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Sheriff's Deputy Patricia Thompson gives safety stickers to students and parents from Dyer Street School, an elementary school in Sylmar.



Photos by Ned Racine

Sheriff's Deputies Greet Metro Riders, Hear Comments and Complaints

By NED RACINE

(June 22, 2007) In the bright sunlight pouring into Union Station's East Portal, June 20, Sheriff's Deputy Daniel Estrada's idea saw the light of day.

Estrada thought it was important for Metro System riders to see Sheriff's deputies one-on-one, eye to eye. He wanted to hear riders' concerns, comments or complaints.

"I wanted to bridge a gap between the patrons and the Sheriff's Department," Estrada explained. "I felt some [riders] weren't very pleased by pressing the emergency button and talking to a box."

Joining Estrada in distributing rider safety information and gathering comments were Transit Services Bureau deputies John Lake and Patricia Thompson. Sheriff's Lt. Nancy Iwata and Marie Carlin, security assistant,



also pitched in.

Accompanying the officers was CEO Roger Snoble. "Security for our customers is a really important thing," he said to explain his appearance with the Sheriffs. "To really make it work, we have to make our customers aware . . . that they have a role in the whole security issue too."

Sheriff's Deputy John Lake hands out safety information to Metro Red Line riders. The officers distributed information from 6 to 9 a.m.



Sheriff's deputies Patricia Thompson, Daniel Estrada and John Lake join CEO Roger Snoble in greeting Metro riders in Union Station's east portal, June 20. Riders filled the Sheriff's suggestion box with comments.

Excerpts from Metro Rider Comments

1. Take away the temptation to ride free by making a way for the tickets to be seen or shown while boarding.
2. Thank you for the safety information.
3. There needs to be more safety officers on the Blue Line. Too much activity going on and there are no officers around.
4. When I see the Sheriff's employees at the stations, their uniform presence is important to me. I also appreciate the undercover employees.
5. I like seeing the Sheriff's with their dogs. I feel like they are watching out for us. Sheriffs are nice and friendly too.
6. Can you do something about drunks and homeless asking for money.
7. Excellent exposure since 911. Friendly.
8. Monitor the Gold Line more during times that school is out. Young people tend to be not considerate to all passengers.
9. We cannot get cell phone reception in Red/Purple Line areas. How are we supposed to call the number they give us when we see a problem?

1,000 people streamed by

"I didn't think we'd get as many suggestions put in the box as we did," said Estrada, who estimated 1,000 people streamed by the deputies. Estrada, who currently works the Metro Gold Line, guaranteed the riders he spoke with that he would ensure that all three shifts of deputies would be briefed on the riders' concerns and comments.

"I want them to know that they can walk up to us at any time and ask questions," he said, noting that the deputies staffing the event had worked on all the Metro rail lines. "We're here for them. We're their own police department."

What was the reaction of the Metro passengers? According to Estrada, riders told the deputies, "We've been wanting to talk to people and give

our concerns, our feelings, and suggestions, but we didn't think we could walk up to you. We didn't know what to write or where to go. You're coming to us is great."

Estrada said the deputies most often heard requests for more canines patrolling the rail system and for higher Sheriff's Department visibility on the rail lines. "I told them we are actively changing our patrolling. We're having deputies on fixed points on the line at certain hours at rush hour. So they're at the highest visibility possible."

According to Lt. Iwata, the deputies will next be greeting passengers at the North Hollywood Station.