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Barbara Burns, community relations manager, traveled to Sacramento last week at the request of the Sacramento Regional Transit District. Sacramento Transit wants to begin a transit safety program and sought Metro's advice on building one. *Photo by Ned Racine*

Sacramento Transit District Pays Metro Safety Program Ultimate Compliment

- Sacramento Transit sees Metro as role model for transit safety

By NED RACINE, Editor

(Sept. 9, 2008) If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Barbara Burns, community relations manager, and the Metro Transit Safety Program received a dose of compliments last week in Sacramento.

The Sacramento Regional Transit District (RT) flew Burns to the state capital, Sept. 4, to seek her advice on building a bus and light-rail safety program.

RT operates 97 bus routes and 37.4 miles of light rail, including a Blue Line and Gold Line. What RT does not have is an outreach program teaching children how to safely use the transit resources in their neighborhoods.

RT research on such a program led them to Operation Lifesaver, the non-profit, international public education program created to reduce railroad deaths and injuries. Operation Lifesaver recommended Metro.

During a three-hour seminar for RT upper management, Burns detailed the origins, development and implementation of the safety outreach program, which has visited hundreds of schools near the Metro Blue Line, Gold Line, Orange Line and Gold Line Eastside Extension, prior to their openings.

"I had charts explaining how we have expanded our outreach, and I

showed how our accidents have gone down," Burns said. "They were pretty astounded by it."

She explained to her audience, which included RT's General Manager, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Planning, how a cost-effective program can be developed for the RT system, which moved 31 million passengers in Fiscal 2006.

The RT covers six school districts, so it's not surprising the transit authority asked Burns to present the Metro transit safety program for children from kindergarten through high school. Burns recalls RT being particularly interested in two aspects of the Metro program: "how-to-ride etiquette" and showing children how to live with a rail system as a neighbor.

As she does with all transit agencies, Burns gave RT two copies of Metro's award-winning rail safety videos: "Look, Listen and Stay Alive," an animated film which targets audiences 10-years-old and younger, and "Tracks Are for Trains," a live-action video tailored to older students.

Additional seminars might be in Burns' future. "I just got another [request] from the Orange County Transportation Authority asking about our program," she said.

Burns described the RT administrators as being "very appreciative, very grateful." She added, "This invitation was highly flattering to us."

Burns' current projects include the pre-opening safety program for the Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension, scheduled to open in mid-2009. By December, the Transit Safety Program will visit all 81 schools near the six-mile-long project, reaching out to almost 52,000 students.

Beginning in March 2009, the program will walk every classroom of students along the new project's route closest to their school.