

TRANSIT UPDATES

Due to construction on the Long Beach Transit Mall, the bus stops have temporarily been moved one block south to Ocean Bl. Stops are in the same order as they were on the Transit Mall. LADOT #142 will also stop at Pacific Ave, just north of Ocean.

Foothill Transit changes effective March include; #482 now using Valley Bl instead of the Pomona Fwy, all #486 trips serving Cal Poly, 15-minute service all day on #280, improved frequencies on #187, extension of #185 to Puente Hills Mall, a new route #269 serving El Monte, South El Monte and Montebello, and minor reroutes on #178 and #272.

The new RTA #51 and #52 UC Riverside shuttles will be cancelled on March 22, due

to low utilization by non-UCR people. UCR will reinstate its "Highlander Hauler" shuttle. Also, RTA has implemented a new line #42 shuttle service between San Jacinto and Soboba Springs. ■

MEMBERS IN ACTION

The Sierra Club Transportation Committee Feb. 12 meeting had as guest speaker Dan Leavitt of the California High Speed Rail Authority. Mr. Leavitt shared the latest news on the status of funding and planning of the proposed statewide high speed rail network. Attendees included Roger Christensen, Ken Ruben, Jerry Pass, Anthony Loui, John Ulloth, Bart Reed & ; and Dana Gabbard

Cecil Carpio made public comment at the Feb. 7 SCAG Transportation and Communications Committee meeting.■

SANTA MONICA- ORANGE COUNTY ADVENTURE PT 2.

(Charles P. Hobbs)

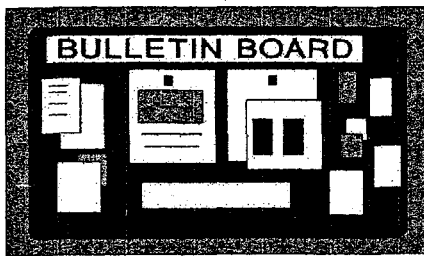
(In the first installment of this adventure, I travelled from Canoga Park to Costa Mesa by way of Santa Monica, Culver City and Norwalk. Now read as I try to get back home!)

I hung around the Triangle Square shopping area (kind of a overgrown strip center, but not yet really a mall) for 15 minutes, then made my way to the bus stop to pick up the #71. I was the only passenger as we swung around the Hoag Memorial Hospital grounds, then on through Newport Beach and finally Balboa.

I walked through the tourist area of Balboa, also somewhat marred by construction. There were a few

restaurants, but a lot of tourist stores and a carnival-type midway (bumper cars, ferris wheel, etc). I also saw, but did not attempt to ride, the Balboa Ferry (a tiny boat that holds about three automobiles, plus passengers). Maybe next trip. Instead, I had some cheap pizza while deciding, just, exactly, how the hell I was going to get back home, without this trip turning into another Owl Excursion, or worse...

At first I thought, I'll just grab the #43 and catch Amtrak from Fullerton. (That seemed to be the easiest Amtrak station to access via OCTA). From a public phone, I dialed 1-800-USA-RAIL to try to get the schedule. Instead, I got a very confusing automated menu that tried to use voice recognition to determine where the passenger wanted to depart from. It did a Grade-F job: I'd say "Fullerton" and the system would think I said "Newark", "Portland" and a couple of others I forgot. Thinking it was just a bad phone, I tried another one. At the last minute I discovered that the phone had been vandalized: someone had (to pg. 10)



Due to schedule conflicts instead of having John Catoe, MTA Deputy CEO, speak at our March 9 meeting on service sectors we hope to work with MTA to have public briefings on this issue held in convenient locations throughout MTA's service area before the first Sectors are implemented July 1st.

At our March 9 meeting we will discuss plans for Fullerton Railroad Days (May 4-5) and Whole Earth Festival 2002 (April 20-21) at Lake Balboa plus engage in a letter writing action.

Also at our March 9 meeting we will discuss an opportunity to see the Alameda Corridor late March/early April before it opens. Members who can't attend who wish to participate in the tour should contact the Executive Secretary.

Odyssey 20/20 intends to undertake a Southern California TransitVote campaign in which volunteers register transit users. Interested members can contact the Executive Secretary to volunteer.

The Regional Transportation Summit announced in the Feb. newsletter has been postponed until Spring.

