

BULLETIN BOARD

President Sharp has decided we will go ahead with our Sept. 9 meeting even if MTA's unions are on strike. Please note there will be no presentations this month at the meeting, which will chiefly involve administrative matters (planning of our upcoming forum, day after thanksgiving trip and holiday buffet/fundraiser). Members in need of a ride should contact us in advance via e-mail or telephone and we'll try our best to arrange transportation by carpooling with other members. If you plan to drive to the meeting and are able to give a fellow member from your area a lift please contact Executive Secretary Gabbard at (213) 388-2364 or dgabbard@hotmail.com no later than Thursday Sept. 7.

On September 23, Western Transit is sponsoring an "Inland Connection Trip" in honor of the 10th anniversary of the Inland Empire Connection. The trip starts at 9:15 a.m., when we will board Foothill #480 at Wilshire and Union St. in Downtown Los Angeles. We will then ride IEC #110, IEC #100, IEC #149, OCTA #50 and MTA #460, returning to Downtown LA at 6:55 p.m.. Lunch and a short walking tour will be in Riverside.

Circle the date: Sept.30 is when we will hold our better service conference, co-sponsored by Odyssey 20/20. More details as they become available.

The public hearing on the proposed MTA service changes has been rescheduled to Saturday Oct. 7, 10 a.m. in the Gateway Building. The details of proposed changes are at: http://www.mta.net/board/agendas/2000_07/pp_07/item31.htm. At our August meeting an ad-hoc group of members examined the proposals and drafted our recommendations which will be presented at the hearing. Arrangements have been made for us to have a block of time comparable to the BRU.

Our thanks to members Thomas Rubin, Chris Flescher, Henryka Maslowski and Bob Huddy for their generous donations in response to our recent appeal.

Sunday July 30 we had a booth at the Worldfest in Woodley Park. Director Perias Pillay coordinated and was at the booth all day (9 a.m. to 7 p.m.). Logistical assistance was provided by Executive Secretary Gabbard. Treasurer Juanita Dellomes kindly lent a canopy, which was much appreciated since it was a very hot day. Members Anthony Curzi, Cara Rice, Kymberleigh Richards and Jaime Alcoba helped staff the booth. The event had an excellent turnout and attendees enjoyed the opportunity to discuss transit issues with our members. Our thanks to everyone who helped make the booth a success.

Want to get on the mailing list for LAX's master plan? You can apply at <http://www.lax2015.org/frame7.html>

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. ■

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

Director Kym Richards reports the following MTA service changes, effective 8/25:

Line #156: Saturday southbound trips scheduled to arrive @ NoHo Station 556A & 636A now run five minutes earlier; the Sunday southbound trip scheduled to arrive 534A is four minutes earlier; Sunday southbound trips scheduled to arrive 556A & 636A now five minutes earlier.

Metro Red Line: Saturday/Sunday/holiday service after 900P adjusted to allow for tunnel maintenance (approx 4-6 weeks); WB Gateway to NoHo trains approx. 3-5 minutes later, Vermont to Western shuttles approx. 10 minutes later; EB NoHo to Gateway unchanged, Western to Vermont shuttles approx. 4 minutes earlier.

The Sept. issue of "Wheel Clicks" (monthly newsletter of the Pacific Railroad Society) notes that the Kaiser entrance at the Red Line Vermont/Sunset station opened July 24.

MTA approved a plan by an outdoor advertising company to install toilets in Metro stations, in exchange for billboards along MTA properties.

Member Roger Christensen informs us an MTA staffer at the beginning of the August Operations Committee meeting reported that since Rapid Bus has been implemented that ridership was up about 11% on the Wilshire Corridor and 33% on the Ventura Corridor. Reportedly, #720 (Wilshire) carries 50,000 daily boardings (busiest bus in the system), while #750 (Ventura) carries 10,000.

Over the past year, ridership on Metrolink's Inland Empire-Orange County Line has risen from 1700 to 2500 daily boardings.

Another new DASH line: Northridge. This one has a very simple route: clockwise via Parthenia, Tampa, Nordhoff and Reseda, with a stop at Northridge Metrolink. Service runs every 10-minutes Mon-Sat.

