BULLETIN BOARD

Upcoming presentations: July 8 Bob Huddy of the Southern California Economic Partnership and SCAG will make a presentation on Smart Shuttle and Emerging Transit Technologies beginning at 2 p.m. The meeting will be held in the library at Angelus Plaza (3rd floor). After the meeting we will show the 30 minute video "Beneath Los Angeles" on constructing the Red Line through Hollywood. At our August 12 meeting we will have a presentation on the maglev regional system proposed by SCAG. Then at our Oct. 14 meeting John Meyer will discuss issues relating to smaller transit services (he administers Morongo Basin Transit, PV Transit and Mountain Area Transit).

Also at the July 8 meeting we may consider whether to support the proposal for a private/public partnership to place toilets at key MTA interchange locations, with a short description by a representative of the vendor.

Circle the date: tentatively Sept. 9 is when we will hold our better service conference, co-sponsored by Odyssey 20/20.

Members in the news: Newsletter editor Charles Hobbs had a letter in the June 6 Desert Sun suggesting ways to improve Sunlink ridership, member Bob Clark, Jr. had a letter in the June 28 LA Independent criticizing the Wilshire/Whittier rapid bus for duplicating the Red Line between Figueroa and Western, and Director Kymberleigh Richards was quoted in the June 15 Daily News ("Express Buses to Begin Running Next Week") as our spokeswoman lauding the new Ventura rapid bus as "a colossal improvement for the passengers".

Vice President Anthony Loui attended the June 16 SCAG Regional Transportation Plan Technical Advisory Committee meeting at which CTIS was presented. This is a Graphical Information System that inventories all transportation improvement projects in the region, identifying gaps in funding, unmet needs, etc. This promises at last some coordination among the alphabet soup of various funding programs: STIP, SHOPP, RTIP, ITIP etc

Our thanks to the following for responding to our recent appeal for funds: Joe Markham, Jaime Alcoba, Juanita Dellomes, Dana Gabbard, Joseph Drummond, John Ulloth, Chris Paley, Daniel Silver, Charles Mountain, Edward Johnson and Harold Katz.

Executive Secretary Gabbard requests input on whether the holiday banquet should be held again at Colonial Buffet in Long Beach. If a different venue is desired we need to reach a consensus soon to begin making the necessary arrangements, wherever we are going this year.

Recording Secretary Joseph Dunn brought to our attention that Union Bank does not charge non profit groups for checking accounts. A great boon since our present bank, Bank of America, as of July 6 will begin charging \$10 per month for our account. We therefore plan to change to Union Bank, and thank Joe Dunn for providing us with a workable alternative to BofA.

Access Systems Inc. is seeking applicants for its Advisory Committee which meets the second Tuesday of each month from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. If you wish to be nominated contact Executive Secretary Gabbard at (213) 388-2364 or dgabbard@hotmail.com (continued on Page 10)

TRANSIT UPDATES Have anything to report? Call 213 388 2364

The labor agreement for MTA's three principal unions expired June 30. Negotiations have been progressing slowly, in part due to MTA management seeking work rule concessions to reduce costs. At the request of MTA CEO Julian Burke, Governor Davis has called for a cooling off period during which the talks will continue. Users wait to see if an agreement can be reached without a walkout occurring when the cooling off period ends in a few months.

Need we state the obvious? The last three Red Line stations (Hollywood/Highland, Universal City and North Hollywood) have opened, making the Red Line "complete"...An estimated 500,000 people boarded Red Line trains on the two opening days (June 24-25), with 120,000 daily boardings (up from 65,000) after that. Ridership on the Blue and Green Lines increased somewhat as well, making systemwide daily rail ridership about 210,000 boardings (In comparison, BART in the Bay Area gets about 318,000 daily boardings...) All counted, the Red Line got 1 million boardings in the seven days since the extension opened.

A number of MTA bus routes have modified their routes:

• #424, #425 and #522 (Ventura BI-LA via 101 freeway) are no more. Local routes #150 (Ventura BI-Topanga BI) and #240 (Ventura BI-Reseda BI) have taken their place, along with new Rapid Bus #750 on Ventura Blvd. (See page 8 for more information on Rapid Bus)

Another Rapid Bus route, #720, replaces #320-322 along Wilshire, and #318 along Whittier Bl.

