

# CEO Report

**Linda Bohlinger, Chief Executive Officer**  
**May 19, 1997**

This year's Try Transit Week celebration was the most extensive since the MTA was created four years ago. The annual event, May 12-16, gave us an opportunity to honor our customers and to give special recognition to those who help cut pollution and relieve highway congestion by carpooling or biking to work. Most importantly, we honored our transit employees of the year.

**C**ongratulations to Juan Pena of Division 7, selected as Metro Bus Operator of the Year; to Rick Miranda of the Metro Green Line, named Metro Rail Operator of the Year; to Alex Rocio of Division 8, Bus Maintenance Employee of the Year; to John Barocca of Division 11, Rail Maintenance Employee of the Year; and to Greg Pitts, Customer Information Operator of the Year. I had the opportunity to personally congratulate each of them during a luncheon ceremony recently. All five transit employees of the year are outstanding representatives of the MTA.

Try Transit Week activities included free tokens, newspaper and coffee at the Long Beach Bikestation. On Tuesday, customers who donated a canned food item received a free Metro Discount Token. We also set up food drive centers at our Customer Service Centers and at four rail stations. A live radio broadcast was scheduled at the Metro Green Line Norwalk station. On Friday, a Transit Fair, with exhibits of the latest transportation technology, was scheduled in downtown LA.

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Try Transit Week is sponsored each year by APTA and co-sponsored by the MTA and other local transit agencies around the nation. The event gives transit operators an opportunity to encourage non-riders to become transit customers for at least one day.

### **Charity Drive Kickoff**

I had the pleasure during our Cinco de Mayo celebration of helping kick off our second annual charity drive, *Committed*

*To Serving Our Communities.* The campaign has extra meaning for us, since it ties in with two of the MTA's guiding principles: customer-focused and community-focused.

Your contributions will support the Asian Pacific Community Fund, Brotherhood Crusade/Black United Fund, The College Fund/UNCF, Combined Health Appeal, Earth Share of California, Los Angeles Women's Foundation, National Hispanic Scholarship Fund, United Latino Fund and the United Way of Greater Los Angeles.

Our goal for Fiscal Year 1997-98 is to increase our annual gifts by 15 percent and to increase the number of employees participating from 60 percent to 75 percent. This fiscal year we raised \$367,000 for charity. Next year, we hope to raise \$415,000. That's \$34,583 a month we could give back to our communities, to the people who support the MTA.

You'll be receiving a charitable contribution form soon. With this form, you can sign up for a payroll deduction, change your current deduction for charity, add one or more fund distribution agencies to your deduction or make a one-time donation to a charity. Remember: the full amount of your contribution is tax-deductible.

### **Budget and Layoffs**

As the current fiscal year winds down, we're putting final touches on the MTA's budget for FY 1997-98. It will include a five percent cut in operating costs, as required by the Board, and layoffs of 78 non-contract employees. At \$2.8 billion, however, the budget will allow us to meet our two highest priorities: funding for improved bus service and completion of the Metro Red Line project.

The layoffs affect selected non-contract job classifications in certain departments. Recently, executive officers distributed information packets to employees who are eligible for voluntary early retirement or voluntary severance pay. The selection period ends June 24, 1997. If not enough employees select either program, involuntary layoffs will be necessary. The process must be completed by July 1.

Voluntary early retirement, with two years' credit for service and two years' age credit, will be offered to former RTD employees and MTA employees hired since the merger. Due to PERS restrictions, former LACTC employees are not eligible for this enhanced benefit. Voluntary severance, with up to 26 weeks of pay and limited benefits depending upon length of service, will be offered as the second option.

Creating next year's belt-tightening budget has not been an easy task. Many hard decisions had to be made to produce a balanced budget. I'm confident, however, that although the MTA will be a leaner, more cost-conscious organization, we can still meet our region's transportation needs.

### **Answering the FTA**

We're close to completing our response to last April's letter

from the Federal Transit Administration which raised concerns about the Metro Rail Recovery Plan, including the MTA's finances, funding and expenditures.

We've drafted a very lengthy document assuring the FTA that we can provide needed local funds to complete the North Hollywood, Eastside and Mid-Cities projects, as well as fund our bus and highway improvement programs. The response also informs the FTA that our Metro Red Line construction projects are on schedule, with revenue operating dates (ROD) expected for Vermont/Hollywood in December, 1998, and for North Hollywood in May, 2000.