4th Annual Center for International Trade and Transportation State of the Trade and Transportation Industry Town Hall

meeting will be held Wednesday March 13 from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at California State University Long Beach (Carpenter Performing Arts center, 6200 Atherton Street). This is free and open to the public (come early, space is limited). For more information: (562) 499-2160 or <http://www.uces.csulb.edu/citt>

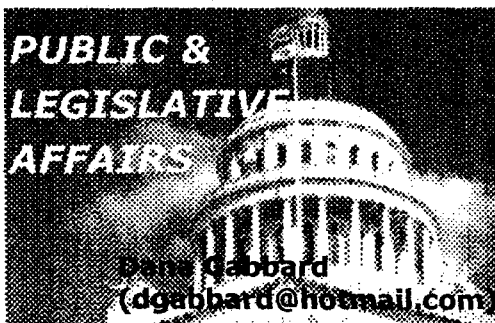
The Southern California Freight Management Case Study is one of five regional studies conducted across the county for the Office of Freight Management and Operations of the Federal Highways Administration. A draft report was released last month. For further information contact Project Manager Robert Calix at MTA: (213) 922-5644 or calixr@mta.net

Jim Motavalli discusses his book *Breaking Gridlock: Towards Moving Transportation* 2 p.m. on Sunday March 10 at Midnight Special Bookstore in Santa Monica (1318 Third Street Promenade). Further information: (310) 393-2923.

The newly formed Santa Monicans for Smart Growth invites interested SO.CA.TA Members to join their discussion by contacting allen_r_freeman@yahoo.com

<http://www.tea3.org/> is a new website from the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) with information and updates on TEA21 reauthorization.

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). Material for publication should be received two weeks before the scheduled SO.CA.TA meeting.



A

lot is going on regarding transportation funding and legislative activity. But I will circulate information on these at our March 9 meeting and focus in this space on the key issue: Board of Equalization Regulation 1533.2. To provide the votes needed to pass the budget last year some Republican Central Valley legislators asked in return farmers be given a limited exemption from paying sales taxes on diesel used in farming. But the BOE is about to adopt an interpretation far beyond the legislative intent and this will reduce funds for transit if it passes the last hurdle at BOE's March 27 meeting. At our March 9 meeting we will provide attendees with materials to write letters asking our BOE representative to not support the broad interpretation. We also may hit the streets March 16 to ask bus riders to sign cards opposing the loss of funding. Let us know if this is something you'd be interested in assisting.

Roger Snoble's clear headed approach to being MTA CEO is highlighted in his Jan. Metro Investment Report interview, the text of which MTA has posted on its website: <http://www.mta.net/press/stakeholders/view.htm>

Arthur Leahy, OCTA CEO exhibits similar laudable intelligence in his Feb. Metro Investment Report interview: <http://www.ablinc.net/mir/archive/feb2002a.html>

The big picture is at last these agencies have true leaders who show every sign of being ready to shake up the status quo. BULLY!

Understatement of the month: "... railroads are notoriously difficult to deal with" (staff report for agenda item 7, San Bernardino Associated Governments Plans and Programs Policy Committee Feb. 20 meeting).

Remember the recent Brouhaha regarding STI/Outdoor trying to erect billboards on MTA Property without securing permission of local cities? The minutes of the Feb. 22 Metrolink Board of Directors meeting has an interesting tidbit regarding this as Mike McGinley, Director of Engineering and Construction at the agency reported "staff discovered this company putting up billboards [on Metrolink track easements] December 28. Efforts were made to evict the workers from the property due to the lack of proper authorization from Metrolink, the MTA and the City and County of Los Angeles. Mr. McGinley stated there were also issues with the workers severing signal cables in the right-of-way and placing their equipment on the track. Mr. McGinley was able to get the work stopped on December 31." The minutes conclude with Chair Hal Bernson stating civil action was being considered against STI for damages due to the neglect. McGinley added he and some of his staff had given statements to counsel.

Pleasant surprise of the month: Access Services, Inc. has chosen Shaw/Yoder as consultants for legislative advocacy in Sacramento. The same firm handles advocacy for the California Transit Association and has garnered plaudits for its effectiveness.

Feb. 28 I participated with about 40 other advocates from around the U.S. in a conference call organized by the

American Public Transit Association (APTA), trade group for public transit. First they described APTA's new education and outreach program they call Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow to build support among the public and officials. Next there was a discussion of a proposal to form a national network of transit supporters called the National Citizens Alliance for Public Transportation. I'll bring materials regarding these two initiatives to our March 9 meeting for review.

A bonus on APTA's website is a recent interview with Federal Transit Administrator Jennifer Dorn:
<http://www.apta.com/news/pt/dorn1.htm>

As the consent decree process approaches a crossroads, cities and transit operators in L.A. County are bestirring themselves to be heard regarding how this could impact them. Foothill Transit's Executive Board at its Feb. 1 meeting (agenda item 23) in closed session voted to file an Amicus Curiae (aka friend of the court) brief with the U.S. Supreme Court at a cost not to exceed \$50,000. The Santa Monica City Council at its Feb. 5 meeting (agenda item 13-B) passed a motion "to authorize the City of Santa Monica to join with other transit agencies and cities to prepare and file an amicus brief in support of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority regarding the limitations on federal courts' power to intrude into the discretionary authority committed to state agencies." Need I add we live in interesting times indeed when Munis come to the defense of MTA?