 Line #18 has been extended to Whitwood Center. Line #471 (Whitter-La Puente) has been extended over the old #318 route to Brea Mall.

- Line #22 (San Vicente BI) has become a shuttle between Santa Monica and Century City
- Lines #119,216,201 and 206 have slight reroutes to the nearest Metro Rail station
- #212 (La Brea Ave) has been extended south along Prarie to serve the Forum, Hollywood Park racetrack and the Hawthorne Green Line station
- Express routes #427 (LA-Warner Center) and #429 (LA-Hollywood-Westwood) have been cancelled.
- A shuttle between Hollywood/Vine station and the Hollywood Bowl is now provided on event days.
- There are new schedules, with minor (if any) changes for most MTA routes.

Member Roger Christensen went out June 26 to witness the first day of revenue service at the new San Fernando Valley Red Line stations. He informs us there was heavy reverse commuting by service employees transferring to buses to go further west. Overall the bus/rail interface for those coming on buses worked well. On a Red Line train Roger struck up a conversation with his seatmate visiting from Curitiba Brazil! The gentleman stated he loved their buses but was happy Curitiba is getting rail because the buses are "way too crowded".

June 23 a fire broke out on a MTA CNG bus while travelling on the Hollywood Freeway. Two passengers were treated for smoke inhalation. The cause of the fire is being investigated. The bus was one of the initial 1995 Neoplans. (continued on Page 10)

PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORT Dana Gabbard

I have found it much harder to keep track of the federal legislative process than the California state one. Imagine my delight to discover the useful tools on the website of the California Institute for Federal Policy Research (http://www.calinst.org/). These include breakdowns of the impact on California of various appropriation bills. At last you can easily see how funds for transportation are being allocated! http://www.calinst.org/pubs/tranapp01.htm

What is Eric Mann up to now? First he blasts Rapid Bus as a "fraud" in the June 18 LA Times (contra longtime BRU paid consultant Ryan Snyder who co-authored a June 25 Daily News op-ed "Rapid Bus More Efficient, Cheaper Than Subway" lauding rapid bus). Then I learned from member Chris Paley about a June 29 La Opinion article about the BRU encouraging its members to contact the Governor not to sign the budget until he adds to it more money for buses in LA. I even came across a BRU flyer that tried to make this argument. The Governor's transportation plan has been brewing for months, and activist groups like us have been involved in the debate over its contents. That whole time the BRU was AWOL. This "campaign" is one of the biggest manipulations ever played on the BRU members by its leadership. Davis at this point in the process can only blue pencil funding! And after months of careful negotiations to line up support for a statewide funding package he wouldn't stop everything for one special interest group. Especially one that hasn't any political allies and hasn't been involved in the process. Especially since Davis has made a big deal about his leadership making it possible to meet the July 1 constitutional deadline for signing the budget twice in a row since becoming Governor. How can Mann have any credibility after this shameless phony deceptive grandstanding? (P.S. - despite the BRU's "campaign" the Governor signed the budget June 30).

William Fulton, respected author of The Reluctant Metropolis and editor/publishes of the California

Planning and Development Report in his commentary "Governor's Congestion Relief Plan **Bypasses Traditional Transportation Planning** System" (http://www.cp-dr.com/html/ main_frames.asp?type=home) worries that the nonpolitical transportation planning process is in danger of being turned into one dominated by political pork. The problem I have with this take on the situation is the status quo has been almost solely about dividing up the monies we have, not identifying and prioritizing needs and working to fund them. The Legislative Analyst Office in a recent report called for a comprehensive passenger rail needs analysis to assist the state in its funding decisions among competing intercity, commuter and urban rail proposals. The San Bernardino Associated Governments has expressed a desire for the LAO proposal to be translated into legislation. Member John Ulloth has asked why we don't have a comprehensive integrated statewide transportation planning process. I would at least agree that a comprehensive needs assessment is called for (something more rigorous than the much cited but rather suspect SCA 3 project report assembled by the California Transportation Commission last year). I agree with Fulton that we should link our infrastructure investment with a growth strategy. But I think we also need a process that isn't serving bureaucrats and consultants. Delivery not process needs to be our goal (everyone worries that Caltrans isn't up to the task of project delivery the new era heralds).

