

## **NATIONAL PARK SHUTTLE**

(John Ulloth)

Responding to public demand, the National Park Service (N.P.S.) is planning a transportation project to take people into its patchwork of Federal, State and local public lands and private inholdings that make up the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Center. Peaking at 10,000 visitors per day on the weekends, transit access through the park is long-overdue. Southern California Transit Advocates was invited to participate in a morning focus group about the service November 10 at the Michael Landon Center in Malibu Bluffs Park.

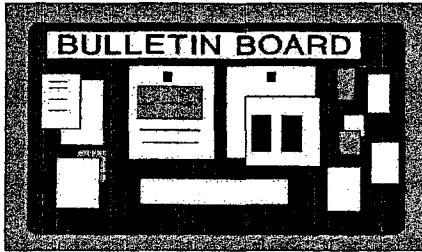
Lillian De Loza of Consensus Planning Group, facilitated the meeting for the construction/engineering firm of Parsons Brinckerhoff Inc., consultants to the National Park Service for this proposal. The panel- a dozen and a half stakeholders from Malibu locals to midcity residents, from beachgoing Pepperdine students to veterans trail club organizers, from a songwriter who finds inspiration in nature to the contract writer for a free propane-powered Malibu shuttle- was flanked by a 4-member table of N.P.S. staff and consultants who provided background and technical answers to the panelists questions.

The consultants provided a color satellite map cover 30 square miles showing the Backbone Trail, overlaid by 2 N.P.S. shuttle routes: 1) the proposed 10-stop "Heart of the Park" loop line linking park facilities, trailheads, beaches, campgrounds, and parking lots-stopping at Tapia Park along Las Virgenes/Malibu Canyon on the east, Peter Strauss Ranch, Rocky Oaks, Backbone Trailhead (west), and a future Lower Kanan Trailhead along Kanan-Dume

Road on the west, Paramount Ranch and Malibu Creek State Park along Mulholland Highway on the north; and Pacific Coast Highway on the south. P.C.H. has 3 short spurs west to shuttle stops at Zuma/Westward beaches, north at Solstice Canyon, and east to Malibu Pier. N.P.S. wants 2 limited stop busses to run this loop simultaneously: 1 clockwise & 1 counterclockwise. 2) a "potential" community feeder line (designated for another focus group) interlines along Mulholland Highway, with ends going northeast to Calabasas & northwest from Kanan Road toward Oak Park to serve strip development and park & ride lots along the I-101 freeway. 2 existing L.A.C.M.T.A. bus lines were also indicated that would connect: Line 434 along the coast, and Line 161 along the I-101 trip.

The questions (and group answers) were what was the appropriate fare (~\$2 or ~\$5 day-pass), headways (ranging from 30 minutes to 3 hours, most said 1 hour), length of service day (sunrise to sunset, best times to hike & official hours of park operation), and whether the lines were a good idea (majority said yes, though 2 opposed, feeling that increasing public access meant overcrowded trails & loss of "wilderness" (which this is not, technically).

About half the group wanted a interpretive experience from the driver or a ranger, a few wanted orientation/education to be provided- especially to new populations of visitors-about trail hazards (lack of water, snakes, mountain lions, criminals). Most of the group wanted a canopy, bathrooms, water at stops. Points made on behalf of SO.CA.TA included: 1) the necessity of this service to increase transit-rider access to, and reduce car use, 2A) need for coordination with M.T.A. for ideal 1-seat rides to minimize waits & transfers, to find a location for a (cont'd pg. 10)



At our December 8 meeting members will vote for officers and directors for 2002. Candidates include:

President - Kris Sharp, Kymberleigh Richards

Vice President - Kymberleigh Richards, Philip Capo

Treasurer - Juanita Dellomes

Recording Secretary - Mark Strickert

Corresponding Secretary - Dana Gabbard

Directors-at-Large (3) - Anthony Loui, Ken Ruben, Kyle Minnis, Philip Capo, Kris Sharp, Kymberleigh Richards, Craig Weingarten

Our thanks to Charles Powell, John Ulloth and Woody Rosner (chair) for volunteering to be on the Election Committee.

