

Metro safety specialist shows visiting school children how to look and listen before crossing railroad tracks.



## Leading the way to Safety

### **Metro's Rail Safety Program Expands Scope; Inspires Regional, National Efforts**

- Pioneering safety program is role model for similar programs being developed by regional and national agencies.

(Aug. 25, 2005) Metro's innovative Rail Safety Program is on the move with a video distribution deal, the addition of bus safety training on the Metro Orange Line, and public service announcements for the Department of Homeland Security.

The success of this multiple award-winning program is evidenced by national interest in its innovative and comprehensive approach to rail safety:

- Operation Lifesaver has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to help distribute the program's videos as part of the organization's light-rail safety program.
- A licensing agreement is pending with New Jersey Transit, with a nibble from San Francisco's Muni.
- Public Service Announcements for Homeland Security are in development for television and theaters and may be distributed for nationwide broadcast.
- Program coordinators have applied for a grant to develop a national public awareness program for Homeland Security based on the Rail Safety model.
- Plus, the Rail Safety team had a banner year reaching 1.2 million students – 354 percent over the projected goal of 350,000.

In the classroom - Program coordinator Barbara Burns presents safety video to students.



Developed by Metro's Community Relations Department to address rail safety issues in the community, the rail safety education and outreach program includes classroom instruction, rail safety orientation tours, and participation at community events with the "Metro Experience" mobile theater.



Patrons line up for 'Metro Experience' at one of many safety fairs held in communities throughout the region.

"Putting the funds from a transit safety grant awarded in 2003 to practical use, Metro completely restructured its rail safety education and outreach program," said Barbara Burns, program manager. The start-up of the Metro Gold Line light rail line that traversed many street-level crossings and traveled through densely populated neighborhoods demanded a fresh approach.

"The consequences of careless behavior around an operating rail system had to be felt, not just parroted," she said. Furthermore, the program must communicate to a public of many languages with a preference for electronic media.

Metro infused the program with multimedia zest and shaped the message with dramatic punch. The result was site-specific DVDs that are relevant to particular audiences and could be easily distributed: "Look, Listen, & Stay Alive" appeals to audiences 10 years of age to adult. The video has won 11 national awards: The Aurora

Awards—Three Platinum Best of Show awards for Directing, Use of Music, and Public Service and one Gold Award for original music; Five Finalist Awards from the international Telly Awards; and a World Gold Medal from the prestigious New York Festivals against competition from 58 countries. Additionally, the video won a First Place Award from APTA.



Three cartoon characters play at a Metro Rail station in the rail safety video, "Look, Listen and



Appearing in a Metro Rail safety video, Metro Rail General Manager Gerald Francis, on screen, cautions kids: "Tracks are for trains, not fun."

"Tracks are for Trains" is intended for children below the age of 10 and features Metro Rail's own Gerald Francis. The interactive DVD is site-specific to the street-level Metro Blue Line and Metro Gold Line, and features charismatic trainers delivering the message with compelling visuals. The site-specific DVD was developed to assist in train-the-trainer programs after partnerships were formed with 10 school districts along Metro rail lines. Each school was supplied the materials to be used in the classroom. This allowed the outreach of the program to quadruple.

The latest release – now playing at schools and community centers – is a presentation of the Metro Orange Line, the 14-mile transitway set to open this fall in the San Fernando Valley.

The popularity of the videos is what led Operation Lifesaver to pursue the MOU with Metro. After conducting focus groups across the country, it became clear that the approach and the messages used in the videos – particularly those targeted to older audiences – met many of the needs identified by older students.

"Operation Lifesaver is always looking for new and creative ways to educate the public about safety along rail lines, said Gerri Hall, President of Operation Lifesaver. "LACMTA's videos deliver rail safety messages in a way that resonates profoundly with viewers, and we are delighted to help spread the word about the tools LACTMA has developed."

The national safety organization will let agencies that participate in the

Operation Lifesaver program know about the LACMTA videos.. "This is quite a feather in our cap," said Burns, "and a wonderful compliment to our program and our agency, which always puts safety first." --*from staff reports*