Director Armando Avalos informs us as of July 1 Glendale Beeline now honors MTA passes, issues interagency transfers to connecting MTA buses [\$.50 (\$.25 S/D), the highest transfer charge in this region], offers a 31-day pass (like Omnitrans), good for 31 days after you first put it in the ticket reader on the farebox, and has replaced tokens with a 10-ride card [\$2]. The Beeline now also issues "change cards" when a passenger overpays the fare.

Between Sept. 10-13, OCTA service will be free to ease anxieties over the numerous changes in routing that go into effect on the 10th.

One new Riverside Transit Agency route is operating, and two new routes are scheduled to start after Labor Day:

- RTA #33 is a local shuttle in the city of Hemet. It is designed to serve senior citizens in trailer parks, but anyone can ride. Service runs Mon-Sat, 10 a.m.-8:30 p.m.
- RTA #39 is designed to provide service to the mountain communities of Idyllwild, Anza and Aguanga. One round trip will run between Hemet and Idyllwild on Thursdays, while on Tuesday and Saturdays, the bus will make one round trip between Temecula and Anza/Aguanga. Service may be expanded later on if ridership warrants it.
- RTA #40 connects Lake Elsinore and Sun City/Menifee via Quail Valley.

In Ventura County, the VISTA East route now provides Saturday service between Thousand Oaks (Oaks Mall) and Moorpark College. The route is almost the same as the weekday route, except that Westlake Village is not served.

Also, construction has started on a new Thousand Oaks Transit Center at US-101/Rancho Road. This facility will be used by Thousand Oaks Transit, VISTA, LADOT and possibly MTA. It is not clear whether any of the agencies currently stopping at the Oaks Mall will abandon that stop. ■

The recent Metro Aqua Line hoax (in which a group that calls itself Heavy Trash put up faux signs for a westside to downtown "Metro Aqua Line") had the intended effect of provoking discussion. As you can imagine the NIMBYs it targeted were not amused. I was quoted in the Aug. 24 L.A. Independent article "Hoax subway route signs shine light on Westside transit woes" that the reaction showed the need for regional approaches to solve regional problems: "Maybe it's indicative there needs to be some sort of dialogue about this issue. We're too trapped in this NIMBY mire where the needs of the region are held hostage by those able to shout loudest, and it's not really rational. As a region we should be talking about the Wilshire Corridor."

A BRU flyer claims one thousand participated in their Aug. 15 march to Staples Center after a late morning rally at MacArthur Park. The LA Times and Change Links both have it as only having drawn about 300. And since I was home sick that day I can testify that out my bathroom window it didn't appear to be more than 300.

I attended the Aug. 21 Federal Railroad Administration/Southern California Association of Governments maglev public meeting at the West Covina City Hall. All the presentations and fancy handouts just reinforced my gut feeling that this project is a bad idea.

Member Thomas Rubin joined me in attending the evening session of the 2nd round of MTA Long Range Plan focus group meetings held Aug. 23 (Vice President Anthony Loui attended the daytime session the previous day). The Policy Directions report presented to us was vague, providing no sense of where the process is heading. And as with the 1st round participants were invited for the 2nd half of the session to participate in an exercise whose value seemed rather questionable. Rubin rebelled at being asked to engage in a beauty pageant voting for modes (HOV lanes, rail, etc.) as to how they match for various goals (air quality improvement, reducing congestion, etc.) when we had no specific projects to compare. After several of us joined in this critique MTA allowed us to simply vote for which goals were most important to us, which was a useful exercise.

Supposedly the next round of meetings is in October. If it isn't more substantive than the first two I have to seriously question whether MTA is fulfilling its obligation under federal law to facilitate public input for its long range plans.

Assembly Speaker Robert Hertzberg has formed a Commission on Regionalism. This issue is long overdue for attention, but rife with political pitfalls. It will be interesting how and if the Commission deals with those touchy aspects.

I have participated in two teleconferences with a nascent Transportation Caucus of key stakeholders who wish to cooperatively influence policymaking in Sacramento. I am seriously considering flying up in mid-October to Sacramento to attend a one day face to face meeting of the Caucus to discuss goals for the coming legislative session and possible strategies.

