

MTA REVIEW

MARCH 1997



Alfonso Rodriguez, who grew up in East LA, is bringing the Metro Red Line subway to the neighborhood of his early childhood.

LOOK WHO'S BUILDING THE EAST LA SUBWAY!

As a boy growing up in East LA, Alfonso Rodriguez had two passions: one was taking things apart, the other playing goalkeeper for the soccer team – training grounds, as it turned out, for one pressure-cooker of a career in railway construction.

"I was always tinkering with stuff," says the 35-year-old project manager of the \$1.05 billion Metro Red Line East LA extension, which is now gearing up for construction.

And then there's that other passion. Guarding the nets and preserving those 1-0 victories are still a source of inspiration to Alfonso, who as a boy lived on Ferris Street at Whittier Boulevard, close to where the subway will one day pass. Instead of intercepting intended goals, today he's more concerned with heading off each and every possible problem on the East LA construction project before it occurs. And just like playing goalkeeper, Alfonso knows the margin of error in this game is zero, rules he intends to thrive under.

"We know we are under a microscope," says Alfonso, whose team includes nearly 200 MTA employees. "That's why we're going to make sure things get done right."

Alfonso will focus on Phase One of the East LA extension, expected to be finished by the year

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I N S I D E

**Expansion of the
Metro Freeway Service Patrol**

New Look for Metro Bus & Rail Fleet

Look for Metro Safari on TV

National Customer First Conference

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Linda Bohlinger

Interim Chief Executive Officer

METRO VIEW



By Linda Bohlinger
MTA Interim Chief Executive Officer

The Los Angeles Times recently reported that a peek into LA's future reveals "the city is on the brink of a 21st century traffic nightmare" ("Area's Highway Flow Rides on US Transit Bill," February 24, 1997). We agree; and solving that problem is MTA's main goal.

When considering public transportation's part in the equation, though, observers sometimes portray a "bus vs. rail" dilemma. But we believe the only way to avoid those predicted traffic nightmares is through a combination of bus *and* rail.

There is no doubt buses will remain the backbone of public transportation in Los Angeles County and improving bus service is our top priority. That's why building rail lines is so important; among their many benefits, they actually help the bus system work better.

You see, we know that buses alone can't carry LA. They're slowing down just like your car because the population is growing and there's more traffic. If current trends continue, we'll need to put 500 more buses on the street by the year 2015 just so our customers won't have to wait any longer between buses than they do now. Obviously, that means their trips will be a lot slower.

The picture changes when a rail system is added to the mix. A heavy rail line, for example, can handle traffic capacity equivalent to that of a 14-lane freeway, taking vehicles off the street and making travel faster for everyone.

Incidentally, we often hear the suggestion that money spent building Metro Rail should just be used to buy more buses, but this is not an option. Our federal funding is earmarked for rail only. Cutting back on Metro Rail would simply mean that all those tax dollars would go to rail projects in other cities...along with the thousands of jobs that are benefiting our local economy every day.

It's worth repeating that bus improvements are still our priority, even if it means a delay in the rail program. In fact, we'll spend over \$500 million in the next dozen years to expand our fleet and make bus service cleaner, safer and more reliable. More than 150 additional buses will be on the street by June of next year. Fares have been rolled back. And we've made on-time performance so important that we've been guaranteeing it during March and April.

Ultimately, however, Angelenos need options. Trains are one way to ensure that buses aren't just accelerating gridlock.



The Board Report

PLAN TO REDUCE CONGESTION ON SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD APPROVED

The MTA Board approved a plan to relieve traffic congestion, improve safety, enhance the bus system and beautify Santa Monica Boulevard between the 405 Freeway and the Beverly Hills city limits at Moreno Drive.

When renovation of the boulevard is completed in 2001, traffic conflicts will be appreciably reduced as a result of the reconfiguration of "Big Santa Monica" and "Little Santa Monica" boulevards.

The Board action means a search for a consultant can now begin. The consultant will produce an Environmental Assessment/ Environmental Impact Report and preliminary engineering study on the 2.5-mile Santa Monica Boulevard Transit Parkway Project.

This particular stretch of Santa Monica Boulevard, formerly part of Route 66, once featured the Pacific Electric Railway Red Car line and has been the focus of various transportation-related studies for at least the last 40 years.

While there were seven concepts studied, the "Classic Boulevard" plan received the most positive feedback during six MTA-sponsored public workshops attended by nearly 1,000 people in 1996.

The "Classic Boulevard" will feature a center roadway with three lanes in each direction, bicycle lanes, a landscaped median and frontage roads on both sides for parking and access to local streets. The project, which will cost up to \$68.2 million, includes priority treatment for buses, on-ramp improvements at the San Diego Freeway interchange and landscaping and urban design improvements.

