



Annenberg Radio News



Bussing in L.A. By Duni Heimpel

Los Angeles is a giant city, with amazing transportation needs.

Its nearly five hundred square miles of freeways, off ramps and surface streets are navigated by the city's ten million inhabitants.

The divide in Los Angeles is drawn along the bus route.

While most get around by cars, over one million ride the city's extensive bus system every day. Fifty one percent of those people are Hispanic, according to Rick Jager of the Metro Bus System (MTA). Almost half, 48 percent, of the MTA's riders earn less than \$14,000 a year. A total of 62 percent earn less than the national average annual income of \$44,000.

Los Angeles' 2,500 buses are often scoffed at by car commuters but they are efficient and clean. The MTA boasts the largest fleet of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) powered buses in the country.

But not everything is perfect on the city's buses. Arrests on the bus and metro jumped 60 percent to over 5,000 from 2003 to 2004, according to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) who polices the MTA. Over 400 of those arrests were for violent crime and three were homicides. Night rides can be dangerous in certain parts of town.

But a large portion of Angelinos have no choice but to take the bus. And it is a lot more convenient than those sitting in their cars would guess.