

## Danger on the tracks >



▲ Gates protecting the pedestrian crossing at the Artesia station are fitted with warning signs.



▲ A pedestrian enters a gate fitted with a warning sign at the Artesia station.

PHOTOS: ERIC RAPP

## Train jumpers risk lives to save minutes

By ERIC RAPP

- [Activist captured action on video](#)

(May 21, 2002) The MTA is currently making efforts to put a stop to a potentially deadly practice – “train jumping.”

The dangerous situation arises when Union Pacific freight trains stop for prolonged periods in Compton and in other areas along the rail line. The trains often block grade crossings near Metro Blue line stations or at the intersections where the UP tracks cross Vernon and Florence avenues.

Frustrated pedestrians, stuck on the other side of the tracks, sometimes jump over or crawl under freight train car couplings to get to the Metro Blue Line platform or to cross the street.

Freight trains are often nearly a mile long, and the engineer – who has no way of knowing that people are climbing on the train – may start the train at any moment with no warning. Those who may be caught on or under a car coupling are in serious danger.

Worse yet, some people jump off freight train cars without looking and run right onto Metro Blue Line tracks, possibly into the path of speeding trains. In 1998, a fatality resulted from this very situation.

### Activist captured action on video

Recently, community activist Gary Jacobs brought the problem to the attention of local news producers for KCOP-TV, Channel 13. The station showed Jacobs' home video of people climbing over train couplings to MTA Director of Rail Operations Jess Diaz.

The MTA has responded to the problem by getting the word out. Public Affairs officers have distributed flyers in the community and on Metro Blue Line trains and platforms. Large graphic signs have been erected at the Artesia station.

Procedural changes also have been instituted on Metro Blue Line trains as well. Now, when approaching grade crossings that are blocked by freight trains, operators must stop before entering the crossing.

▼ Scenes from home video shot by community activist Gary Jacobs, aired on KCOP Channel 13 News, show people “train jumping” near Metro Blue Line's Artesia station.



Additionally, says Vijay Khawani, Director of Rail Operations Safety, MTA officials met with Union Pacific representatives to try to find a solution to the problem.

"We showed the video to them," he says. "They will try to work internally to change the way they run trains in the area."

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