An example of the status quo is the SCAG RTP Decision Document, which shows virtually no money for new projects outside Los Angels County (mostly due to sunsetting transit taxes). Instead of providing leadership for a solution SCAG just wants to document the disaster!

Stealth bill of the month: SB 1101 which would torpedo the proposed transit zones. Will the Governor veto this bill the same way he vetoed a similar one last year? That veto angered unions, a key Davis constituency. Can Davis resist them twice?

On a happier note, AB 769 to fix the El Monte busway is sitting on Governor Davis' desk. He may well sign up by the time members receive this newsletter. I am gratified our efforts (along with those of many, many others) have resulted in what I see as one of our first real legislative accomplishments!

Quote of the month on high speed rail: "Bullet trains sold as magic bullets or cure-alls for California's transportation woes will ultimately yield not to a new California Gold Rush, but to the embarrassment of fool's gold" (UCSD Professor Steve Brie in the June Metro Investment Report).

I got off a twofer in my June 14 LA Times letter: lauding its June 9 editorial "Don't Blow Transit Opportunity" while blasting Mayor Riordan and Supervisor Yaroslavsky about pushing Wilshire Bus Rapid Transit without community support, and blasting SCAG's maglev in response to a June 16 article "Panel Advances Bid to Win High-Speed Train System".

Brilliant quote on maglev of the month: Claremont Mayor Karen Rosenthal, "... people from Claremont, Ontario, Diamond Bar, Walnut, LaVerne, Glendora and Upland who are driving to the Ontario Airport are not going to drive to the Arcadia Terminal of the Maglev in order to take the Maglev to the airport. That is an unrealistic scenario" (minutes of the June 1 SCAG Transportation and Communications Committee meeting).

My other letters this month include a June 7 missive to the LA Independent suggesting Wilshire BRT opponents should aim their ire not at MTA staff (who are simply doing their jobs) but the MTA board members who pushed this proposal and a June 9 KNX editorial reply urging passage of AB 769 (and including yet another blasting of Riordan and Yaroslavsky for being AWOL on this issue despite being self-proclaimed busway advocates).

Three facts about the SCAG maglev proposal I learned at a June 21 presentation on it to the

California High Speed Rail Authority: it will be single track (except at stations and along one short segment), with 20 minute headways (due to the single tracking) and an average speed of 91 mph. Operationally this means a breakdown, accident, etc. will shut down the whole system. And the time advantage will be greatly degraded by a 10 minute average wait time. And performance versus an upgraded Metrolink doesn't justify the huge investment. Amazing!

Laurels to Speaker emeritus Villaraigosa for blasting the BRU at the June 9 Pasadena Blue Line groundbreaking as demagogues.

Well, at least the AQMD as a small concession allowed rule 1192 for transit buses to have a caveat if clean diesel can meet certain criteria it can substitute for CNG. Already their are grumbles AQMD is demanding things of clean diesel it doesn't of CNG. Stay tuned.

I attended the June 8 Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor Study meeting at Memorial Park in Culver City and was gratified at the turnout, which included members Sean Bainbridge, Roger Christensen and Anthony Loui plus allies Darrell Clarke, Jerry Pass and Ken Rubin. I even had a chance to meet and say hello to Dave Ashcraft, General Manager of Culver CityBus. And witnessed Ryan Snyder, bus proponent supreme, step aboard a MTA rapid bus on display and look about as if he was seeing a treasure from a distant land.

Sneaky act of the month: a mysterious \$600,000 earmark for a Major Investment Study of the Crenshaw Corridor was included in the May 30 version of the budget bill (AB 1740) only to be pencilled out in the June 22 Conference Committee version. Do I see the hand of Supervisor Yvonne Burke again pushing this project? And was it her latest idea (Breda STREAM buses) or a return to her beloved stalled rail project? (continued on page 6)

BOOTH REPORT Dana Gabbard (dgabbard@hotmail.com)

The weekend of June 24-25 SO.CA.TA participated in the celebration of the opening of the extension of the Red Line to North Hollywood with a booth at North Hollywood station (Lankersham and Chandler). It was anticipated a large turn out would occur, given past rail openings. Also the North Hollywood arts and community fair this year was being held the same weekend on Lankersham in front of the station. And our San Fernando Valley members informed us this event itself has been garnering a huge crowd during the past few years.

