

## **'Bandit Vans' Luring MTA, LADOT Riders, LAPD Task Force Targets Illegal Operators**

(November 5) They don't wear masks and they may not carry guns, but the "bandit vans" that some Metro Bus operators have seen trawling for passengers at MTA and LADOT bus stops recently are stealing just the same.

"Bandit vans are non-registered vehicles whose drivers generally are not licensed to operate a bus," explains Dan Ibarra, deputy executive officer, Bus Operations. "Our operators observe them in our bus zones, often blocking the zones and not allowing our buses to service the stop."

Uniformed and plainclothes officers from the LAPD's Transit Bus Division conducted a task force operation, Nov. 3, in the 7th Street and Westlake Avenue area to apprehend bandit van operators. According to Capt. Vance Proctor, the task force made two misdemeanor arrests, issued four citations and impounded two vans.

The illegal vehicles may be vans, station wagons or small 22-passenger buses. The drivers often lure passengers aboard by promising rides for only \$1. According to Ibarra, they frequently tell commuters they will operate off main streets and offer almost door-to-door service.

"The bandit vans inhibit bus traffic and decrease revenues to the MTA," Proctor said. The Transit Bus Division task force will continue to operate at least once a month.

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