

## **Employees on Workers' Comp May Be Assigned Parking Lot Duty**

(March 28, 2003) Employees drawing Workers' Compensation benefits could be assigned to monitor MTA parking lots, Metro Rail stations and "key stops throughout the city" under a motion approved unanimously, Thursday, by the MTA Board.

The motion by Chairman Hal Bernson directs the staff to study the feasibility of a "parking lot observer program" and to present a plan within 30 days. Deputy CEO John Catoe said the labor relations and legal staffs already are studying the proposal.

The program would be similar to a Washington (D.C.) Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) program that helped increase security in the capital's transit system.

In answer to a concern raised by a spokesman for the United Transportation Union during last week's Executive Management and Audit Committee meeting, Bernson said, "We don't want to put anybody in harm's way. Our intent is to try to make some productive use of people who can't perform their regular duties and to reduce our Workers' Compensation claims."

"We're not talking about people who are seriously ill or who are not ambulatory," Bernson explained at Thursday's Board meeting, "but about people who are recovering from an injury (that will allow them) to be back at their regular job within a short time."

Bernson's motion notes that MTA's Workers' Compensation costs are two to 15 times greater than transit agencies in other major metropolitan areas.

Such costs have "an effect on our ability to increase wages and other benefits," he said during the committee meeting. "We think everybody benefits if we can make this work."

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