

[Home](#)[CEO Hotline](#)[Viewpoint](#)[Classified Ads](#)[Archives](#)[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

[Safety](#)[Pressroom](#) (web)[Ask the CEO](#)[CEO Forum](#)[Employee Recognition](#)[Employee Activities](#)[Metro Projects](#)[Facts at a Glance](#) (web)[Archives](#)[Events Calendar](#)[Research Center/Library](#)[Metro Classifieds](#)[Bazaar](#)

Metro Info

[30/10 Initiative](#)[Policies](#)[Training](#)[Help Desk](#)[Intranet Policy](#)

Need e-Help?

Call the Help Desk
at 2-4357

[Contact myMetro.net](#)

Sheriff's Deputy Meredith Lawson, backed by canine unit Deputy Rich Faulk and Canine Deputy Debra, screen customers at Union Station entrance to Metro Red and Purple Line. Fare inspectors, lined up at left, check customers for fare upon exiting the system.

L.A. Sheriff's Unit Works to Deter Terrorists on Metro

- Package, Purse, Luggage Screenings Lead to Drug Arrests, Fare Evasion Tickets

By LAURA KLOTH
Staff Writer

With a goal to bolster security on Metro's trains and buses, a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department anti-terrorist team has been conducting random screenings of luggage, purses and backpacks throughout Metro's bus line and rail network since spring.

And, so far, reaction from patrons has been mostly positive, said Los Angeles County Sheriff's Sgt. Jeffrey S. Ivask.

The Special Operations Threat Interdiction Unit (TIU) began conducting random screenings about a year ago on Metrolink, and continued on the Red Line in March, Ivask said.

In addition to its own Transit Security Officers, Metro contracts with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department to patrol Union Station, its buses and trains and to protect passengers.

Since then, the 8-person anti-terrorism team, with the assistance of LASD Explosive Detection Canine Teams, has been screening items on the Metro Red, Blue, and Orange lines conducting as many as three, two-hour operations a day.

"The concept is that through this unpredictable, randomized deterrent, we're going to deter terrorism," said Ivask. "We're looking for obvious explosives and/or weapons."

Voluntary consent

A typical Mobile Search and Screening Team (MSST) operation involves deputies setting up a checkpoint at a bus or train station which includes a large sign announcing to patrons that once they enter the station, they are subject to screening by Sheriff's personnel.

Since the screenings are voluntary, a rider can simply walk away before walking into the station. However, once he enters, a refusal to be screened means he won't be allowed to ride the train or bus at that particular time, notes Ivask.

"If someone doesn't want to be subject to that, they're more than welcome to leave," he said.

Just who is screened is determined by the random criterion chosen that day.

The screenings do not include body pat downs, or searches. During the screenings, deputies or fare inspectors also check for fare evaders.

The positive pay-off

During a recent Red Line screening, 419 passengers passed through the checkpoint with 72 selected for screening. Deputies did not locate any explosives or weapons, but did issue 30 citations for fare evasion.

Since the operation began, screenings have also resulted in several narcotics arrests of passengers carrying marijuana, illegal mushrooms, and methamphetamine. In one curious case, deputies even arrested a police impersonator who carried a fake ID, replica handgun, handcuffs and phony citations.



A large sign announces a checkpoint ahead.



Since the screenings are voluntary, a rider can simply walk away before walking into the station. However, once he or she enters, a refusal to be screened means they won't be allowed to ride the train or bus at that particular time.

"Generally, I think we've had more positive comments from people coming

through than negative," Ivask said.

"There is a realized threat. It's been upheld in the federal court of appeals that this does not violate the Fourth Amendment. The federal court has already ruled on that because it's random. We're not singling people out. We're not racial profiling," he added in response to the accusation of one rider who asserted that the Sheriff's were screening riders on the basis of race.

"It's about time. Good Job. I'd like to see more of this," said one rider, while another woman, who had undergone two screenings already, stated, "This delay is a small price to pay for a secure system."

Since 9/11 and the 2004 train bombings in Madrid and London, U.S. law enforcement officials have seen a marked increase in the federal funding for such operations.

The Metro screenings are funded by a \$2 million Transportation Security Administration (TSGP) grant awarded in 2007 to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department.

Another \$1.1 million grant was awarded in 2008 to pay for additional personnel to facilitate more screening operations.

Ivask said with more funding available to hire additional personnel, the department hopes to increase screenings from the current three to six or eight every day.

| [Home](#) | [Phone Directory](#) | [Forms Online](#) | [FIS Online](#)