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Deputy Patricia Thompson asked pedestrians using the Patsaouras Transit Plaza to put safety first. Many stream between these flower pots and walk in front of buses. *Photo by Ned Racine*

## Metro Security, TSB Sheriffs Target Transit Plaza Pedestrians for Safety Education

- Deputies cite six drivers who stopped in bus-only zone

By NED RACINE, Editor

(Oct. 7, 2008) On Sept. 30, officers from the Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau (TSB) and Metro Security explained to pedestrians using the Patsaouras Transit Plaza that the shortest distance between two points might be dangerous.

At the request of Metro Bus Operations, TSB Deputy Patricia Thompson used handouts and conversation to remind pedestrians that crossing in front of buses is a bad idea, even if it saves a few seconds.

Metro Security devoted multiple officers to the effort, including Lt. James Cook, Lt. Rivers Jacques, Sgt. Yi Pu, Sgt. Rudy Montoya, Lieutenant Keith Bowlin and Sergeant JC French.

Metro was concerned that jaywalkers and automobile drivers were slowing buses moving through the East Portal of Union Station and risking a collision. During the 6 to 9 a.m. operation, Thompson found ample evidence of both.

"People are so used to doing it; they've been doing it for years," said Thompson, who has been a deputy for 11 years, four of those at TSB.

Thompson estimated that 1,500 people passed through the bus turnaround area that morning, many passing in front of buses, causing several near misses. "We were outnumbered," she said of her five-person team.

Pedestrians headed for the Gateway Building and Cesar Chavez Avenue commonly stream between the flower pots along the East Portal and flow around the buses.

Thompson's team included Deputy Trendel Coley, Deputy Danny Estrada, Security Assistant Patty Hernandez and Community Relations Officer Jennifer Mendoza.

"People have been doing this for so long, you can't just hit them with a hammer," said Thompson, explaining why the "meet and greet" effort resulted in no citations for pedestrians. The deputies did, however, issue citations to six drivers who were stopped in the bus-only zone. Those tickets run \$255.

According to Roman Alarcon, director of bus and rail operations control, Metro is considering additional safety measures, which include cautionary signage for pedestrians, as well as an additional sidewalk across the bus turnaround area.

The Sept. 30 operation included a suggestion box for pedestrians and bus users. The majority of the suggestions Thompson received requested an additional crosswalk for the bus turnaround area.

The meet-and-greet operation was Thompson's idea. She said she wanted to do something to catch the attention of pedestrians and drivers, many of whom roll through the stop signs in the bus turnaround area.

"We want you to get home safe," Thompson explained. "Use crosswalks and just pay attention to the signs."