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Metro Rail team wins top honor at 2008 APTA International Rail Rodeo

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority won the prestigious Rail Transit Team Achievement Award at the 16th Annual American Public Transportation Association (APTA) International Rail Rodeo, held in conjunction with the 2008 APTA Rail Conference in San Francisco May 31 - June 2.



Top-scoring Metro Rail team wins the Rail Transit Team Achievement Award at the 2008 APTA International Rail Rodeo. From left, Metro Rail Train Operator Robert Rodriguez, Metro Rail Train Operator Geronimo Young, Metro Rail Equipment Maintenance Specialists Ronnie Burt, Eric Czintos and Toshi Manaka.

The winning team members are Metro Rail Train Operators Robert Rodriguez and Geronimo Young and Metro Rail Equipment Specialists Eric Czintos, Ronnie Burt and Toshi Manaka.

The Los Angeles Metro Rail team, racking up the highest rail operator and maintainer team combined score, walked away with the Team Achievement Award. Eighty-one contestants from 20 rail systems competed for top honors.

APTA announced the results of the 16th Annual American Public Transportation Association (APTA) International Rail Rodeo in a press release issued June 2.

The Maintainers Competition judges the ability to troubleshoot maintenance problems. The Metro maintainers earned first place in this competition for the second year in a row. The winning maintainers were Eric Czintos, Ronnie Burt and Toshi Manaka of Los Angeles Metro. San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit took second place and Metro St. Louis came in third place, said APTA spokesperson Virginia Miller.

It was a triumph for returning champion maintainers and Metro Rail Fleet Instructor Russell Homan, who notched first place at the previous APTA International competition held in Toronto in 2007.

"I couldn't be any prouder of those guys," said Homan. "They are the best, by far." The top-scoring team scored a perfect 100 points in the "defective component," "HVAC" and "tools and fasteners" events.

Homan attributes the rail maintenance team's achievement to hard work and a great deal of experience. Veteran competitors 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.

International competition is also familiar territory to Operator Robert Rodriguez.

Veteran competitor Rodriguez and high-scoring newcomer Geronimo Young scored a close second to the victorious home team from the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency. Rodriguez has competed at the international level on numerous occasions since 1997, said Metro Rail Operations Instructor Esther Pippins.

The Operators Competition measures professional skills including: train operation, knowledge of safety regulations, train equipment, and track right-of-way rules and procedures. First place in the Operators Competition went to San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency; the winning operators were Chi Ki Hau and Jason Lao. The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority operator team of Rodriguez and Young came in second. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority placed third, said Miller.

The APTA International Rail Rodeo Competition is designed to encourage excellence and professionalism in rail transit operations, said Miller. The competition was held on May 31 at Muni Metro East in San Francisco.

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