

## **Caught On Camera, Bus 'Joy Riders' Arrested by LAPD**

By GAYLE ANDERSON, Associate Editor

(Dec. 28) It has all the elements of an action-packed Hollywood thriller. Four youths, posing as MTA employees in orange safety vests, entered the Regional Rebuild Center backlot on the afternoon of Dec. 3 and commandeered an empty bus for a joy ride to Hollywood and back.

What could have been a sequel to "Speed," the 1994 movie in which a city bus was hijacked, turned out to be a crime spree caught on tape by the MTA's on-board camera system. The suspects, later identified as one male and two female juveniles and one adult male, were rounded up by LAPD in little more than a week.

The "Excellent Adventure" began with a practice run around the rear of the lot that ended in a collision with a parked bus. The collision, which resulted in an estimated \$22,000 in damages, did little to deter the determined pirates. They simply hopped aboard another coach and set out for Hollywood.

The youths drove the big Metro Bus off the lot and onto city streets where the adventure escalated into a successful heist. Still undetected, the youths returned the bus without incident to the RRC and vanished into the night.

### **Film at 11**

The MTA's on-board camera system started a relay response among LAPD divisions and MTA Security. A crime report, documented with photographs, fingerprints and images from the on-board camera system, developed into a dragnet to ensnare the youths.

On Dec. 10, MTA Security — armed with images from the videotape — recognized one of the suspects in the vicinity of Gateway Transit Plaza and detained him for questioning by police. He was booked and released to the care of his grandparents.

Two other suspects, identified by the first suspect, were rounded up on the following two days and booked.

The case against the three juveniles was filed at Eastlake Juvenile Court on Dec. 15. The fourth suspect, identified as an adult, was arrested Dec. 18 and charged with one felony and two misdemeanor counts.

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