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LA COUNTY METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES - JANUARY 22, 1997

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Larry McFarland, Chairman
Nell Bjornsen
Pam Corradi, Vice Chairperson
Russ Davies
Mike Dickerson, Secretary
Seymour Rosen
Howard Sachar
Peter Schick
Jim Seal

SPEAKERS

Pat McLaughlin, Managing Director, MTA Organizational Effective
Frank Remley, Coopers & Lybrand
An Overview of MTA's Organizational Assessment Study with Q & A

Brent Cardwell, Manager, ITS

Patsaouras Transit Plaza Monitors Update

STAFF PRESENT:

DA Haydel, Board Research Services

Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by CAC Chairman L. McFarland

Chairman's Report

In order to ensure adequate time for the guest speakers' presentations, the Chairman deferred his report until next month.

III. **Committee Report**

Mr. Dickerson reported on the Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) study session held on 17 January, 1997.

Ellen Levine was adamant that the agency had been forthright and candid about the seriousness of the incident and that any statements to the contrary were not supported by the facts. She was sustained by Nell H. Silver, President of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1277. The candor was further vindicated by a display of photographs of the explosion that were extremely graphic. Mr. Dickerson stated that the sub-committee's concern arose from the protracted delay from the original scheduled date 17 September, 1996. The difficulty may have been caused by a miscommunication. Operations staff thought that the committee had requested a report on the explosion of 12 August, 1996 and was awaiting details, whereas the committee wanted a more expansive discussion of the basic safety issue.

Staff stated the explosion was a good wake up call and they had been very lucky. They confirmed a preliminary explanation that the tank's structural integrity was weakened by contact with a foreign object or projectile. Removable thin shields were placed under the tanks and checked nightly for any intrusion. The shield is removed every 6,000 miles for detailed inspection. The tanks were being filled to only 2,400 PSI rather than the design specification of 3,600 PSI. Various devices designed and built by the shop forces to increase efficiency were displayed. Questions were asked as to the cost of these inspections. It was represented that presently, by working more efficiently and the limited number of CNG buses in service, the inspections were not causing additional labor costs. The questions regarding the cost when the full fleet of 350+ CNG buses was operational were not answered. The sub-committee felt it was likely to be very expensive.

There followed a discussion period. The sub-committee and one of their experts made representations that there were alternate technical explanations that had not been explored. Department of Defense documents and other studies were produced that suggested a systemic problem likely existed in the method of fueling. A shock wave spike was being created that approaches and may exceed the safety limits of the tanks. The accumulation of these spikes would reduce the structural integrity of the tanks over time. One consequence is a possible catastrophic, on the road, failure if a fatigued tank was struck by a foreign object. Reducing the amount of gas introduced in each fueling increased the cumulative degradation of an additional 5%. It was agreed that none of these questions have been explored and in fact had not been asked.

It was further represented that the system appeared to have been designed by experts in low pressure, gas transmission known to experts in high pressure, gas transmission as "plumbers".
Due to time constraints, this was not explored.

Ms. Levine asked that a follow-up study session be scheduled were the sub-committee experts' representations and general concerns could be more fully discussed. Mr. Silver stated he had had concerns but did not know the precise questions to ask and the session was very helpful.

The sub-committee will meet with Ms. Levine to determine if a format can be formulated that makes a further study session even more meaningful.

Documents distributed during this report included an article entitled "Building a CNG Transit Fueling System: Advice from the Experts"; and a letter to Ellen Levine, Executive Officer, MTA Operations from Arnold E. Liu, Vice President, Quantum Dynamics, regarding CNG tank rupture on Bus 4519, 12, August, 1996.

IV. **Public Comment**

Dana Gabbard questioned if the MTA will implement the Coopers & Lybrand's recommendations as a strategy for improving the agency.

Mr. Hays commented that many of the MTA's maps do not reflect a philosophy of "putting the customer first". He cited that major landmarks such as the Afro American Museum and the Crenshaw-Baldwin Hill Center do not appear on the sector maps.

Mr. Watt suggested that acronyms listed in the Coopers & Lybrand's briefing document be defined in a glossary section of this report.

Guest Speaker

Frank Remley, Coopers & Lybrand, conducted a one-hour presentation on the MTA Organizational Assessment Study. He distributed copies of his presentation outline to the CAC members and the public.

Members of the CAC raised the following questions:

- Were former employees of the MTA interviewed in the data collection portion of study?
- Is there a mechanism for ensuring staff's honesty.
- Given the many functions performed by the MTA, can this agency survive as the sole provider?

Brent Cardwell, Manager, ITS, provided an update on the upgrade required to make the video monitors located in the Patsaouras Plaza functional. April 1997 is the scheduled date for completion of this upgrade. Brent will suggest to Nick Patsaouras that the Union Station Gateway Board consider temporarily installing bus signs at this location.

VI. **New Business** **None**

- VII. **Approval of Minutes**
Due to the holiday, the CAC General Meeting was substituted with a Holiday Luncheon at Empress Pavilion in Chinatown. As such, there are no minutes for the month of December 1996.
- VIII. **Adjournment**
L. McFarland adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.