



'No-Graffiti' Signs Attract – Guess What – Vandals!

- Deputies Make 2 Arrests
- Data Base Lists Vandalism Suspects

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Aug. 21, 2001) It was like tempting a bear with honey. When Sheriff's deputies placed a "No-Graffiti" sign at a bus stop in East LA, recently, two vandals just couldn't resist. They defaced it with a "slap tag."

"It was bait," says Det. Sgt. Paul Becker. "We figured since we are always chasing down these vandals, we should plan an operation where we have them come to us."

The specially made sign was placed at Dozer Avenue and Rowan Street in East LA, a location where Line 30 Metro Buses have frequently been vandalized.

Deputy James Doherty, assigned to the Sheriff's Department bus patrol team, staked out the site and waited.

Within minutes two juveniles approached and took a seat at the bus stop. One stood up and slapped a white label on the sign. The boy's graffiti "moniker" was scrawled on the label.

Arrested and booked

The Sheriff's vandalism team swooped in and detained the boys. A search of their backpacks turned up about 20 indelible markers and a number of the labels normally used as slap tags. They were booked on charges of vandalism and possession of vandalism tools.

Information obtained from graffiti arrests and from the deputies' field interviews of vandalism suspects is entered into the department's LARCIS crime data base.

Deputies can compare the graffiti monikers found at a vandalism scene to those in the data base to help them locate and arrest suspects.

"The LARCIS system is just one tool of many we're using to combat the

vandalism problem on the transit system," says Becker.

The LAPD's anti-graffiti GHOST team also plans to use the "No Graffiti" signs this fall in an effort to thwart vandalism on the Metro Red Line and on bus lines that run near schools, according to Sgt. Helen Lopez, GHOST team supervisor.

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