



October 21, 2003

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MTA-Led Panel Makes Recommendations in Wake of September Bus Stop Wounding of Three Taft High School Students

(Los Angeles) - A multi-agency task force formed by MTA to review bus-operating procedures following a Sept. 9 shooting of three students at a bus stop near Taft High School in Woodland Hills has recommended a broad series of steps to improve the safety of LAUSD students. Task force members including MTA, the Los Angeles Unified School District, the district's police department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department will carry out the 12-step action plan.

"I want to commend the MTA and the other participating agencies for addressing this very serious issue with the urgency it deserves," said Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman of the MTA Board, who requested that MTA convene the independent panel. "These recommendations should go a long way toward helping to ensure that we can avoid any repeat of this tragic incident in the future."

The Sept. 9 shooting, believed to be gang-related, occurred a few minutes after the operator of a Metro Rapid Line 720 bus chose not to pick up students at a bus stop at Ventura Boulevard and Winnetka Avenue because he believed some of the students waiting at the stop were unruly and posed a safety risk. Three Taft High School students were wounded in the shooting, one of them critically. Three suspects were arrested and remain in custody.

"The actions the task force members have chosen to pursue go well beyond the panel's initial focus," said John Catoe, MTA deputy chief executive officer. "While not every incident can be anticipated or prevented, this tragedy has spawned changes that will create a safer climate at bus stops located near LAUSD schools served by the Metro Bus system."

The plan includes several key actions:

- MTA will modify its current policy that requires bus operators to notify MTA's Bus Operations Control Center (BOCC) of a pass-up *only* if it involves a wheelchair bound or otherwise disabled customer. The new policy will require immediate notification upon passing up a bus stop, regardless of the situation.
- Depending on the nature of the pass-up, MTA will contact its law enforcement provider, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. If the pass-up involves students under the age of 18 or unruly students, MTA's law enforcement will contact the LAUSD police department for follow up and/or intervention.
- MTA will create a bus safety-training program for schools similar to its rail safety-training program and will initially test it in schools in the San Fernando Valley. The program will be expanded later throughout MTA's service area. In addition, MTA and LAUSD will determine if LAUSD training programs related to situations involving adolescent behavior might be incorporated into MTA training programs.
- Whenever an MTA bus operator has requested an unruly passenger under the age of 18 to vacate a bus, the operator must request a supervisor or police officer to respond. The LAUSD'S police department will be notified when a student is put off the bus during school pick-up or drop-off hours.
- MTA's Chief of Police, Captain Dan Finkelstein, and LAUSD Police Department Commander Steven LaRoche will develop procedures for contact and coordination between the two agencies.

Other steps identified by the task force include:

- Notification to MTA of new school openings and coordinate location of bus stops and changes to service new schools
- Notification to MTA of school schedule changes
- Inspections of bus stops at or near schools to determine whether the stops should be relocated to provide maximum space
- Familiarize LAUSD personnel with MTA's Bus Operations Control Center, incident reporting system and new technology

MTA Deputy CEO John Catoe will report to the Board in 120 days and in 6 months on the progress of the task force in implementing the 12 recommendations.

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