



^ Metro Bus Operator Larry Aguiñ

Bus Operator's Report Led to Arrests in Wave of Car Thefts

By AMY HOWELL

(Feb. 12, 2002) Metro Bus operator Larry Aguiñ recently went above and beyond the call of duty, potentially saving at least one person's car from being stolen from a Metro Blue Line park-n'-ride lot.

Aguiñ also may have been the primary contributor to solving a wave of car thefts from park-n'-ride lots at several Metro Blue and Green Line stations.

As a result of his actions, Aguiñ was presented with a Letter of Commendation from the MTA's Office of Safety and Security.

The break in the case came just after 11 p.m., Feb. 1, when the El Monte Division 9 operator noticed two male juveniles casing patrons' cars in the Metro Blue Line Artesia station's park-n'-ride lot. Aguiñ immediately reported the suspicious activity to the Sheriff's Dispatch Center at the Rail Operations Center.

Something wasn't right

"I wasn't doing anything for notoriety or publicity," said Aguiñ, who became a bus operator for the SCRTD in 1984. Rather, his actions were based on "human instinct," an innate response to the fact that "something wasn't right."

Although Aguiñ didn't know who he was helping, he felt obligated to make the report "because I would want the same thing done for me."

Acting on Aguiñ's report, Sheriff's deputies Larry Ware and Michael Verlich of the Transit Services Bureau noticed the two suspects walking away from several cars in the Artesia station lot. They were detained for possible burglary to motor vehicles.

While they were being held, one of the suspects dropped a filed-down Toyota ignition key. A pat-down search of the other suspect uncovered a filed-down Honda ignition key. Under questioning, the boys allegedly admitted they were going to use the keys to steal a car.

Linked to burglaries

The suspects may be linked to a chain of automobile burglaries at the Metro Blue Line Wardlow and Willow parking lots, as well as at the Lakewood and Norwalk Metro Green Line stations.

"This is the biggest break yet," said MTA Transit Security Manager Dennis Flowers of Aguiñ's report and the subsequent arrest of the suspects. "He may have helped us a lot."

Further investigation by Sheriff's deputies revealed that the suspects had used one of the ignition keys to unlock a white Toyota. The Toyota's owner said she had locked her car and hadn't given anyone

permission to enter or drive her car.

Based on the Toyota owner's statement and Aguin's observations, the two suspects were arrested for attempted grand theft of an automobile.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Amy Howell is a Transit Operations correspondent intern assigned to write news articles about employee activities at the operating divisions.

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