

CEO REPORT

Joseph E. Drew
MTA Chief Executive Officer

October 14, 1996

I was particularly pleased last week to announce the appointment of Ellen Levine as executive officer, Transit Operations. A woman who has made her mark at the MTA, Ellen is the first female to lead the agency's single largest department, with responsibility for the activities of almost 7,000 employees at locations throughout the county. In fact, she is one of the few women in the nation to head a regional bus and rail operation.

Ellen has performed superbly for the past 18 months as Western Region General Manager. During her 17 years with the agency, she has served as deputy executive officer, Operations; maintenance superintendent for labor and administration; special assistant to the CEO; and as budget manager in the Office of Management and Budget.

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An immediate challenge will be implementation of the recent fare lawsuit settlement, which calls for adding more buses, more operators and more service to our transit system. As one of her first decisions, Ellen has announced the appointment of Rick Hittinger, service operations manager, Division

10, to replace her as Western RGM. Let's all congratulate Rick on his new position.

I also want to thank Jim Reichert for his willingness to step in quickly and take the helm of Transit Operations for the past five months. His experience as a transit professional kept the department on course, and his advice and counsel has been invaluable to me. Jim will be staying on for the interim in a consulting capacity. □

ATTB Rolls Out in Style

I hope many of you saw the prototype of the Advanced Technology Transit Bus when it made its first public appearance, Oct. 11, at Headquarters. The visit capped an exciting week for the ATTB

and for the MTA. On Oct. 8, an audience of 1,000 or more welcomed the new high-tech coach during rollout ceremonies at the Northrop Grumman plant in El Segundo.

The ATTB has been in development since 1992, when the MTA partnered with Northrop and won federal funding for the \$51 million project. The bus, powered by a fuel-efficient hybrid electric propulsion system, weighs nearly 9,000 pounds less than a conventional CNG bus. The front door ramp and low floor design provide easy access for passengers. The operator-friendly vehicle seats 43 passengers and has standing room for 29 more.

The prototype will be road-tested over the next 13 months in Los Angeles, Phoenix and at the Federal Test Center in Altoona, Penn. This will include a combination of 250,000 miles of driving and 750,000 miles of operation under simulated driving conditions. □

September Employees of the Month

Let's all be sure to congratulate the Employees of the Month for September. Nominated for the honor by their co-workers, they represent the best of the best.

Regina Abernathy, Customer Information Agent. The Communications Division employee always looks for ways to emphasize the positive aspects of a demanding position. As a result of her outstanding performance and ability to motivate others, she was chosen to assist with new employee training and development.

Perry Blake, Controller. A Finance Department employee, Perry spends many hours of research to find ways to retrieve information from the FIS system and to establish new procedures to complete projects. A team player, his quality of work is demonstrated by the amount of time he invests in all his projects.

Arthur Brown, Scheduling Department. A Regional Transportation Planning and Development employee, Arthur supports 35 employees who develop bus and rail schedules. He proves his commitment to the job by coming in on his days off, working late, and by always maintaining a positive and supportive attitude.

James Henry, Security Guard. Representing the Transit Police and Executive Office, James makes many valuable contributions on security issues. Self-motivated and conscientious, he recently was called on to fill in for his supervisor for an extended period, an assignment that required him to oversee the security guard operation.

Brian Takamiyashiro, 2nd Shift Engine Line, RRC. A Transit Operations employee, Brian helped the 2nd shift engine line build a highly dependable and productive team. He helps train co-workers in overhauling engines, provides technical assistance to mechanics in his section and undertakes complicated and rush assignments.

Don Wong, Program Management. As the Construction Division's move coordinator, Don was responsible for the monumental task of

ensuring the smooth transition to the Gateway Headquarters building. He exhibits the highest ethical standards, considers long-range concerns and develops recommendations and solutions.

