

TRANSIT UPDATES

Effective December 15, MTA will make the following service changes:

- Two new Rapid Bus Lines. #745 will run along Broadway between Downtown LA and the Harbor Fwy Green Line station. Stops will be made at Union Station (Patsouras Plaza), Cesar Chavez, Temple, 3rd, 5th, 8th, Pico, Washington, Jefferson, MLK, Vernon, Slauson, Florence, Manchester, and Century.

#754 will operate the length of Vermont between Sunset and the Metro Green Line, stopping at Santa Monica, Melrose, Beverly, 3rd, Wilshire, Olympic, Pico, Washington, Jefferson, MLK, Vernon, Slauson, Florence, Manchester and Century.

These two new routes will replace Limiteds #345 and #354, respectively. Also, these two lines will be fare-free on Dec 15 and 16.

- Three new Limited Stop lines, all weekday peak: #370 on Garvey between LA and El Monte; #380 over the route of #180 between Hollywood and Pasadena, and #381 on Figueroa between Century Bl. and York Ave. Also, #333 on Venice Bl. will now run on Saturdays as well.

- Additional late night service will be added to #166, #243 and #460

- Ventura Bl. Rapid Bus #750 will stop at De Soto.

- #76 will be rerouted downtown to connect with the future Metro Gold Line station in Chinatown

- #439 will be rerouted to serve the Howard Hughes shopping center in

Westchester (Culver City #6 already stops here).

Service on #426 between East Hollywood and Wilshire/Western will be reduced, due to a drop in ridership.

Foothill Transit has long used the Eastland Shopping Center parking lot as a park-and-ride. This might change, as Eastland is expanding. While Foothill and the city of West Covina are negotiating with Eastland to keep a few spaces available, Foothill is also promoting other park-and-ride facilities (The Lakes, Fairplex, etc.)

Member Ken Ruben informs us Culver CityBus has painted its bus #7085 in a holiday color scheme. It is in the standard forest green paint but with the message Happy Holidays above the windows and various decorations on the back and sides. Meanwhile Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus has repainted its former "candy-cane" bus. It is now gold that reads "Love & Peace".

Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) offers special shopper trolley service in Lake Elsinore Dec. 7, 14 and 21 and in Corona/Norco Dec. 14, 15, 21, 22.

RTA will offer free rides beginning at 6 p.m. until the end of service on its 37 regular fixed route buses on New Year's Eve. MTA will again offer free rides beginning at 9 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Riding will be free on Metrorail (Red Line, Blue Line, Green Line) until service ends and on Metrobus until 5 a.m. the following morning.

Reminder: DowneyLINK operates on the Saturdays between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

BULLETIN BOARD

Election of officers and directors for 2003 will be held at our Dec. 14 meeting. Overseeing it will be the election committee - Nate Zablen, Bart Reed and Chair Woody Rosner.

Nominees include:

- President - Kymberleigh Richards
- Vice President - Kymberleigh Richards, Ken Ruben, Mark Strickert
- Corresponding Secretary - Dana Gabbard
- Recording Secretary - Mark Strickert, Charles Powell
- Treasurer - Juanita Dellomes
- Directors-at-Large (3) - Kyle Minnis, John Ullóth, Ken Ruben, Craig Weingarten, Kris Sharp, Lionel Jones, Chaffee Yiu

The meeting begins promptly at 1 p.m. Afterward we will caravan to Long Beach via Metrorail for our annual holiday party at Colonial Buffet beginning at 5 p.m. Cost is \$15 (you can pay at the meeting or the event) and includes an all-you-can-eat meal, goody bag of transit trinkets, transit schedule giveaway plus door prizes galore. All in all it promises to be one fun evening.

At our Jan. 11 meeting Bob Huddy will speak on community based transit.

