## LAPD Data Base Identifies Habitual Metro Rail Fare Evaders

(April 10) Every weekday, the Metro Red Line records more than 118,000 boardings. Some passengers don't pay the fare — some of them habitually. But, the LAPD's Transit Group knows who the repeat offenders are. And they're taking action.

The Transit Group's "fare evasion repeat offenders" computer data base now lists 309 riders with three or more citations for fare evasion. These repeat offenders receive special attention from officers patrolling the subway.

"We're trying to identify the top offenders and hold them accountable," says Detective Doug Raymond, who heads the Transit Group's detective unit. "Statistically, the number is very small, but with 300-plus habitual offenders, we have to take it seriously."

The most frequent offender is a 51-year-old man who has racked up 16 citations, according to Officer Joe Hopkins, who maintains the data base. Several others have more than 10 each. Fare evaders, he says, come from all walks of life.

**644,000 fare checks**
Transit Group patrol officers in February conducted some 644,000 random fare checks affecting 20 to 25 percent of Metro Red Line passengers. The officers issued 1,416 citations and 856 warnings for fare violations and arrested 30 chronic fare offenders.

Every fare evasion citation is entered into the Transit Group's data base, which flags individuals who accumulate three or more citations. Officers patrolling the subway are instructed to check the data base before issuing a citation.

If the detainee is found to be a habitual fare offender, he or she is arrested and booked on misdemeanor charges. While the penalty for a fare evasion citation can be a maximum fine of $250, conviction of a misdemeanor can mean jail time, a fine or other punishment.

"The courts are starting to understand that these are people who have been given many opportunities to comply," says Raymond. "We're using our data base to address a selective problem. Our goal is to keep it a small problem."
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