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## **Metro's 'Seniors on the Move' Program Offers Training in the Art of Riding Mass Transit**

Following the trial of George Russell Weller -- the elderly man whose out-of-control car killed 10 at the Santa Monica Farmers' Market three years ago -- questions remain about the challenges for seniors trying to get around without the aid of a car.

Whether their licenses have been rescinded for legal reasons or they have decided it is time to abandon driving, the effect can be devastating. Among the choices: stay home, move away to a very small town or depend on family and friends for rides.

That's why Francis Gaudio was attending Metro's Seniors on the Move meeting in North Hollywood this summer. "It's getting to the point where I don't like driving at night. But I don't want to have to depend on my kids."

Walter Richeimer and his wife of 59 years, Bea, were there for a similar reason. "We're still driving but we're looking toward the future," he said. "We want to find the best way to get around."

In car-steeped Los Angeles and many other cities and towns across the country, generations have never taken public transportation. The prospect, while offering a viable alternative to driving, can be daunting. That's why Metro launched Seniors on the Move. Since 2004, when the innovative training program was organized, 3,400 older adults have been taught how to use mass transit.

Training meetings are held at various locations around the county. Topics discussed include public transit options available to seniors (train, bus and paratransit for the infirmed); the best routes to take to reach various destinations; the cost of the trip (including discounts available to seniors) and hours of service. The free meetings are followed by a demonstration ride on a Metro bus. All Metro buses and trains are handicap accessible.

Also distributed at the meeting is a list of warning signs that could indicate unsafe driving behaviors. Among them (from minor to serious):

- Decreased confidence driving.
- Increased agitation or irritation when driving.
- Trouble navigating turns.
- Confusion at exits.
- Getting lost in familiar places.
- Car accident.
- Confusing gas and brake pedals.
- Stopping in traffic for no apparent reason.

Metro already carries a large number of seniors. Each month 80,000 senior/disabled passes are sold at reduced rates: \$12 for monthly passes (versus a \$52 regular pass cost) and \$1.50 for day passes (versus a \$3 regular pass cost).

Also for seniors, Metro publishes a large-print rider's guide that includes hours of operation, useful phone numbers, fares and safety information. Another handy tool is the Metro Flash book, which contains large number cards, so that riders who have trouble reading bus numbers can hold up their requested line number to

signal the correct bus to stop. Timetables and route maps can be accessed on the Internet at [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) and enlarged to any size.

For traveling instructions to a specific location, go to the Trip Planner on the top right of [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net). Or call (800) 266-6883 to plan a trip. Customer information agents are available to answer questions in English and Spanish.

Seniors on the Move meetings last about 2 hours. For more information call (213) 922-2000 and ask for Seniors on the Move.

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