MTA is holding a meeting on its Crenshaw Major Investment study Monday December 16 at the Korean Fellowship Hall in the Miracle Mile, 4350 Wilshire Boulevard from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

MTA San Fernando Valley Sector service changes will be discussed at a meeting on Wednesday, January 15, 2003 at 6:30 PM in the Van Nuys State Building, located at 6150 Van Nuys Boulevard in Van Nuys. San Gabriel

Valley Sector service changes will be discussed on Saturday, January 25, 2003 at 10:00 AM at the Pasadena Senior Citizen's Center, located at 85 East Holly Street in Pasadena. Omnitrans and RTA are holding meetings for possible fare and schedule changes. See the Calendar (p.g. 11) for details.

From Nov. 22 through Dec. 23 comments will be received by the Los Angeles County Dept. of Regional Planning on the update/amendment of the County General Plan (which focuses on unincorporated areas). Topics include new highway and bike plans: http://planning.co.la.ca.us/drpl_revw.html

It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air is a unique public education and partnership-building initiative developed jointly by several federal agencies to help regional, state and community efforts to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. For more details: <http://www.italladdsup.gov/>

The California Air Resources Board has several list serves that send e-mail notices when areas of its website are updated. Among the lists are several transportation related ones (e.g. Carl Moyer program, Zero Emission Vehicles). To subscribe see <http://www.arb.ca.gov/listserv/listserv.htm>

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. ■

**PUBLIC &
LEGISLATIVE
AFFAIRS**

Dave Gabbard
(dgabbard@hotmail.com)

The Transportation Summit was a promising event. Hopefully the organizers realize the need to engage in further outreach (many have noted attendance was mostly confined to the usual suspects), especially with regard to the composition of the delegations to be sent to Sacramento and Washington, D.C. in 2003. Hopefully next year the event will have less speech making and more workshop opportunities. I'd also get rid of the "resolutions", which were in most cases long-winded policy laundry lists that will quickly be forgotten. Engaged dialogue among stakeholders should be given more emphasis along with educational opportunities. But for a first try it was a pretty good event.

I was heartened at the description of our group L.A. Times reporter Kurt Streeter included in his November 12 article 'Transit Nerds Making Themselves Heard': "More modestly successful, and more mainstream, is the Southern California Transit Advocates, considered the oldest of the Los Angeles advocacy groups, around since the late 1980s."

We have had our first solid victory in the effort to ensure transit users are included on the various MTA Service Sector Governance Councils: The Culver City city council at its Nov. 11 meeting selected as one of its 4 nominees SO.CA.TA member Ken Ruben in the category of community advocate. Overall the Westside, South Bay and Gateway areas have made laudable

outreach efforts. In fact members in the the Gateway Cities region still have an opportunity to be considered for the sector council in that area by contacting Deborah Chan Kin of the Gateway Cities Council of Governments at (562) 663-6850. The situation regarding the San Fernando Valley sector is murky. And sadly the San Gabriel Valley establishment persists in pushing for only elected officials to be placed on the Sector Council there. As window dressing they propose having a non-voting public member to serve in a advisory capacity. Notice it isn't even clear whether this "advisor" would be a transit user. We will resist this and any other efforts to undermine including transit users on the Sector Councils.

Michael Bohlke is one of the most knowledgeable persons about transportation issues in the region but you've likely never heard of him. That is because he is the transportation deputy for Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite-Burke and while on occasion you will see him quoted in the press his main mission is scouting the territory for his boss and keeping her informed of developments. I recently ran across Bohlke at the Expo light rail meeting in Culver City and he smoothly spun regarding my previous column questioning whether Brathwaite-Burke's championing of the Red Line extension along Wilshire was a ploy to undermine the Expo project. Essentially Bohlke declared my comments were interesting but missed the mark and that the Supervisor's support of the Red Line is longstanding. I conceded the latter point but then rejoined if she wholeheartedly supports the project on its own merits why hasn't she held a meeting in Miracle Mile to share these views with her constituents who are the greatest obstacle to the extension? Bohlke didn't really give an answer to my question. Sorry, Mr. Bohlke, but I still suspect your boss of cynical calculation not real advocacy. If and when

she does some heavy lifting than I'll believe her support is genuine. And frankly I hope the Supervisor surprises me and displays the kind of courage one would need to face-off with the NIMBYS. But I'm not holding my breath...

