

MTA Unveils 'Metro Experience' Mobile Theater to Promote Community Awareness of Rail Safety

- Interactive presentation simulates actual train ride and demonstrates consequences of unsafe behaviors to drive home importance of safety around trains

MTA today rolled out the "Metro Experience" mobile theater, a cutting edge thrill ride that drives home the importance of rail safety. The theater will be used extensively in the communities where MTA is now performing testing of Metro Gold Line trains in preparation for the line's scheduled opening this summer.

The interactive theater-on-wheels is the newest tool in MTA's arsenal to educate community members, especially school children, on important safety precautions as trains travel through the neighborhoods of Pasadena, South Pasadena, Highland Park, Lincoln Heights, Chinatown and downtown Los Angeles. The presentation dramatically portrays serious incidents that can occur if safety regulations are ignored, and will also be used in communities throughout Los Angeles County to promote rail safety.

The mobile theater employs a 16' x 9' silver mat screen that is optimal for 3D projection, two large LCD projectors which display left and right channel video, surround sound and 4D effects such as wind, seat movement and strobe lights to simulate the true operation of a train along actual Metro Gold and Blue Line routes. Sixteen or more people can experience the five and a half minute safety presentation at one time.

"The Metro Experience is, essentially, a Disneyland-style ride for Metro Rail," said Roger Snoble, CEO of MTA. "It provides us with an opportunity to make a strong sensory impression on children and adults about what to watch out for when they are near Metro trains in their neighborhoods."

Trains have not operated between Los Angeles and Pasadena for years, and a new generation of residents must understand and adhere to safety precautions along the route. When the line opens, trains are scheduled to run every 10 minutes among 13 stations during peak hour commute times, and every 12 to 20 minutes during non-commute hours.

The "Metro Experience" mobile theater is a key resource in MTA's rail safety education efforts, and spotlights many of the safety measures built into the system by MTA Rail Operations Safety. The agency's Rail Operations Safety and Community Relations departments worked jointly on Metro Gold Line safety. Rail safety measures include four quadrant gates that completely seal off key intersections when trains are crossing, pavement-embedded vehicle detection loops that detect and release vehicles caught within intersection crossing gates, pedestrian and swing gates that close many crossings

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER YEH



MTA officials present "Metro Experience" mobile safety theater to students from the Highland Park Nightingale Middle School at Avenue 57 Metro Gold Line Station. Below, students enjoy 3-D effects inside theater.



to pedestrian foot traffic, and fiber optic signs installed on at-grade traffic signal poles giving drivers advance warning of approaching trains.

These extensive safety measures, however, can be rendered ineffective if members of the community do not heed them. Community awareness is essential.

"MTA considers safety a partnership with the community," said Lynda Bybee, MTA's Deputy Executive Officer of Community Relations. "It takes a personal responsibility to ensure safe interactions with the trains."

MTA has worked since last September to raise community awareness by conducting proactive education presentations that detail rail safety issues. Local schools have been a primary focus. In fact, MTA's Community Relations Rail Safety team attended scores of community events and 71 area schools, reaching 48,700 students with the rail safety message.

Students are trained to be cognizant of approaching trains and their required stopping distances, to stay away from tracks and idle trains, and not to breach train crossing gates. MTA has taken actual photographs of the rail alignments and has interactive DVD presentations to help the community recognize rail warning devices and how they function in their neighborhoods. Real life examples are used to demonstrate what to do and what not to do near trains.

Other components of MTA's Safety Education Program include a poster campaign in schools to remind students daily about rail safety, and public service announcements that will run on local television stations and movie theaters in the coming months.

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