

FOR THE FIRST

I want to begin this first edition by expressing my gratitude for all that each of you have done to make the MTA a first-class organization. Far too often we miss the opportunity to say how much an individual or group is appreciated, keeping to ourselves what others need to hear.

To those of you who I haven't seen to personally thank, I want to thank you now for a job well done. Although this first issue is devoted primarily to your efforts following the Jan. 17 earthquake, I'm speaking here about the work that goes on daily — the work that earns us our paychecks. Many of you have earned respect throughout the transit industry, and others of you are local heroes. We could not run an organization this size without the expertise of each individual, and I, for one, am proud to be a part of it.

In the weeks ahead, we'll certainly be asked to work even harder in the face of the increasing challenges. We're dealing with budget reductions, fare and service restructuring and, undoubtedly, crises we cannot yet predict. However, I'm confident that together we can do what it takes, and grow stronger as a result.

For reasons we all understand, I'm dedicating this first issue to the earthquake and the events that continue to follow. I know many of you suffered personal property losses and damage, and still reported to work during the days following the quake. Sadly, one MTA employee lost his life. Til Lee, a Class A Mechanic who worked at the MTA's Central Maintenance Facility, and his 14-year old son were killed in the devastation that rocked the Northridge Meadows apartments. My deepest sympathy goes out to Mr. Lee's family, and to all the rest of you who suffered any personal loss from the quake.

- Franklin E. White

A Job Well Done

The MTA Comes Through in a Crisis

First and foremost, I'm proud of the countless ways the entire MTA served the citizens of Los Angeles County following the Northridge Earthquake on Jan. 17. MTA employees rallied immediately to reassure the public that our transit systems were up and running.

On the day of the quake itself, we achieved 94% service delivery on our buses and Blue Line trains, despite the numerous debris-strewn streets in the San Fernando Valley. The next day, after safety inspections gave our subway tunnels a clean bill of health, the Red Line was running on schedule. And, of course, the increased passenger capacity provided by Metrolink commuter trains continues to offer one of the few accessible connections between the Antelope Valley and Los Angeles. As of Monday, Jan. 31, Metrolink passengers disembarking in Sylmar, Burbank and Glendale are also being served by four new and 14 rerouted bus lines.

The sight of our buses and trains on the county's streets, freeways and tracks let citizens know they were not stranded. Many of our county's commuters, accustomed to their beloved automo-

biles, looked to public transit for the first time. They called our telephone information lines to learn how to use the system, which resulted in a 40% increase in the number of calls; in fact, 12 more phone operators were added to ease the volume.

Governor's Emergency Transportation Relief Task Force

Having met the county's immediate transit needs, MTA staff began setting up a public transportation network to handle the increased transit needs during the time it takes to repair our damaged freeways.

California's Governor Pete Wilson, in cooperation with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena, established a task force made up of municipal, county, state and federal transportation officials to identify problems, locate existing resources and respond to the public's short- and long-term mobility needs.

The Governor's task force has been meeting daily at the Los Angeles district office of CalTrans. The MTA is heading up two of the four subcommittees: Art Leahy, the MTA's executive officer for operations, chairs the Transit Subcommittee, and Linda

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Bohlinger, the MTA's deputy executive officer of capital planning, chairs the Finance Subcommittee. Linda's committee oversees the funding for L.A.'s emergency transportation needs. With over \$2-billion in needs, the task force has a big job. So far, we've been so effective that a check for \$10 million, designated for the most critical needs, was delivered to Linda's subcommittee last Friday from F.E.M.A.

Emergency Transportation Service

Almost as soon as the earth stopped shaking after the initial quake, MTA staffers began laying plans for both immediate and long-term emergency transportation service. Requests began pouring in to the bus dispatch center for emergency transportation of people who were displaced from damaged homes and hospitals. It wasn't long before the MTA staff had handled 156 requests for buses; of this number, 110 MTA buses were provided, and arrangements were made for other area transit providers to handle the remaining 46.