question of the month: why is the Los Angeles Rail Car project (aka the P-2000 cars running on the Green Line) so over budget, years late and with the vehicles still only conditionally accepted? None of these questions are addressed in the staff report (agenda item #10, Dec. 12 MTA Board meeting) seeking a budget increase of \$14 million.

I spent the afternoon of Saturday November 16 at an outreach fair held during the fall conference of the Junior State of America (L.A. area chapters) at the Sheraton Gateway near LAX. They actually contacted me and asked for us to participate. JSA is an organization of high school students devoted to leadership development and non-partisan exploration of political issues. Previously our outreach has been in events linked to transportation or environmental themes, this was the first we participated in that was overtly political. During the 3 hours of the fair some very intelligent young people engaged me in conversations and took our literature.

When you read a lot of transit agency board minutes like I do you get used to plowing through reams of boring boilerplate material in the pursuit of that occasional bit of golden information. So you can imagine I felt like I had hit the mother lode when reading the Antelope Valley Transit Authority Board minutes for Oct. 28. In discussing problems with AVTA commuter service Chairman Ron Carter sharply questioned the progress in addressing miles between road failures. Also Director Rick Dispenza in a discussion of inventory control pointedly asked were items unaccounted for merely

not adequately kept track of or actually being stolen. Staff responses to these inquiries did not seem to instill confidence to the extent that Dispenza openly worried whether another service meltdown as experienced with previous contractor Laidlaw was happening. A sign of how concerned the board became at what they were hearing is that Chairman Carter felt a need to seek assurance about the security measures taken to limit access to the fareboxes. Pointedly staff were directed to assess the operational situation and develop an action plan to correct it. Makes you wish you could have been present to see the verbal fireworks, huh?

Well, we knew it had to happen - at their recent City Hall protest the BRU denounced Mayor Hahn; City News Service describes BRU Spokesman Martin Hernandez as suggesting Hahn was working at odds to the consent decree "bolstering policies that foster and sustain ... structural racism". I knew when Hahn showed up during the mayoral election at a BRU press conference to endorse their stance on consent decree compliance that he would eventually come to rue doing so. Also following past patterns I was sure Eric Mann would eventually denounce Hahn for "betrayal". Like clockwork a mere 18 months later all my hunches appear to be coming true.

Kymberleigh Richards and I met with Los Angeles Times reporter Kurt Streeeter Nov. 21 at Times Mirror Square. It was partly a get acquainted session and also a chance for Streeeter to pick our brains about issues he might want to keep an eye on during the next 12 months. I brought a list of 8-10 topics that might be worth looking into. It is encouraging that Streeeter, along with colleague Caitlin Liu, have been doing more real digging while on the transportation beat than some of their predecessors. Since the Times sets

the news agenda for the region, that is a healthy turn of events.

Dec. 5 the Regional Council of the Southern California Association of Governments choose the West Los Angeles to March AFB via Union Station and Ontario Airport corridor as the Initial Operating Segment for Maglev. While going forward in their efforts to secure more federal funds for planning the IOS the agency appeased disappointed advocates of competing corridors by promising to continue studying those as potential future extension segments. Plus SCAG reaffirmed its support for the California-Nevada High Speed Rail Commission proposal for a Maglev system linking Las Vegas and Anaheim. I am sure the army of consultants feeding at the SCAGLEV trough heaved a sigh of relief at the continuation of this unfolding fiasco.

Good news: Riverside County's Measure A (a 30 year extension of the half-percent sales tax for transportation) passed with 69.1% in the November election. Next local county due to try and pass a renewal: San Bernardino.

