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Resources

- ▶ [Safety](#)
- ▶ [Pressroom](#) (web)
- ▶ [Ask the CEO](#)
- ▶ [CEO Forum](#)
- ▶ [Employee Recognition](#)
- ▶ [Employee Activities](#)
- ▶ [Metro Projects](#)
- ▶ [Facts at a Glance](#) (web)
- ▶ [Archives](#)
- ▶ [Events Calendar](#)
- ▶ [Research Center/Library](#)
- ▶ [Metro Classifieds](#)
- ▶ [Bazaar](#)

Metro Info

- ▶ [30/10 Initiative](#)
- ▶ [Policies](#)
- ▶ [Training](#)
- ▶ [Help Desk](#)
- ▶ [Intranet Policy](#)

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Anti-Graffiti Raid Nets 18 Suspects, Weapons, Drugs, Graffiti Tools

(July 28, 2006) A law enforcement task force led by members of the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau arrested 18 suspects, Thursday, and seized weapons, drugs and graffiti tools.

Targeting parolees and probationers suspected of vandalizing Metro buses and trains, the officers raided 71 houses in an effort that began at 4:30 a.m.

One of the 18 arrested was wanted for rape. Warrants were issued for 39 others who were not living at the addresses given to probation authorities.

Graffiti in their neighborhoods "makes people feel uneasy," Metro Police Chief Cmdr. Dan Finkelstein said during a news conference following the raid. "It's going to continue to take organized effort like we had today" to control such vandalism.

In 2004, Metro spent \$7.8 million on graffiti abatement, according to an internal report. Of that amount, \$5.5 million went toward cleaning buses and bus facilities, while \$2.3 million was spent on rail and rail facility cleanup.

In 2005, Metro spent \$7.3 million on labor and parts – an average of almost \$611,000 a month – to clean up graffiti on buses, trains, stations and at its facilities.

Of that \$7.3 million, a total of \$4.7 million was spent to keep buses and bus facilities free of graffiti, while \$2.6 million was spent on rail and rail facility cleanup.

The task force conducting Thursday's graffiti raid included officers from the California Highway Patrol, the Los Angeles Police Department and school police.

