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Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca spent some 90 minutes visiting with Div. 1 bus operators Arnold Holguin, Ricardo Suarez, Wesley Yancey, Omar Moh, Asst. Manager Guillermo Goytia, Candelario Guandique, Al Chavez, Roberto Sarabia, Carolyn Jackson and Bernardo Gamboa.

Sheriff Baca Makes the Rounds, Addresses Operators’ Concerns

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(Nov. 17, 2009) An interesting rumor got started soon after Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca paid a visit to Los Angeles Division 1 on East 6th Street.

Baca, accompanied by South Bureau Transit Capt. John Witt and North Bureau Transit Capt. Pat Jordan, spent some time with operators in October, fielding questions and offering suggestions.

South
Bureau
Transit
Capt. John
Witt
joined Los
Angeles
County
Sheriff
Lee Baca
as he
made the
rounds
addressing
bus
operators



at
divisions 1
and 5.

Transportation Manager Sonja Owens said she was very grateful that the head of the one of the busiest law enforcement agencies in the country would take some 90 minutes to visit with her staff.

Others wondered if Baca was personally invited by CEO Art Leahy, who they'd heard had gone to the same school as the sheriff.

Was it true? Well only partly.

"The Sheriff and I each went to Franklin High in Highland Park, East Los Angeles College, Cal State LA, and the University of Southern California, but not at the same time," Leahy explained adding that Baca is a tad older.

So what was the reason for his visit?



Los Angeles
County Sheriff
Lee Baca
spoke to
operators at
the Arthur
Winston Div.
5 to answer
questions and
address
concerns.

"He's a great guy who understands Los Angeles and is very committed to providing great service to Metro," said Leahy. "I'm very pleased that we have such strong support from the Sheriff."

Baca also spent time at Arthur Winston Div. 5 recently, taking the opportunity to meet the staff and address more concerns such as how operators deal with the crowds of sometimes rowdy high school students and gang members who start trouble on the buses.

Witt said his people have worked closely with school authorities and have developed plans to improve deputy visibility and response times, adding his boss just wanted to reinforce the department's commitment to Metro and to its patrons.

"We have an excellent safety record. We take this very seriously," said Witt.



Div. 1 Assist.
Manager
Guillermo
Goytia and
Transportation
Manager
Sonja Owens
were happy
to host the
sheriff.

Owens said when Baca asked questions, and he was very specific when he provided effective solutions. For example, when operators were asked if they preferred plain clothes deputies, most responded they preferred uniforms.

"The great thing about it is that not only did I get to meet him, but the operators got to meet him. He was down to earth and wanted to start building a bridge," said Owens. "It's different when the chief says 'We're going to get a committee. We're going to ride more buses'," Owens said.