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Fare Inspector Brittany White holds out the 25 tickets she wrote the morning of Sept. 17. White was one of four TSB officers and fare inspectors writing citations at the Imperial/Wilmington station. Among all the officers at multiple stations north of Imperial/Wilmington, 587 citations were issued to safety offenders in a four-hour period. Photo by Jimmy Stroup.

in charge of the citation team at the Imperial/Wilmington station. "I have to go to court and defend them just like any other ticket."

Calibet was describing the codes prohibiting crossing train tracks when red warning lights are flashing. Though pedestrians normally have the right-of-way wherever they go, trains can't stop very quickly and are afforded right-of-way in all cases.

"It clearly states don't cross when the lights are flashing, but people still do," said TSB Lt. Jenny Bethune, the ranking officer on the scene. "They're in such a hurry to catch the train that they don't care."

Bethune said the TSB was working with Metro to create new, highly visible signs that will better warn people when not to cross the tracks. She said that despite the warning – no matter what they do – people will cross the tracks illegally.

## Media along for the ride

## Officers Catch Nearly 600 Violators During Rail Safety Event

Blue Line stations targeted to raise passenger safety awareness; at \$177 each, citations total exceeds \$100,000

By JIMMY STROUP

(Sept. 19, 2007) As part of a multi-agency effort to increase rail passenger's awareness of safe behavior around the tracks, the Metro Blue Line was the staging ground, Sept. 17, for an operation that had the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau citing offenders for unsafe practices.

TSB deputies issued nearly 600 citations to Blue Line patrons between 6 and 10 a.m. at stations north of Imperial/Wilmington. At \$177 each, average, the total amount of the citations issued exceeds \$100,000.

"It's a vehicle code violation," said Deputy Albert Calibet, who was the officer

Along with issuing citations, Union Pacific, BNSF Railway and Metrolink partnered to offer media representatives a ride in the engine of a freight train to see first-hand how pedestrians and cars violate traffic laws pertaining to train crossings.

The two-engine, two-car rig cruised up and down the freight line that runs parallel to the Blue Line all morning. Reporters "caught" safety offenders on tape illegally driving or walking across closed crossing gates, and news agencies played the recordings on evening newscasts that night in an additional attempt to increase safety awareness.

At a press conference following the issuance of citations by TSB and Union Pacific Police, Sgt. Brian Godwin described the need to reinforce safety practices among regular Blue Line patrons.

"I don't think anyone is happy, necessarily, to get a ticket," he said. "But overall it's for the best to get people educated about what is and what isn't safe behavior around trains."



TSB Lt. Jenny Bethune said this sign was a model of what the Sheriff's Deputies and Metro have been working on to better warn rail patrons that crossing tracks when the red lights are flashing is against the law. Bethune said she'd rather see people follow the law than give out citations to those who violate the vehicle code. Photo by Jimmy Stroup.