

MTA, 'Operation Clean Sweep' Team with LA Galaxy Star to 'Kick Graffiti'

By JOSÉ UBALDO

(Sept. 17, 2002) MTA and Operation Clean Sweep, a program sponsored by the Los Angeles Department of Public Works, are teaming up with LA Galaxy soccer team star Cobi Jones to help deliver the message, "Kick Graffiti."

The purpose of the campaign, announced at a news conference this morning in El Sereno, is to raise community awareness about the blight caused by graffiti on buses and rail cars and in the city's neighborhoods.

"I am thrilled to be able to contribute my image to this campaign and my time to a cause that means a great deal to me and the Galaxy", said Jones. "I encourage creativity but hope that kids find another outlet to express themselves."

The campaign promotes the city's anti-graffiti hotline (800) 611-CITY and focuses on a major advertising campaign that includes 10 transit agencies in LA County: Metro Bus and Metro Rail, Torrance Transit, Culver City Bus, Norwalk Transit, Montebello Bus Lines, Foothill Transit, Santa Monica Big Blue Bus, Santa Clarita Transit, LADOT, Long Beach Transit. Other partners include the Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles Sheriff Department.

Anti-graffiti hotline

In addition to the ads on buses and trains, an anti-graffiti hotline will provide information on graffiti removal, community cleanup, community grants, alley closures and an education program.

"Graffiti is much more than just an eyesore for the MTA. It costs us about \$5 million a year to replace windows and seats and repair other damages on Metro buses and trains," Deputy CEO John Catoe said during the media event.

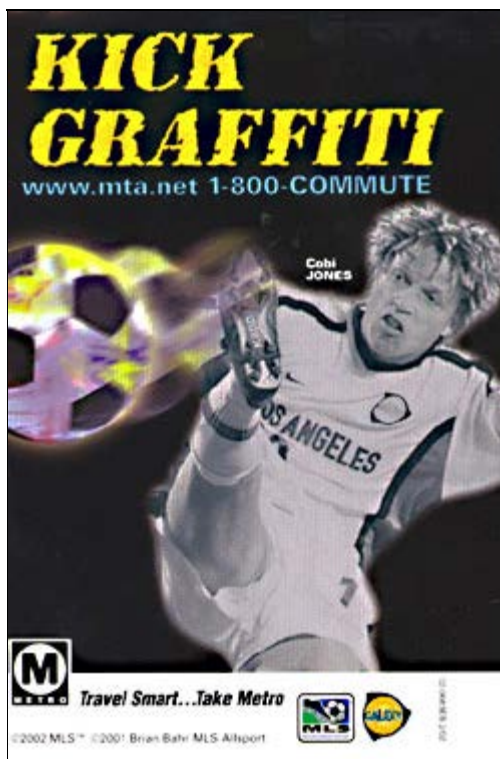
"I want to send a message loud and clear to the vandals who get their kicks destroying our equipment," said Catoe. "You're hurting your family, friends and neighbors who depend on public transportation. You will get caught and you will pay."

Last year the LAPD and LASD arrested nearly 700 people for vandalism on Metro buses and trains. So far this year, arrests have totaled nearly 600.

12 months' probation

Depending on the severity of each case, penalties for a first offense range from 12 months' summary probation to detention in a youth facility or up to 1,000 hours community service.

GRAPHIC DESIGN: ELIZABETH BAIN



Multiple offenders face a fine of \$450, five days in jail or community service (double the time given to a first offender, to be completed with a Caltrans crew).

Probation can result in multiple restrictions including curfew, mandatory school attendance and possible loss or delay of issuance of one's drivers license.

In 2001, MTA spent more than \$5 million for graffiti and vandalism abatement efforts including repair of etched bus and train car windows, torn seats and other interior and exterior damage to Metro buses and trains, as well as to Metro facilities.

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