



[Home](#)

[CEO Hotline](#)

[Viewpoint](#)

[Classified Ads](#)

[Archives](#)

[Metro.net](#) (web)

**Resources**

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

**Metro Info**

- ▶ [Strategic Plan](#) (pdf)
- ▶ [Org Chart](#) (pdf)
- ▶ [Policies](#)
- ▶ [Training](#)
- ▶ [Help Desk](#)
- ▶ [Intranet Policy](#)

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Speaking at the July 29 "All Hands" meeting at the Gateway headquarters, Metro CEO Art Leahy laid out the agency's future growth plans, as well as the challenges of meeting the goals of Measure R and the 30/10 Initiative.

## Metro: Facing World-Class Challenges with a World-Class Workforce

(July 29, 2010) Metro CEO Art Leahy sums up his first year with Metro in two simple words: "fun and challenging."

Fun because of the people he works with and challenging because of the scope of the work that the agency will continue to shoulder over the coming years.

Speaking at the July 29 "All Hands" meeting at the Gateway headquarters, Leahy told those attending that the agency was "making significant progress" in becoming a more efficient and economically operated entity.

Metro, he said, "is accomplishing great things in developing ways to better serve the people of L.A. County," he said, voicing his appreciation for the "hard work that everyone is doing to deliver valuable and readily accessible transit service to the taxpayers."

Commenting on those goals and addressing the persistent rumors of future lay-offs, Leahy said the agency is putting a concerted effort into integrating its bus and rail operations so they can better integrate with the region's highway network and that "no further lay-offs are being planned or contemplated."

Metro, he said, "is going through a process. We're creating the Los Angeles County of the later half of this century and a lot of people are watching what we do."

We're the critical player in a national effort to create a truly integrated, user friendly transit network that can be affordably maintained and serve the needs of a constantly developing region."

Much of this work, "will be accomplished within a tight time frame," he said, alluding to Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's successful effort to generate support in seeking federal funding for the so-called 30/10 Initiative, which cuts the time to complete 12 major regional transportation projects from 30 to 10 years.

The goal of the Initiative is to ramp-up the effort to improve the Southland's air quality, lessen the dependency on foreign fuel, and significantly enhance the region's public transportation network, while generating jobs.



Metro's workforce was praised for working together as a team of "genuine professionals" by Martha Welborne, Metro's new Executive Director of Countywide Planning.

Leahy's comments were echoed by Martha Welborne, Metro's new Executive Director of Countywide Planning, who joined the agency in May.

"I'm delighted to be working at Metro," she said. "The learning curve has been a steep one, but we have a team of genuine professionals who are working very hard to meet the challenges of meeting our Measure R and 30/10 goals."

One of the major components of reaching the agency's Measure R and 30/10 goals is "creating a regional consensus" to support the tremendous volume of work that's required to make them a reality.

Also critical is cultivating an environment of safety "not only to the people that ride our buses and trains, but to our employees that operate and maintain our system," Leahy said.

Overall, he said, the major challenge is to compete effectively for funds in an increasingly competitive environment. "The economy is under a severe strain and dollars are scarce. We need to be frugal and mindful of budget issues early in the development plans of any project."

Planning ahead "makes all the difference; it just isn't smart to be jumping unprepared from one financial crisis to another," Leahy added.

But at the heart of it, Leahy said, is the quality of the people who operate Metro's buses and trains, the people who maintain them and the people who perform the countless administrative tasks from payroll and operations to planning and community relations.

"We have a workforce that's world-class and more than up to the tasks at hand," said Leahy. "The future is bright. There's a lot to do, but I'm more than confident we have what it takes to get the job done."

-- Michael D. White, Staff Writer

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