

Metro Clean Crews Lead MTA's Community Clean-up Effort

By BILL HEARD,
Editor
(Nov. 7, 2001) In the past three years, clean-up crews led by MTA employees have cleaned 96,389 buses, 126,005 bus stops and layover zones, pressure-washed 1,409 bus terminals and tidied up 117 miles of inactive rail rights-of-way.



Metro Clean's award-winning crew members are, front row, left, Pedro Torres, Brian Howard and Leo Gomez. Rear row, from left, are Rissa Harris, Granville Houston, Pete Serdienis and Raymond Baldonado. At left, Leo Gomez assigns tasks such as shoveling, sweeping and trash pickup to members of his cleanup crews.

Those gee-whiz facts tell only part of the story of a seven-day-a-week, year-round effort by the 10 members of Metro Clean, a group of MTA Stops and Zones employees who supervise crews of juveniles and adults assigned to the program as court-ordered restitution for misdemeanors such as vandalism.

The award-winning program recently garnered another kudo – a certificate of appreciation from the Los Angeles Department of Public Works for a weekend community clean-up event sponsored by Mayor James Hahn in the Rampart District.

Some 200 people participated in the Rampart cleanup – 80 from the Metro Clean program.

Make communities cleaner

"In an effort to make communities cleaner and to provide a more comfortable environment for our bus patrons, we send out Metro Clean crews to participate in these events," says Pete Serdienis, the Facilities Maintenance manager responsible for the program.

Started in 1985 as the MARS program, Metro Clean each weekday deploys five or six teams of adult offenders under MTA crew leaders, all ATU members. On weekends, the nine-member crews may include as many as 90 adult or juvenile offenders.

The juveniles also participate in an educational component of the program. The class, taught by a supervisor who is a credentialed teacher, focuses on character building as a means of reducing criminal behavior.

According to supervisor Granville Houston, the courts require the offenders to participate in Metro Clean. An offender who refuses to participate in a day's work may be denied credit for the day or may be expelled from the program and face jail time or other punishment.

Kept busy with clean-up

On any given day, offenders are required to report to the Regional Rebuild Center for the start of work at 7 a.m. They're kept busy until 3 p.m. at their cleanup tasks.

Leo Gomez is one of the crew leaders responsible for overseeing the day's work. If the crew is assigned to a layover zone, he directs the workers in sweeping out buses, wiping down windows and seats, removing any graffiti from the inside or outside of the bus and cleaning the windshields.

At a bus stop, Gomez may assign two workers to shoveling debris, some to sweeping and others to picking up trash. His van is equipped with safety vests, work gloves, traffic cones and cleaning equipment. In the course of a day's work, a crew can clean between 70 and 80 bus stops.

"Even though the sidewalk adjacent to a bus stop doesn't belong to the MTA, most people perceive that the bus shelters, benches and the area around the stop are under MTA jurisdiction," says Serdienis. "By cleaning these stops, Metro Clean crews provide our customers and their neighborhoods with a cleaner, more pleasant environment that enhances the MTA's image."

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