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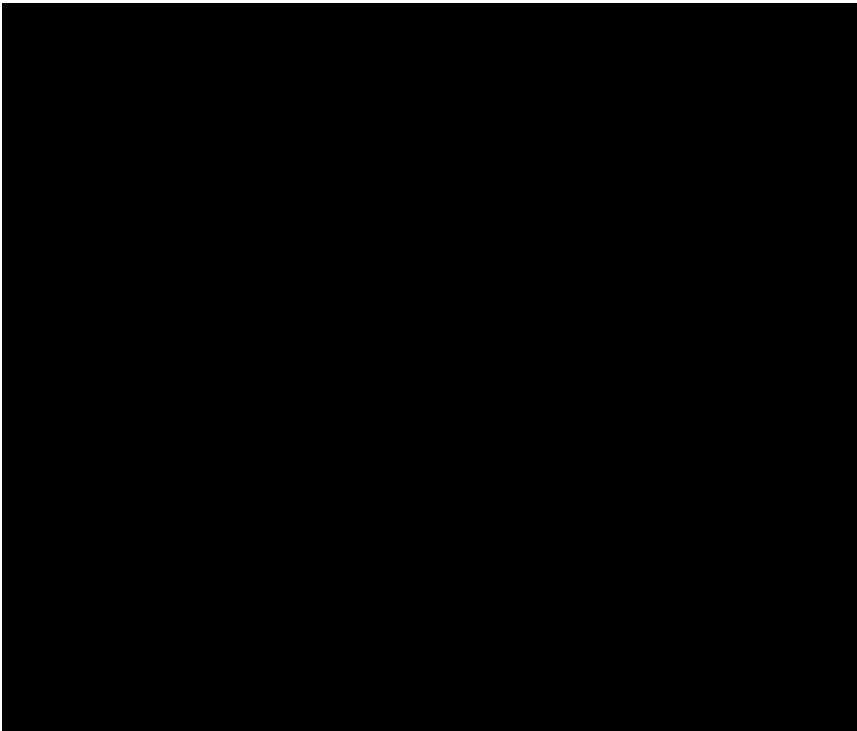
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Video by Rich Morallo. Not hooked up to YouTube at work? Watch at home at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VD4pYOzRIUQ> NOTE: This YouTube link is being sent to you for the purpose of viewing the Metro video only. Metro employees are subject to the Employee Code of Conduct that generally restricts the use of company time/equipment to conducting Metro business. Please click on icon above to view the video.

Division 6 Operator’s Spanish Lessons Pay Off for Metro Bus Patrons

By Rich Morallo  
*Community Relations / Volunteer Coordinator*

(March 18, 2010) "*Bienvenidos, subete*, welcome, step up," Div. 6 Bus Operator Tim Shephard greets the lady boarding his Metro Line 2 bus on Sunset Boulevard.

As other passengers board, Shephard requests that they move to the rear, "*Muevase para atrás*."

Shephard, a 25-year Metro employee who retired from the agency in 2007 and returned last year as a part-timer at Division 6, is comfortable talking with his Spanish-speaking customers.

"I like helping the patrons, answering their questions and giving them directions," said Shephard.

Adept at conversational Spanish, Shephard always keeps a pocket translator and English-Spanish dictionary on hand for the times when he needs a certain word.

Twenty-three years ago an elderly lady boarded Shephard's bus.

"She was Latino and I didn't know Spanish but she wanted to know where the bus was going," he recalled.

Enlisting the help of another passenger, Shephard managed to answer the lady's question, but promised himself to start studying the language.

Over the years, by constantly practicing and talking in Spanish, Shephard picked up the language.

"I would ask people in grocery stores and restaurant where there were from and start talking Spanish with them," he said.

Shepard has also become more involved with local communities as a member of the Regional Black Chamber of Commerce, which has plans to "do outreach to the Latino neighborhoods on some of our projects."

Learning new languages comes easy to Shephard, who's picked up a working knowledge of both German and Russian during several visits to Europe.

But, his first priority is helping his passengers, especially the elderly, he said, remembering his grandmother, who died in 1974 of a stroke she suffered after running to catch a bus.

"It is so rewarding to know people can understand me when I give them travel information," the bilingual operator said.

"I just need to practice on my accent because my patrons wonder if I'm Puerto Rican or Cuban," said Shephard, who was born and raised right here in Los Angeles.