



NEWS

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CONTACT: GARY WOSK/JIM SMART
MTA MEDIA RELATIONS
(213) 922-2712/922-2700
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MTA MORE THAN MEETS CONSENT DECREE REQUIREMENTS TO MAKE MAJOR METRO BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS IN 1997 AND BEYOND

The MTA pointed to five accomplishments achieved in 1997 that demonstrate the Authority is meeting the goals of the Consent Decree to improve service to Metro Bus system passengers.

In a year-end summary, MTA Interim CEO Julian Burke noted the following major accomplishments:

- The MTA reduced the average number of standees on buses to below the level required by the Consent Decree.
- The Board approved the purchase of 223 compressed natural gas (CNG) buses which will be delivered following completion of an outstanding order of 250 CNG buses currently being delivered at a rate of 15 to 20 per month. In addition, the Board gave the green light to invite bids for a new procurement of 215 low floor CNG buses.
- The CEO, in January, will ask the MTA Board to approve the suspension of new rail construction on the Pasadena Blue Line and Metro Red Line East Side and Mid-City extensions in order to improve the MTA's financial condition and give priority to improved bus service.
- The MTA's 6-year capital plan will give priority to purchasing an additional 1,313 buses in that time by identifying funding sources.
- Began the Metro Bus Pilot Project Master Plan which will add 67 buses and vans on routes designed to improve access to employment and educational opportunities as well as medical facilities particularly for transit dependent

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residents. The first phase of the plan began to be implemented December 14 and consists of 12 new and restructured lines.

"Improving the bus system is our number one priority and the facts speak for themselves," said Burke. "In 1997, substantial progress was made to improve the Metro Bus system, however, in the coming months we can, will and must do an even better job of meeting our riders' needs."

According to Ellen Levine, Executive Officer Transit Operations, since late 1996 the MTA has made the following additional bus service improvements:

- Introduced a new mid-day 75 cent fare on two selected bus lines (seniors pay only 35 cents).
- Lowered the price of its regular monthly pass system-wide from \$49 to \$42.
- Lowered the price of its semi-monthly pass from \$26.50 to \$21.
- Introduced a specially priced \$11 weekly pass.
- Launched the largest bus service expansion in 20 years by expanding the Metro Bus fleet by 106 vehicles.
- Bus service additions in early 1997 and in June reduced the number of standees during peak hours. Nearly 400,000 daily boarding passengers benefited from the new load standard.
- Began the Crenshaw Connection, a new flexible bus service that serves the residential area of Leimert Park, as well as the Crenshaw Baldwin Hills Plaza. Passengers are able to board at bus stops or flag a bus down to pick them up at any corner served by that line. Passengers can be dropped off at any corner in the service area.
- Began new flexible service around the busy Vermont Avenue bus line by offering patrons special shuttle rides to destinations several blocks away. The Southside Smart Shuttle operates between Slauson Avenue and the Metro

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Green Line's Vermont station providing patrons direct access to neighborhood shopping areas, medical facilities and regional transit services.

- Required 3,400 bus and rail operators to attend the new Transit Institute at MTA headquarters. The focus of the Institute includes the best ways of resolving conflicts, providing better customer service and becoming more culturally sensitive. Mandatory yearly participation in the institute increased the total number of annual training required by each operator from eight hours to 16.
- The Boyle Heights Line 620 shuttle added five new stops in the Pico-Aliso community. The shuttle serves the residents of the Pico-Aliso Housing Community and Pico-Aliso Village in East L.A.
- MTA and the Bus Riders Union held six public meetings to provide community input for the Metro Bus Pilot Project Master Plan.
- Approved new three-year contracts with three unions representing MTA employees thereby avoiding a disruption in bus service.
- Studied the use of special high capacity buses on congested Los Angeles Corridors to determine if buses that bend in the middle and operate on exclusive busways can help reduce congestion in crowded transportation corridors.
- The Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles Sheriff's Department began patrolling the Metro System, providing Angelenos with a unified approach to safety, emergency services and crime fighting.

"The past year marks a significant turnaround in being able to provide better service to our passengers," summed up Levine. "With the continued support of our passengers, the community-at-large, the MTA Board and the entire Transit Operations Department, even greater strides will be made in 1998 and the years to follow."

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