



NEWS

October 23, 1996

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MTA BOARD APPROVES MERGER OF TRANSIT POLICE FORCE WITH THE LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT (LAPD) AND THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT (LASD)

The MTA Board of Directors today voted to merge the agency's 500 member Transit Police Department, the largest transit force in the country, with the LAPD and the LASD.

"This merger will allow us to provide our patrons with significantly greater security at a lower per unit cost," said Larry Zarian, MTA Board Chairman. "By eliminating overlapping functions, and civilianizing some jobs, we can place additional officers in the field, with most of them deployed on our buses. The merger will allow the members of the MTA Transit Police the ability to plan their future."

The Board has authorized plans for five-year contracts with both the L.A. Police Department and the L.A. Sheriff's Department, not to exceed \$224.3 million for the total period.

Under the merger plan, the program is designed to capitalize on the strengths of the MTA Transit Police, which is currently the 10th largest police department in the state of California, as well as the LAPD and the LASD.

The police force for the MTA will continue to operate out of the agency's headquarters. The force will gain additional services, as well as LAPD and Sheriff resources, such as, mobile field command post operations, traffic units, motor units, mounted units, and off-road vehicle units.

(MORE)

TRANSIT POLICE MERGER, page two

"By combining the expertise and experience of MTA police officers with the law enforcement experience of the LAPD, we will be able to provide the citizens of Los Angeles with the highest quality of police services," said Los Angeles Police Chief Willie Williams. "The merger will help us accomplish our mission of fostering a transit system in the City of Los Angeles with a continued reduction of crime and disorder."

Under the merger program, overlapping administrative costs can be eliminated. The new program also calls for placing fare collectors on the trains, who will work in teams to check for fares.

The new partnership is already underway through negotiations with representatives from the LAPD and LASD who moved into MTA headquarters in May to work directly with MTA staff. There will be a transitional period through December, 1996, as LAPD and LASD officers organize for two major units of service, one for city operations, another for county operations.

During that transition, Chief Sharon Papa of the MTA Transit Police will remain in charge of operations.

Pending approval by the governing bodies of the City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles, the full merger will take effect in January, 1997.

"We look forward to providing the finest law enforcement services available to all MTA bus and train riders throughout Los Angeles County," said Los Angeles Sheriff Sherman Block. "This merger also provides new working experiences and career opportunities for both Sheriff's Deputies and the former MTA Officers."

(MORE)

TRANSIT POLICE MERGER, page three

MTA CEO Joseph Drew outlined some of the benefits of the merger for the MTA: "It enhances the safety of our patrons. It increases our law enforcement capabilities, by allowing us to deploy more officers in the field. And it provides better safety for the officers. In addition, we ensure that the MTA police officers also benefit. They will not lose any pay, and will in fact receive increased benefits, all of this at a lower per unit cost."

The MTA Board and the CEO will retain policy oversight, and the Authority also will retain full control over the budget.

"We can maximize our capabilities and do it more efficiently," Drew said. "We can now better focus on our primary goal of implementing a multimodal transportation system for the Los Angeles region."

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