

Transit Bus Division Task Force Cites Eight 'Bandit Van' Operators

(Dec. 17) An LAPD Transit Bus Division task force conducted a crackdown on "bandit vans" in an area west of downtown Los Angeles on Thursday and issued citations to eight drivers. It was the second such operation this year by undercover and uniform officers designed to target the illegal trawling for passengers at Metro Bus stops.

The eight drivers were cited under a section of the Penal Code which prohibits the "sale or offer of transportation" by an "uncertified carrier." The illegal vehicles typically are vans, station wagons or small 22-passenger buses. Violators are often unlicensed and found to be driving unregistered vehicles.

"It's an ongoing problem, and not just an MTA problem," said LAPD Captain Vance Proctor. "We're going to continue to work in traditional ways as well as look for innovative ways to solve it."

"Most of the violations are misdemeanors," added Proctor. "But when the vehicles are not properly registered or are unsafe, we're going to impound them."

The task force approach was generated out of meetings with operators at MTA bus divisions who say the "bandit vans" often block bus zones and prevent Metro Buses from servicing stops. Proctor says the task force will operate on a monthly basis in 2000.

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