless 4-million plus hour construction safety record, the new six-mile extension links East L.A. with downtown Los Angeles and Pasadena, as well as with the Metro Blue and Green light-rail lines, Metro Red and Purple subway lines and the Metro Orange Line dedicated busway. The Metro employees who helped launch the new line received a huge pat on the back from CEO Art Leahy and other Metro officials. "It really is another example of the MTA revolutionizing Los Angeles," said Leahy, praising the workers who helped guide and direct the 75,000 people who turned out for the gala opening event.

December

The Metro Board gave a thumbs-up to light rail transit as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor transportation project. The light rail alternative will be 8.5 miles in length from the Metro Green Line Aviation Station to the Expo Line, now under construction, at Crenshaw and Exposition boulevards. Seven new stations will be built along the new line with an option for one more. The final Environment Impact Study/Environment Impact Report could be ready by the end of 2010, with the line scheduled to open in 2018. The project is estimated to cost \$1.3 billion in today's dollars and an estimated 7,800 construction jobs will be created annually by the project. Funding will come from Measure R, the half-cent sales tax initiative approved by Los Angeles County voters last November.



December 13, 2009: Metro launched a pair of new bus services on Dec. 13 – Line 902 and the Silver Line. Line 902 serves the San Fernando Valley, providing direct service between North Hollywood, Van Nuys and Pacoima with limited stops connecting the North Hollywood Metro Red Line Station to Valley College and Van Nuys Orange Line Stations. The Metro Silver Line offers an express service connecting the San Gabriel Valley and the South Bay using both the El Monte Busway and the Harbor Freeway Transitway with numerous stops in downtown Los Angeles.