The outcome exceeded all our expectations. Both days had huge crowds. And to our delight the event was festive, with a joyous atmosphere as if the controversy and fights over rail transit were being set aside as people celebrated this milestone, and had fun.

Executive Secretary Gabbard had over the past six months been gathering material for distribution at the booth. Our theme was livable communities. We had some materials from the American Public Transit Association and Sierra Club on these issues to give away. Also we had a box of schedules for Amtrak's Pacific Surfliner service. Plus copies of an updated Transit Guide and materials from Edward Simburger (his two Metrolink guidebooks plus video travelogues). Darrell Clarke of the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter Transportation Committee brought a display on the Exposition right-of-way which was very popular. And we had MTA schedules to give away. Fresh out of the print shop. Director Kymberleigh Richards went above and beyond in arranging for us to have the new schedules for the buses serving the station. She arranged for Frank Schroder, MTA schedule maker supreme, to drop off boxes of new schedules Saturday

(Public Affairs, from pg. 5)

While it has received scant attention our region faces a crisis due to the lack of ozone reduction caused by the lackluster smog reduction program run by the state. This could lead to non-conformity and a freezing of all roadway construction with federal funds under specified criteria. It is hoped a stopgap document can be adopted and forwarded for federal approval in time if needed. Oh, my.

Our Executive Committee forwarded to the California Futures Network our recommendations on smart growth legislation submitted to affiliates for review. We suggest support of the legislation with a transportation component (AB 2140, SB 1815, AB 779 and AB 2494). The balance of the bills are outside our expertise and we feel that we shouldn't express an opinion on those (although several on the face of it seem worthy of support).

I'll conclude by noting I have begun embodying a

statement honorary member Ed Buckley sometimes invokes: "I just know enough to be dangerous". At the June 6 Montebello City Council meeting when they discussed a fare hike, I offered some ideas to provide relief for the \$15 per rider cost of dial a ride. And realized I was maybe shooting a bit higher than the politicians were used to. And I don't think the staff were used to public comments including the question why they don't seek section 5310 funding to purchase a van for residents needing transportation to the senior center lunch program, which will shift them off the expensive dial-a-ride. Staff responded that their experience is their chances of getting such a grant are too small to justify the expense of preparing a request. Is this a case of not knowing about how to squeeze funds from the 10% of specialized transit funding that is generally the purview of industry veterans?

morning. And as the booth started up it quickly became clear the MTA schedules were a big hit with the public. Also quickly MTA began pointing out our booth when people asked for schedules and or had questions. The agency preferred us to handle this so their booth could concentrate on giving out bags of MTA trinkets without being bogged down. And we gladly enbraced this role.

The table next to ours was for TransitPeople, the organization started by member Tim Adams that takes kids from areas like Pico Union to cultural and community events and institutions on public transit. Tim and some very bright young people enthusiastically shared information about TransitPeople. Also once or twice some of the kids helped with tasks for our booth. We were glad to see Tim getting a good response from the public and possibly build a few more key alliances.

We sold 15 Transit Guides and recruited two members (one at the event and one who sent in his membership fee afterward). Answered a lot of questions - some on how to get around on transit and others dealing with politics or transit technology. Armando and Chris Paley used their bilingual skills to answer questions en espanol. John Ulloth and others handled a separate table that became available Saturday morning to solicit names of interested citizens for our outreach effort to build community support for transit improvements.

Members who helped staff the booth included President Kris Sharp, Vice President Anthony Loui, Directors Kymberleigh Richards and Armando Avalos, Executive Secretary Dana Gabbard, Recording Secretary Joseph Dunn plus Nate Zablen, Jaime Alcoba, Charles Powell, Carlos Osuna, Paul Castillo, Phil Capo, Chris Paley, Woody Rosner, and John Ulloth. Members and allies who dropped by the booth while enjoying the event included Charles Hobbs, Chris Ledermuller, Henryka Maslowski, Mike Baron, Joe Markham, Russell Chisolm, Robert Meinert, Bart Reed and Jerry Pass. A special quest was Charles Thomas, a Valley resident and MTA Passenger Advisor, who on Saturday proved invaluable in answering Valley transit service related questions (e.g. "How do I get from here to the Van Nuys Airport?") when Kymberleigh was elsewhere.

