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Metro Bus Operator Charged with Insurance Fraud, Perjury

By PAM MURANO

(April 19, 2007) A Metro Bus operator has been charged with three felony counts of insurance fraud and one count of attempted perjury. Ricardo Valdez, 40, is currently being held at LA County Jail with bail set at \$90,000.

The Central City Division 1 operator was arrested April 13 by the California Department of Insurance Fraud Unit following an investigation by Metro's Special Investigations Unit.

Valdez joined Metro as a part-time operator in 1996. In 1998, he was involved in a non-work related traffic accident and suffered a back injury.

Valdez allegedly attempted to conceal this condition from Metro by blaming the back injury on accumulated trauma from driving a bus. He is charged with filing a fraudulent Workers' Compensation claim for the injury in an attempt to gain benefits from Metro.

Although the agency made no direct payments to Valdez, it did pay \$9,000 in expenses on the case before the alleged fraud was discovered. Metro will seek restitution for those payments and for Metro's expenses related to preparing the criminal case for filing.

Valdez was arraigned on the charges, April 16, at the Los Angeles Criminal Court.

