

BULLETIN BOARD

A reminder: if you have web access you should request a password to the member only section of our website by e-mailing the cybermaster at transit@lerctr.org.

We have printed up a fresh supply of flyers publicizing our group. If you can help distribute these (at a local library, transit center, etc.) to help us reach prospective new members and/or sell the Transit Guide please contact us and we'll gladly send you some PDQ.

RailMail is a new newsletter for the Los Angeles to Pasadena Construction Authority. To be added to the mailing list call 866-465-2727.

Assembly Speaker Hertzberg's Commission on Regionalism now has a website: <http://www.regionalism.org>. It includes information on upcoming meetings and a link for subscribing to a free e-newsletter.

The Technical Appendix to the SCAG draft 2001 Regional Transportation Plan update is now available. The 3 volume set costs \$90. It will also soon be available for viewing on the RTP website: <http://www.scag-rtp.govconnect.org/> For further information contact SCAG at (213) 236-1800.

SCAG will be holding a workshop on the RTP Update Program Environmental Impact Report Wednesday Feb. 21 from 10 a.m. to Noon at SCAG's offices (818 W. 7th Street, 12th Floor, in downtown L.A.). Further information: (213) 236-1906.

Nomination's for the Donald G. Hagman Award for regional leadership are now being taken by SCAG. If you have someone you think should be nominated tell us.

Ed Simburger will be giving a talk on his book Railroad-Freeway at the La Cienega Borders (300 S. La Cienega in West Los Angeles) on Sunday Feb. 11 at 2 p.m. Further information: (310) 659-4045.

Bus Riders Union, the documentary by Haskell Wexler, will be screened as part of the Pan African Film Festival on Friday Feb. 16 at 8:40 p.m. at the Magic Johnson Theaters (3650 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. at the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza). Tickets are \$10 and a discussion will follow the screening. It is requested that tickets be purchased in advance from the BRU offices: (213) 387-2800.

Want to win free tickets (for 2) for any Amtrak Coast Starlight destination? To enter a monthly drawing online go to <http://www.cstourist.com/> and click "win free train tickets!" (be sure to read rules before entering).

Saturday Feb. 24 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles (<http://www.lamurals.org/>) will sponsor a tour of murals and art in Metro Rail stations beginning at Union Station and touring the entire system. Cost is \$25 - further information is available by phone [(818) 487-0416], fax [(818) 763-7647] or e-mail [mcla@lamurals.org].

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

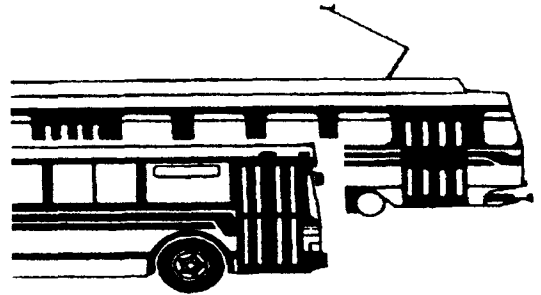
Although Metrolink trains are stopping at Downtown Pomona as of Feb 5, the official station opening will be March 2, 10 a.m. (No word yet on whether SO.CA.TA will participate...)

New Orion natural gas buses are running on MTA/First Transit routes #125, 128, 130, 205, 225/226, 232, 177, 254, 256, 266, and 270. So far most of them seem to be on the routes in the South Bay (particularly #125, 232 and 205), although some have been spotted on the #177 between Duarte and J.P.L.

SCAT has modified several routes in Oxnard:
• Minor changes on #2 (Colonia), #3 (South Oxnard), #4 (North Oxnard) and #9 (Gisler), primarily to make it easier for buses to keep their schedules

Line #12 now has route-deviation service between Pacific View Mall and the Harbor.

Line #15 (El Rio) now runs between the Esplanade, and St. John's Medical Center, via El Rio. The portion of #15 that formerly went to Downtown Oxnard is now served by Line #4B



MEMBERS IN ACTION

Members Dana Gabbard, Joseph Dunn, Alan Micheison and Mark Panitz attended one or more of the meetings Santa Monica Blue Bus recently held. Besides announcing upcoming adjustments to schedules and some additional service Santa Monica is planning a fare restructuring July 1. This may include introduction of a day pass and either a 75 cent fare or 25 cent fee for local transfers.