Overall we had a blast! People were glad we came and enjoyed the materials we distributed. Our presence at ever its like this can only enhance our credibility and visibility, and build bridges.

Our thanks to Fran Curbello of MTA Marketing and the Warren Morris, her boss, for arranging our booth. It was a great event and we were glad for the opportunity to be part of it! ■



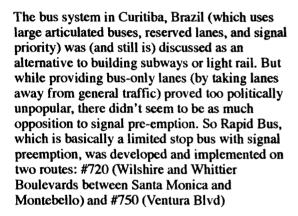
AT BOOTH:

(from left to right)
Chris Paley, Chris
Ledermuller,
Darrell Clarke, Kym
Richards, Dana
Gabbard. The
Electric Railway
Historical
Association's
booth was behind
ours.
-C. Hobbs photo

RAPID BUS Charles P. Hobbs

Rail replacement? or repackaged limited stop service?

It was mid-1994 when the MTA discovered that it didn't have the funds to build all of the rail lines that it had planned. There was also growing political opposition to the subway, and to various other rail projects. So, the MTA decided to look at alternate ways of providing faster bus service.



MTA made an effort to distinguish the Rapid Bus from other services. Special stops, usually separate from the local bus stops, have been provided. (Eventually, a newly designed shelter, with electronic signage showing when the next bus will arrive, will be placed at the Rapid Bus stops). The buses themselves are low-floor models, painted in a distinctive red design. The buses make only limited stops, generally about a mile apart (this is farther apart than the old-300 series limited buses they replaced). Finally, they have the ability to affect traffic signals, so that they (almost) always get a green light when they come to an intersection.

Of course, the Rapid Bus still shares the same traffic lanes with other traffic, so it can be delayed. Often, the bus will turn the light green,



but still must wait for traffic in front of it to move. Also, currently the signalling system only works in the City of Los Angeles, so the buses still get caught at red lights in Santa Monica, Beverly Hills, East Los Angeles and Montebello (applies to the #720--the #750 is totally within the City of Los Angeles).

So, how well do they work? I've ridden both #720 and #750 over the past two weeks. #720 (the Wilshire-Whittier route) seems to be a bit slower, and more susceptible to being caught at red lights, even within the City of Los Angeles. (Major cross streets, like Wilshire, Vermont and La Brea seem to be the most problematic). There are a couple of long stretches without any stops (between Crenshaw and La Brea and between Santa Monica Bl. and Westwood), but the bus didn't seem to pick up much speed there. That could have been a problem with that particular vehicle, though.

#750 on the other hand, is a speed demon, rocketting its way between Universal City and Warner Center. Major cross streets don't seem to hold this route up as much, and sometimes I felt as if I had to hold on tight as the bus zoomed through intersections and changed lanes.

MTA plans to put Rapid Bus service on other major bus routes in the future. While I don't think Rapid Bus is necessarily a replacement for rail service, it might be a good substitute for freeway express service.

(Updates, from pg. 2)
July 1 Metrolink fares rose four percent as part
of the second phase of the three-part fare
adjustment begun last year. Also beginning July
1 Metrolink will extend its group discount to any
group of ten riders or more, including children
and seniors. Travel must be during non-rush
hour or weekends and reservations for group
sales must be made at least 21 days in advance
through the Metrolink Customer Call Center at
(800) 371-LINK.

One final change as of July 1 is Metrolink has eliminated the transfer upgrade option for those using transit to access stations. Metrolink staff at the May 12 hearing on the proposal explained up to 70% of Saturday fare violations are due to incorrect use of the transfer upgrade and further that many connecting transit operators no longer provide transfer media. This change does not impact Metrolink tickets and passes being accepted for base fare on connecting transit service.

As of June 18 Santa Monica Big Blue Bus has modified schedules on several lines: line #1 has increased evening frequency for westbound service, line 5 has shaved as much as 12 minutes off the scheduled running time and increased westbound morning peak hour service frequency from Pico/Rimpau, and line #13 is being supplemented with special direct peak hour/peak direction service between the VA and Pico/Rimpau - in the morning it will depart Pico/Rimpau with a line #5 headsign and a Veterans Hospital window card, in the evening it will depart the VA with a line #7 headsign. All the Montebello Bus Lines proposed fare changes outlined last month in the newsletter were approved by the City Council and went into effect July 3 except the local transfer charge increase was trimmed to five cents (proposal was ten cents, currently it is free) and the dial-a-ride for seniors/disabled continues to be fifty cents (for now).