Steadier traffic flow, a safer ride, faster bus rides and wider sidewalks are among the benefits the community will reap. When Santa Monica Boulevard is reconfigured, the wait at traffic lights will drop from 96 to 36 seconds at many intersections. In fact, the time saved by drivers and passengers in the year 2015 has been calculated at \$9.5 million annually. Additional savings to drivers and passengers are calculated by less vehicle wear and tear, fewer accidents, saved fuel and fewer work hours lost due to traffic congestion and gridlock.

In addition to workshops, the MTA also held over 20 meetings with smaller groups and convened a community task force, a practice that will continue while environmental studies are undertaken. The MTA has also communicated with the community through a public survey and an 11,000-circulation newsletter.

METRO FREEWAY SERVICE PATROL EXPANSION

The Board approved the expansion of the Metro Freeway Service Patrol to include limited midday, weekend and night service. The program will be expanded to include the following service:

- Construction zone towing where shoulders are eliminated.
- Weekday midday coverage.
- Added coverage for three existing peak-hour beats.
- Weekend coverage from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.
- Night coverage from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Freeway Service Patrol will be expanded to include limited midday, weekend and night service.



MTA
BOARD
ACTIVITIES
FOR
FEBRUARY
1997

We're Going on Safari!

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The MTA will be making a splash on the airwaves with a half-hour television show designed to bring attention to the many facets of the authority. Called Metro Safari, this fast-paced entertainment program is scheduled to air Saturday, April 12 at 2 p.m. on KABC, Channel 7.

According to Rae James, Executive Officer, Customer Services and Communications, "Metro Safari's premise is to show some of what's happening in transportation in

Los Angeles, as discovered by an expeditionary team on an ongoing urban adventure. It's a visually exciting mix of conventional and unconventional video and film. It is sometimes off-beat and quirky, but always captivating."

Metro Safari is designed to intrigue the audience with interesting angles on transportation. In many of the segments, non-transportation experts are featured. For example, one segment dealing with fossil discoveries

during construction of the Metro Red Line subway features interviews with LA's Natural History Museum curator and a paleontologist. "By using the format of an entertaining television program, we hope to go beyond the scope of simply advertising MTA's services, and paint a larger and more compelling picture of the agency and its role in LA's present and future," said James.

MTA officials hope to make this a regular series and are currently working to get corporate funding for the program. A Spanish-language version of Metro Safari will be shown later on a local Spanish-language television station.

MTA

METRO SAFARI

LOOK WHO'S BUILDING *continued from page 1*

2004. The 3.7-mile project includes four subway stations designed with cultural themes and will extend from Union Station/Gateway Transit Center to First and Lorena streets. There will be stops at Little Tokyo/Arts District, First Street and Boyle Avenue, Cesar Chavez Avenue and Soto Street, and First and Lorena streets. By the year 2010 daily ridership is expected to climb to nearly 30,000 passengers on this leg of the Metro Red Line.

"The subway affords the people of East Los Angeles an array of opportunities and will provide a first-class transportation system," says Alfonso. "For instance, many residents will find it much easier to seek and commute to jobs, as well as attend school, outside the area. In a way, the subway will erase an imaginary boundary line that has prevented people from getting ahead simply because they didn't have the ways and means of traveling to a certain destination.

"The subway's going to serve the public's needs for mobility and connect them to the Metro Blue and Green Lines, Metrolink, Amtrak and buses traveling all over Los Angeles County and beyond."

Overseeing the construction of public works projects in residential areas is nothing new to Alfonso, a civil engineering graduate of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. He came to the MTA last April with a track record of building projects on time, within budget and in a manner communities find acceptable.

Unlike the first three Metro Red Line segments, a significant portion of the tunneling on this project will take place directly under residential and commercial buildings, nearly 250 in all. And, although public apprehension in Boyle Heights and East LA is high, Alfonso says the design approach and technology to be used reflect this higher challenge.

AGENCY HOSTS INAUGURAL NATIONAL CUSTOMER FIRST CONFERENCE

The MTA played host to the first ever national Customer First Conference geared toward the public transit industry and designed to highlight the importance of placing customer service and satisfaction as top priorities for the industry. Presentations were delivered by some of the country's top customer service experts who offered ideas designed to boost customer service and attract new customers.

According to Rae James, Executive Officer, Customer Services and Communications, "The conference was a golden opportunity for the MTA and transit officials nationwide to share the best methods developed by the private sector. The conference afforded participants the opportunity to take the lessons learned at this conference to make their transit systems more customer-friendly and convenient."