Obscure entity of the month: the Critical Infrastructure Council, hosted by the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation (this has been described in a Aug. 24 San Gabriel Valley Tribune op-ed "Maglev Not the Answer to Southland Gridlock" co-authored by CIC Chair Viggo Butler as "A Group of concerned business leaders ... [studying] alternative solutions to the transport of goods and people")

Passenger Rail Improvement, Safety and Modernization Program (PRISM) is a concept for statewide passenger rail system rehabilitation funding that is being proposed. It would be similar to the current SHOPP program that fund maintenance of state highways. Metrolink is working with other California rail passenger operators in hopes that in the future PRISM could be adopted by the state as a new Public Transportation Account program.

Question of the month: Why does former California Transportation Commissioner David Fleming (Butler's co-author for the aforementioned op-ed) criticize the German Transrapid maglev yet endorses as feasible the Japanese maglev? The Japanese technology is even less proven than the German one. And both don't pencil out versus an upgraded Metrolink.

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Member Jane Reifer has done yeoman work organizing the Orange County Citizen Bus Restructuring Task Force with the aid of fellow members Kirk Schnieder and Phil Capo. The task force grew out of concerns of many over the impact of OCTA's impending "straightlining" on riders. And their hard work has paid off with a well attended forum held in Santa Ana Aug. 24 plus an impressive amount of press coverage:

"Sneak Peek at New OCTA Routes" (Orange County Register Aug. 7);
"Forum held for bus passengers" (Orange County Register August 23, 2000);
"Task force Unhappy with New OCTA routes" (Orange County Register Aug. 25);
"For Anxiety Over Bus Reroutings, Four Free Days"(LA Times Orange County section, Aug. 15);
"Bus riders meet today to oppose route changes" (LA Times Orange County section, Aug. 24)
"Bus Riders Gather to Oppose Route Changes" (LA Times Orange County section, Aug. 25);
"Bus Route Changes Draw Criticism" (LA Times Orange County section, Aug. 29).

Jane also informs us OCTA is slowly showing signs of being receptive to the Task Force's input. What a stirring example of activism!

Director Kymberleigh Richards had in-depth analysis of the proposed Burbank/Chandler busway and its many shortcomings in the Aug. 27 LA Times San Fernando Valley edition "Full Disclosure Now Before Busway Is Built" <http://home.pacbell.net/krichrds/ft082700.htm> Also Richards' comments at the August MTA Board meeting regarding plans for placing public restrooms at rail stations and transit centers were excerpted by KNX newsradio August 25.

Member Roger Christensen appeared twice in the Aug. 17 LA Times Valley supplement "Our Times". First with a letter in the Community Forum suggesting that neighborhood critics who complain that the Red Line parking lots are too small are suffering "amnesia" as they are the same people who fought to have the lots reduced in the early 1990s. And in a related article about solutions to Red Line parking by Karen S. Kim, he is quoted as a SO.CA.TA member advocating that people should learn to take connecting buses to the stations. Way to go, Roger!

Members Harold Katz (Aug. 14) and Roger Christensen (Aug. 12) both had letters in the Daily News blasting Joseph Honig's Aug. 6 sophomoric op-ed "Face it, L.A.'s subway is a failed idea". ■

L.A. Supervisor Michael Antonovich is promoting a plan to reconfigure the MTA Board to have only 1 member represent the city of Los Angeles, 7 for the other 87 cities in the County plus still have the 5 county supervisors on the Board. I won't even waste space on why this one is DOA and makes no sense. Talk about pandering to the California League of Cities! Plus I am still trying to understand why Antonovich in his Aug. 3 Pasadena Star-News op-ed touting this scheme claims instead of the subway we should have built

a 60 mile light rail line to the Antelope Valley. Huh? And of course the Ventura Freeway line to Westlake Village he has been pushing for years to no avail. Oh, those would have been in HIS district. Silly me, now I understand.

I'll conclude by confessing that A.B. 2643, which if passed will reallocate \$20 million a year from MTA to the munis, slipped under my radar. My sole comment is it reinforces my feeling a regional vision is what we most desperately need and which seems more and more remote. ■

ELECTION 2000 AND TRANSIT-PT. 2 *Steve Crosmer*

(Editor's Note: Steve Crosmer is a co-founder of SO.CA.TA, as well as a former vice president. This article represents his opinion only, not necessarily that of the Southern California Transit Advocates).

Al Gore is currently the vice president of the United States and holds the second highest elected office in our nation. Despite the fact that vice presidents have little impact on political decision making, one power he can exercise is breaking any deadlock or tie votes in the Senate.

