



# NEWS

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**CONTACT: GREG DAVY/JIM SMART  
MTA PRESS RELATIONS  
(213) 244-7048, 244-6347  
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## **MTA INTRODUCES THREE NEW BUS MASCOTS TO HELP SPREAD ANTI-GRAFFITI AND VANDALISM MESSAGE TO SCHOOL CHILDREN**

**Papa Bus:** "I had a hard day today. I stopped at a school to pick up some school kids, and all of a sudden they came from out of nowhere and tagged me with ugly graffiti."

**Baby Bus:** "Did it hurt, Papa?"

**Papa Bus:** "Yes, it hurt."

If MTA buses could talk to each other after a rough day on the road, this is the conversation they might likely have. Now, thanks to a new addition to MTA's award-winning "Take Pride & Stop Tag" anti-graffiti and vandalism program, a bus family of three will come alive for thousands of young students throughout Los Angeles County to tell them how graffiti hurts.

Papa Bus, Mama Bus and Baby Bus made their debut February 14 in front of a group of appreciative Edison Elementary School students at MTA's Long Beach Bus Division 12 where the idea of having bus family mascots was born.

"The dedicated MTA employees who have volunteered their time on this program since it began more than two years ago should be commended," said MTA Chief Executive Officer Franklin White. "The program has already had a very positive effect, as evidenced by the fact that our buses now are virtually clean of graffiti."

The "Take Pride & Stop Tag" program is an effort begun through the Division Advisory Committees (DAC), which consist of volunteer MTA employees at each of the agency's 14 bus and train operating divisions around the county.

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Their goal, White noted, is to involve the community in keeping MTA buses free of graffiti and vandalism.

"If we want the public to look forward to riding a clean, attractive MTA bus, it's important that we keep the spirit of community involvement high," White said. "This program has been very successful in doing that, and I think our new mascots will help even more."

The mascots were the brainchild of Division 12's Steve Rivers, a bus operator, whose initial idea for an educational puppet show grew when Rivers' fellow Division 12 operator Andy Carter suggested the characters become life-size. Maintenance Technician Daniel Ramirez prepared the script for the characters, who talk to each other about the everyday rigors of being a bus, and how "painful" it is when someone vandalizes them. The characters will be used to deliver the anti-graffiti message to thousands of school children in Los Angeles County.

The "Take Pride & Stop Tag" program won first prize in the 1994 AdWheel Competition, sponsored by the American Public Transit Association (APTA).

To participate in the program or for information on "Take Pride & Stop Tag" presentations, the public can call the MTA's Vandalism Abatement Program office at (213) 972-5835.

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