Where are they now dept.: while the BRU continues to have the benefit of a legal team provided by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and other equity oriented organizations (paid for by MTA as part of the decree agreement) some of the leading lights of the early years of the

lawsuit have moved on: Robert Garcia who participated in the suit while at Environmental Defense is now Director of the City project at the Center for Law in the Public Interest:
<http://www.clipi.org/cityproject.html> ; lead attorney Constance Rice now is co-Director of the Advancement Project:
<http://www.advancementproject.org/>

Three documents I have found invaluable:

- TEA21 Transit Funding Provisions. Explains the various categories of federal funding in a clear, non-technical manner. Free from APTA; e-mail request to rgandee@apta.com or (202) 496-4889.
- Executive Guide - Issues for 2002. Summarizes key transportation challenges faced by California. Free from California Transportation Commission; call (916) 654-4245 or on-line in Acrobat format at <http://www.catc.ca.gov/reports/eg2002.pdf>
- Dollars and Democracy: An Advocate's Guide to the California State Budget Process. Excellent explanation of the California State Budget Process. \$6.00 (plus tax) from the California Budget Project 921 11th St., Ste. 502, Sacramento, CA 95814-2820 or download Acrobat version via link at end of summary: <http://www.cbp.org/reports/9903dol.html>

Hardly any members of the public attended the Feb. 13 Open House held at MTA for the I-10 Freight Corridor Study. But I understand the Stakeholder briefing earlier that day had many attendees (including member Bart Reed) and a lively discussion.

I'll close this month by noting the recent passing of Alan Wimmergen, longtime rail advocate and President of the Rail Passenger Association of California since 1989. I had dinner with Wimmergen once and was impressed at his intelligence. ■

KERN COUNTY EXCURSION

(Dana Gabbard)

Some years ago Charles Hobbs rode Kern Regional Transit Service (KRTS) that connects several cities in Southern Kern County. This raised the possibility that a public transit trip from the Antelope Valley to Bakersfield was possible (albeit somewhat daunting).

After several years of passing over having a KRTS trip as our day after Thanksgiving study tour at our Oct. 13, 2001 meeting it was decided that this was the year to attempt it. I volunteered to act as trip planner. My first step was to request the relevant KRTS schedules plus get the current schedules for Santa Clarita Transit and the Metrolink Antelope Valley line. My first surprise was to discover KRTS recently had combined what had been two routes when Charles Hobbs took his trip (Mojave to Tehachapi and Tehachapi to Bakersfield) into a single route. This salutatory change eliminated a mid-trip transfer (and hour long wait). The schedules also revealed the two morning trips of the East Kern KRTS route departed Lancaster/AV Mall earlier than when Hobbs rode it. There was no way via transit to get to the AV Mall from downtown Los Angeles in time to catch either trip. We instead would have to catch the mid-day run. The advantage of this was our departure from L.A. on Metrolink would be at the civilized hour of 9:55 a.m. (versus some years when we had to catch buses or trains at 6 a.m.).

About 9:30 a.m. we gathered near the Metrolink information window in Union Station. Members present included: Andy Novak, Craig Weingarten, Edmund Buckley, Alan Michelson, Robert Meinert, Woody Rosner, Hank Fung, Charles Hobbs and Dana Gabbard. Our group made its way to track 4 and boarded Metrolink cab car 608 on Metrolink train 205 for the trip to Newhall. We were in the last passenger

car, upper level so any members who boarded during the trip could easily find us. The train departed on time at 9:55 a.m. and our Metrolink experience was fairly uneventful, as group members enjoyed the scenery and camaraderie. Kymberleigh Richards boarded at Burbank and shared packets of Chex Morning Mix-Fruit/Nut for those who hadn't had breakfast.

We arrived in Newhall circa 10:30 a.m. Lionel Jones was waiting for us at the station and revealed he had gotten there from Wilmington via local transit (including a reverse commute Santa Clarita Transit trip from the San Fernando valley). Soon our bus connection arrived - Santa Clarita route 795, #229 (an MCI D-4000R). There was a small crowd gathered of people like us who were using this bus to make a mid-day trip to Lancaster/Palmdale. Loading bogged down when the driver had trouble using the lift to board a wheelchair passenger and we didn't depart until 11 a.m. (with about half the seats taken).

On the way to the Antelope Valley we drove along SR-14 and remarked what a horrible commute that would be: a very desolate/hilly landscape. We also saw the California Aqueduct and went thru an extensive road construction area. Only one person deboarded at the Acton Metrolink station. Despite our late start we arrived at AV Mall only about 15 minutes behind schedule (11:45 a.m.). This gave us an hour until our next bus. Some brave souls decided to seek refreshment at the Mall. Most of us didn't like the long walk this would entail thru the parking lot plus were uncertain about logistics (such as where the food court was, whether the mall was jammed with shoppers, etc.). Happily a near-by alternative presented itself: mere steps from our bus stop was a Denny's.

