



NEWS

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MTA KICKS OFF ADOPT-A-CROSSING RAIL SAFETY PROGRAM

The MTA, in conjunction with National Transportation Safety Week and Operation Lifesaver National Rail Safety Week, is promoting safety along the Metro Blue Line by initiating an adopt-a-crossing community outreach campaign. To kick off the campaign, the MTA today recognized five community organizations making the first adoptions along the Blue Line, which runs from Long Beach to Los Angeles.

The adopt-a-crossing program is designed to improve safety at the 28 gated crossings along the Blue Line, which opened in 1990. Through the course of the program, crossings will be adopted by community groups, churches, schools or other organizations. The adopting group will assist the MTA in spreading the rail safety message in their neighborhood by distributing literature or inviting MTA staff to give presentations at the group's meetings.

"It's great to see community groups get involved in rail safety," said MTA Chairman and L.A. County Supervisor Mike Antonovich. "We need their help to spread the word that motorists and pedestrians should respect the crossing gates. Failure to do so can often lead to tragedy."

The MTA's rail safety program has four components: education, which includes efforts such as adopt-a-crossing; enforcement; legislation and engineering.

"On the enforcement side, we're installing photo enforcement equipment at 17 crossings on the Blue Line," said MTA Chief Executive Officer Franklin White. "Demonstration programs at three intersections resulted in reductions of 32 to 92 per cent in drive-around violations."

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Legislation sponsored by the MTA, the Rail Transit Safety Act, is intended to decrease the number of rail-related accidents by imposing additional fines for rail grade crossing violations. The Act became law in January 1994. Senate Bill 1802, also sponsored by the MTA, was enacted in January 1995 and establishes procedures for using photo enforcement for rail crossing violations.

Engineering efforts include the installation later this year of a four quadrant crossing gate designed to block intersection traffic in both directions. A demonstration at one crossing will be used to determine the effectiveness of the concept. Pedestrian gates at the Imperial Highway Station are being tested, and horns at crossings activated by the train operator also will be demonstrated.

The five organizations and their crossings are the Roosevelt Park Parents Association--Florence Avenue and Nadeau Street, Westminster Neighborhood Association--Century Boulevard, Watts Willowbrook Rotary Club--103rd Street, Watts Tower Culture Crescent--108th Street, and United Parents of Lynwood--Imperial Highway.

National Transportation Safety Week and Operation Lifesaver National Rail Safety Week are held annually to educate the public on the importance of rail safety.

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