



June 15, 1999

Metropolitan  
Transportation  
Authority  
  
One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA  
90012-2952

**TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**FROM: ALLAN LIPSKY** *Allan Lipsky*  
**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER**  
**SUBJECT: BUS CONSENT DECREE**

Attached is a letter I sent on Tuesday to the Los Angeles Times regarding their editorial opinion that the MTA should not appeal the Special Master's rulings regarding load factor compliance. In the letter I stress that the Times is not revealing the complete impact of the Special Master's rulings, nor recognizing the improvements we are making.

The Times once again neglected to mention that we have and continue to hire more mechanics and bus operators. We have suspended new rail construction to focus on Metro Bus Service. This year we will add 130 additional peak hour buses. We continue to receive new buses every week of the 2,095 buses we have on order.

The Times editorial is only one example of failure of the agency's image to reflect recent accomplishments. The MTA's lack of public support and unfavorable media coverage certainly help the plaintiffs in the Consent Decree litigation.

To address the problem, in consultation with Consent Decree Counsel, CEO Julian Burke engaged the firm of Sitrick and Company to aid us in getting the message to our customers, stakeholders and the public. We believe Sitrick and Company will help us clear up some of the misconceptions surrounding the Authority's position regarding the Special Master's order. Moreover, they will help us communicate a further understanding of the Authority's position to the media and other constituents.

If you have any questions or suggestions concerning our public relations effort, please contact me, Habib Balian or Mr. Burke on his return.

Attachment



Letters to the editor  
Los Angeles Times  
Times Mirror Square  
Los Angeles, CA 90053

June 8, 1999

Metropolitan  
Transportation  
Authority

One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, CA  
90012-2952

Editor:

For the second time this spring the Times has urged MTA not to appeal an order by a federal court Special Master who demands MTA spend \$463 million more to buy and operate hundreds of new buses on top of the 2,095 new buses MTA already is buying and the nearly \$1 billion it spends each year to operate Metro buses and subsidize municipal bus operators in Los Angeles County.

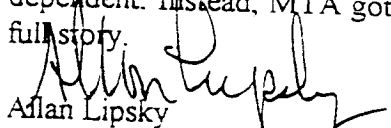
Fortunately, MTA hasn't heeded the *Times'* advice. The Special Master recently acknowledged his original order was too much and modified his ruling which will save taxpayers \$40 million. However, the current order is still excessive and that's why MTA is now appealing to the federal judge who appointed the master.

Neither the Special Master nor the *Times* gets the full story. Our bus riders are now getting everything they wanted out of the 1996 federal Consent Decree to improve Metro Bus service. Shortly after CEO Julian Burke was hired 21 months ago, the MTA Board suspended new rail construction so MTA could focus its resources on bus improvements. The MTA is ordering 2,095 new buses with new buses arriving weekly. Bus service already has been significantly expanded, and this year MTA will deploy 130 additional peak hour buses. Hundreds of new operators and mechanics are being hired.

These efforts are paying off. Overcrowding is being eased. Metro Bus service is improving daily. But just as MTA and our bus riders together get ready to cross the goal line, the goal posts have been pushed back 50 yards. If MTA now must comply with the Special Master's order, it risks breaching the public trust because the MTA has many statutory and financial obligations beyond running buses.

The *Times* casts this issue as strictly a bus versus rail debate. It ignores the fact that if MTA must comply with the Special Master's order, it will seriously impact the many street and highway programs funded by MTA that ensure mobility for 6 million motorists in the county. There are very real economic and environmental consequences that must be considered.

The *Times* should have given MTA a pat on the back for standing up for taxpayers and everyone who drives a car or truck in Los Angeles County as well as the transit dependent. Instead, MTA got a kick in the pants because the *Times* prefers to ignore the full story.

  
Allan Lipsky  
MTA Chief Operating Officer  
(213) 922-7433