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New Jersey Transit On Board with Metro's Rail Safety Program

- License deal is a first for Metro, but more may follow

By JIMMY STROUP

(Nov. 22, 2005) Kindergartners and high school students who go to school near a Metro Rail line have probably seen the safety material Metro demonstrates

to children all year long. Soon enough, students at schools in Newark, N.J., will be able to say they've seen it, too.

With a \$7,500 check to prove it, Metro has for the first time licensed the animated and live-action short safety films, as well as 14 public service announcements (PSA) to another transit agency.

The Transit Safety Education and Outreach program was developed to educate would-be rail riders near the Metro Blue and Gold Lines about rail-specific safety issues.

The licensee is the New Jersey Transit Corp. (NJTC), the third-largest transit agency in the country. NJTC will use the Metro-created media to educate some 3,000 students on safety issues that are special to light rail systems.

"It's exciting for us, because we always knew that we had a good product. To have other people recognize it, too, is great," said Barbara Burns, the rail safety program manager. "Basically what they said is, 'This is right on. This is what we need.'"

Just signed Nov. 14, the agreement entitles NJTC to licensed uses of the videos and PSAs employed in the Metro Rail safety program. NJTC will edit the video to change the Los Angeles station names to New Jersey stops, but will otherwise use the material as it stands.

West Coast agencies interested

Though the NJTC deal is the only current working agreement, Metro is in negotiation with several other West Coast transit agencies to license the safety material.

Metro, in cooperation with the Los Angeles Unified School District, has used the various media to reach an estimated 1.2 million people countywide, Burns said. The New Jersey agency uses mostly subway systems, which dwarf their light rail system in comparison.



Three cartoon characters play at a Metro Rail station in the rail safety video, "Look, Listen and Stay Alive."

A demonstration of the various media Metro developed was shown at an American Public Transportation Association event in San Jose in 2003. Shortly after, Operation Lifesaver, a national rail safety organization, conducted focus groups that indicated other transit agencies would be interested in using Metro's materials.

The new light rail materials have been in use since 2003 when the Gold Line opened.

"Our light rail safety program is a combination of site-specific PowerPoint presentations and cutting-edge videos," Burns said.

"We do orientation tours where the students receive a safety presentation and get a day pass. So it's really good for the schools," she said. "It's good for us because we get the kids riding at an early age."