The two-day conference, held in February at MTA headquarters and the Omni Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, featured presentations by Dr. Stephen R. Covey, author of the national best-seller "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," Richard Whiteley, president of the Forum Corporation and author of "The Customer-Driven Company," Robert Spector, co-author of "The Nordstrom Way," and Paul Skoutelas, executive director and CEO of LYNX, a public transit system in Florida.

In addition, top officials from Saturn automobiles, Southwest Airlines, Disney University Professional Development Programs and several mass transit agencies presented their companies' proven customer service strategies. Innovative break-out sessions focused on a variety of issues, including using the Internet to reach

customers, transit marketing, the effective use of surveys and applying effective customer service strategies in the public sector.

"The MTA decided to host the conference to improve its training programs for front-line customer service employees. We believe the money invested in this conference will go a long way toward improving the agency's overall bus and train service to the public," said Linda Bohlinger, MTA Interim CEO. "We also invited our colleagues in the public transit industry to benefit from this conference. By exchanging information, the MTA benefits by learning about other successful customer service programs used around the country."

In addition to the conference, the MTA has initiated a variety of new projects under its Customer First program, an

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Rae James, Executive Officer, Customer Services and Communications, (left) and Linda Bohlinger, Interim CEO, meet with Richard Whiteley, president of the Forum Corporation and author of "The Customer-Driven Company" at the MTA sponsored national Customer First Conference.

And because the project is to be constructed in the neighborhood of his early childhood, Alfonso expresses a great deal of pride.

"This is really where I started dreaming of what I wanted to do when I grew up," said Alfonso. "Personally, I'm proud and gratified that this is my project. I would much rather work on the Metro Red Line East LA Extension than other projects because, my God, I grew up here... it's hard to describe the feeling of connection."

Listening to what people want is the approach Alfonso has adopted since joining the MTA a year ago - he has attended 15 community meetings thus far and will continue doing so until the project is completed in the year 2004. He also makes it his business to return every phone call. Yet he is the first to admit it will take much more than being from East LA and having a great attitude to win over people's confidence.

"I believe people know I really care about this community based on our conversations," he said. "But clearly, just the fact I was born here is not enough. It does help because the MTA is perceived by some as being insensitive to community needs. I do know when it comes to East LA however, we've made an incredible effort to make sure the community is always informed. We've taken the necessary steps to ensure this segment runs smoothly. For instance, we're spending nearly twice as much on proven, state-of-the-art tunnel boring machines and will use a different tunneling technique than other Metro Rail segments to significantly lower the risk of a sinkhole or settlement from occurring.

"I just know when this project is done it's going to be beautiful. And when it's finished I'll be able to say I had a part in it."



MTA Goes for the Gold

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MTA
adopts
new
look
for the
Metro
Bus
and
Rail
Fleet

The MTA has rolled out the first of what will eventually be a redesign of the authority's entire Metro Bus and Metro Rail fleet featuring bright white vehicles accented with gold trim.

"These newly repainted buses and trains will show the riding public our commitment to quality service," said Ellen Levine, MTA Executive Officer, Operations. "This is just one of many programs to be implemented this year aimed at improving our service."

The new design elements include bright white paint, light tinted windows and an attractive graphic design incorporating the "Metro Bus" or "Metro Rail" and "Travel Smart... Take Metro" logos on newly refurbished buses and trains. In addition, all new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses on order will have the same new paint scheme.

A total of 105 existing Metro Buses are scheduled to be repainted with the new color scheme and placed into service by the end of June 1997. Additionally, 64 new CNG buses, scheduled to arrive by May 1997, will also incorporate the new colors. In 1998, a total of 250 buses are scheduled to be repainted.

"The introduction of these newly refurbished buses with their new paint scheme, along with the arrival of new state-

of-the-art CNG buses, the addition of over 100 buses by year's end, reduced fares and the launching of a special on-time guarantee program, are the beginning of a major effort in improving the bus system," said MTA Interim CEO Linda Bohlinger.

"Because of the simpler design, the cost of repainting is estimated to be 25 percent less than with the old color design," said Bohlinger.

Additional elements aimed at improving the bus system include installing new lighter tinted windows and new seats. The new exterior design also will be used on Metro Red, Green and Blue Line trains as well as Metro Bus stops and service vehicles.

"This beautiful design was created in-house by MTA mechanics working at our Regional Rebuild Center in concert with our marketing and graphics personnel," said Levine. "Their outstanding efforts have created more attractive bus and rail cars which are also less costly to paint."

The new exterior paint design is expected to be applied to all Metro Buses and Metro Rail trains over the next four to six years.