Jan. 30 SO.CA.TA co-sponsored with MTA and the Southern California Council on Environment and Development a community meeting on MTA's draft Long Range Plan at the Westside Pavilion. Members in attendance included Ken Rubin, Russ Jones, Dana Gabbard, Anthony Loui, Charles Powell and John Ulloth. Over 50 citizens attended the meeting and engaged the MTA staff in a vigorous dialogue. The next day KFWB broadcast reports on the meeting, one of which had a 20 second soundbite of Gabbard on the importance of transportation to our region's future. Special thanks to Vice President Loui who took the lead as liaison with the Robert Group (MTA's outreach consultants) for the two meetings we co-sponsored on the LRP.

Isa Meksin attended SCAG's January Transportation & Communications Committee meeting which featured a presentation on the Aviation component of the draft Regional Transportation Plan.

OCTA CenterLine project news: Mark Strickert attended the Jan. 18 CenterLine open house at OCTA headquarters; Kirk Schneider and Jane Reifer attended the Jan. 22 public hearing before the OCTA board. They report at both meetings attendees ranged from vocal supporters to screeching NIMBYs. ■

As of this month the Public Relations and Public Affairs committees are being combined with myself and Kymberleigh Richards as co-chairs. We have agreed to call the committee The Public and Legislative Affairs Committee (PLAC), which was what it used to be called before being split into two. Hence starting this month we are resuming the former name of this column: PLAC Report.

SCAGLEV is dead (maybe)! Just before leaving office U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater chose the Pittsburgh and Baltimore/Washington DC maglev proposals to advance as finalists for the federal maglev demonstration funds. Despite this setback SCAG has quickly regrouped and is taking its dog and pony presentation touting the concept to various local governments (latest stop: West Covina) evidently in hopes that by garnering enough endorsements from local politicians that that will somehow translate into some means of keeping the project alive. Seems farfetched. After all, we are talking about a project that requires billions. How a few council resolutions will free up that kind of money remains to be seen.

stupid idea of the month: MTA paying Booz/Allen \$354,832 to do a management audit of the agency (item #29 revised, MTA Board Jan. 25 meeting). Why not simply dust off the Coopers/Lybrand audit of a few years ago (which cost a pretty penny) and implement it?

MTA faces a crossroads with the impending retirements of CEO Julian Burke and transportation operations chief Thomas Conner. The agency has certainly improved thanks to their efforts. But the next obstacle MTA faces is recruiting successors able to build on the legacy Burke and Conner leave. Also a looming question is whether the MTA Board will now backslide into its former micromanaging ways, which Burke generally was able to limit (despite displeasure at what they saw as high-handedness boardmembers were unable to lay a hand on Burke due to their desperate need to

retain him to shore up sagging credibility with key funding partners).

All I'll say about the Jan. 16 MTA Long Range Plan stakeholder meeting I attended is it was exactly what I expected. Oh, well, onward to 2003!

mystery of the month: who prepared bilingual flyers found in the Wilshire corridor declaiming "Extend the Metro Rail Under Wilshire to the Westside!" and requesting people attend the Jan. 30 meeting we cosponsored? Tagline: "And tell them to start it now--not in 25 Years".

The Jan. Metro Investment Report announces Pico Rivera Council Member Beatrice Proo has taken the MTA Board seat formerly occupied by Jenny Oropeza. Oropeza meanwhile as a new state Assembly member will have a seat on the transportation committee, as well as being the chair of a new Select Committee on the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Meanwhile Betty Karnette has given up her chairmanship of the Senate Transportation Committee since she has been placed on the Rules Committee. And the new committee chair is... State Senator Kevin Murray.

While reading the contracted bus service report for the 1st quarter FY 01 (item #7, MTA Operation Committee Jan. 17 meeting) I was surprised to learn First Transit (which operates lines 125, 128, 130, 205, 225/226, 232, 177, 254, 256, 266, and 270) on Nov. 21, 2000 was presented with a Cure Notice by MTA due to service performance problems such as on-time pull-outs, cancellations, missed service, vehicle cleanliness and customer complaints. FT has 60 days to improve and is currently being assessed penalties for substandard performance.

