

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Member Roger Christensen has recently had two letters published in local newspapers. His July 7 Daily News missive blasted a previous article in which a reporter detailed her 2 1/2 hour journey from the east San Fernando Valley to LAX. Then in the July 16 San Fernando Valley edition of the L.A. Times, Christensen exposed the \$100 million dollar diversion of busway monies masterminded by Senator Richard Alarcon.

On our behalf President Kris Sharp is sending letters of support for AB 1930, which restores local control for communities to negotiation with Caltrans over the impact of freeway projects within their boundaries.

Congratulations to Vice President Anthony Loui for his appointment to the Santa Monica Planning Commission. During the past month the Vice President has been busy. July 27 he attended a transportation summit of the the Progressive Los Angeles Network. The Summit was co-organized by Gloria Ohland of the Surface Transportation Policy Project and Robert Garcia of Environmental Defense. Participants were a cross section of environmentalists and planners working in the social and transportation sector. The policies that were discussed centered around neighborhood planning, smart growth, air quality and environmental quality. A proposed white paper was circulated and reviewed. Anthony spoke out on what he considered troublesome planks regarding equity and the Consent Decree.

Anthony also attended the Southern California Association of Governments Regional Transportation Plan Technical Advisory Committee meeting July 25. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the status of the draft 2001 Regional Transportation Plan, before it goes out for public comment in November.

A "Decision Document" has been prepared on the current RTP status. SCAG is putting a price tag of \$46 billion dollars over 25 years for transit improvements proposed by the RTP transit task forces. For obvious reasons this is meeting sticker shock from local officials. Anthony and other are suspicious at how legitimate the \$46 billion estimate is.

Lastly Anthony recently participated in an Advisory Board Meeting with the Southern California Land Use Transportation Coalition. In this meeting, various stakeholders such as the Local Government Commission requested SO.CA.TA spearhead an analysis and response to the price tag of the Transit component of the RTP.

Member Thomas Rubin had a letter in the North Hollywood Aug. 3 *Our Times* suggesting strategies to alleviate parking problems at the new Red Line stations.

TRANSIT UPDATES *Have anything to report? Call 213 388 2364*

Sept. 9 at 10 a.m. in the MTA Headquarters building, there will be a public hearing on numerous proposed changes in MTA service. Details of the proposed changes are at: http://www.mta.net/board/agendas/2000_07/pp_07/item31.htm. An ad hoc group will prepare our recommendations for submission to the hearing.

During the first two weeks of October buses will carry Metrolink and Amtrak passengers between Simi Valley and Chatsworth while work is done on the tunnel under the Santa Susana Pass. A recent landslide on the coast route has forced Amtrak to bus passengers between San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara until repairs can be made.

The MTA board approved eliminating zone fares for Harbor Transitway services in hopes of providing relief for the overcrowded Blue Line. Also the board approved operating route #445 seven days a week, every 15-minutes starting Oct 1. The route will serve freewayside stations at Pacific Coast Highway in Wilmington and Carson St. in the County area between Carson

and Torrance which will open Oct. 1.

LADOT has expanded the Hollywood DASH line to run in a big loop connecting Franklin Ave with the old Hollywood DASH route and a part of the former "Destination Hollywood" route. It runs every 30-minutes, Mon-Sat. Also, there is a new Hollywood-Wilshire DASH connecting the Hollywood/Vine and Wilshire/Western Red Line stations. via Wilton, Melrose, and Gower. This runs weekdays only.

The Port of L.A. has begun work on its 1.5 mile Harbor Trolley system, with construction slated to be completed in November.

Information line for county funded summer beach buses is (888) 769-1122.

Omnitrans #61 has been extended to serve Pomona Transcenter (via Holt) as well as the Fontana Metrolink station. Service is provided every 15-minutes on weekdays and every 30-minutes on weekends. Omni #60 now goes between Ontario Mills and Chaffey College.

