

## Judge Gives MTA More Time to Find Buses to Meet Court Order

(October 7) Federal District Court Judge Terry Hatter has modified his Sept. 23 Consent Decree order and now has given the MTA until Jan. 3, 2000, to put 248 temporary buses into service.

Hatter's original ruling ordered the MTA to place 248 buses in temporary service by Oct. 23 until it could replace those buses with 297 new coaches. With the buses the agency already had put on the street this year, plus 64 buses the MTA had planned to place in service by December, Hatter's order meant that the MTA needed to add 88 buses by the Oct. 23 deadline.

The modified court order now allows the MTA until Nov. 5 to find the 248 temporary buses and sets Jan. 3 as the date by which they must be placed in operation.

"We're grateful Judge Hatter has recognized that we're doing the best we can," said Chief Operating Officer Allan Lipsky. "In the extra time he has given us, we are trying to identify funding sources, find the vehicles, and hire and train operators, mechanics and service attendants."

Although the MTA is making every effort to comply with the court order, the agency also intends to reserve future options by filing a request with the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals for a stay of Hatter's order.

To operate the 88 buses, the MTA would need to hire and train 102 bus operators, 32 mechanics and 18 service attendants. The MTA's hiring process is about seven weeks long. Six weeks of training are required for an operator, three weeks for a mechanic and one week for a service attendant.

Lipsky said the MTA will need \$97 million over five years to operate the additional 88 buses. The agency has formed four committees tasked with looking at possible new sources for funds, sources of potential savings, possible service efficiencies and re-evaluating previously programmed funds.

The MTA has argued that it would breach statutory and contractual obligations and be inconsistent with the Consent Decree, if the agency were to take funds from other programs without proper process to pay for the buses required in the court order. Such a move, the agency has argued, could forfeit funding for future transportation projects, including bus programs.

[Back to MTA Report](#)