One of the key differences from the January, 1997, Rail Recovery Plan is the establishment of a program reserve for capital and operating uses. We'll use this reserve to offset any future revenue decreases or to cover any increases in project or operating costs. This reserve reflects a more conservative financial approach for all of our programs.

We met with the FTA recently and will present options to the Board at a special meeting May 21. I believe our response demonstrates to the FTA that we're moving ahead to address their concerns.

### Note of Appreciation

I want to express my appreciation to those who worked so hard to make our Take Our Daughters To Work event so successful. More than 400 girls participated at Headquarters and at the operating divisions. The day was a valuable experience for the girls and for our staff – and it was fun!

Hats off to Gail Charles, Director, Equal Opportunity Programs; and to Marion Colston-Fayyaz, Cynthia Shavers, Joyce Hudson, Sonya Turner-Lynch, Steven Depp, Maria Reynolds, Maria Aguirre, Harriette Marshall, Phyllis Tucker, Frank Harper, Carl McKnight and Erica Goebel. Thanks also to the Executive Officers, chaperones and floor coordinators, Cafeteria Manager Jay Tomas, Marketing, Human Resources, Transit Operations, General Services and the Diversity Task Force.

### Arthur and Oprah

Another honor for Arthur Winston, our 91-year-old maintenance employee. He made a grand appearance last week on the nationally televised Oprah Winfrey show.

On Monday, he was whisked by limo from Division 5 (recently renamed the Arthur Winston Mid-Cities Division) to television studios in Hollywood. The show was taped for airing on KABC, Channel 7, Tuesday, May 13.

As always, Arthur was an outstanding representative of the MTA. He continues to set an example to all of us for his energy, loyalty, dedication to excellence and to customer service.

### Top-rated Video

A videotape produced by our Safety Department and the Transit Police has been accepted by the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training for use by law enforcement agencies statewide. Entitled "Metro Blue Line Photo Enforcement Program," the video showcases the MTA's program for identifying motorists who endanger themselves and others by crossing Blue Line tracks against the signals.

Congratulations to Lou Hubaud, Director, Systems Safety;

Linda Meadow, Assistant Director, Safety Compliance; Abdul Zohbi, Systems Safety Administrative Analyst; and Transit Police Officer Glen Copeland for their success in producing a valuable law enforcement training tool.

### In Other News

• MTA Headquarters and Gateway Transit Plaza have won awards for excellence. The Southern California chapter of the International Interior Design Association honored the building with its Calibre Award for best interior design. Gateway Transit Plaza received the Kaufman & Broad Award from the Los Angeles Business Council for outstanding project contributing to the beautification of the Los Angeles area.

• A traffic signal coordination program in the South Bay, funded by the MTA, is saving motorists time and money and is helping clean the air. The \$3.2 million project to date has resulted in \$6.3 million in savings to drivers on the Pacific Coast Highway, Sepulveda and Hawthorne boulevards, and Western Avenue. A study estimates that motorists are saving 30 hours a year in drive time and up to \$100 a year as a result of better fuel economy and less auto wear and tear.

### Closing Thoughts

Here's an item from the book, *Work Is Not a Four-Letter Word: Improving the Quality of Your Work Life*, by Stephen Strasser and John Sena, as reported in The Pryor Report.

When you're stuck with a repetitive or unpleasant task at work, you can grouse about your situation or you can invoke S.T.L.F.T. The initials stand for "Something to Look Forward To." Thoughts of a wonderful weekend, a vacation, gardening, golf or tennis, attending a play, movie or concert – all qualify as S.T.L.F.T.

Sounds like daydreaming? Authors Strasser and Sena say S.T.L.F.T.s "allow you to focus momentarily on something pleasant and serve as reminders that routine is only a small segment of a much larger canvas."

Not a bad idea to help us through a tough day.



Linda Bohlinger

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Editor:	Bill Heard
Designer:	Terry McMahon
Executive Officer, Communications:	Rae James
Director, Public Relations:	Marc Littman
Asst. Director, Internal Communications:	Phyllis Tucker
Manager, Printing Services:	Al Moore



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