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Winners Circle: From left, senior equipment maintenance instructor and maintainer team coach Gary Dewater; interim Exec. Director, Transportation, Roman Alarcon, Chief Operating Officer Lonnie Mitchell, APTA Chair Mattie Jones, interim Exec. Officer Rail Vehicle Maintenance George R. Kennedy, champion maintainers Glen Abraham, Ronnie Burt and Eric Czintos, APTA President William Millar and APTA Vice Chair Gary Thomas. *Photo courtesy of APTA.*

## Metro emerges victorious at 2010 APTA International Rail Rodeo

### Top-scoring Rail Team takes first place in maintainers competition; Metro ranks third in overall standings at Vancouver games

- Combined maintainer and operator scores lands Metro in third place in overall competition.
- Maintainer team scores first place in four hard-won events to nail top score.

(June 8, 2010) In an Olympic-sized arena where mere mortals move tons of steel in a competition that matches operator against train, and mind over pneumatics and dexterity plates, Metro's rail team emerged victorious at the 2010 APTA International Rail Rodeo June 5, scoring first place in the maintainers competition and ranking third in the combined overall standings.

Metro's championship maintainer team of Glen Abraham, Ronnie Burt, and Eric Czintos took first place, racking up first-place points in four of the eight competitor events.

The champion maintainers chalked up a near three-peat victory, nailing first place for the third time since 2007. (The championship team narrowly missed first place in the 2009 maintainers competition but claimed the top crown in the overall scores at that event held in Chicago.)

Green Line operator José Arrias and Gold Line operator Pam Parker-Ehrich teamed up to compete in a field dominated by heavy-hitters from eight major transit properties, including two Canadian teams.

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) of Denver, Colorado won the prestigious *Rail Transit Team Achievement Award*. This top award is given to the system with the highest rail operator and maintainer team combined score.

The winners of the 18<sup>th</sup> annual American Public Transportation Association (APTA) International Rail Rodeo were announced on June 6 at an awards dinner in Vancouver at the 2010 APTA Rail Conference.

The maintainers competition judges the ability to troubleshoot maintenance problems.

Denver's RTD won second place with the team of Randall Lovegove and George Sweeney. SEPTA's maintainer team of Ed Carruthers, Mike O'Grady, and Jason Rickert won third place.



Best in the land three years straight, champion Metro Rail equipment maintenance specialists team of Ronnie Burt, Eric Czintos, and Glen Abraham teamed up with Green Line Operator José Arrias, above, center, and Gold Line Operator Pam Parker-Ehrich, at right with Rail Division Transportation Manager Tom Jasmin, to carry the Metro banner in the Vancouver competition.



"I'm convinced our maintainer team is the best in the country," said coach Gary Dewater, senior equipment maintenance instructor. "They were sharp. They're just so good at what they do," he said.

Veteran competitors and Blue Line maintainers Ronnie Burt and Eric Czintos have teamed up every year since 2003, when they took first place in the International Competition held in San Jose. The champion maintainers team won first place at the 2007 and 2008 APTA International competitions.

The rail operator team competition measures an operator team's professional customer service and operating skills, including knowledge of safety regulations, train equipment, wayside rules, regulations, and procedures. This time, operators took to the field on fully automated trains manufactured by Bombardier Inc, a Canadian manufacturer of guided-vehicle systems. The trains, which do not require an operator, posed a challenge on board for hands-on control.

First-time competitors José Arrias, a Green Line operator and 10-year veteran of Metro, and Gold Line operator Pam Parker-Ehrich landed in seventh place to edge out Houston in the operators competition. Their good performance, when combined with the points from the top-scoring maintainers, earned the Metro team a respectable third place overall.

Both operators, new to the competition and challenged by different equipment, scored third highest in the "operating course" trial, a feat that was lauded by interim Executive Officer Rail Vehicle Maintenance George R. Kennedy. "Anytime new competitors can score that high in the toughest field is outstanding!" he said. "They did great!"

First place in the operators competition was won by Denver's Regional Transportation District's Robert Dennis. Michael Shepard from Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) of Philadelphia, PA came in second place. The team of Lee-Ann Knight and Ven Rao from BC Rapid Transit (SkyTrain) of Burnaby, BC took third place honors.

Nine public transit systems from across North America competed in this international competition, which recognizes the men and women who keep rail systems safe and efficient. Metro was up against top-seeded properties: Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), Regional Transportation District (Denver), MTA New York City Transit, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (Houston), Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), Canada Line, BC Rapid Transit (SkyTrain), and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), which competed in the maintainers competition only.

Metro was the team to beat for the third year in a row. The Los Angeles Metro championship rail team took top honors at the 2009 American Public Transportation Association (APTA) International Rail Rodeo held at the Chicago Transit Authority yard in Skokie, Illinois. The previous year, the Metro team scored the prestigious Rail Transit Team Achievement Award at the 16th annual APTA International Rail Rodeo, held in San Francisco in 2008.

The repeat victory in 2009 made it a solid gold year for Metro, whose championship bus team won top honors in the APTA International Bus Rodeo for the second time in three years.

The APTA International Rail Rodeo Competition was held on June 5 at the VCC/Clark Station in Vancouver, BC.

*-- from Gayle Anderson*