Around Noon the East Kern KRTS bus we would ride arrived and went to its layover. By 12:45 p.m. we had regrouped at the bus stop and were ready to board the

Econoline Champion cutaway B251 (21 seats plus wheelchair lift). Most of the seats were taken when we left the Mall, then the bus went by the Lancaster Metrolink station, a senior center, and the Walmart/Outlet Mall area in Lancaster. We had a full seated load and a number of standees in the aisle by the time we left Lancaster. It was a fairly uncomfortable trip, given the circumstances. I did notice some Joshua Trees alongside the road we travelled.

A few people got off in Rosamond (the first town in Kern County served by the East Kern route), but everyone got off at Mojave, as the bus was going out of service. (The passengers continuing to California City and possibly Ridgecrest boarded a waiting bus). This location was the de-facto transit center for Mojave, where the KRTS local circulator connected with the East Kern route. Also Amtrak Thruway buses stopped here. Next to the drop off was a Carl's Jr., which we availed ourselves of for relaxation, refreshments and use of the facilities (our next bus trip would be two hours long). A few members went out to explore Mojave (and seek KRTS schedules) and soon came back with the news that one of the KRTS bus yards were nearby. And KRTS schedules were available at the counter.

At 3:10 we boarded KRTS route 58 Express, a cutaway Chevy Van 30 Startrans bus (#250) along with a few additional passengers. Antifreeze was leaking from the engine and it soon developed the door wouldn't close. So the driver drove over to the bus yard and dropped us off streetside before going in the yard to get a replacement vehicle. While we waited Craig Weingarten went to the counter to ask for schedules and was told they had never had so many people request schedules in person in a single day before. Meanwhile we found ourselves with a much better bus than the dinky cutaway: an El Dorado RE-26 (#B171), which Charles Hobbs described as being

"like the old DASH buses". Now riding a top of the line bus we delightedly departed for Bakersfield via Tehachapi.

On the way to Tehachapi we passed a horrible automobile accident on the opposite side of the road with a helicopter ambulance sitting beside the twisted metal of the vehicles along with numerous law enforcement units and officers handling the accident scene. Traffic in the opposite direction was backed up for miles (due to a center divider they couldn't cross onto our side of the road).

Tehachapi was eerie - you would be in the midst of a commercial area at an intersection then moments later down the road amidst an empty landscape. Charles Hobbs called it "one of those weird towns, half suburb, half rural." After leaving Tehachapi (where we had three boardings) the bus continued on State Route 58 towards Bakersfield. As golden twilight fell I stared at the most beautiful scenery of the trip - miles of stark rolling hills. And I wondered whether its fate would be someday to be covered with urban sprawl or to be preserved.

About 5 p.m. we arrived at the Golden Empire Transit Chester Street Transit Center in downtown Bakersfield. It turned out the information counter there also had some KRTS schedules, and members took advantage of this to fill holes in their collections (the Mojave yard only had certain ones).

Some thought had been given to riding GET route 2 along Chester. But we decided instead to have a leisurely meal and give ourselves plenty of time to get to the Amtrak station. During our 1999 trip we ate at Lorene's Ranch House near the Transit Center and were glad for the chance to have dinner there again, discussing the day and all we saw. We debated whether to walk to the Amtrak station or catch a GET bus there. In the end we decided to walk. (to pg. 10)



TRANSIT ADVOCATES OF ORANGE COUNTY - Mark Strickert and Jane Reifer - 866-476-2282 ext.4, or zineland@yahoo.com

New Head of Buses at OCTA

New Interim Director of Transit Operations is Rick Teichert. He has been in the finance department at OCTA for many years, and got his start in transit at Omnitrans. The previous director, David Armijo, moved to MTA where he is in charge of one of the new sectors. Rick has indicated an interest in working closely with transit advocates.

All Night - OCTA Buses 43, 60, 57, 50

Dreamed-of night service will finally become a reality with the OCTA September service change. The 43 and 60 will run 24 hours, seven days a week, and the 57 and 50 will run 22 hours, seven days a week.

One Seat Service Reinstated from Costa Mesa to Downtown Santa Ana

Routes 155 and 180 will be combined into the new route 55, effective March 10. This will replace the one-seat service lost during the straightlining on the city trip pair that had the highest ridership in the system. Although there will be a slightly higher travel time due to choosing a different corridor, this new route should reduce the major inconvenience of transferring and waiting for a second bus.

Your Input Sought on Proposed 43/111 Through-Routing

While TAOC has always supported

through-service on the Harbor Blvd. corridor, we were disappointed to see the major downtown Fullerton intersection of Harbor and Chapman eliminated from 43/111 short-turns (43 service to Fullerton College is also lost). While service north of Chapman Ave. would be about as frequent as today (30-40 minutes), service between Commonwealth and Chapman would be reduced to 30-40 minute frequency from its current 7-30 minutes, as all runs would turn in and out of the Fullerton Transportation Center at Commonwealth only. This eliminates 43 service from Lemon to Harbor along Chapman Ave., and reduces service TO Chapman Ave. on all but the infrequent long runs. We have suggested going to the new long runs OCTA suggests on Commonwealth, but retaining the current short turn routing on Chapman, maybe just to Pomona, but as this creates "branching", it isn't acceptable to OCTA. We also suggested that all short turns could go north to Valley View or Bastanchury, but that seems unlikely. OCTA has offered to install a bus stop at the southeast corner of Harbor, south of Commonwealth, and even bring the 24 (Chapman Ave.) bus into FTC. They say they can increase the long runs in the future. They may delay implementation on this until the September service change in order to accommodate our concerns. Please send us your suggestions: zineland@yahoo.com or (866) 4-SOCATA, x 4.