Please note the meeting will begin at 1 p.m. We will discuss our plans for 2002 and solicit feedback from members. After the election we will caravan to Long Beach for our annual holiday banquet at the Colonial Buffet. Cost of the banquet is \$15 (which can be paid the day of the event).

Roger Snoble, new Chief Executive Officer of the MTA, will speak at Friends 4 Expo Transit's general meeting Thursday, December 6 at 7:00 p.m. in west Los Angeles at 2955 South Robertson Blvd. (Hamilton High School in the

Library on the 2nd floor). This location is served by MTA route 220 and Big Blue Bus route 12. Friends for Expo Transit website:

<http://members.aol.com/friends4expo/>

Our thanks to Lt. Leo Norton of the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department transit bus police unit for an information presentation at the November meeting. Also at our November meeting we endorsed the core principles statement of the California Alliance for Transportation Choices along with a set of suggested changes prepared by Jane Reifer we will forward to CATC for their consideration.

The day-after-Thanksgiving exploration of Kern County Regional Transit service between Antelope Valley and Bakersfield was a great success with 12 members participating. A report will be published in a future issue. The owl trip being planned by Philip Capo has been tentatively rescheduled for early 2002. After that our next study tour will be the Pacific Coast Highway/Malibu to San Clemente trip likely in April or May.

With the coming of the new year members need to send in their membership renewal. Due to escalating expenses at our November meeting a dues increase was approved by a vote of the members: \$21/year regular (\$8.40/year limited income). Your prompt renewal guarantees continued receipt of the Transit Advocate and supports our advocacy efforts.

The final MTA meeting on the Glendale Blvd. Freeway Terminus Project will be held Thursday, Dec. 6 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the Silver Lake Recreation Center (*cont'd on pg. 9*)



Nov. 9 the LA Times ("Leading MTA Critic Makes U-Turn, Says Enough Buses Are in Service") quotes Eric Mann at a MTA Board special meeting as stating MTA has enough service on the road to meet the criteria of the agreement. Yet the same day Mann on KCRW's "Which Way L.A." complained his comments had been taken out of context, only referred to the initial load standards, and that MTA lacked the buses to fulfill the more stringent impending load factor standards. By Nov. 12 it was business as usual: Mann in a Daily News article on new MTA CEO Roger Snoble ("New L.A. Bus Boss Tech Fan") states that "[Snoble] needs to order 1,000 new compressed natural gas buses". What's going on?

Mann is currently in a somewhat complicated predicament. If (and it is a big if) MTA petitions the Supreme Court to review the 9th Circuit Court ruling and the Court decides to take the case there is a chance of the agreement not passing muster. The mere possibility of such an adverse precedent occurring has many civil rights organizations nervous. These groups are pressuring Mann to back off. On KCRW Mann spoke of his statement as "extending an olive branch" at the behest of Mayor Hahn. While running for Mayor, Hahn pledged to get the MTA Board to drop its appeal. One can imagine how difficult this must be given Mann's propensity for personal attacks and escalating demands. And it

appears conciliation is something Mann can't sustain. It'll be interesting to see whether the MTA Board decides to go forward with the petition. The deadline for filing is mid-January.

My mind reels at the ongoing SCAGLEV fiasco. Reading the packet from the SCAG Maglev Task Force I am dumb-founded at the dubious claims made by the army of experts SCAG is paying to study this grand vision... (is my cynicism showing?)

Speaking of the Southern California Association of Governments, I was interested to learn the Plans and Programs Committee of the San Bernardino Associated Governments at its August meeting requested from staff an analysis of the process for establishing a new Metropolitan Planning Organization for its area in place of SCAG. Bottom line: SANBAG staff do not recommend pursuing MPO redesignation based on the difficulty of the process, turmoil it would cause and "potentially minimal benefit of making a change".

Faithful Reader brought to my attention item #32 from the November 29 MTA Board meeting paving the way for MTA to pass thru \$1 million dollars of state funds to pay for transportation infrastructure improvements around Staples Center. Turns out this was an earmark in a budget bill. One wonders how generous the campaign contributions were for the legislator who facilitated this.

Speaking of funds from distant lands, Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard has succeeded in obtaining \$100,000 in federal funds to study the feasibility of the proposed downtown red car project which we had a presentation about a few years ago.

