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County
Supervisor
Zev
Yaroslavsky
and San
Fernando
Valley
General
Manager
Richard
Hunt
examine
prototype
strobe light
on Metro
Liner bus at
news
conference.



Metro Demonstrates Prototype Strobe Lights on Orange Line Bus

- Agency considering ways to make Metro Liners more visible

By JIMMY STROUP

(Nov. 17, 2005) Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, San Fernando Valley General Manager Richard Hunt and a host of local TV and print reporters gathered at West Valley Division 8, Thursday, to witness a demonstration of prototype strobe lights mounted atop a Metro Orange Line bus.

The Metro Liner was outfitted with the lights as one of several ideas—some implemented and some still on the drawing board—meant to improve safety conditions for Orange Line operators and passengers and for motorists at transitway intersections.

“Our intent here is to show more visibility during daylight hours,” Hunt said during a meeting of the Executive Management and Audit Committee. All of the recent accidents on the Orange Line occurred during the daytime.

The test bus, with strobe lights flashing, went into service at 1 p.m., Thursday, making its first run eastbound from Warner Center. It will continue in service throughout the evening.

Because the strobe lights may not be in compliance with

the California Vehicle Code, the California Highway Patrol has been asked to consider a code waiver that would permit placing strobe lights on all Orange Line buses.

Changes Already Made

The safety task force responsible for the Orange Line has already cooperated with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation to lower bus-related traffic signs for increased visibility.

And at certain intersections, the standard green “through” light has been replaced with a green arrow to reinforce the “No Right Turn” restraint. In addition, bus speeds have been reduced to 10 mph at all intersections.

Bright yellow signs featuring a picture of the signature Orange Line bus silhouette and marked “BUS” have also been added at some intersections to increase awareness of Metro Liners’ presence.

After an accident, Nov. 2, the Los Angeles Police and Sheriff’s departments increased traffic enforcement along the Orange Line. In the 10 days that followed, the sheriff’s department alone issued nearly 500 traffic citations. Most were for running signals, followed by citations for failure to yield.

Plans and Ideas

Far from being finished improving the Orange Line, Hunt said several ideas are under consideration that could make drivers and pedestrians pay more heed to buses. Some include:

- “Busway Ahead” signs set back from upcoming intersections,
- “Rumble Strips” and roadway bumps,
- Lights embedded in the pavement signaling bus entrances, and
- Closing gates at high-risk intersections.
- Painting the buses a brighter color has also been suggested.

“We’re looking at a couple of different ways of enhancing the appearance of the vehicle,” Hunt told the committee. “I do want to point out that the first vehicle involved [in an accident on the Orange Line] was a bright red bus. But if the issue keeps coming up, then certainly it’s something we’ll have to consider.”

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa hopes the safety changes—both implemented and planned—will improve safety along the Orange Line.

“These recommendations are putting us on the right track,” he said at the committee meeting. “This thing’s working. We’ve got to fine-tune it, and we will.”

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