



NEWS

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MTA BOARD GIVES METRO FREEWAY SERVICE PATROL BIG BOOST

The MTA Board has approved two recommendations that will ease congestion on clogged Los Angeles County freeways and enhance the successful Metro Freeway Service Patrol.

The first action authorizes MTA staff to purchase 20 portable field offices, also known as Portable Incident Command Packages (PIC-PACs). The goal: clear major accidents from the freeway faster and improve communications between the MTA and the California Highway Patrol - which will test four of the suitcases-on-wheels this summer.

Contained in the suitcases are a computer, fax, cellular telephone, digital camera and other equipment. CHP officers responding to the scene of an accident will be able to print route diversion maps and simultaneously transmit pictures to various agencies so that the right equipment and personnel can be deployed .

"Not only has the Metro Freeway Service Patrol helped more than 1.3 million stranded Los Angeles freeway drivers since 1991 by providing free gas, a quick repair and/or towing, it has just as importantly reduced the impact any one accident may have on the freeway system," said Interim MTA CEO Linda Bohlinger.

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"With this success in mind," continued Bohlinger, "the Board's action in awarding a \$400,000 contract to EIGER Tech Systems can only improve something that is already working very well. It is calculated that Metro Freeway Service saves drivers and passengers \$264 million a year in time, which instead of being spent sitting in traffic, now can be used for more productive purposes."

The PIC-PAC units have been used successfully by the U.S. Department of Transportation, FEMA, 14 major oil and chemical companies, and about 50 public safety agencies throughout the United States.

In a separate but related item, the Board awarded nearly \$10 million in contracts to 10 towing truck companies. The new contract's average hourly rate is 3.2 percent below current ones.

The Metro Freeway Service Patrol program consists of 41 tow truck assignments that covers over 400 miles of congested freeways. The service is paid for by Proposition C and state gas tax funds and is offered midday Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, and 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. Friday and Saturday.

"Los Angeles County has the worst freeway congestion in the nation," Bohlinger said. "About 1,300 major incidents, lasting approximately three hours each, occur on our freeways annually, and the tow truck service is significantly taking a bite out of these delays."

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