

TRANSIT UPDATES

Metrolink riders! Still have any Amtrak Step-Up coupons left? Amtrak/Metrolink are using them as tickets in a drawing for prizes such as Amtrak trips, and other Amtrak goodies....all tickets (with your name, address and phone number written on each ticket) should be mailed to: Amtrak Step Up Coupon Retirement Drawing, Attn Pacific Surfliner, 810 Alameda, LA, CA 90012. Tickets must be received by January 15.

RTA is proposing a few route changes. If they are approved, they would go into effect on May 25:

#1 would be rerouted in the UCR area via Blaine and Third, like the current #13. Also, all trips would be extended south to Corona. However, some weekend evening service would be cut.

#10 will take #12's current routing to Pierce/Magnolia via Hole.

#12 would be rerouted via Magnolia, La Sierra, Indiana and Pierce. #13 would be rerouted via MLK, Chicago, Marlborough, Atlanta and Spruce

#14 will operate directly via Indiana St (not via Washington, Lincoln and Madison). Also, it will be extended to UCR via the current route of #1 (University and Canyon Crest).

#16 would be extended from Downtown Riverside to Fairmont Park.

#17 and #20 would be rerouted into Moreno Valley Mall. #17 would no longer serve the Riverside City College Moreno Valley campus, but #20 would be rerouted to serve the campus.

#18 will run every 60 minutes (up from 75). Also, new #18A will serve the area north of SR-60.

On route #19, service north of the Moreno Valley Mall, as well as service south of Perris would be removed.

#21 would undergo a reroute near the Pedley Metrolink. It would also be extended from Downtown Riverside southward via Brockton, 14th, Redwood, Wong and Pine.

#25 would be rerouted via University, Iowa and Center. (Much of the current routing would be picked up by #12). Also, all trips would run through to Loma Linda.

#31 and #35 will terminate in Beaumont at 6th/Beaumont. (The cities of Beaumont and Banning plan to run a joint bus service the entire length of 6th and Ramsey through the two cities. This is to start in April).

#36 will no longer serve Yucaipa, but will run between Calimesa and Redlands via I-10.

#37 will be replaced by two new routes. New #74 will run between Hemet and Sun City (and to Temecula?), while #79 will run between Hemet and Temecula via SR-79.

#38 will be extended to serve the Swan Lake area

#41 will be extended from Perris to the RCC Moreno Valley Campus

#49 would also be extended south of Downtown Riverside, along the same route as #29.

BULLETIN BOARD

Just a reminder: yearly dues are now due and can be paid by mailing a check to the SO.CA.TA address, or by cash or check at the Jan. 11 meeting.

Bob Huddy will speak on community based transit at our Jan. 11 meeting. Afterward we will caucus to prepare comments on the upcoming MTA service change hearings. A big thanks to everyone who made the annual Holiday Buffet a wild success.

Officers and Directors for 2003:

President: Kym Richards
Vice President: Mark Strickert
Recording Sec: Charles Powell
Corresp. Sec: Dana Gabbard
Treasurer: Juanita Dellomes

Directors: Kris Sharp, John Ulloth, Lionel Jones

Big Blue Bus of Santa Monica is holding meetings to seek comments. See the Calendar for dates and times.

The Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) proposes several changes to its current bus system which, if approved, will take effect on May 25. Check the calendar for date, location and time of hearings. Also on the calendar are dates and times for the MTA sector service change proposal meetings being held this month.

Thursday January 23 at 2 p.m. the LAX Working Group is meeting at the Council District 11 Westchester Field Office, corner of Manchester and Lincoln Blvd. This is sponsored by LA Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski (for further details - David Kissinger, 310-568-8772)

The final report on the National 1-10 Freight Corridor Study is due for release in March. To request a copy of the Executive Summary call the project hotline: 866-441-0399.

Jim Walker, volunteer historian at the MTA Library, is trying to locate materials published by the defunct L.A. County Transportation Commission (1976-1993), including reports, handouts, etc. Let us know if you can help.

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)

It is going to be one rough year. Early December the Governor proposed large cuts in transportation funding to help close the budget gap. And this is just the opening salvo as the state grapples with a yawning fiscal crisis. The January issue of Wheel Clicks (newsletter of the Pacific Railroad Society) reports at the Dec. 13 Metrolink Board meeting it was decided a Southern California group of transportation agency representatives will go to Washington, D.C. in late April or early May to lobby the California Congressional delegation for additional federal funding. Also the new L.A. County Mobility21 Coalition plans to undertake similar trips to Sacramento and D.C. in the coming months. Frankly things at the moment look grim, especially for capital projects that haven't advanced beyond preliminary engineering.

Speaking of Wheel Clicks, the December 2002 issue reports the San Pedro Red Car project is mired in the Public Utilities Commission permitting process. The project website [<http://www.railwaypreservation.com/page8.html>] states "The line is projected to begin operation in the Spring of 2003." The next open house to observe work on the cars will be held Saturday, January 25, at the Wilmington Red Car Works, 877 Pier "A" Street, from 11am - 3pm; updates

are also available on the Red Car Information Line: 310-732-3473.

The whole MTA service sector governance council process is too volatile at the moment to venture anything in print; I'll make verbal comments at our meeting instead. P.S. - the first council to receive MTA board approval, for the South Bay, is meeting on Jan. 17 at 9 a.m. in the Carson Community Center, 801 E. Carson.

interesting fact of the month: Amalgamated Transportation Union local 1277 [<http://www.atu1277.com/1277/>] not only represents MTA's mechanics and service attendants but all operations employees of both Riverside Transit Agency and SunLine Transit.

Mark the date: July 14 is the 30th anniversary of the opening of the El Monte busway (source: December issue of Crossroads).

