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**Former Metro Operator Sentenced in Vandalism Case**

By PAMELA MURANO

(Apr. 4, 2006) In an agreement with the district attorney’s office, former East Valley Division 15 Operator Luano James pleaded “no contest,” March 22, to one count of felony vandalism for vandalizing a Metro “smart card” farebox in September, 2005.

The 21-year Metro employee – who was terminated following his arrest last fall – was sentenced by the Van Nuys Superior Court to a 90-day stay in county jail, three years of probation and ordered to pay a \$30,000 restitution to Metro.

James was videotaped pouring coffee onto fareboxes, as well as stripping the sensors from the farebox currency receivers, on the buses he was operating.

The Metro Special Investigations Unit investigated the vandalism and worked with the Sheriff’s Transit Services Bureau to obtain a warrant for James on the vandalism charge.

On vacation at the time the warrant was served, James eventually voluntarily surrendered to authorities and was arrested and charged under section 594 (A) (1) of the California Penal Code.