



# NEWS

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CONTACT: ED SCANNELL/MARC LITTMAN  
MTA MEDIA RELATIONS  
(213) 922-2703/922-2700  
[WWW.MTA.NET/PRESS/PRESSROOM](http://WWW.MTA.NET/PRESS/PRESSROOM)  
E-MAIL: [mediarelations@mta.net](mailto:mediarelations@mta.net)

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## **METRO RAIL OPERATORS WIN AT INTERNATIONAL RAIL RODEO**

For the first time since the MTA began Metro Rail service almost 12 years ago, an MTA team has won the American Public Transit Association's International Rail Rodeo operator's competition.

Metro Red Line operators Robert Rodriguez and Tu Phan bested operators from 17 other transit properties during competition in Baltimore to bring home the top prize. Operators from Toronto and Baltimore placed second and third.

The MTA's team of rail maintenance specialists – Ronnie Burt, Juan Ruvalcaba and Eric Petersen – also made a good showing, finishing seventh in the fierce competition.

When operators' and maintenance specialists' scores were combined, the MTA placed third, overall, in the international event. All of the MTA's representatives "absolutely did an outstanding job," said Jess Diaz, director of rail operations.

"We went to Baltimore as a team," said Rodriguez. "We went not only for ourselves but we were there to represent all the rail employees of MTA."

"Our challenge was to take our Red Line training and skills and to apply them to the heavy rail system of Maryland MTA," said Phan. "We share this first-place win with our friends and co-workers."

More...

**Page 2 of 2 MTA/International Rail Rodeo**

One of the biggest challenges for the MTA team was operating unfamiliar equipment, according to Diaz.

Although Baltimore's heavy rail system is similar to the Metro Red Line, the vehicles come from a different manufacturer and operate different from the rail cars Phan and Rodriguez are used to.

After three days of classes and over-the-rails practice with the unfamiliar equipment, the MTA team was ready to go. "They're a dedicated crew," said Diaz. "They focused on their goal and got there."

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