

Catoe Says MTA Ranks Closed to Persons with Criminal Records

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(July 15, 2002) Responding to concern about public safety aboard Metro buses and trains, Deputy CEO John Catoe declared Wednesday that the MTA no longer will hire individuals with certain criminal records no matter how long ago the convictions occurred.

Speaking at a news conference, Catoe said the agency's recruitment policy is being revised to preclude employment of persons convicted of a felony or of certain misdemeanors, including misdemeanor charges that result from felony plea bargains.



■ Deputy CEO John Catoe reaffirms hiring policy at press conference in Patasouras Plaza.

"I don't care if it occurred 30 years ago," he said. "If that conviction is there, that person will not be employed by this agency." Both as a matter of public safety, he said, and because it would be "a negative reflection on...the outstanding employees we have operating our transit services."

Catoe spoke to reporters inquiring about a lawsuit filed by the family of a teenage boy who was molested by a former Metro Bus operator in June 2001. The operator, who had a criminal record, was found guilty of the incident.

"It's deplorable what happened," Catoe said. "But, I can assure you that systems are in place...to ensure that we do not recruit anyone with a felony conviction or certain misdemeanors."

Criminal records reported

The MTA's previous hiring policy required job candidates to report their criminal records. The policy took into account whether the candidate was a minor at the time of the offense, the nature of the offense and how recently it had occurred.

A candidate who had multiple convictions that demonstrated a pattern of criminal behavior could not be hired.

Since 1996, the MTA has submitted job candidates' fingerprints to the California Department of Justice for a criminal background check.

The revisions to the MTA's recruitment and selection process will apply equally to all employees, according to Carolyn Flowers, executive officer, Administration. The agency's disciplinary policy recently was updated to permit termination of employees who violate local, state or federal laws.

Catoe said the policy change is not retroactive. Current employees who have maintained satisfactory work records and have not violated local, state or federal laws while employed at the MTA will not be impacted by the policy changes.

"We're looking for a lot of good people to drive our buses," he said, "but

if you have a (record), don't bother applying here because you're not going to get hired. The safety of our customers is far more important to us."

[Back to MTA Report](#)