I attended the Nov. 3 LAX Master Plan public meeting at Los Angeles High School along with Cecil Carpio (our member from Inglewood). But since the whole process is in turmoil my sole comment was when a revised plan is readied that public meetings must be held.

Nov. 6 along with Jane Reifer and Kymberleigh Richards I attended the Transit Riders' Federation Summit in San Jose sponsored by Odyssey 20/20. Jane gave a great presentation on how to get the information you need to analyze service performance and the tricks to understand it. Andrew Sullivan of Rescue Muni discussed how they gather the information for the annual service quality "scorecard" they issue. Jeff Hobson of the Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition discussed coalition building. And in a rousing presentation Rod Diridon, chair of the California High Speed Rail Authority Board of Directors, discussed the current status of the project. After watching Diridon in action I finally see the chance for the political leadership that just might get this effort rolling. It was a great meeting and I know all of us who attended learned a lot. Kudos to Kristina Egan and her Odyssey staff!

Kymberleigh Richards presented our position at the MTA Nov. 10 public hearing on proposed FY 2002 service changes. It was disappointing that this meeting was poorly publicized by MTA, and therefore attendance was light. But I was impressed the Bus Riders Union representative actually spoke regarding the various proposals instead of simply giving the usual BRU line. Sure, they opposed everything. And it was laced with their usual tortured rhetoric. But I actually agreed with some of the things the spokesperson said. How about that?

The Train Riders Association of California 2001 Annual Meeting Nov. 17 at the Burbank Hilton was very informative as we heard from OCTA CEO Art Leahy, Metrolink CEO David Solow and Pasadena Blue Line Chief Project Officer Thomas Stone about the status of their various rail projects. Darrell Clark also shared his wonderful Expo Rail slideshow and the story of how Expo advocates beat the odds. Members in attendance included Ken Ruben, John Ulloth, Jane Reifer, Kirk Schneider, Nate Zablen, Anthony Loui and Roger Christensen.

Our endorsement is being sought for several transportation-related items: Surface Transportation Policy Project is launching what it terms a New Transportation Charter as part of TEA-21 renewal. Proposition 42 on the March 2002 ballot permanently dedicates gasoline sales taxes to transportation purposes. And the Planning and Conservation League are preparing their initiative. We will have material on all three of these at our December meeting.

Regarding the PCL effort, I've learned buried in it is funding for the Orange County Central Park and Nature Preserve. This is in fact the "great park" concept being pushed by those opposed to El Toro being developed as a commercial airport. Is this a deal killer for us?

I'll conclude by noting a while back I spent some time talking with Sacramento based Associated Press reporter Jim Wasserman about Rapid Bus, and then spent a weekday evening with an AP photographer helping him take some pictures of the Wilshire Rapid. Guess what? The article appeared in the Nov. 4 Orange County Register ("Buses Roll Out Perks") including a picture of me riding while staring into space. Plus I'm quoted in the article. Am I ready for my close-up, Mr. DeMille? ■

## **OWL EXCURSION 2001**

(Dana Gabbard)

July 25, 1997 members of SO.CA.TA participated in our first exploration of MTA owl service. At the end of 1999 a small group of members explored MTA's City NightLine (route 646) during owl hours. With over 18 months elapsing since our last trip during the wee hours several members expressed a desire to undertake another owl exploration. Charles Powell graciously planned an itinerary and a rendezvous was set for 8:30 p.m. at the East Portal building adjacent to the fish tank on Saturday Aug. 18. Members present included: Andy Novak, Charles Powell, Bart Reed, Mark Strickert, Armando Avalos, John Ulloth, Dana Gabbard, Charles Hobbs and Frank Schroder.

Our first bus was line 33, a Neoplan (#6519) at 8:55 p.m. We were the only passengers along with member Ken Ruben who by coincidence caught the same bus to go home. 3 boarded at Alameda and 5 at Spring (all ride counts in this report EXCLUDE SO.CA.TA members). We deboarded at Spring/Temple at 9:04 p.m. and bid farewell to Mr. Ruben.