MAKING THE MTA A BETTER AND MORE-RESPONSIVE PUBLIC AGENCY

The MTA Board adopted an ambitious management plan that will make major changes in the way the MTA does business. The action plan is designed to make the authority more efficient and effective.

"This is the beginning of a long road to change for the MTA, to make our agency more responsive to our customers and to the communities we serve," said MTA Interim CEO Linda Bohlinger. "We are here to make transportation better in Los Angeles and this management plan will help us redefine many management practices to help achieve our mission."

The plan approved by the Board incorporates dozens of suggestions made by the nationally-respected auditing company, Coopers & Lybrand, hired by the MTA last year to take a look at all MTA management and policy procedures and practices.

The plan lays out 85 steps to improve the Authority's management structure and practices that should result in lower operating costs. It is also designed to improve employee morale.

In response to the Coopers & Lybrand report, the MTA has highlighted four areas of concern for management action: greater fiscal responsibility, increased focus on customers, emphasis on a more timely and thorough response to community and regional needs, and greater support for employees.

"On behalf of the staff, I want to assure the public that we are committed to implementing these changes in procedures," said Bohlinger. "These management changes will help us focus on our primary mission to provide transportation improvements that will shorten commuting time, improve mobility and give the public greater value for its tax dollar."

Bohlinger noted that it will take up to five years to implement some of the recommendations, but many others already have been acted upon and others will go into effect within the next six months. For example, procurement functions will be merged into a single department this month. Up until now, there have been two procurement procedures, one for rail construction and one for the rest of the agency. "This single change should reduce the time it takes to hire outside services and contractors and reduce our operating costs," Bohlinger said.

A greater focus on bus and rail operations is also defined in the plan. Specifically, staff is to develop performance and customer service standards and publish the results in order to increase awareness of just how the agency is meeting the needs of the riding public.

Staff training is also planned to upgrade employee skills, including the area of management practices. One such program already is underway at the MTA in cooperation with the UCLA School of Management.

New methods of fare collection and a new system for maintaining the bus and rail fleet will be mapped out in the coming months in order to lower costs and provide better on-time service for MTA patrons.

"The MTA is changing, and it will be a better and more responsive agency in the years to come," Bohlinger said. "The public has placed its trust in this agency and the Board is committed to a management structure and management changes to make sure we meet our goals and objectives."

CONFERENCE

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extensive effort launched in 1996 to better serve the transit-riding public. Some of the new MTA programs include "Talking Buses," in which buses on specific lines will be equipped with a recorded voice which announces upcoming bus stops and provides safety messages. In December the MTA reduced the price of monthly transportation passes to \$42 and offered a specially-priced weekly pass for \$11 for the first time.

In an effort to make passengers feel safe and comfortable while waiting for the bus, the MTA launched an ambitious program to clean each of the 18,000 bus stops in Los Angeles County used by Metro Buses on a regular basis, even though historically this task has not been the MTA's responsibility. The Bus Stop Cleaning Program includes four six-member crews who pull weeds, remove trash and clean sidewalks, benches and walls.

The Customer First campaign also incorporates the ideas of MTA staff, many of whom use public transportation or come in contact with transit customers every day, and who responded to an employee suggestion campaign which generated 100 simple, common-sense ideas to improve bus service. Among the suggestions: provide customer comment cards on each bus, create a book containing bus routes and maps and offer customer information on the Internet.

With its new emphasis on customer service, the MTA used the conference as an opportunity to sharpen its marketing and customer service know-how to retain its current passenger base and to attract a new generation of transit customers.

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MATSUMOTO NAMED MTA INTERIM DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Terry Matsumoto has been named MTA's Interim Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Finance and Administration.

Matsumoto will be responsible for Finance, Administration, Employee and Labor Relations, Procurement and Transit Police. He also will remain the authority's chief financial officer and will continue to focus on expanding the MTA's investor relations outreach program.

"Terry has a solid financial background and will provide a steady hand as we implement programs to improve the administration of the authority. He will focus on our need to communicate well with the financial community and launch a centralized procurement function," said Linda Bohlinger, MTA's Interim Chief Executive Officer.



"Terry is known for his fair-handedness. He is also a recognized expert in the area of transportation finance," she added. "His efforts will be focused on developing and maintaining an employee-supportive environment and making sure everyone remains committed to improving customer service."

Matsumoto brings 25 years of professional and managerial experience to his position. He has worked in both the public and private sector and has served as Director of Strategic Funding Analysis for the MTA's Regional Transportation Planning and Development Division. He also has served as the MTA Controller.

Prior to joining the MTA, Matsumoto held senior management positions at the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles and in the private sector. He is a certified public accountant who earned an MBA from UCLA. He and his wife and their two children live in West Los Angeles.

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