



# NEWS

August 29, 2001

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### SAFETY MESSAGE AIMED AT KIDS RETURNING TO THE CLASSROOM

### **MTA DECLARES SEPTEMBER 'METRO BLUE LINE SAFETY MONTH'**

As thousands of children living near the Metro Blue Line tracks head back to school, MTA is moving safety to the head of the class by declaring September 'Metro Blue Line Safety Month.' The month-long campaign will augment MTA's ongoing public safety awareness program, which is aimed at promoting safety along the 22-mile-long light rail line and reducing the number of Metro Blue Line-related accidents.

Metro Blue Line Safety Month includes several key features:

- 300 pole banners with bilingual safety messages at selected rail crossings



- safety messages on electronic signs at Metro Rail station platforms
- origami piece with a safety quiz/messages to be distributed to K-5 students
- student planner featuring a calendar, anti-graffiti message, Metro Rail map and safety message, to be distributed to junior high and high school students
- distribution of rail safety brochures on Metro buses and trains
- distribution of coloring and activity books, safety bookmarks to schools

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Metro Blue Line Safety Month is strategically timed to remind returning students about safety around tracks and trains.

"This is an excellent opportunity to deliver the safety message to thousands of young people in a short span of time," said Abdul Zohbi, MTA's manager of system safety. "If we can make the connection now, our children will carry those lessons with them into their adult years."

MTA's ongoing public safety awareness program has resulted in a significant decrease in recent years in the number of train vs. vehicle and train vs. pedestrian accidents. MTA staff members have made door-to-door contact with residents living along the Metro Blue Line alignment and conducted safety presentations to numerous schools, community organizations, homeowner groups and safety fairs.

MTA staff conducts a Metro Rail safety tour program in which students along the Metro Blue Line alignment are invited to ride the trains and learn about the rail system and how they can be safe near train tracks.

In addition, safety brochures have been distributed to Department of Motor Vehicle offices and public libraries, and signs have been posted on trains to reinforce the safety message.

Technological improvements, law enforcement and MTA-sponsored legislation also have played a large role in reducing the number of Metro Blue Line accidents.

The technological improvements introduced by MTA include the use of photo enforcement at selected crossings, swing gates, pedestrian gates, train-activated "No Left Turn" signs, media islands, additional active warning lights at various crossings, and installation of the ARC (Alternating Rail Car) light system on the rail vehicles.

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Following a year-long test, MTA has been granted approval to install a four quadrant gate system at key crossings, and MTA continues to evaluate a "second train coming" warning sign at Vernon Station for possible future installation at other key crossings.

In addition, MTA has relocated and redesigned the train signals which provide instructions to train operators, and the agency has installed fiber optic "Train" signs in the Los Angeles street running portion of the alignment along Washington Blvd. and Flower St. to provide an enhanced warning for motorists of oncoming trains. Since these design changes have been implemented, the rate of accidents caused by illegal left turns has been reduced dramatically. MTA currently is working on expanding these projects and installing such signs in the city of Long Beach.

The reduction in accidents is also attributed to vigorous enforcement of rail crossing regulations by the L.A. County Sheriff's Department motorcycle team, as well as the increase in the fine for rail crossing violations and the inclusion of rail safety questions in the Department of Motor Vehicle California Drivers Handbook/test, both spearheaded by MTA.

"We've made a concerted effort through our use of technology, law enforcement and person-to-person contact, to encourage people to do the right thing when they approach the Metro Blue Line tracks," said Zohbi. "We believe Metro Blue Line Safety Month is another important step toward making safety everyone's first concern."

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