As we waited for the next bus participants separated into small groupings to converse. At 9:14 p.m. we caught line 92, another Neoplan (#4544). As we made our way thru Silverlake and Echo Park we had a few boardings and deboardings. Upon hitting Auto Row (Brand Bl.) in Glendale things picked up, with 4 riders boarding at Chevy Chase and 3 more at Colorado. We deboarded at Brand and Broadway and just missed the line 180 bus we were hoping to catch.

Quickly schedules were pulled and contingencies considered as we sought options due to missing our connection.

Meanwhile we noted how lively Brand Blvd. has become - people strolling, shops open late, an urban dynamism reminiscent of Old Town Pasadena. Also noticed was the uncomfortable metal wire seating for bus patrons - YOWCH! The bus braintrust decided to abandon riding line 156 from Hollywood and downtown, instead waiting for the line 181 to connect with the Red Line to get back on schedule. One problem with this plan is member Woody Rosner had arranged to join us mid-tour. Thankfully Charles Hobbs had brought along a cell phone and kindly let Dana Gabbard borrow it to call Rosner and give him instructions on how to catch up with the group at Gateway Plaza.

At 10:18 p.m. we caught line 181, yet another Neoplan (#6799) with 30 passengers. We made our way thru Glendale and the Los Feliz district, eventually having a few standees. We arrived at Hollywood Blvd. and Western at 10:40 p.m. The transfer was timed perfectly as a downtown-bound train appeared just after we reached the platform at 10:45 p.m. We boarded car #595, which had nearly a seated load. Once we hit Wilshire/Vermont the train began to empty out and by 7th/Metro it was nearly empty. We arrived at Union Station just after 11 p.m.

With about 20 minutes at our disposal before the next bus members made use of the restroom, scanned the schedule rack or just hung out. Dana went up to the Plaza and enjoyed the eerie quiet watching the wind gently sway the palms with the downtown skyline as a backdrop. Barely noticeable was the muted rumble of the nearby freeway.

Woody Rosner, following directions, arrived to join the tour. Also Phil Capo linked up with our group. Phil had tried to join us earlier but was stymied by bus

detours around street closures in Silverlake for the Sunset Junction community fair. At one point Phil barely missed catching our line 92 bus as it passed under Sunset.

Due to Plaza construction the usual stop for the bus we wanted to catch was closed. And despite our standing at stop 6, its designated temporary stop, the bus nearly passed us. But a bit of hand waving persuaded the operator to stop (also Armando had a copy of the official notice about the temporary stop change which he showed the operator when we boarded). This was line 439 and (surprise) it was a Neoplan (#6581). We departed Gateway at 11:25 p.m. as the sole passengers (and would nearly remain so during our entire time on this bus). Near Staples Center there was heavy traffic (due to the WNBA finals). After that the trip was fairly high speed. At about 12:25 a.m. we arrived at LAX City Bus Center (Lot C).

A one hour break was scheduled for this location. We made our way to the Lot C shuttle bus station, and partook of the vending machines: coffee, snack foods, soda, sandwiches, candy plus a very cold water fountain. Dana dispensed snack sized candies he brought with him and soon most were engaged in animated conversation with fellow tour participants.

Around 1:15 a.m. we made our way back to the Bus Center since our next bus was scheduled to arrive soon. The bus didn't arrive until 1:32 a.m. but the operator driver hopped off, closed the door of the bus and hot footed for the bus station. Finally at 1:42 a.m. we attempted to depart--except that the back door interlock wouldn't disengage, which meant that the bus couldn't move. To our rescue came Charles Powell who used his knowledge as an MTA service attendant to

fix it (to a round of applause from grateful passengers). Route 40 (a Neoplan #6579) departed with 9 passengers. As we traveled along we began picking up people until the bus was full with some standees.

Again we needed to modify our itinerary. Phil Capo suggested we ride the 207 and 30 to have our arrival downtown coincide with the 3 a.m. lineup. So we deboarded at Western and Martin Luther King Blvd. After about a 10 minute wait at 2:23 a.m. the line 207 bus (a Neoplan #6311) showed up. There were 17 passengers and a few more boarded before we got off at Western/Pico. This was a desolate locale except for a service station (open but closed up tight - you paid through a window). At 2:48 a.m. line 30 arrived. It was our first NABI low-floor of the trip (#7417) with only one passenger. No one else got on as we made our way to downtown.