Within three days, we had a new bus service in place to serve the Westside, with 22 added buses for five existing Westside lines and one in the San Fernando Valley. As you know, the damaged Santa Monica Freeway was, until Jan. 17, the heaviest traveled freeway in the world. Our added buses, along with the detour routes and HOV lanes provided by CalTrans, have made traveling between the Westside and downtown Los Angeles much easier than originally predicted after the quake.

A Metrolink-Bus Network Saves the Day

The task force didn't wait long to set service enhancements in motion. Because of the collapse of the State Route 14 freeway at the I-5 Interchange, Metrolink ridership from the Antelope Valley to Los Angeles immediately tripled. To handle the load, Metrolink has increased its number of passenger cars from six to 36, while increasing the number of daily trains from 61 to 68. Necessary bus connections are being provided to passengers disembarking at the Sylmar, Burbank and Glendale stations.

We are prepared to add as many as 60 more buses in the San Fernando Valley to augment existing routes and to serve the more than 20,000 Metrolink passengers traveling from the Santa Clarita and Antelope valleys into the Los Angeles Basin.

Three new Metrolink stations have been opened to serve commuters affected by the earthquake, and a fourth is opening on Jan. 31 in North L.A. County. The Santa Clarita line was extended 50 miles to include station stops in Sylmar, Palmdale and Lancaster.

In short, the MTA has created, augmented or rerouted a total of 24 bus lines to assist commuters affected by the earthquake to date. It took employees willing to expand their normal functions to make it happen.

Call-Boxes for Emergency Assistance

Santa Clarita motorists who are now using "The Old Road" as an alternate route to reach Interstate 5 will soon have freeway call box service again. Again, thanks to MTA staff, call boxes are being relocated to "The Old Road" between Calgrove Boulevard and I-5, and should be in service this week.

Positive Press for Metro Rail

Meanwhile, our subway tunnels have garnered some positive attention. All Metro Red Line subway tunnels, including those currently under construction and the 4.4 mile segment where

trains currently run under downtown Los Angeles, suffered no structural damage during the quake nor from the subsequent aftershocks.

Ed McSpedon, the MTA's executive officer for construction and RCC's president, tells me that structural and safety engineers who completed an end-to-end walk through inspection immediately after the earthquake found no damage to the tunnels or the subway system. Further, the Vermont corridor tunnel construction project sustained no damage despite the fact that the permanent concrete liner is not even in place yet.

RCC also lead a surface inspection of other Metro Rail projects in the Los Angeles area — including the Metro Green Line between El Segundo and Norwalk. There was no street-level damage that would affect public safety or impede traffic.

Finally, Ed reported that after making sure that conditions were safe, nearly 80 feet of the Segment 2 tunnel was drilled on Monday, the day of the earthquake. We do, indeed, have dedicated workers.

Red Line Ridership Up

MTA operations reports that Metro Red Line passenger loads have increased by 40% due to the increased Metrolink patronage. Last week, the Red Line carried an average of 21,000 passengers a day, up from an average of 15,000.

National Attention and Positive Marks

So, MTA employees, I say you've earned the positive attention the MTA is receiving far and wide. California Gov. Pete Wilson and President Clinton have both toured the areas that sustained major damage, and both have vowed their help in getting relief to Southern California. As the region's coordinator of federal and state transportation funding, the MTA is responsible for submitting formal applications for financial assistance from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), as well as state emergency agencies.

Comments from the Big Apple

New York is paying us notice too. A New York Times editorial on Jan. 24, clearly championed our mass transit cause. "Now, as Los Angeles recoups," said the editorial, "local, state and Federal authorities must resist rebuilding everything as it was before, only stronger. Rather, they must seize every chance they get to advance mass transit instead of pouring concrete."

The editorial concludes with a dose of reality. "Los Angeles did not have its last earthquake on Monday, only its latest. Improved mass transit would help it cope with the next one."

Frankly, I'm more than impressed with your courage and performance. Please accept my sincere congratulations. Keep up the good work!

I welcome your comments and questions in response to CEO Report, which is designed to provide employees with direct communication with my office. Please contact either of my Special Assistants, Michael Gonzalez at 244-7476, or Phyllis Tucker at 244-6191.

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