



Special Master Hands Down Rulings in Favor of MTA December 13, 2005

by Numan Parada

The special master has released rulings that tend to favor the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority over the position of the Bus Riders Union.

Donald Bliss, the Washington-based attorney and the Special Master overseeing the implementation of the Consent Decree, released the first ruling on Wednesday, November 30. Bliss approved the agency's New Service Plan and complimented the MTA on the continued improvements in bus service across the county.

The New Service Program includes expanding Metro Rapid bus service to 29 lines by June 2008, many with articulated buses. Bliss also noted that bus operations funding had increased from \$719 million, when the Consent Decree was taken effect in 1996, to \$1.195 billion in 2005. The special master also set a number of conditions Metro must follow after the end of the 10-year agreement, including maintaining high standards of service quality and submitting quarterly reports to the special master on plans to rearrange service.

According to a statement by Metro in its *Metro People* newsletter, the ruling "validates Metro's efforts over the past years and in future years aimed at improving Metro Bus service in LA County." Metro concluded that the order was "reasonable" and that it would continue to provide the best bus service possible.

Some speculate that this may be a sign that the consent decree could end in 2006. However, the Bus Riders Union, which sued the MTA in 1994 over deficient bus service and won the consent decree settlement, vowed to extend the agreement for four more years until the MTA fully complies, according to BRU attorney E. Richard Larson.

The special master released a second ruling on December 13. According to the *Los Angeles Daily News*, the ruling dismissed the BRU's demand to reinstate 10 of 13 bus lines that were cancelled between 2003 and 2005. One of the three bus lines that the MTA was ordered to revive was on Wilshire Boulevard. The "Hillside Shuttle" and the "Bus on Every Freeway" elements proposed by the BRU were also rejected.

Nevertheless, several BRU motions, including one saying the MTA is in contempt for not fulfilling a past order, are still under review.