After witnessing the bus lineup along Broadway and 7th, we boarded line 51. Our plan was to ride the 51/53 owl loop along Avalon and Central. The bus was a 1992 TMC RTS #1242 (former methanol/ethanol). There were very few boardings during either segment of the loop. Also we saw few activity centers served by the bus. The surroundings were a blur, the atmosphere muted, and several of the tour participants nodded off briefly.

The last bus of the night was line 60 (downtown Los Angeles to downtown Long Beach). By the time we boarded it along 7th Street at 4:10 a.m., it already had 15 passengers. The bus was a 1996 Neoplan #4720. The ambiance was much livelier than the prior bus, and before long the female driver was conversing with Dana and Phil about the owl trip and her experiences driving the 60 in owl hours. She told them a riot of 200 people the previous Saturday (*cont'd on pg. 9*)



**TRANSIT ADVOCATES OF ORANGE COUNTY** - Mark Strickert, with Barry Christensen and Jane Reifer - 866-476-2282 ext. 4, or [zineland@yahoo.com](mailto:zineland@yahoo.com)

### **A MISSING LINK RETURNS!**

Direct Service From Santa Ana Transit Terminal to Cal State Fullerton and Brea Mall starts December 9th.

OCTA Route 53 is being extended north to Brea Mall, including new service in Fullerton along Associated Rd, Yorba Linda Blvd, and Placentia Ave. The new Route 53 will restore connections between downtown Santa Ana and North County destinations and bus lines that were lost with the "straightlining" of September 2000. This will also provide brand new service for people along Sunkist St. between Lincoln Ave. and La Palma Ave., on Blue Gum/Melrose from La Palma Ave. to Orangethorpe Ave., and sections of Placentia Ave. Some of these areas have had a 2 mile gap between bus lines in the past. The route will now provide one-bus service to Brea Mall, Cal State Fullerton (at Associated and Yorba Linda), CHOC Hospital, OCTA headquarters, MainPlace Mall, downtown Santa Ana, Hutton Center, and the Irvine Business Center. The route will also provide anyone in west or central Fullerton the opportunity to transfer just once from any east-west bus (except Imperial) and go to the previously mentioned destinations.

**NEW AND IMPROVED BUS SERVICE STARTING DECEMBER 9, 2001**  
Other OCTA December Service Changes will include:

- Route 26, Fullerton to Yorba Linda via Commonwealth Ave/Yorba Linda Blvd., will begin service on Sundays and holidays, along the full route from the Fullerton Park and Ride on the west, to the North Orange County Community College District campus in Yorba Linda in the east.
- Route 35, Fullerton Park and Ride to Huntington Beach via Brookhurst, will run every 20 minutes during weekday peak periods, instead of every 30 minutes
- Route 37, La Habra to Fountain Valley via Euclid Ave., will run every 20 minutes during weekday peak periods, rather than every 30 minutes. More good news is that there will be no short-turns at La Palma as previously proposed
- Route 47, Fullerton Transportation Center to Newport Beach via Lemon St, Anaheim Blvd, and Fairview St., will operate every 15 minutes at weekday peak, and 20 minutes on weekends
- Route 57, Brea to Newport Beach via State College Blvd. and Bristol Ave., will have additional peak-hours service in Costa Mesa and Newport Beach, and an added weekday morning run from Brea Mall (departing 4:08 am)

**DECEMBER 2001 BUS BOOK ERRATA**  
Be sure to obtain copies of forthcoming Riders Alerts as many Bus Book schedules have been incorrectly printed this time around - particularly Routes 50, 46, 47, and 57.

### HAVE A SEAT

The Fullerton City Council will consider new benches and trash cans for bus stops on Friday, December 14th at 4:00 PM. (The meeting is on an unusual day because of scheduling conflicts.) This will likely mean the end of bus bench advertising, at least in the downtown area. The council meets at City Hall, 303 W. Commonwealth Ave.

### ADOPT-A-ROUTE PROJECT

TAOC has chosen Route 43 / Harbor Blvd. as its first Adopt-A-Route project. Please submit your observations of this line's strengths and weaknesses.

