



NEWS

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Contact: BILL HEARD/JIM SMART
MTA MEDIA RELATIONS
(213) 922-2703/022-2700

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CYPRESS PARK DISPATCHER KEEPS MTA BUSES ON THE ROAD

O'Neal McDaniels is one of those employees the public never sees, but without him bus runs from the MTA's Cypress Park bus division might never get out.

"And if the bus doesn't leave the division on time, our patrons can be left standing at the bus stop and never know why," said Art Leahy, the MTA's Executive Officer for bus and rail operations. "Buses from this division, which serves about 100,000 riders every day, operate throughout downtown Los Angeles, Glendale, Pasadena, Eagle Rock and nearby communities," he said.

McDaniels works much of his day in a small cubicle covered with clipboards inside division headquarters at 630 W. Avenue 28 in Cypress Park. The clipboards are neat and orderly, reflecting his state of mind.

The clipboards contain lists of the names of bus operators and the lines they operate. His job is to make sure each bus is manned and, at the same time, that the division doesn't run up costs unnecessarily by having too many bus operators on standby.

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“Every division must have a few extra operators on standby in case of emergency, sickness or accidents,” explained Leahy. “The trick is to have the right number of people available, not too few and not too many. O’Neal is considered a master at his trade because he maintains the right pool of available operators, without wasting taxpayer dollars. That’s no small task, and, in fact, when its done right day after day, year after year, its a great achievement.”

McDaniels has been at his task at Division 3 for 15 years, and for nine more at various divisions throughout the MTA’s service area. It has been nearly 10 years since his division missed a run for lack of a bus operator - an unbelievable record.

McDaniels is responsible for the assignment of 304 full-time operators, and 43 part-time workers, to more than 275 bus runs that operate out of Division 3.

“Most people don’t like to stay in O’Neal’s position for long,” said Mike Lensch, McDaniels boss. “Its a headache constantly juggling schedules, dealing with people’s personal problems. Its not easy to imagine how many times in a day someone has an emergency – an unexpected doctor’s appointment, a court appearance. O’Neal makes sure someone is there to replace that suddenly unavailable operator.”

“Its tough dealing with so many different personalities,” McDaniels said, “people have things that come up in their lives.”

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The Pomona resident is so good at his job that he has been tapped by MTA management to train other men and women to become manpower assignment experts. In fact, in the past 23 year, he has trained nearly half of the 30 people who work at the same job he has.

“You’ve got to deal with people straight,” said McDaniels of his technique for maintaining rapport with his fellow MTA employees. “If you treat them right, and tell them the truth, they’ll deal with you the same way.”

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