Bad news: a San Bernardino Associated Government (SANBAG) staff report has made me aware that due to EPA changing the standards by which ozone pollution is measured more parts of the country may soon be declared "non-attainment" areas than currently are. This would make these areas eligible for federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program funds. Which essentially means less CMAQ monies for Southern California, which are used for all sorts of pollution reduction strategies. I guess this is another example of unintended consequences...

Speaking of SANBAG, its board is persisting in its desire to study withdrawal from SCAG and set up a separate Inland Empire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

The very professional SANBAG staff have in reports outlined why current federal law makes withdrawal and creation of a separate MPO virtually impossible. In the Dec. 4 San Bernardino Sun article 'County's planners in transit over regional transportation' it is revealed "[SANBAG staff have] also expressed reservations about pulling out of SCAG, saying it could leave the Inland Empire powerless to affect decisions made in Los Angeles and Orange counties; decisions that would likely affect Inland Empire air quality and transportation routes connecting Inland Empire commuters to their jobs."

phrase of the month: Metropolitan Planning Organizations - Federal highway and transit statutes require, as a condition for spending federal highway or transit funds in urbanized areas, the designation of MPOs which have responsibility for planning, programming and coordination of federal highway and transit investments. (source - Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations <http://www.ampo.org>).

By passing agenda item #42 at its Dec. 12 meeting the MTA Board essentially has decided to defer confronting the systemic problems at Access Services by throwing some money at the problem (\$5 million for the current fiscal year) with a cap on the ASI budget for the 2004 fiscal year. But the plan the Board is adopting includes a same day service component, which isn't mandated by ADA. This is a potential budget buster and it is unclear what limits will be placed on the same day component (the plan cryptically declares "amount of resources for subsidy program [to provide additional same day trips] will vary, depending on trip demand and funding"). Disability advocates are placing their hopes in the creation of a ASI foundation to help pay for the same day services. I think they will find this more difficult than they imagine, since millions will be needed to

subsidy same day service trips. No one seems to want to confront this crisis, being content instead to merely noodle at the margins and put off the tough decisions.

Sierra Club co-founder John Muir famously mused "everything is hitched to everything else." Something that may not immediately strike one as influencing transportation but in fact does is the structure of governmental funding. How moneys flow in California between the state and local governments and who controls what funds influence all sorts of governmental decisions (such as land use) that impact transportation. I have repeatedly read laments of the situation post Prop-13. And been curious what factors prevent something being done about it. Rick Cole, current city manager of Azusa and a long-time champion of smart growth/urban revitalization, put his finger on one aspect when interviewed in the Nov. Metro Investment Report: "Part of the problem lies in the way cities characterize the problem. For ten years, the League of Cities has railed about the ERAF shift (where local property tax revenue was shifted from cities and counties to school districts so Sacramento could balance the State budget). There is no question cities got a raw deal-Governor Davis is on record that the money was "stolen." ... But voters

don't care about revenue for cities, they care about funding for services: police, fire, libraries, parks, streets etc. Talking about ERAF is talking about the wrong issue. The real issue is stable funding of vital services to every California family, whether they live in a small city, a big city, a rich city, a poor city-or in unincorporated county areas. Reform is stalled because a compelling case has not been made to the voters that it isn't some abstract entity like "the city" or "the county" that is suffering under the current mess-it's the services that voters care about that are suffering." That sounds 100% dead-on.

trivia question of the month: does anyone remember why MTA heretofore has not been a member agency of ASI? Answer in next month's column.