SPECIAL DNC TRANSIT UPDATES

The Democratic National Convention will take place in and around Staples Center between August 12 and August 17. Many streets near Staples Center will be closed, made one-way, or subject to security checks. This means that several bus routes will be re-routed. In general, bus routes using Figueroa, Flower or other streets near Staples Center/Convention Center will be re-routed away from that area, and nearer to the center of Downtown. MTA bus routes affected include: #30, 31, 33-333, 56, 70, 81, 362, 434, 436, 439, 442, 444, 445, 446, 447 and 460. There may also be changes to the following routes: #27, 28, 83, 84, 85 and 328. A complete map is at http://www.mta.net/press/2000/07_July/map.htm/

Downtown DASH routes #A, #DD (weekend) and #F will also be rerouted away from Figueroa/Flower and onto Grand/Hope. will operate until midnight Aug.12-17 Also a special \$3 DASH good for unlimited use on DASH Aug.12-20 will be sold at various places downtown, including the MTA pass outlets in Arco Plaza and Gateway Center.

LADOT Commuter Express routes that run along Figueroa/Flower (#419, 422, 423, 534) will also be affected. Consult <http://www.ladottransit.com> for further details.

BLUE LINE 10TH ANNIVERSARY *Elson Trinidad*

I guess we all forgot...

Ten years ago, on July 14, 1990, rail transit returned to Southern California. The Metro Blue Line opened to the public, literally out of nowhere (unlike the Red Line, then known as "Metro Rail," which made headlines ever since former mayor Tom Bradley first proposed it in 1973), this light rail line got very little attention until the day it opened.

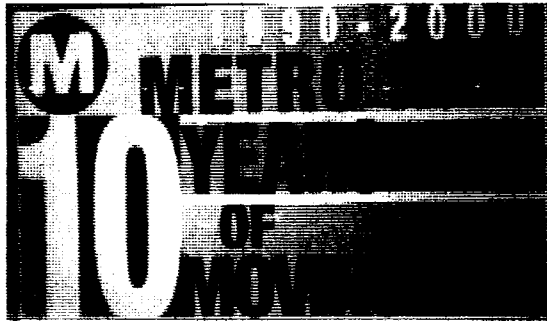
On that hot and sweltering Saturday in 1990, hundreds of people gathered at Pico and Flower streets for the opening ceremony, attended by RTD and Los Angeles County Transportation Commission officials (the two agencies that would become today's MTA), but most prominently by the late Kenneth Hahn, then an L.A. County Supervisor who first proposed a light rail system from downtown to Long Beach in 1980, inspired by the recently-opened San Diego Trolley and the availability of a right-of-way once used by the Pacific Electric Red Cars.

Legend has it that he took transportation officials to the observation tower of Los Angeles City Hall and pointed out the ROW, which was clearly visible towards the southeast.

During the opening ceremonies, a two-car Blue Line train, striped in various shades of blue with a red accented stripe (to pay homage to the Red Cars) emerged from the Flower street subway tunnel (the 7th Street Metro Center station was still seven months from being completed) to a cloud of blue smoke and confetti. A band started to play the Cantina Theme from "Star Wars" and the crowd lined up for free rides.

Lined around the block, curious younger Angelenos and PE old timers alike curious rode this relatively "foreign" and "exotic" form of transportation. Even as a train it was different -- no clickety-clack of a mainline railroad and the sudden acceleration of the electric motors took everyone - so used to the gradual acceleration of automobiles and buses - by surprise.

They rode down Flower Street, and Washington Avenue. The riders earned curious stares from people in cars, trucks and buses looking at this train, which could very well come from outer space. After the train stopped at the Washington station, the air horn started to trumpet, and train blasted forward...



It was like having your own personal freeway lane. But this was smoother. VERY smooth. And then, it took off. literally...as it climbed the elevated structure over Slauson Ave. "Oohs" and "Ahhhs" were heard all over the standing-room-only capacity train.

Most people who never even set foot into places like Huntington Park, Watts or Compton got to see it. And in most cases, it wasn't as bad as they've heard. They even got to see the legendary Watts Towers, perhaps for the first time in their lives.

Those days, the line was shorter than it is now. Aside from the subway section, the Long Beach loop was still three months from opening. The end of the line back then was at the Anaheim St. station, where there were shuttle buses to take them to the rest of Downtown Long Beach while

the Loops was being completed, and other buses to take passengers back to Downtown "The Old Way."