TAOC Prop 42 Event

We had a nice event despite bring unintentionally locked out of our meeting room; it was a great night for a transit meeting under the stars. About a dozen people showed up; more than we expected for an issue that is not considered very glamorous. Ted Green, the statewide coalition director of the Yes on 42 campaign, filled us in on all the

Prop 42 facts and Rick Teichert, OCTA Interim Director of Transit Operations, gave us updates on both what's new for OCTA transit service, as well as their approach to future funding needs.

Metrolinks

The Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo station opening will be on Friday, March 29th at 9am. According to Dana Gabbard's research, this will be another simple ribbon-cutting/photo-op session, though one or more TAOC people will be attending.

The proposed Yorba Linda station is taking some heat from the city of Anaheim. Some Anaheim residents along the tracks east of Imperial Blvd. are asking for new soundwalls, on the assumption that a new station will increase noise. Several handwritten banners are now visible along the existing walls visible from Esperanza Road. They should be more concerned by increased freight train traffic, but whatcha gonna do?

Other Railings

The Rail Advocates of Orange County has begun to hold a second monthly meeting. They are being held in Irvine, with the hopes of stirring up local support and involvement in a city that is a part of the first CenterLine segment, and also where anti-transit people are concentrating their efforts. Barry Christensen hosted the first meeting, though we would expect the local members down there to take the lead in the future. A big thank you to Spectrumotion for use of their conference room. Spectrumotion is a Transportation Management Association (TMA) that publicizes and coordinates alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle commuting in the Irvine Spectrum area.

RAOC is also working on a rail-oriented art exhibit for the annual city-wide arts

event "A Night in Fullerton", for Friday, April 27th, and will be planning to share a booth with TAOC at Fullerton Railroad Days the first weekend in May.

Shuttle to the Puddle

A summer shuttle proposal was approved by the Dana Point city council. They voted to go with a student-oriented route to/from Aliso Niguel High School, Crown Valley Park, and along Niguel Road, plus a park-and-ride shuttle from Stonehill Road and Dana Hills HS. They will also have a water taxi at Dana Point Harbor. Service is expected to start on Memorial Day weekend. RAOC member Daniel Benson worked with the engineering firm hired for the project.

U-Turn of Events in San Clemente

OCTA's Kmart Plaza "transit center" operations are bothering some area residents and motorists, as all routes 1 and 91 buses make big U-turns on Camino de Estrella in order to stop in front of the namesake financially-troubled retail establishment. In the past, some routes used Camino Mira Costa as part of a loop, or (like with the current 191) came up Camino Capistrano from the former Doheny Park/Domingo transfer area. TAOC is requesting suggestions for improvements. E-mail us at: zineland@yahoo.com or (866) 4-SOCATA x 4.

Welfare To Work Transit Service

St. Anselm's Cross-Cultural Community Center provides aid and services for recent immigrants to Orange County. One of their activities is emergency transportation for Welfare-to-Work participants and their children, to and from work and school. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. ■

(Adventure, from pg. 2) removed the transmitter (the part you speak into) from the receiver. Ouch. So I used my cell phone, and got the system I had used before (type the first three letters of the station you are departing from, etc.) This time, I got the information I was looking for. I'd miss the 7:30 train, but there was a 9:30 and an 11:30 I could count on...

So, around 5:45, I got back on the #71. This time, about 3 or 4 other people boarded with me, and about 3 more (including one bicyclist) got on later. For some weird reason, OCTA was running one of the commuter buses normally used on the #701/721 (reclining seats, etc) on this trip.

Back at Triangle Square, finding the proper #43 stop was a trick, especially in the dark. I had to walk in back of the shopping area and board it at the layover at Park/Central. (The shopping center included a fancy "Bus Stop" area with a shelter, etc. but apparently it was no longer used by OCTA for some reason). The #43, another artic, left at about 6:38. I was still dithering a bit about Amtrak, not really wanting to hang around Fullerton for an hour and a half. Then I remembered...MTA #460. That bus must run at least every half hour at this time of day. I could wait at that nice bus stop at Disneyland....So, I got off of the #43 at the Disneyland stop. As it turns out, the next #460 would leave at 7:45, so it was only a 10-minute wait.