I'll conclude by revealing I've learned where former ASI Executive Director Richard DeRock landed: he is now General Manager of Link Transit, the public transportation agency for Chelan and Douglas counties in Washington state (largest city: Wenatchee). Quite a come down, huh? By the way, Link's annual budget is \$6 million (ASI has a \$60+ million budget). ■

TRANSIT TRIVIA

Besides Los Angeles, name four Southern California cities that have currently 2 working train stations apiece:

(Answer in the January newsletter)



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

New Chair of OCTA Board

Congratulations to Tim Keenan of Cypress in his new position as OCTA's Chair of the Board. Mr. Keenan is very supportive of all modes of transit. He has requested a meeting with TAOC, so keep in touch for announcements of this special opportunity. Public Member Greg Winterbottom, Chair of the Transit, Planning and Operations Subcommittee, is the new Vice Chair.

As the U-Turns

OCTA had a great community meeting on November 18 to discuss the Kmart Plaza U-turn. It's too bad that the most inspired Rider's Alert OCTA ever produced didn't get on many buses. OCTA even offered bus riders transportation to and from the event. Luckily, several bus riders made it to the meeting anyway. Unfortunately 2 days later there was a major accident involving the U-turn, strengthening local residents' contention that the U-turns were unsafe. OCTA immediately put the 1 and 91 buses on a temporary detour through a nearby neighborhood to avoid having to make the U-turns. They got immediate complaints from the wealthy neighborhood, and now have until Valentine's Day to implement a permanent solution. It seems like the best solution for bus riders would be to lay concrete in the Kmart parking lot for turnarounds. The next best solution is to keep just the 1 on the long detour, but

stop the 91 at Domingo and Doheny Park. The third best solution, and the most likely, is to stop the 91 at Domingo and Doheny Park, and eliminate Kmart access altogether for the 1. 191 span and headway would be improved to that of previous service levels on the 1 and 91, costing OCTA about \$400,000 annually. There will be a bus riders' forum on this issue on December 18 or 19, at the Methodist Church across from Kmart Plaza. It's been great to see how hard OCTA has worked to try and save Kmart Plaza access.

March 2003 Service Changes

Responding to passenger requests at the public hearing, OCTA will:

29 - add a weekday SB 9:53 trip from Brea Mall to Beach and La Habra
43 - add a weekday NB short turn trip at 11:03 pm, add weekday SB short turn at 10:52 pm, short turn weekday SB at 11:22pm will become a long trip starting at 11:06 change weekday SB 5:16 am trip to 5:06 am.

47 - extend weekend NB short trip to Brea Mall, leaving Balboa at 7:43

Add weekend SB short at 9:42pm to Fullerton Transportation Center

147 - add another SB short to Fullerton Transportation Center, leaving at 4:40pm

They were going to cancel the only NB afternoon trip, but this was slipped in after the public hearing and was not highlighted to the Board subcommittee. The public is not aware of this change, either. OCTA staff decided to hold off and delete the NB run in June, so as to give better notice, although there will be no public hearing.

216 - Reduce to one run in each direction, rather than canceling the route.

463 - Will be extended to Hutton Centre to replace cancelled 461 service.

Shelter From the Storms

There are now 3 major bus routes (51,53,62) representing 316 weekday

runs stopping just outside the Santa Ana Transit Terminal, and not going in. Still no sign of a promised shelter.....

Rail Advocates of Orange County
RAOC meetings are now just once monthly, usually the 1st Thursday of the month at the Santa Ana train station. Please call ahead for January though, or watch the SO.CA.TA news board, as it may be rescheduled for a day other than January 2nd.

Later MTA 460 Service

In response to a TAOC request for later night service on the 460 to complement all-night Harbor and Katella buses, Dan Nguyen of MTA has added more night service in both directions. Thank you, Mr. Nguyen!

December Bus Book Brain Teaser

A free OCTA bus token to anyone who can figure out what these instructions, appearing for route 60 of the December Bus Book, mean "On westbound trips passengers may board or alight at any stop between Tustin and the VA Hospital, except between 12:00am and 5:00am when passengers may board or alight at any stop. From the VA Hospital to Long Beach Transit Mall, passengers will only be discharged." Answer at end of column.

