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TSB Deputy Miguel Cervantes checks a subway car for debris and passengers at Union Station.  
*Photos by Gayle Anderson*

## New Metro Rail Campaign Makes Subway Cleaner and Safer

By JIMMY STROUP

(June 25, 2008) Fresh from a successful 90-day trial period, a new campaign aims to make the Metro Red Line and Purple Line cleaner and safer for passengers and employees.

Begun in March 2008, the "Mission Terminal Attack" is a "multi-level assault on crime and grime," said Mike Cannell, general manager of Rail Operations.

A partnership among Metro Security and maintenance and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Transit Services Bureau (TSB), Mission Terminal Attack grew out of Cannell's frequent riding of the rail system when he joined Metro in August 2007.

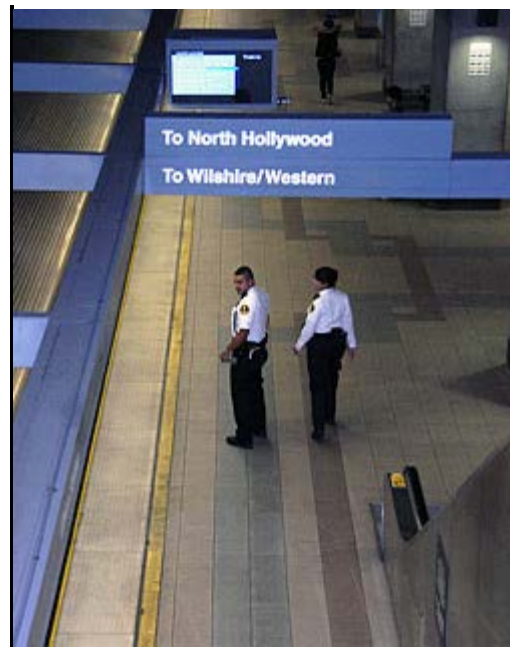
"I saw debris spread throughout the trains," Cannell said. "By 7 p.m. our trains looked like a giant trash receptacle. It was as if all of our passengers seemed at liberty to leave their newspapers, Starbucks coffee cups and food wrappers behind."

Cannell believed some simple adjustments and more security oversight would make an obvious difference, creating an environment where riders would find Metro Rail in its ideal state – not a place where "inappropriate and even illegal behaviors were making our system appear unsafe, dirty and unattractive."

### Clearing the trains

Mission Terminal Attack sweeps the subway trains of debris and passengers each time they arrive at a "terminal" station: Union Station, North Hollywood, Wilshire-Western and 7th/Metro, stations where all passengers are asked to leave the trains.

These four terminal stations are particularly important because 70 to 80 percent of subway riders board or exit the trains at these stations, according to Cannell.



TSB Security Assistants Ricky Lopez and Joanne Salcito sweep trains every 10 minutes.

"Particularly during the morning sweeps, the service attendants, custodians and security assistants haul dozens of bags of debris off the train," Cannell said. "This wouldn't be possible without the sheriffs and security assistants asking riders to exit the train as our rules require."

Between sweeps, TSB deputies check fare compliance and answer questions.

Cannell and his staff also installed "No Trespassing" signs at the stations. Reports of criminal activities at night troubled Cannell, and he wanted Metro Security and TSB to be able to enforce a "No Trespassing" policy to reduce those night crimes.

He also increased the contingent of service attendants at both Union Station and 7th/Metro as a way of keeping the system clean.

### Giving service attendants time

Working with Metro Security and TSB deputies, Cannell expanded security and safety checks. He wanted a threefold benefit of reminding riders that the system is monitored by law enforcement, clearing the trains of any passengers and giving service attendants the time to clean.

To reinforce Metro rules against drinking and eating on the subway, new announcements on the train emphasize that violators are subject to a \$250 fine.

Mission Terminal Attack, Cannell emphasized, is about much more than aesthetics.

"Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that an unclean system attracts criminal activities including graffiti, vandalism, fare evasion and assaults," he said. "[And as for] graffiti, once it starts, it's hard to stop. It costs Metro more than \$100,000 each month to attend to [graffiti]."



TSB deputies and security assistants await approaching trains to conduct a window check before entering a train for inspection.

"The difference in the trains is obvious," he said. "They are free of papers, debris and those hundreds of coffee cups which should not have entered the train in the first place."

He hopes enforcing laws against drinking and eating on trains and fare evasion will begin before passengers reach the platform, as early as their riding elevators and escalators.

The rail chief is also currently trying to increase the nighttime presence of security officers to meet what he called the "daughter gauge." If you wouldn't let your daughter ride on the system alone at night, Cannell said, the system wasn't safe enough.

#### **Lack of crime the best proof**

Cannell said that while security personnel may think the security job is menial or uneventful, the lack of night crimes is the best proof that the heightened security is working.

"Sometimes prevention's greatest successes are invisible," Cannell said.

"All of us have a big job to do to support a very large rail system that is growing rapidly," Cannell said. "Everyone's commitment to 'Mission Terminal Attack' is very important and the effort is greatly appreciated. Thanks to everyone for your participation in this important assignment."