Fares on the #460 are complex, as three issues must be taken into account:

- The Orange County portion of the fare (\$1 or an OCTA pass)
- The LA County portion of the fare (\$1.35 or a MTA pass)
- The two express steps for those passengers going all the way to Downtown LA (\$1, unless the MTA pass has express steps or is a discount pass)

So, it took about five minutes to get everyone loaded (one fellow put three \$1 bills in the farebox AT THE SAME TIME and I thought it was going to jam but it didn't) We left about 1/3'rd full, and picked up some more people at Knotts, leaving O.C. about 1/2 full. Most of these passengers got off in Downey or Norwalk (about 12 people got off at the Green Line station), so there were relatively few people (probably about 6 or so) going all the way downtown.

Once we got there (about 9:10 p.m.), I and a couple of other passengers got off at Hill Street, dodged a couple of bums around the Pershing Square Red Line station and waited to catch a train. The Red Line was moderately full (about 1/2-1/3rd full in the car that I was in) and I rode to Universal City without any further incident). We made it there just in time to catch the last Rapid Bus of the night (9:47 p.m.) The bus was about 1/3rd full, and the vast majority of passengers rode it to Reseda Bl, then got off. There was little, if any on-and-off action on this trip at any of the stops between Universal City and Reseda. I and one other passenger arrived at Topanga/Victory around 10:20 p.m. Whew! ■

(Kern, from pg. 7) After a stroll of about 10 blocks we arrived at the station circa 7 p.m. This was my first chance to see the new Bakersfield Amtrak station (for many years they had made do with a small trailer for a station) and was impressed.

Shortly after 7:30 p.m. the train arrived and we began boarding Thruway buses (except Lionel who opted for Greyhound)

for various destinations. By 9:30 p.m. I was at Union Station and grateful to ride the Red Line to connect with a Wilshire bus, thence home to a well deserved rest.

So, where should we go next?

[special thanks to Charles Hobbs and Andy Novak whose narratives of the trip provided some details in this report] ■

AMTRAK'S DUKAKIS ADDRESSES RAILPAC

by John Ulloth

Railroad Passengers Association of California (RailPAC) met at Santa Ana's rail/ bus terminal for the south state location of its biennial meeting. The keynote address of February 2nd featured Amtrak Chair Michael Dukakis.

Dukakis' visit was ideally timed- on the heels of Amtrak Reform Council's recent report to Congress (recommending breaking NorthEast Corridor (N.E.C.), long-distance trains, & regionals into separate business units, and separating maintenance from operation) and Amtrak's George Warrington's press statement (threatening to kill long distance trains, etc. if Congress didn't provide more funding.)

Dukakis: "WE FINALLY GOT HIGH SPEED TRAINS ON THE N.E.C... it took 25 years to get it, but "people were breaking down the doors to get onto those trains... Amtrak carried the nation on its back after (air service was interrupted) Sept. 11th."

"IF YOU GIVE US (Amtrak) THE CAPITAL, WE'LL DO THE JOB... You can't run a 1st class railroad for \$331 Million per year... We shouldn't have to make \$150-\$200 Million Railroad Retirement payments to people who never worked for us... "We pay \$750- \$800 Million in maintenance per year. We paid \$85 Million in interest last year because we had to go outside Appropriations (getting loans)... We need additional funds to build corridors; what better time to do it- invest in rail- than in a recession? (that) puts people to work when they need it.

WE (AMTRAK) NEED 5% of what highways & airports get; that shouldn't be too difficult: \$1.2 Billion in (annual) capital needs, (with) a 5-year commitment, and a rail trust fund (to carry Amtrak thru recessions) so we don't have to play a guessing game year after year. "The AMTRAK REFORM COUNCIL are there looking over our shoulders (didn't mind), but

regarding this week's announcement: it's the wackiest set of recommendations I've ever seen: (they) refuse to address how much funding is needed for a first class national rail passenger system, or how to get it." (Congress' Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee Chair Senator Ernest) Hollings says he's 'sick and tired of every year being The Year We Fix Amtrak, and by October, nothing happens.'" More Congressional support is needed: "There are 65 hard (pro-Amtrak) Senate votes- but we need more- not just to say 'yes', but to be passionate & tenacious; that will take everyone in this room."

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

Q.: What about previous speaker's statements (United Rail Passenger Alliance's V.P. Andrew Selden) that long distance trains make money, the N.E.C. doesn't; that trains are not competitive with airlines, but trains can compete with automobiles?

A.: "Long distance trains do lose money, but are a part of an integrated, connected system. N.Y.- Philly Amtrak has 70% of the combined air-rail market; N.Y.-D.C. Amtrak has 24% of it; N.Y.- Boston Amtrak has 23% of it; we (Amtrak) should have 70% of all those markets."

Q.: What about Amtrak's credibility & George Warrington's, would he be fired after this week's statement? (someone pointed out U.R.P.A.'s Bruce Richardson started the rumor).

