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## Southland Transit Official Charged with Illegal Sale of Day Passes

- Detective said passes, money changed hands at suspect's home
- Contract technician arrested in cash thefts from TVMs
- TVMs have been modified to halt use of arcade tokens

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Feb. 10, 2006) A Southland Transit operations manager charged with grand theft and embezzlement for allegedly selling Metro \$3 day passes to illegal street vendors is scheduled for arraignment, Feb. 20, in Compton Superior Court.

Bertha Island, 49, of Compton, was arrested at her home, Jan. 31, after Sheriff's Detective Keith Schumaker observed her selling three books of 50 day passes with a total value of \$450 to a street vendor.

A search of Island's home turned up books of day passes dated for use Feb. 2, 2006, and \$150 in cash she allegedly received from the street vendor.

Island was booked at the Sheriff's Century Station and held on \$20,000 bond, although she later made bail. Her former employer, Southland Transit, is under contract to provide service on six Metro lines in the San Gabriel Valley from a bus yard in Baldwin Park.

"She had been doing this for well over a year, is my best guess," said Schumaker, who followed the trail to Island through street contacts he made over a period of five or six months.

Since September 2005, Schumaker also has arrested three suspects who had bus keys in their possession. They used the keys, he said, to break into buses and steal day passes left unattended. Bus operators are required by Metro policy to take the passes with them if they leave their bus.

## Stealing from TVMs

Schumaker also worked closely with the Revenue Collections Department and Metro Security to catch a contract technician who allegedly was stealing cash from ticket vending machines (TVMs) while he serviced them.

GFI employee Greg Galloway was arrested, Jan. 6, and charged with felony burglary and grand theft. "I believe he took \$10,000 in December, alone," said Schumaker.

Revenue officials pinpointed another fare media scam – the use of arcade tokens to trick TVMs into giving back Metro tokens – last October. The scam was especially prevalent on the Metro Blue Line.

The problem began with the installation of new TVMs. Once it was discovered, the TVMs were modified to restrict the number of tokens a machine could issue at one time, according to Beverly Williams, senior supervisor in Cash Counting. By the time the scam was halted, Revenue Collections had accumulated 26,000 arcade tokens.

Metro has continued to replace old TVMs with new ones on all rail lines. A total of about 325 new machines, which have been modified to include the anti-theft safeguards, will be installed throughout the rail system.

To date, new TVMs have been installed on the Metro Gold, Blue and Green Lines and at Union Station and 7th and Metro. Installation of new machines on the Metro Red Line will begin, Monday, at the North Hollywood station.

Schumaker said he and other Transit Services Bureau detectives are expanding their investigations and more arrests are anticipated in the near future.