

## Graffiti Cleanup Project Keeps the Metro Gold Line Golden

By FRANKLIN A. HOLMAN

(Sept 24, 2003) Sheriff's deputies assigned to MTA's Transit Services Bureau have gathered a posse to clean up the graffiti that can be seen from Metro Gold Line trains traveling alongside the LA River.

The graffiti cleanup project, which started in late August, aims to make people feel safer by eliminating the tagging from the concrete riverbank. It will also allow Metro Gold Line riders to view the city in a more favorable light and better enjoy the ambiance of the city.

The LA River Cleanup project began with a comment from the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau command staff: "If you can see it from the Gold Line, it becomes the Sheriff's handle."

From that point, Sgt. Dale Gulley, Lt. Mike Parker, Deputy Edmond Ohandjanian, Deputy Robert Anderson, Deputy James Johnson, Deputy Manolito Lawsin and Sgt. Ronald Williams of the Special Problems Unit took the initiative needed to get the graffiti removed.

A series of meetings and direct contacts by the deputies resulted in cooperation from a number of sources. Providing support are the City of LA's Operation Clean Sweep, Central City Action Committee, Supervisor Gloria Molina's office, Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard's office, Councilman Ed Reyes' office, the LAPD and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

### Broken window theory

"The project revolves around the broken window theory," says Gulley. "If you take an area and let it be degraded, it will be riddled with crime. If you clean it up, the criminal won't see it as a target. They will keep moving on."

Funding for the project involved a lot of effort and a bit of luck. During a meeting, a Corps of Engineers representative explained, "It nearly takes an act of Congress to get the funding for the cleanup."

An aide to Roybal-Allard overheard that comment and helped to get the necessary funding. The fact that Gulley is friends with a Corps of Engineers manager also helped.

Between the two sources, \$100,000 was raised for the graffiti

**FYI** > If you see someone tagging MTA property, call the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau at 323-563-5000.



Workers clean up tagging along the LA River, above, in an effort to remove all graffiti that can be seen, below, along the Metro Gold Line route.



cleanup efforts.

A contractor hired by the Corps of Engineers is removing the graffiti, which will be sandblasted and painted over. About 50 percent of the tagging has already been removed from the LA River banks.

"If we can control the graffiti, we are ahead of the game," says Deputy Johnson. "We have to do the best we can to let the criminals know that we are here. We can't let these guys take over the area. By cleaning the graffiti, we can help reduce crime and make the city safer and cleaner."

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