A.: (After dismissing the idea of canning Warrington): "Amtrak revenues are up 11%- We're doing a remarkable job. We have credibility, but financially conservative (auditors?)... 1 out of every 4 Amtrak dollars is spent in the State of California, where Amtrak will make a profit. Amtrak plans 16 trains a day, 1 hour 55 minute schedule for Surfliner... (audience approves)... but TGV (High Speed train in France) is making a 510 mile run in 3 hours 9 minutes, they'll spend \$3.5 billion; 6 million will ride it, & Air France is phasing out all domestic flight!... Amtrak's board will work as hard as we possibly can."

ARIZONA TRIP REPORT

by John Ulloth

Members Phil Capo and your author visited Eastern Arizona, but couldn't help but see a bit of transit enroute...

WILLIAMS, ARIZONA's beautifully preserved 2-story wooden rail station is now City Hall. Laid out in the same manner as many Chicagoland rail lines- trackside park with a station building and lumberyard, main road with storefronts facing the tracks, Williams fronts a very busy main line (freights to or from San Diego and points east about every 30 minutes).



AJO, ARIZONA The nearest civilization outside Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument is Ajo, Arizona ("garlic" en Espanol), this former Phelps-Dodge company town is dominated by a ring of colorful multi-storey mine tailings from the open pit copper mine. Artists and wildflowers provide the main industry now, according to the Chamber of Commerce that seeks to harness the area's tourists- drawn to the mild desert winter- to revitalize the area.

Though the rail line is abandoned, downtown is dominated by a huge Spanish Eclectic style rail station, whose continuous arcade rings 3 sides of the town square, topped by a polychrome tile dome. Stores on the arcade are still open, and the waiting room is now a retirement center.



At the southeast corner of town, we struck it rich: the storefront of Ajo Stage Line. Starting as a tour coach operator in Eastern Washington, this innovative provider leaves no stone unturned for ridership, funding, and marketing! Ajo Stage Lines is a Dial-a-ride for the scattered desert Ajo community, a tour line to the nearby Mexican border (willing to drop us off at the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument's visitor center on the way), an airporter and shopping day tripper to Tuscon & Phoenix (providing local feeder service between residential area and the airport there), and contracts one of the school bus runs in Ajo! And he takes charters to anywhere in the west (National Parks are popular.) And it's all packaged with a wild west theme; a free postcard at the terminal/ dispatch center/ travel agency pictures the owner in wild west gear in front of an 1880's wagon!

TUCSON, ARIZONA late at night, the sheltered downtown bus plaza- part of a city block, retaining storefronts of otherwise-demolished buildings as a visual arcade is terrific! Despite having the lights off in the information center after hours, the guard handed Phil shedules throught the closed window. Trundling along an L-shaped line from the university, a Japanese

trolley serves a popular shopping district/ nightspot, toward the Amtrak station). It could use a thru-connection (under the rail "viaduct") to the main part of downtown, and bus plaza.

TOMBSTONE, ARIZONA's famous gunfight at the O.K. Corral is reenacted by at least 1 of 3 different troupes daily. Downtown is barricaded from auto traffic, when transportation is strictly pedestrian, horse-drawn wagon, stagecoach, or police wagon (fake). In its heyday, cut short when water flooded the silver mines, a population of thousands, over 100 bars, and inbound liquor and outbound silver to be moved, Tombstone's railroad station (now the library gunfighters wouldn't have much use for) must have been a very busy place.

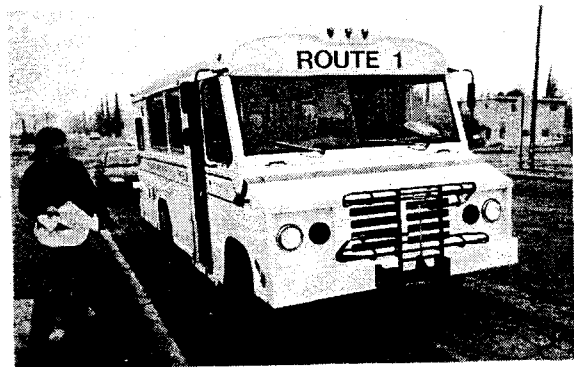
BISBEE, ARIZONA perched and squeezed on the side of a narrow valley with a copper pit in the bottom- parts of the mining operation are still active- but nowadays, it's mostly a tourist & hippie town, with brick Industrial-age storefronts now museums, schools now stores, giant chuches, Victorian porches fronting inns and cottages, lining steep roads twisting up the hillsides. Bisbee sports several innovative bus lines: 2 tourist lines, a nature tour line that offers actual owl service (takes riders on moonlight hikes to see owls), and...



The Bisbee Bus; no seperation of Church & State here; Capo stands outside the equipment stored in the Catholic church parking lot. The busses sport decals indicating they're supported by the state as well.

DOUGLAS, ARIZONA's large 2-story station in this border town is boarded up but still standing.