New Fullerton Transportation Center Pedestrian Linkages

Spaghetti Factory addicts will be happy to hear there is now a direct pedestrian pathway from the east end of the north train platform to the front door of the restaurant. Metrolink ticket machines and validators remain near the bridge on the west end.

Latest Owl

OCTA expects to introduce night owl service on Route 29 next September. They will be introducing one new night owl route every year

Son of 62

OCTA expects its next brand new route to start next September, with service on Collins, Orangewood, and Cerritos, ending at Cypress College.

Bikes Are Transit, Too!

First in a series of Orange County bike reports, from RAOC's Roy Shahbazian: Ever try riding a bicycle to work or play? Getting around on OC streets by bicycle is sometimes fun and sometimes stressful. A bike lane or off-street trail can make the ride a little more pleasant and get you where you're going quickly.

On a bicycle you can average 11mph comfortably. A 5 mile trip will take about 30 minutes, whereas the same trip by bus will take about 45 minutes with one transfer. Short trips tend to be faster by bicycle if you don't mind using human-powered transportation. Bicycling can be more flexible in the evenings or on weekends when bus and rail service is limited. Instead of bus fare, treat yourself to a doughnut or ice cream cone.

More bicycling tips can be found at <http://www.bettercommute.org/> in the bicycling section.

(Answer to Teaser: Route 60: On WB trips from the VA Hospital to the Long Beach Transit Mall, passengers will be discharged only, except from 12:36am to 4:51am.)

MEMBERS IN ACTION

The Nov. 18 Mobility-21 Transportation Summit drew a contingent of members including Kymberleigh Richards, Roger Christensen, Dana Gabbard, Bart Reed, Lionel Jones and Craig Weingarten.

Kymberleigh Richards attended the Dec. 5 Raise Summit for non-profits and especially found informative the seminars on grant raising and lobbying restrictions for the various categories of 501(c)(3) organizations.

We wish to belatedly note John Ulloth participated in the Caltrans/MTA 101 Corridor improvement workshop held Sept. 19 in Calabasas.

Andrew Novak attended the Dec. 4 MTA Gateway Service Sector meeting in Downey.

Among the members at the Dec. 5 Friends of the Red Line meeting were Nate Zablen, Ken Ruben, Roger Christensen, Tom Rubini and Bart Reed.

Attending the Train Riders Association of California (TRAC) Annual Conference held Nov. 23 in Sacramento were Ken Ruben and Roger Christensen. And at the meeting Christensen was elected Vice-President of TRAC. Congratulations, Roger!

Jerome H. Weymouth participated in the California Association for Coordinated Transportation/California Rural Transit Assistance Program rodeo held November 9-10 in Hemet. Jerome took second place in the individual competition, and was only 46 points behind the first place winner. Way to go, Jerome! Details on the event (with photos of the winners) can be seen at <http://www.calact.org/rtap/roadeo1.htm>

Kymberleigh Richards and Nate Zablen were quoted in the Nov. 14 L.A. Times article "Residents Renew Bid to Halt Valley Busway, Calling Crossings Hazardous".

Ken Ruben, Dana Gabbard, Charles Powell and Anthony Loui attended the Nov. 21 Mid City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project community workshop held at Veteran Memorial Complex in Culver City.

J.K. Drummond wrote to Congresswoman Jane Harman regarding the impending reauthorization of TEA21 and received a response in which Harman promised Drummond that she will "keep your views in mind" should such a bill reach the House floor for a vote.

From Ken Ruben: "As some readers of The Newsletter know, I had the opportunity and honor to meet David L. Gunn, President and CEO of Amtrak at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles, Friday, November 15.

I represented RailPAC (Rail Passenger Association of California-I am a member of the Board of Directors and one of the Southern California Directors-at-Large) in meeting and greeting Mr. Gunn about a month ago.

I hope to have a more detailed report on how this unplanned, informal unscheduled greeting sort of meeting came about in a future issue of the Newsletter." ■