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### **Remembering SCRTD's Involvement in the 1992 Civil Disturbance**

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(May 3, 2002) Ten years ago civil order in Los Angeles came to a screeching halt. Bus, train and other passenger services, provided by the MTA's predecessor, the SCRTD, however, did not.

RTD employees rose to the occasion in the wake of the Rodney King verdict and the civil disturbance that ensued.

When street violence began the evening of Wednesday, April 29, 1992, operators running lines in South Central Los Angeles—the eye of the storm—continued to serve passengers until receiving instructions a few hours later to pull their buses off the streets.

At the request of the Los Angeles Police Department, service on all or part of the 28 lines that served South Central Los Angeles was eventually canceled, to ensure the safety of passengers and operators.

Over the next four days, bus service in less affected areas continued during the day. The RTD even put extra buses on the road to transport Foothill Transit passengers between the El Monte Terminal and Downtown Los Angeles, an area Foothill Transit chose not to serve during the riots.

Despite thick smoke and problems with rioters on the tracks, Metro Blue Line trains were able to continue all scheduled service during the first day and night of the riots. To ensure passenger and operator safety, service was curtailed to a sunrise-to-sunset schedule for the next several days.

Division 5 in South Central Los Angeles became a command post for about 4,500 military personnel, police officers and firefighters. Maintenance workers repeatedly fueled fire



engines, police cars  
and motorcycles and  
National Guard  
vehicles, as well as  
buses used for police

and troop transport.

At the height of the chaos, operators drove about 140 RTD buses to transport police and National Guard troops to various locations around the city. Mechanics repaired vehicles that had sustained damage from gunfire and mob violence.

Bus Operations Controllers, Facilities Maintenance personnel, Transit Police officers, RTD phone operators and a host of other employees, who made the sometimes hazardous trip from home to their work locations, also kept things running as smoothly as possible during Los Angeles' worst civil disturbance.

Normal RTD bus and train service resumed Monday, May 4, 1992.

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"RTD Responds", which appeared in the May 1992 edition of the SCRTD employee publication, *Headway*, was a source of information for this story. For more information, visit the MTA Library for the May 1992 issue, as well as other issues, of *Headway*.

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[Back to 'metro.net revisits events of 1992'](#)