Atsuko Yamada, Human Resources, Special Programs. An Administration Division secretary, Atsuko frequently takes on added responsibilities, including payroll and FIS input, to help her co-workers. Organized and competent, she takes the initiative in looking for new ways to support the work of the Special Programs staff. □

A unified retirement plan

Those who attended informational meetings last week learned that we're going ahead with our effort to move into a unified retirement plan. I'll ask the Board this month to approve a new organizational structure that would allow non-represented employees to choose the retirement plan combination that best fit their needs. The leaders of the UTU, ATU and TCU have decided not to offer this option to their members.

If approved by the Board, we'll create separate organizations called "MTA 1" and "MTA 2." MTA 1 will include non-represented employees and members of the Teamsters and Transit Police unions, whose benefits are linked by contract with non-represented employees. The new organization would take effect January 1, 1997. MTA 2 will include members of the UTU, ATU and TCU.

MTA 1 members would be able to choose PERS, without Social Security, or the RTD/MTA retirement plan, with or without Social Security. All non-represented new hires would be enrolled in PERS. Because the unions are not participating, employees who switch to PERS no longer would be eligible for a Social Security refund – in some cases amounting to \$10,000 or more. The MTA also loses a potential refund of about \$100 million that could have been used to improve the bus system.

Union members in MTA 2 would remain with Social Security and the existing retirement plans. I am, however, recommending to the Board an option for the UTU, ATU and TCU to allow their members to participate in the unified plan up to the point at which employee plan selection begins, approximately 15 days after Board approval. □

CEO HotLine in Action

Thanks again to all of you who called the CEO HotLine with your concerns. And thanks to the staff for your thoughtful responses. Here's a sampling of recent calls.

Every payday departments have to waste time sending someone to pick up employee paychecks from Payroll. There's always a long line. Why doesn't Payroll deliver paychecks to us anymore?

Delivering paychecks really wasn't practical, safe or efficient. However, Finance took action on your suggestion in September by starting a new paycheck distribution procedure that eliminates the long lines you mentioned. The new procedure sets aside designated times for departments to pick up paychecks. Now, every department receives its paychecks before noon on payday. Thanks for your suggestion.

How do you find out what career planning services are available at the MTA?

Several career development planning services are available. Be sure to review all MTA job bulletins. Contact Cindy Kondo-Lowe of Employee Development at 922-7120 for career devel-

opment counseling and to ask about gaining academic qualifications for a new position or career. And don't forget to visit the MTA Library on the 15th Floor at Headquarters. The staff can help you find job, educational and career information through the Internet and other sources. Good luck!

It seems to me that the Employees of the Month should receive a monetary reward, such as a U.S. Savings Bond. Was that considered?

The committee, which represents the seven major MTA units, considered a monetary award, but decided that recognition as an Employee of the Month was the most important element. An Employee Suggestion program, to be announced soon, will include monetary awards to employees who make cost-savings or revenue-producing suggestions. □

Awards at APTA

The MTA won recognition on several fronts at last week's American Public Transit Association (APTA) annual meeting in Anaheim. The hit of the show was our introduction of the ATTB prototype which wowed delegates from all over the nation.

Our Public Affairs and Marketing departments shared first place in the APTA Ad Wheel awards for large transit system. The award honored the MTA Arts Festival, produced as part of the 1995 Wilshire Boulevard centennial celebration. Poster designs developed for Metrolink by the MTA Graphics Department won the Ad Wheel Grand Award for print media. Congratulations to all three departments!

The MTA's Career Development and Training Center received a \$100,000 check from the FTA to continue support of the TCAP and TOP programs for high school and college students interested in transportation careers. Some 630 students and 30 teachers at four area high schools and four community colleges participate in the training programs. □

Closing Thoughts

Here's a quote from Tom Peters' book, *The Pursuit of WOW!*, I thought you might like:

"How do you go on an effective diet? How do you stop smoking? How do you stop drinking? In short, you do it and it's done. Then you work like hell for the rest of your life to stay on the weight-maintenance, non-smoking, or booze-free wagon.

"A while back, I came across a line attributed to IBM founder Thomas Watson. If you want to achieve excellence, he said, you can get there today. As of this second, quit doing less-than-excellent work. The idea is profound." □



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