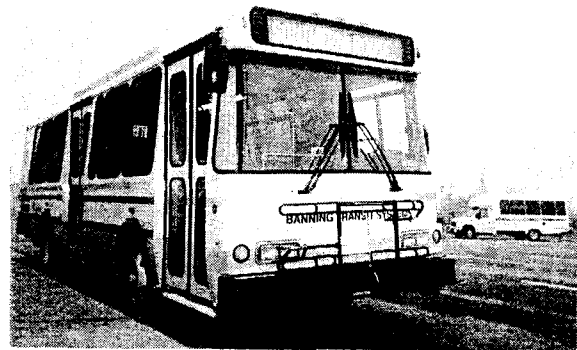
ON THE NIGHT BACK, WE WERE PASSED BY A WESTBOUND L.A. COUNTY M.T.A. BUS DOING 70 MPH. ON THE FREEWAY. IN ARIZONA. BACKWARDS... it was on the back of a truck, probably returning from servicing.



THIS BEAUMONT FIXED ROUTE SERVICE has to be one of the oldest pieces of transit equipment still used in revenue service! Note fixed headsign- painted on.



BANNING SYSTEM'S LOGO is a stagecoach. Beaumont's Dial-a Rides, in an unpaved parking lot meet Banning's fixed routes in front of the hospital across the street.



Q.: Where do we get the funding?

A.: "Select any revenue source that grows with inflation."

PRIVATIZATION & COMPETITION

"On my last 7 plane trips, I had to take my shoes off 7 times (audience laughs)... The Brits are now putting more money into their (newly privatized rail) system than when the government ran it. It's a disaster in England- separating operation from maintenance- and doing it here is a recipe for bureaucratic disaster.... In Massachusetts, 1 guy runs the M.T.B.A. (out of the Governor's office)- he has co-terms (same election cycle) with the governor, there's no question who to blame or reward. Massachusetts was the 1st State (1975) thanks to help from (the late Speaker) Thomas P. O'Neal, to use highway funds (for transit)- 35 Million bucks bought the entire commuter rail system in Massachusetts- can you believe it?- now it's the best- the best deal I ever made....

WHAT A DIFFERENT RAIL SYSTEM WE'D'VE HAD IF THE RIGHT GUY HAD WON IN 1988!"

(audience laughs, Dukakis referring to his unsuccessful bid for U.S. President). WHO WOULD TAKE OVER AMTRAK? "4 entites expressed interest in running rail lines; only one of them American: Peter Pan! (laughs)- Peter Pan bus lines! (audience laughs); I don't think they're going to do this for us! In 1913-14-15, (rail financier, Edward) Harriman's father said 'we need a single national railroad system.' I hope the freight railroads will help us; tax dollars for better tracks, signals, crossings are for them too."

Q: But what about the lack of competition in Amtrak?

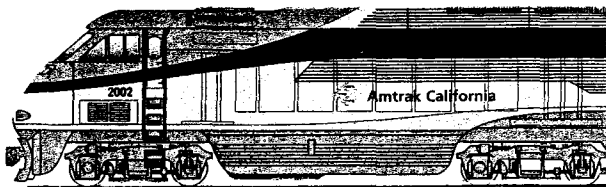
A: "We do have competition (airlines, cars & trucks are competition), always will."

Q.: What about the mandate for a comprehensive National Transportation Policy, now 35 years overdue (per a January 2002 Trains magazine column); are you working with the Executive Branch?

A.: "I don't know what the President's plans are. I have been working with (Transportation Secretary Norm) Mineta's Norm Jackson on supporting early reauthorization (for Amtrak). 1 out of 3 flights is 350 miles or less: 72 per day from L.A.X.-San Diego. 1 of 3 flights out of O'Hare is under 350 miles; 9 midwestern states propose high speed rail lines from Chicago to: Detroit, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Cleveland, etc.... But I'm not for abandoning goals of profitability; (we want) modest but consistent income from improved long distance trains. The governors of Alabama and Georgia want to initiate high speed trains; but who says improved Amtrak routes in their states shouldn't go over 110 m.p.h.? (working on that). Virginia, the Carolinas & Georgia have a Southeast Rail Caucus; try to drive D.C.-Richmond, or anywhere in Atlanta; it's a 16-lane parking lot at 2:00 in the afternoon!"

Q.: I have \$2,500 in Amtrak tickets for next year; can you guarantee me I can ride then?

A.: "No, I cannot. We cannot run on \$331 Million per year... California has been most generous of any state, but now it's time you got Federal matching funds." (applause)



Charles Guess gave a very slick presentation on the final routing of the Orange County Transit Authority's CenterLine project, and Ed Kasperick reported on San Diego & the Coaster. Noel Braymer was elected president following Alan Wimmergren's untimely passing.

So.Ca.T.A. member Barry Christiansen (was Fullerton Rail Days part of the presentation), Dana Gabbard, Jerry Pass, Bart Reed, Woody Rosner, Ken Rubin (reelected RailPAC Director with) Kirk Schneider; all actively participated.■