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Detectives Ron Smith, left, and Keith Schumaker and the unmarked Sheriff's van that served as their "Trojan Horse" during an investigation of robberies at the Metro Green Line's Crenshaw Station and a nearby bus stop. The Trojan Horse, found in Greek mythology from the 12th century BC, contained Greek soldiers who sacked the city of Troy.



LASD photo

## 'Trojan Horse' Charade Leads to Arrest of Suspect in Crenshaw Station Robberies

- Charges to include armed robbery

By NED RACINE

(July 24, 2007) Earlier this month, Transit Services Bureau detectives proved that a Trojan Horse need not be filled with Greek soldiers nor constructed of wood to be effective.

Detectives Keith Schumaker and Ron Smith implemented "Operation Trojan Horse" on July 16, hoping to ensnare armed robbers preying on Metro passengers near the Green Line's Crenshaw Station and a nearby bus stop.

On July 2, 3, 6 and 9, between 8 and 11:30 p.m., riders entering or leaving the Crenshaw Station, or bus stop outside the station, were confronted and robbed by four, and sometimes more than eight male, suspects. iPods, cell-phones, cash and clothing were among the items stolen.

On July 9, Smith reports, one victim was pistol whipped, suffering moderate injuries to his face and head. Due to the number of suspects involved in the robberies, Transit Services Bureau (TSB) detectives and

patrol personnel began surveillance of the station and bus stop using uniformed and undercover officers.

Beginning July 5, Smith and Schumaker contacted the local school police, Hawthorne and Inglewood police departments and gang units. They canvassed neighborhoods and walked door-to-door talking to residents. Aiding them was a Metro-supplied video from the Crenshaw Station. The surveillance video captured some of the suspects allegedly committing the robberies or being at the scene at the time of the crimes.

When they interviewed two 10-year old boys standing on the sidewalk near 116th Street and Crenshaw Boulevard, the detectives received their big break. Smith said the boys identified almost every suspect captured on the video and provided a location where the suspects congregated.

Armed with the boys' information, Schumaker and Smith drove by an apartment complex on July 16 and saw eight males matching the suspects' description standing outside. Detectives Smith and Schumaker left the area and began preparing an operation that would involve TSB patrol personnel, two K-9 teams, a Sheriff's helicopter, two Lennox Sheriff's station patrol units, and a gasoline-powered "Trojan Horse."

### **Mock Traffic Violation**

The July 16 Operation Trojan Horse actually employed two vehicles: an undercover van and a marked patrol unit. While Schumaker drove the van, Smith and two other deputies hid in the back. Sgt. Christian Meadows, in the patrol vehicle, began the ruse by stopping the van for a mock traffic violation.

The patrol vehicle and van stopped beside the apartment complex where the suspects stood. As the suspects moved toward the van, drawn by the traffic stop, Smith and the other two deputies jumped from the van's side door and detained four males.

One of these, Christopher Copeland, 18, was identified as a primary suspect and arrested. The three other males were interviewed and released.

After interviewing Copeland, who lives with his parents near the Crenshaw Station, the deputies identified two additional suspects and the tentatively identified of several more involved in the four armed robberies.

A search of Copeland's bedroom yielded items which directly implicated him in the robberies, according to Smith. Copeland then admitted his involvement in the crimes and identified two more suspects, aged 13 and 18, Smith said. The parents of those suspects agreed to turn their sons in to TSB.

Smith reports TSB detectives are preparing to file felony charges of armed robbery against Copeland with follow-up proceedings to arrest the remaining suspects. Yesterday Smith arrested two more males, one 16 and the other 19. Each, he said, have signed confessions admitting their role in the robberies.