It was a pleasant surprise that academic Jonathan E.D. Richmond in his Jan. 21 LA Times op-ed "The Costly Triumph of Ideology" acknowledged the

complexities of privatizing bus service that most advocates ignore or deny the existence of. Another pleasant surprise were the comments of USC Professor James Moore at the Jan. 24 MTA Citizen Advisory Committee meeting, in which he emphasized various options to address growing traffic demand instead of his anti-rail rhetoric.

ALERT! Caltrans is seeking comments on on the draft Public Participation Program and Elements of its Transportation Plan. These provide the framework of a process that will be occurring during the next 2 1/2 years. Comments are due by March 2. I will bring a copy of these documents to our meeting. Or examine them online at: <http://svhqsg4.dot.ca.gov:80/hq/tpp/Offices/OSP/ctp.html>

Trust but verify seems the credo behind MTA's resolution (item #43, MTA Board Jan. 25 meeting) that MTA must first review and approve allocation requests that Caltrans or local governments make for projects approved in the Call for Projects process. Evidently MTA hopes by this to catch projects that are unable to meet the SB 45 timely use of funds provisions and request reallocation by California Transportation Commission to a future year instead of the next county-share period. From my reading this is a wise precaution. Thumbs up to MTA staff for developing this.

Who will next in Southern California add articulated buses to their fleet? My guess is Santa Monica, which plans to order some by an add-on to OCTA's next artic order. MTA is also interested but taking a careful measured approach by first evaluating the current offerings (maybe because of the RTD's disappointing '80s experience with artics).

Well, LAX finally released the draft environmental documents to go forward with expansion. Now the battle will really begin!

<http://www.laxmasterplan.org/> has the documents (as do a number of local libraries). Further information: (310) 646-7697.

obscure entity of the month: OnTrac, AKA Orange North America Trade Rail Access Corridor Authority. This is a joint powers of the County of Orange and cities of Placentia, Fullerton, Anaheim and Yorba Linda attempting to raise funds to grade separate the Orangethorpe rail line a la the Alameda Corridor. Website: <http://www.ontrac-jpa.org/>

The inside word is Alarcon's MTA Board reform bill (SB 18) isn't considered likely to proceed very far, due to the usual collection of reform opponents.

I was quoted in the Jan. 18 San Fernando Valley edition of the LA Times ("MTA Offers Long-Range Transit Plan for the Region") on parochial politics and the region's state of denial about the impending transportation crisis.

Adios to the Southern California Intercity Rail Group. Created to possibly take over operation of the Pacific Surfliner, it was unable to achieve regional consensus for undertaking such a take over and ended up merely facilitating input to Amtrak. Most guess SCIRG's role in the coast corridor will be taken up by the L.A.-San Diego Rail Corridor Agency (LOSSAN) which while mostly inactive of late shows signs of renewed activity and possibly may add as new members the counties north of Los Angeles the Surfliner runs thru.

I'd like to conclude by offering a fond farewell to David Ashcraft, Transportation Director of Culver CityBus, on the occasional of his retirement effective Jan. 6. Thanks Mr. Ashcraft for the years of quality bus service you oversaw, and enjoy a well deserved rest! ■

I went to the symposium today. Basically, the Automobile Club was very supportive of bringing a diverse view of looking at transit as a reasonable alternative to the effects of automobile and freeway use due to growth.

Marty Wachs was one of the best speakers in the conference who gave a historical overview of surface transportation in Los Angeles in the last 100 years. He noted that the decentralization of Los Angeles, along with suburbanization and sprawl first occurred at the turn of the nineteenth century when oil and land developers seized tremendous opportunities to develop vast tracts of land simultaneously. Consequently, the development that first occurred in these communities were of very low density. Immigrants from east coast cities settled in LA and became prosperous enough to buy cars to travel around Los Angeles. Wachs noted that unlike many east coast cities that began as pedestrian oriented cities, Los Angeles was essentially at the beginning of the twentieth century, a transit oriented city that developed the largest streetcar system in the world. Simultaneously, the wealth of the city's inhabitants were manifested in the number of cars that were bought and houses that were sold. Vast suburban tracts with low density necessitated automobile use to the point where the automobile had fit perfectly into the land-use patterns of development in Los Angeles. Wachs said that the automobile did not take away transit. The land use was responsible for the explosive growth in automobile use.

