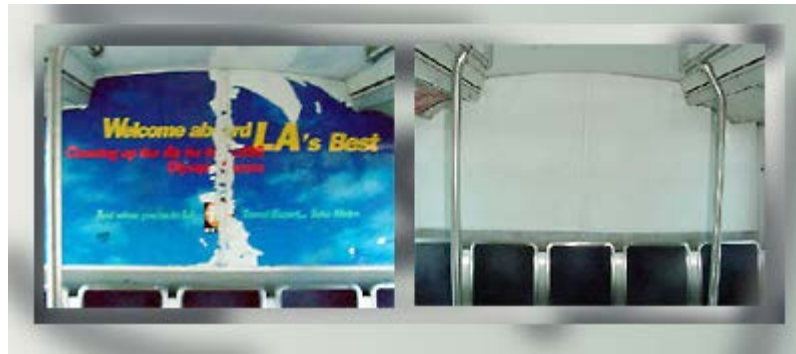


Before and after photos of the back panel of a bus show the graffiti-resistance of a new material used in an experiment by a maintenance team at Sun Valley Division 15.



Division 15 Maintenance Team Gets a Grip on Graffiti

By ERIC RAPP and LISA HUYNH

(August 20, 2002) Everybody knows that the 'bad kids' sit at the back of the bus. And until recently, Sun Valley Division 15's buses were rolling proof of that.

The back panel of 1995 model Neoplan buses, directly behind the rear bench seats, is especially vulnerable to graffiti. Far from the watchful eye of the operator, easy to etch with a knife or other cutting devices, and with a broad surface for paint or markers, many back panels quickly become covered with tags and other graffiti.

The Maintenance department at Sun Valley Division 15 recently came up with what may be an effective graffiti deterrent that also can improve the appearance of the buses by making marking and etching more difficult.

Mechanic Joe Savatgy found a graffiti-resistant material made of fiberglass with a textured surface that makes etching difficult. It's also easier to remove graffiti made by paint or permanent markers from the new panels than it was on the old panels.

Savatgy worked with mechanics Mark Calinog, Donald Regis and Oscar Gonzalez to create a template from the old panels. The template makes cutting a new panel efficient and precise – enabling the mechanics to quickly and easily replace damaged panels.

Graffiti reduces ridership

"It's important to keep the buses looking clean because the customers feel safer," says Calinog. "The graffiti reduces the number of riders."

MTA spends about \$13 million annually to keep Metro buses clean of graffiti and other types of vandalism. The agency sponsors anti-graffiti public service campaigns and uses juveniles and adult offenders to help clean the buses. Despite these programs and division efforts to remove graffiti, vandalism remains a persistent problem for MTA.

The Division 15 team chose bus No. 4655, a six-year-old coach manufactured by Neoplan, as the experimental bus to be used for installation of the new, graffiti-resistant panel.

It has been at least three weeks and there are no signs of tags or graffiti on the back panel of No. 4655.

Vendors are currently providing quotes for the new panels, but soon enough, the back and side panels of the remaining Neoplan buses at Sun Valley Division 15 will be replaced with the fiberglass material.

"Our customers will really benefit from the improved quality of service provided by the new interior appearance," says Maintenance Manager Jim Pachan.

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