### REPORT FROM LAGUNA BEACH

Member Jay Laessi reports that the City of Laguna Beach is now advertising the Mainline ("Blue Bus") service by distributing flyers and bus schedules door

to door. The entire city is being blanketed with literature, one neighborhood at a time. This campaign was prompted by Laessi's efforts on the Parking, Traffic and Circulation Committee and his belief that advertising is crucial to getting people out of their cars. Laessi, Executive Director of Auto-Free Orange County, can be reached at 949/452-1393 or auto-free.net.

### MEET AND GREET

The next meeting of the Transit Advocates of Orange County will be on Thursday, December 13th, at 6:00 PM in Fullerton. The Rail Advocates of Orange County are scheduled to get together on Wednesday, December 19th at 7pm, also in Fullerton. Please contact us at [zineland@yahoo.com](mailto:zineland@yahoo.com) or (866) 476-2282 ext. 4 for location and other details. ■

*(Owl Trip, from pg. 7)* in the nightclub district of Huntington Park filled the street and forced her to gingerly have the bus make its way through the melee.

We arrived at the Long Beach Transit Mall at about 5:30 a.m. Five minutes later we boarded a Blue Line car (#128A) for the trip back to downtown L.A. Armando and Andy got off at Willow Station to have breakfast. Most of us continued to downtown L.A. and had breakfast at the Pantry.

This trip demonstrated the perils of bus connections and the value of being able to improvise. Our thanks to everyone who participated.

[This trip report drew upon Charles Hobbs' narrative, available at <http://www.lerctr.org/~transit/owl2001.html>.] ■

*(Bulletin Board, from pg.3)*  
(1850 W. Silver Lake Drive). This location is served by MTA route 201.

Save the dates: California Transit Association 2002 Conference November 6-8 at the Doubletree Hotel near Ontario Airport; Planning and Conservation League Legislative Symposium the weekend of Feb.2-3, 2002 in Sacramento (further details: <http://www.pcl.org/Symposium/summaryinfo.html>).

As always, The Transit Advocate needs articles, letters, Transit Tips, photographs and research 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](mailto:transit@lerami.lerctr.org)). Material for publication should be received two weeks before the scheduled SO.CA.TA meeting



## **TRANSIT UPDATES**

Three-car trains are now running on the Metro Blue Line. More three-car trains are being deployed as equipment (i.e. new Green Line cars) becomes available. By January, every other train should be a three-car train.

Meanwhile, controversy continues regarding the Pasadena Blue Line (now renamed the Gold Line) as to whether or not all grade crossings need to be grade separated. Requiring total separation would cost \$300 million extra, and may end the project.

LADOT #142 (Long Beach-San Pedro) has reportedly resumed its regular route via the Vincent Thomas Bridge.

The City of El Segundo has begun offering a free lunchtime shuttle for its downtown district operating with a 9 minute headway weekdays between 11:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. For more information: (310) 524-2704. (J.K. Drummond).

Ventura's countywide transit smart card program (dubbed "Go Ventura") will go into effect January 2, 2002. ■

## **MEMBERS IN ACTION**

James Umbach had a letter in the Nov. 20 Sacramento Bee regarding a City Council vote in favor of a big box development despite the resident having voted several years ago to set aside the land for a transit oriented development when Sacramento's light rail system is extended there in a few years.

Charles Hobbs has posted his journal (with pictures) from a recent visit to Paris and London including comments on his experiences using transit there: <http://www.lerctr.org/~transit/eur2001.shtml> .■

(*Nat'l Park, from pg. 2*) bus yard (they had not thought one necessary), possibly with one of the Park & Ride lots, 2B) to find Park & Ride spaces on the coast, 3) to develop public awareness through significant advertising, maps, and a distinctive clean-technology vehicle, 4) to use the potential of transit to move visitors away from over-used park lands into under-appreciated areas, to buy more land, and 5) get operating funds from new sources (the Pentagon?) not transit service.

Asked afterward about funding sources, N.P.S. officials said they have funding for

this study-a 1 or 2 year pilot project to shape the final transit development. They said they have not finalized operating fund sources, but most likely be Federal T.E.A.-21 funds, along with a public lands funding earmark for transportation.

The Honorarium, a \$50 bill (with President Grant's face on it), became a "Grant" to SO.CA.TA's treasury at our November meeting.