Back then, the trains only ran as late as 9 p.m. Rides were free for the rest of July, as the ticket machines still had to be installed and/or tested. A curious few tried the concept of parking one's car at a station, and taking the train the rest of the way towards Downtown -- It was a reasonable and perfectly fair compromise over "giving up your car." The trains carried about 16,000 a day for the first few weeks, it was considered a general success.

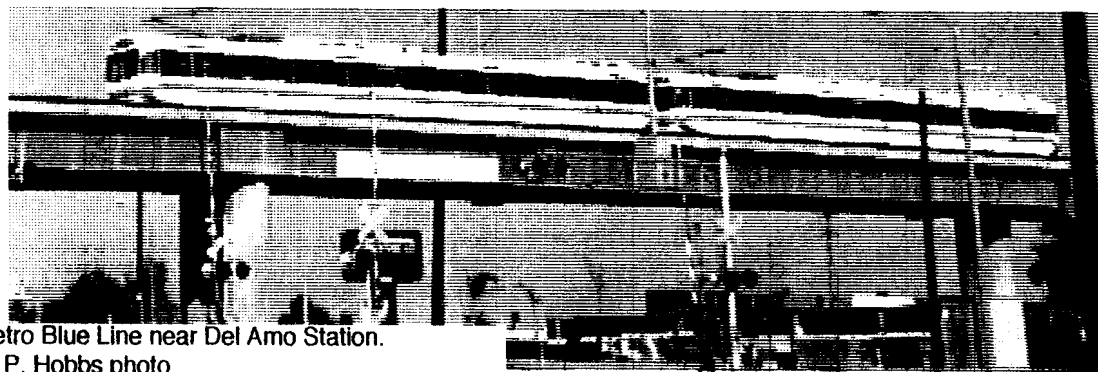
But then, the Long Beach Loop opened in September, 1990 and the 7th St. Metro Center station underneath Downtown Los Angeles opened on Valentine's Day, 1991. For the first time in 36 years, commuters entered a subway station in Los Angeles. Some peered through the windows of the wooden construction walls to see the future -- the Metro Red Line which was still two years away from opening.

Over the course of the decade, things changed. Recession hit Southern California hard. Riots hit the city harder. A large earthquake hit the city hardest. But the Blue Line still carried on. In late '92, Metrolink funneled suburbanites into Downtown and out of the freeways. '93, the Red Line finally

opened, bridging the gap between Union Station and the Blue Line. The Green Line opened in '95, being the east-west companion to the north-south Blue Line. The Red Line was expanded three more times in the next half-decade. And somewhere in between, transit-dependent riders (despite the words dictated to them by organizations who supposedly claim to fight on their behalf) saw the line as a perfect way to get from their 'hoods to access jobs and schools, and those who were faithful to their automobile, mostly from Orange County and the South Bay, discovered the joys of parking and riding with their occasional and sometimes regular "affair" with the trains.

Now the Blue Line, carries 63,000 riders a day, unimaginable ten years ago. It is one of, if not THE most successful light rail line in the United States. It's part of a nearly 60-mile system and is even undergoing expansion -- the trains are so packed that platforms are currently being extended so longer trains can run. Also, a cousin line from Downtown to Pasadena is currently being readied for a 2003 opening, as well as future lines to East L.A. and possibly Santa Monica. Perhaps in a few decades, taking the train will be THE hip way to travel in L.A. in the 21st century. The Blue Line took us into the new century before it even began.

Happy Birthday, Metro Blue Line.



Metro Blue Line near Del Amo Station.
C. P. Hobbs photo

PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORT *Dana Gabbard*

July 27 I participated in a conference call for the Alternative Transportation Caucus. A number of pending state bills were discussed - we committed to sent letters on behalf of AB 2140, which we already support.

Finally MTA is holding the 2nd round of Long Range focus group meetings later this month. Hopefully this will not turn into another dog and pony show!

Yvonne Burke continues her Crenshaw obsession: She is having the rail Major Investment Study reopened with Bus Rapid Transit (i.e. busways) added. Oh, boy.

