



NEWS

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THE POETRY SOCIETY OF AMERICA AND THE GETTY MAKE POETRY A PART OF THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF MORE THAN A MILLION METRO BUS PASSENGERS

"That was a time when words were like magic.
A mind had mysterious powers
and a word spoken by chance
might have strange consequences.
It would suddenly come alive
and what people wanted to happen
could happen —
all you had to do was say it."

— from "Magic Words"
Inuit Poem

During the next year, these and other magical words will grace the interiors of MTA's 2,200 Metro buses. Each month, two poems will be placed inside every bus as part of Poetry in Motion/LA™, the newest addition to a celebrated national program conceived by the Poetry Society of America.

A group of renowned local poets launched the program today with readings at the East Portal of Union Station in Los Angeles. They also placed their own poems inside a Metro Bus parked on the Patsaouras Transit Plaza.

Poetry in Motion/LA™ is a collaboration of the Poetry Society of America, the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, the Santa Monica Big Blue Bus and the MTA.

"There can't be too much poetry in the world, and we're delighted to help put a little bit more on the streets of Los Angeles," said Michael Roth, the Institute's associate director. "We are especially pleased to launch Poetry in Motion™ here at the commencement of National Arts and Humanities Month."

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The colorful poetry placards are currently being mounted in empty advertising spaces inside each Metro Bus. The poems were selected by the Poetry Society of America which looked for works that were relatively short, upbeat and representative of the demographic diversity of the Los Angeles area. Several of the poems are in Spanish.

"We are thrilled that this innovative program will come alive in L.A.," said Elena Karina Byrne, director of the Poetry Society of America/L.A. "We are reminded that the power of language belongs to all of us."

Among the poets whose works will be represented in the project are E.E. Cummings, Quincy Troupe, Octavio Paz, Kobayashi Issa, Langston Hughes and Marisela Norte.

Norte has received much of the inspiration for her stories, poems and performance work while riding the bus, in particular Line 18 from downtown to East Los Angeles.

"As a writer, the bus has been my transportation and my inspiration for the past 30 years," said Norte. "It has become my 'mobile office,' the space where I write about the daily lives of Angelenos who ride the bus to and from work."

Although Poetry in Motion/LA™ was not officially launched until today, customers who have seen the poetry placards on board their Metro buses have praised the program.

"Finding a poem on a bus is like a gift," said Metro Bus passenger Roni Walter who called the MTA to express her enthusiasm. "It makes people realize they are not alone."

Walter has ridden the bus for over 14 years and performs as a spoken word artist throughout Los Angeles and "loves that the poems are at eye level because the words capture people."

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The Poetry Society of America has worked with transportation agencies and cultural institutions in New York City, Chicago, Portland, Atlanta and Baltimore to bring Poetry in Motion™ to over eight million daily public transit users. The LA launch coincides with the unveiling of newly renovated Grand Central Station in New York City, another "gift" to urban mass transit users.

"We are honored and pleased that the Poetry Society of America and the Getty Research Center have brought this program to Los Angeles and that the 1.1 million boarding passengers who ride Metro buses each day will be treated to such exceptional poems," said Maya Emsden who heads MTA's Metro Art department. "Poetry has the remarkable ability to transport people and to transform a mundane commute into something which borders on magic."

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**Statement by CEO Julian Burke
re: Protest by Metro Rail Subcontractors**

Oct. 1, 1998

In building a multi-billion dollar project of the magnitude of the Metro Red Line subway it is imperative that the MTA closely monitor expenditures of taxpayer dollars and verify the need and reasonableness of all change orders.

There will be times when legitimate claims from contractors for additional dollars will be granted by MTA, and there will be times when claims will be rejected. The majority are reviewed on an individual basis not only by MTA but also by an independent panel of outside construction experts who serve on the MTA's Dispute Review Board whose members are appointed by both the MTA and the contractors. The MTA simply cannot grant the claims of contractors carte blanche. Contractors are made aware of our claims review process before they sign on to do business with the MTA.

It is also the responsibility of the prime contractors working on the project to pay their subcontractors.

MTA belatedly received a copy of a letter from a group of Metro Rail subcontractors who call into question the review process. The identify of the coalition's members was not known until yesterday and the specific complaints of these contractors is not known so MTA cannot comment more specifically on the contractors' protest until we have had a chance to investigate. It should be noted that MTA does business with hundreds of prime contractors and their subcontractors. MTA staff will have to research the particular contracts and claims.

It has been suggested that Congressional intervention may resolve any issues raised by the Metro Rail subcontractors. MTA believes such action could create confusion with the parties regarding which procedures control their future settlement discussions and, therefore, it is unlikely such intervention would foster resolution on these matters.

The MTA will continue to monitor its claims resolution and audit processes to ensure that the dollars entrusted to us by the taxpayers are spent wisely.