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Think Ahead Stop on Red: Media event calls attention to carnage resulting from drivers running red lights.



Photos by Juan Ocampo

Metro, Local and State Agencies Highlight Dangers of Running Red Lights

- Mother describes son's death, urges drivers to stop at red lights

By JENNIE HARRIS

(August 3, 2007) Yesterday in Patasaurus Plaza, a mother and brother shared the loss of a child killed by a red-light runner as city, county, state, and Metro officials joined law enforcement officials to highlight the risk of ignoring red lights.

A wrecked Toyota Turbo coupe and red light signal were a backdrop to the "Think ahead. Stop on red." safety campaign event. California Department of Transportation, California Highway Patrol, Los Angeles Department of Transportation, Los Angeles Police Department, and Los Angeles

Sheriff's Department had representatives at this event.

Metro Board Chair Pam O'Connor said, "Unfortunately this reminder message did not come soon enough, as tragically, a principal member of our Metro family, one of our bus operators was killed last week when a motorist ran a red light and struck his bus. This past Saturday, another vehicle ran a red light, striking an Orange Line bus, causing injuries to the bus driver, motorist, and several passengers."

Toni Adams and her teenage son Nick Adams described the death of Nick's twin brother, Brent, who was hit by a red-light runner while crossing an intersection in Brea. As a result of the impact, Brent was catapulted 90 feet and died 8-years-old. The driver was flustered from running an hour late for work, reported Ms. Adams, who now volunteers for Stop on Red, a vehicle-safety advocacy group.

"It seems that the more drivers get away with running red lights," said Ms. Adams, "the more they believe they have the right to do so."

Nick Adams held up photos of himself growing up with his twin brother as his mother spoke. "I know it's frustrating to sit at red lights," she said, "especially when you're in a hurry and trying to gain a few seconds might seem worth the risk of a citation, but is it worth your life, being permanently disabled or disfigured, living with the guilt of killing or injuring someone else?"



Chief Operating Officer Carolyn Flowers describes the sadness she felt attending the funeral of Metro Bus Operator Gregory Bradley, who was killed July 26 in an accident involving a red light. Below, Toni Adams shares photos of her 8-year-old son Brent who was killed by a driver running a red light. At her side is son Nick, Brent's surviving twin brother.



Los Angeles City Council Member Wendy Greuel provided sobering accident statistics: In the U.S. in 2004, over 900 people were killed as a result of crashes caused by drivers not stopping at red lights. Approximately 176,000 were injured. In 2006, in the City of Los Angeles alone, there were 50,623 traffic collisions; 3,290 were red light traffic collisions.

Greuel said, "We are currently installing 32 cameras at some of the busiest intersections in the city . . . A recent study shows that Intersections with red light cameras reduced violations by nearly 50 percent and crashes by nearly 30 percent. We can literally say that those cameras help save lives."

Chief Operating Officer Carolyn Flowers acknowledged that Los Angeles already has a problem with congestion, but "the problem is compounded when we have accidents. We slow down the system, slow down mobility, but, most importantly, we impact lives."

The meaning behind "Think ahead. Stop on red." is that "people need to better plan their trip," said Helen Ortiz-Gilstrap, a Metro Community Relations manager. "There's always going to be delays. Give yourself an extra 15 minutes of time. That way you won't be so hurried."