LADOT Line #549 has a new route in Sherman Oaks/ Encino. Instead of traveling via Burbank, Sepulveda, Ventura, Hayvenhurst to Encino Park-Ride, it now does a huge loop via Burbank, Hayvenhurst (with a stop at the Park-Ride lot), Ventura, and Sepulveda. The last stop on westbound trips is Sepulveda/ Magnolia. The first stop on eastbound trips is Encino Park-Ride lot.

"DASH Downtown Accepts Your Metro Pass!" is a new brochure from LADOT. And is a welcome change from the past practice of not publicizing this information (not even in the schedules or its website!).

LADOT also has a new system map and new schedules (but no changes) for #423 and Crenshaw DASH

BLT (Burbank Local Transit) has a new brochure detailing all their transit services for the general public. It includes the fixed-route Media District Shuttle, and the two rush-hour dial-a-ride services, the Downtown Area Shuttle, and the Golden State/Airport Area shuttle.

By the way, fares on BLT are \$1.00. Free with MTA, Metrolink, and LADOT passes. (LADOT information from Member Armando Avalos)

For more information on the new city of Orange Trolley (a shuttle bus serving Orange Metrolink, Disneyland, The Block and other local attractions) call (714) 771-2910. or visit http://www.metrolinktrains.com/fun/destination/oranget.html

(Bulletin Board, from Page 2)

"The Shadow Legislature" is a 12 part series the Orange County Register recently ran that followed an actual bill as it wound its way through the legislative process. This up close and unvarnished look at how laws are made will benefit members wishing to learn more about realpolitik. The entire series is on the Register's website: http://www.ocregister.com/politics/features/2000/shadow/

Railvolution, the annual conference on light rail and community revitalization, will be held in Denver this year Oct. 4-8. Further information: convene@aol.com or 800-788-7077

"Can rail prevail the first time around?" by Paul Weyrich (former publisher of the New Electric Railway Journal) has been posted by Railway Age on its website: http://www.railwayage.com/jun00/intransit.html

http://www.webb.net:80/sites/mta/ is a bulletin board for MTA users and employees to post opinions and share information (a la the late lamented MTA rumors page).

Planetizen is a new website on planning with article links and job listings: http://www.planetizen.com

Western Stops and Transit Amenities Council is a new organization for transit professionals to share information on bus stops and transit amenities. Local agencies that are members include GET, Culver CityBus, Gardena Municipal, AVTA, Long Beach Transit, LACMTA, Montebello, NCTD, OCTA, SCAT, RTA, Omnitrans, San Diego Transit, SBMTD, Santa Clarita Transit, and Foothill Transit. A website is under development - to contact Chair Chuck Beadle call (502) 283-4845 or chuckrbeadle@earthlink.net

Member Mike Baron recently brought to our attention the dingy condition of the Hope Street 7th/Metro station exit corridor. We hope to work on addressing this soon. Also Mike tells us he informed LADOT that downtown DASH buses frequently fail to change headsigns during layover and operate with headsigns for the opposite direction. LADOT promises to recitify this. We thank Mike for his effective advocacy.

Member Angela Brancel sent us the June 15 Orange County Register article on a OCTA theft ring being broken. 3 employees were convicted of stealing thousands from fareboxes. The agency in response has beefed up security at its three yards.

Member Joseph Drummond posted on our member board that he recently spotted a wanted poster on an MTA bus (a newer bus, on the large rack behind the drivers seat) with phone numbers for riders to call if their recognize the man pictured, a suspect in a bus crime. Kudos to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Transit Service Bureau for this effort to combat transit crime.

As always, *The Transit Advocate* needs articles, letters, Transit Tips, photographs and research (newspaper clippings, etc.) from all members and interested non-members. All materials should be sent to 3010 Wilshire #362, Los Angeles, CA 90010. (or e-mailed to transit@lerami.lerctr.org). Material for publication should be received two weeks before the scheduled SO.CA.TA meeting date.