Vice president Gore has been a champion for transit and the environment. He has been a strong supporter of transit going back to his early days in Congress in the 1970's. He has continued that through his tenure as a U.S. Senator, and now as vice president. His home is in Carthage, TN, about 50 miles or so east of Nashville.

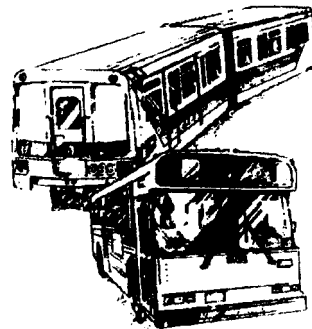
Vice president Gore is currently working with folks in Nashville to have commuter rail service started sometime this year or next. The first line to operate likely will be to Lebanon, not far from Carthage. Other lines being proposed are to Franklin, Kingston Springs and Murfreesboro. He is also working with Amtrak to restore intercity rail there as well, possibly with an extension of the Chicago-Louisville "Kentucky Cardinal". If elected, he will probably support the expansion of these services, but his biggest hurdle will be dealing with Congress.

Gore has been praised by many environmental organizations, Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, and National Wildlife Federation. He has also

won the support of labor, as there are many transit-related occupations in that field, especially bus drivers and railroad operations crews, and maintenance people who service the vehicles and right-of-ways.

Gore also broke a tie in the U.S. Senate to raise the gas tax by 4.3 cents-per-gallon in 1994. This vote also allowed states to have flexible spending with this tax to use it for transit so that traffic congestion could be relieved on the highways and provide commuters with alternate transportation while major reconstruction projects are taking place to improve roads and repair bridges. A lot of this work was long overdue, it helped provide steady jobs to stimulate the economy, and offer reasonable solutions and alternatives to travel besides taking the automobile.

The biggest challenge Gore will face will probably be Congress. He will have to show that he is serious about this and must include this up front when time comes for him to write the budget. Congress will always chip away by amending or attaching other pieces of legislation to their own liking, and he will have his work cut out for him if the opposing party has control of Congress. ■



It seemed too good to be true...

Around August 14, people in West Los Angeles started seeing large signs, indicating that a particular intersection was a "Future Station Location" for the "Metro Aqua Line".

The signs (one pictured here) looked convincing enough, complete with MTA logo and a project number. The project was supposedly sponsored by the quasi-official sounding "State of California Metropolitan Transit Association" and even had a phone number.

And, unlike previous Red Line extension proposals (generally involving going down Wilshire all the way to Santa Monica), the Aqua Line would travel via ritzy San Vicente Blvd (former Pacific Electric "Red Car" route), between Ocean Bl. in Santa Monica and Wilshire Bl. in Brentwood. Then it would run along Wilshire, terminating at Wilshire/Western, where people would transfer to the existing Red Line route.

No mention of the type of technology (monorail? subway? light rail?) was made, although, since the route connected with, but not continued, the Red Line system, many people assumed it was something different. A few months ago, an advocacy group had unsuccessfully lobbied for a monorail project along Wilshire Bl. Could this be it?

Welllllll.....someone eventually called the MTA about the proposed "Aqua Line", and guess what? It was a big surprise to the MTA as well!

As it turns out, the Aqua Line was not an MTA

project at all. (The fake name should have tipped people off--there is no "State of California Metropolitan Transit Association").

In fact, the signs were placed by a group of architects and artists. This group, called "Heavy Trash", deliberately placed the fake signs in expensive neighborhoods, where it is generally assumed that people would oppose a rail transit line, and start talking about it, perhaps exposing various attitudes, both positive and negative, toward the project, and transit in general. (Of course, that assumption is not unfounded, as the

ongoing fight over the Expo Line demonstrates. But surprisingly, there wasn't a noted groundswell of opposition to the Aqua Line).

Of course, not everyone associated the Aqua Line with transit, with some people thinking it was a water or sewer pipe project. Others thought it

Well, the Aqua Line signs have all been taken down. And, maybe a few people have had their interest in transit stimulated a bit. (According to reports, the phone number on the signs received about 150 calls, and the MTA received at least ten calls about the project).

Meanwhile, the fight for the real transit projects, including the Expo Line and Bus Rapid Transit on Wilshire, continues, as if the Aqua Line diversion never happened.

It seemed too good to be true....■