Fact of the month: Richard DeRock, Executive Director of ASI, has a base salary of \$109,000.

Alliance for Regional Solutions to Airport Congestion reports the long delayed Environmental Impact Report for LAX expansion will be made public soon. Oh boy, then the fun will start!

To no ones surprise former Interim MTA CEO Linda Bohlinger recently resigned as the Executive Director of Tri Rail in Florida. Ominously she hints at a possible return to Southern California. Would anyone be dumb enough to hire her? Similarly Louis Moret, crony of Richard Alatorre, is leaving his job as SCAG Chief Operating Officer, ending his reign of mismanagement.

I wonder if OCTA CEO Lisa Mills' plans to resign in 2 months involve a desire to not be consumed by the CenterLine debate?

stupid idea of the month: MTA boardmember Hal Berson amended the 2000 STIP to include funds to widen Zoo Drive at Griffith Park reducing "right angle turns" and "congestion" and making it "faster" to get to the L.A. Zoo Parking Lot. Member Roger Christensen, who witnessed the MTA board feeding frenzy over the STIP, asks "Haven't these people heard of traffic calming? Isn't Zoo Drive in a Park and not a Freeway or a shopping center asphalt lot?"

Truck only lanes is a stealth component of the Regional Transportation Plan. Some freeways would be double decked with autos above, trucks below. California Corridors in its July 28 issue provides a peek at this fruit-loopy idea (<http://www.capitolalert.com/pulse/corridors.html>).

I conclude by thanking L.A. Councilman Hal Berson (who I just roasted above) for giving Mayor Riordan hell (per the July 14 LA Weekly article "Bad Call" roaring on a phone at his councilseat "How dare you!") when the Mayor hinted if Berson didn't vote in favor of giving the Democratic Convention \$2 million that Berson would lose his seat on the MTA Board. Way to go Hal!

BULLETIN BOARD

Two presentations will occur at our Aug. 12 meeting. Mr. Juan Levy will answer questions regarding the proposal to place public toilets at MTA intermodal locations. Then at 2 p.m. Albert Perdon will make a presentation on SCAG's proposed regional maglev system. The meeting will be held in the library of Angelus Plaza.

Aug. 5 the Executive Board met to discuss the possibility of restructuring, the status of ongoing projects, various new initiatives considered, etc. It was a productive session and bodes well for our continued progress.

Member Woody Rosner wishes to hear from the membership regarding their possible interest in T-Shirts and/or caps with our logo on it.

Saturday, September 23 the Western Transit Society/Southern California Transit Advocates are co-sponsoring an exploration of the Inland Empire Connection system, on its 10th anniversary. The exact trip times and meal stop will be in our next newsletter. We will begin in downtown Los Angeles on Foothill 480 to Montclair, IEC 110 to San Bernardino, IEC 100 to Riverside, IEC 149 to Mall Of Orange, OCTA 50 to Harbor & Katella, walk one block north to Disney Esplanade and MTA 460 to Los Angeles.

Member Cara Rice recently underwent training by Operation Lifesaver, a non-profit educational program that strives to increase public awareness of the need to exercise caution at rail crossings. Trainers make presentations to public groups, schools, etc. Cara asks whether SO.CA.TA members wish to undergo training and aid this worthy cause. Further details by calling (530) 367-3918 or caol@foothill.net - further details are at <http://www.foothill.net/~caol/>

Monday Aug. 21 from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. SCAG and the Federal Railroad Administration will co-sponsor a public meeting on the proposed regional maglev project. This will be held at West Covina City Hall, 1444 West Garvey Ave., South. Presentations will be made at 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., but information is available and comments can be made anytime during the meeting

The San Diego Railway Association is having a party Saturday Aug. 19 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. to celebrate the opening of its Railway Museum in the historic National City Depot (922 W. 23rd St). Tickets are \$20 for orders postmarked by Aug. 10, \$30 thereafter and at the door. More information: (619) 699-8690

To join a nationwide e-mail list on light rail contact NAWDRY@aol.com.

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. ■