Metro Rapid is Semi-Finalist in Harvard's 'Innovations' Awards

By ED SCANNELL

(Nov. 13, 2002) MTA's Metro Rapid bus program has been selected as a semifinalist in Harvard University's 2002 Innovations in American Government Awards.

Metro Rapid bus at Patsaouras Plaza.

The awards, presented annually by the John F. Kennedy School of Government, recognize outstanding examples of creative problem solving in the public sector.

"We are honored to have been chosen as a semifinalist for this prestigious award," said CEO Roger Snoble. "Metro Rapid has succeeded beyond anyone's expectations at meeting the needs of our existing passengers and generating new transit ridership on two busy L.A. corridors by producing an increase in bus speed unheard of in a major U.S. city."

The Metro Rapid program was selected as one of 98 semi-finalists from among a pool of nearly 1,000 applicants. The five winning entries will be announced next May in Washington, D.C. Each will receive a grant of $100,000.

Metro Rapid was launched in June 2000 with a 26-mile line on the Wilshire/Whittier corridor and a 16-mile line that operates on Ventura Boulevard.

Metro Rapid has succeeded in reducing travel times by nearly 30 percent and increasing total bus ridership in the two corridors by nearly 40 percent. One third of the ridership increase is patrons new to transit.

Buoyed by this success, the MTA Board earlier this year approved a 24-line expansion of Metro Rapid beginning this December with the startup of lines on Vermont Avenue and South Broadway. The expansion will be completed by 2008.

All levels of government -- federal, state, local, tribal and territorial -- within the United States are eligible for Harvard's Innovations in American Government Award. Each program is evaluated according to its novelty, creativity, effectiveness, significance and transferability.

Since it began in 1986, the annual competition has recognized 295 innovative programs and awarded them a total of $17.9 million in grants.

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