There was an interesting session on "The Revival of Rail Transit". John Dyer, former Director of SCRTD spoke of the political history of the birth of Metro Rail through the formation of Propositions A and C, along with the almost impossible lobbying, consensus building and political power making in

Washington DC that made Metro Rail happen. Dyer said that when the Federal Government evaluated all the transit proposals made at that time, the Los Angeles proposal was seen as "the most feasible and cost efficient."

Dyer also gave an account of the effects of the fifty cent fare RTD once had due to Proposition A. He said that the system experienced a sharp spike in ridership, with over 1.7 million boardings/day in 1984. He said, however, that bus service was running at its maximum peak efficiency with, at certain parts of Downtown Los Angeles experiencing bus departures at the rate of 15 second headways. The system literally overloaded and started to break down with a total fleet of over 3,000 buses in service vastly contributing to vehicle delay and congestion. Dyer said clearly that 1984 demonstrated that Los Angeles cannot survive with an all bus service.

Dyer also noted that Metro Blue Line is the most heavily used light rail system for its service length in the country. Also, Metro Red Line now stands as the fifth heaviest used heavy rail system in the country for its service length. New York City takes numbers 1-3, followed by Washington DC in fourth place.

Nick Patsouras said that the news media is the cause of contention in badly coloring people's perception of transit in Los Angeles. He especially noted that the news media typically bashes Metro Red Line because of its high cost of construction and overlooks the many benefits that the line offers which clearly outweigh its construction cost portrayed in the news media. Patsouras also noted that when we plan and build a transit system we are actually participating in the act of City Building.

Mark Pisano of SCAG explained the emerging three-tier MTA transit system network. He also

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<http://www.citywatchla.com/> has a list of Los Angeles mayoral candidate debates. Treasurer Juanita Dellomes especially encourages attendance at the forum she is helping organize with AARP to be held Thursday March 8 at Wilshire United Methodist Church (4350 Wilshire Bl.) at 1:30 p.m. The L.A. mayor race is a transportation issue because whoever becomes the next Mayor will greatly influence regional transportation policy by virtue of controlling 4 votes on the MTA board. We encourage members who live in Los Angeles to attend a forum and be an informed voter.

Insider transit fan tip: Sunday April 8 MTA will be running Blue Line cars 148 and 109 (both painted as recreations of classic PE red cars) in regular service. Normally they only run weekday peak service.

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. ■

talked about the region having high-speed rail service in the form of MAG-LEV.

I did not stay for the Dan Beal speech but I take it that he is approaching transportation through the traditional highway view and that we should spend more money on this mode because it's the most used. I noticed that he is suggesting that the region can take a "slowed growth" approach in order to curb runaway growth so that one can all drive cars efficiently on widened freeways. I think that is unrealistic. The Los Angeles Region can never reach consensus to stop growth. Cities in this region have different views on growth, depending on their geographic region. To me, what is definitely happening is the push-pull of different cities and sub-regions trying to either promote or stop growth which translates into various forms of NIMBY, smart growth or sprawl for economic development in our region.

I think what was encouraging was Marty Wachs, when he mentioned that Los Angeles is typically portrayed by the many gloom and doomsayers as an apocalyptic city region that no

other city wants to become with the freeway as its icon. Wachs said that the truth is that Los Angeles's arterial street system is the key to the making of the city, not the freeway, and that most local neighborhoods and Los Angeles's regional urban form was shaped by its street grid system, not its freeways. He also said that there were two arterial grid system plans in Los Angeles. There was a 1924 plan which called for the widening and straightening of major streets that were the supposedly precursor plan for the boulevard system we have today. Also, there was a 1930-1939 plan for expressways and parkways that would have completely transformed Los Angeles into a highly livable city without freeways. This plan fully integrated the boulevard with local neighborhoods into a cohesive regional urban design plan. Wachs also indicated that freeway construction in America essentially slowed after 1971. Finally, most speakers stated that we will be needing more transit in the future, and that this will be the focus of our transportation system, hopefully balanced with automobile use. ■