



SHERIFF ROBERT JONSEN

**For Immediate Release - Media
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PRESS RELEASE

VTA copper theft nets two arrests

The Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office Transit Patrol Division has responded to an increasing number of copper thefts occurring on Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) property. So far this year, there have been two dozen cases of copper theft resulting in more than \$500,000 in damage. These crimes not only interrupt VTA operations, but also pose a serious safety hazard. In several cases, the theft of copper wire has been cut close to the signal tracks, disabling warning lights and gates.



On Monday, March 11, 2024, at about 12:44 p.m., a copper theft in-progress was reported near the VTA Cropley Light Rail Station in San Jose, where a suspect and a white pickup truck was spotted near the tracks. A short time later, at about 1:30 p.m., the suspect was seen in the area of the VTA Reamwood Light Rail Station in the City of Sunnyvale. Transit Patrol deputies made an enforcement stop nearby of a vehicle matching the description of the pickup truck. During the investigation, deputies located suspected stolen VTA copper wire valued at \$10,000 inside the truck. Danielle Mayo, 60, and Frank Pacheco, 55, were both arrested for suspicion of possession of stolen property, conspiracy, and possession of methamphetamine. Both suspects were booked into the Main Jail in downtown San Jose. The stolen wire (*see photos*) is approximately 20 feet in length and weighs more than 100 pounds. It is not yet known if the suspects are responsible for any other VTA-related copper thefts.

Prepared By: Sr. Comms Officer Brooks Jarosz
Approved By: Undersheriff Ken Binder

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A common trend for many of the copper theft incidents include thieves who cut visible wire near rail platforms. Suspects typically survey the area for any law enforcement response once the copper wires are cut and return later to physically remove the copper. Locally, VTA and Caltrain transit agencies have experienced an increase in copper theft-related incidents. In one case, at Hostetter Light Rail Station on February 27, 2024, theft of 66 feet of copper resulted in \$198,000 in damage. A day earlier, 120 feet of copper was stolen from the Cropley Light Rail Station estimated to cost \$60,000 in losses, including labor costs and service response. The Sheriff's Office is urging the public to report any suspicious activity on VTA rail track areas.



Stolen copper wire recovered on 3/11/24



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