Good news! The city of Los Angeles next month will release a Infrastructure Assessment Report Card as part of a process to identify and address infrastructure maintenance needs. Hopefully this means the city finally is addressing the defects in its assessment of street pavement conditions identified over a year ago in a City Controller audit.

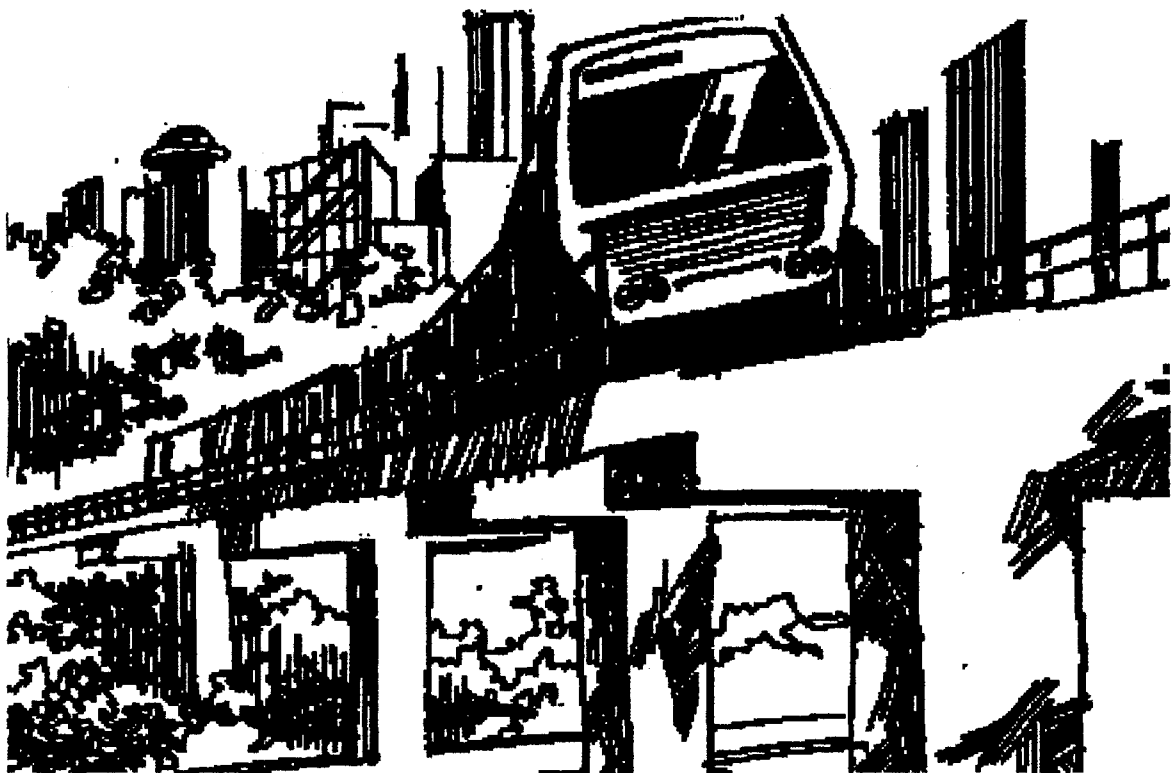
Here is the answer to last month's trivia question: MTA initially didn't join Access Services, Inc. because the United Transportation Union interpreted its collective bargaining agreement with MTA such that if MTA had a formal relationship with ASI than the UTU's contract would apply to the drivers at ASI. This is why while MTA heretofore has funded ASI and relied on it for providing ADA complaint

service it kept the agency at arm's length. (P.S. - does the UTU still believe this or are MTA's current moves toward joining ASI merely slipping under the Union's radar screen?).

Also last month I discussed at length the stressed-filled October Antelope Valley Transit Agency board meeting. Now I have before me the Nov. board meeting minutes and lo and behold it turns out a Mr. Keith Whalen, Vice President of MV Transportation (AVTA's operations contractor that was the object of the board members' ire) to assure the board steps were being taken to "come back into line with contractual obligations". Whalen also made a formal

apology and that monthly reports would be made to the Board on their progress. Chairman Ron Carter in response made reassuring noises, "it appeared MV was taking proper steps in correcting the problems by bringing in key personnel. He stated that time will tell the results, but to keep up the good teamwork". Sounds like MV still is somewhat in the doghouse but being given a chance to mend its ways.

I'll conclude by congratulating MTA Deputy CEO John Catoe who is succeeding Ron Kilcoyne as Chair of the Southern California Association of Governments Regional Transit Task Force. Good luck, John! ■



During our Aug. 2001 owl service exploration I promised Director Phil Capo he would be given the opportunity to plan the next owl trip. Eventually it was decided the trip would begin Saturday August 31, 2002. The fish tank in the East Portal building next to Gateway Plaza was settled on as the starting point. By the appointed time (8:30 p.m.) a number of members had arrived - Woody Rosner, Lionel Jones, Armando Avalos, Andy Novak, Alan Michelson, Ken Ruben, Mike Milloy, Dana Gabbard and Phil Capo.

Knowing Mr. Capo's championing of owl service I undertaken a publicity campaign for the event. Much to my surprise this drew the attention of channel 34, one of the local Spanish language channels, with a camera crew showing up at the fish tank. We had enough advance warning to arrange for member Tim Adams to be present to act as our spokesperson. Tim explained to the reporter the purpose of our trip and why transit service being operated during evenings and early morning hours is important. While we were gratified at being able to get our message out, the need to start our trip finally compelled us to race to the nearby Red Line platform and catch the 8:57 p.m. departing train.

We deboarded at Pershing Square station and exited just in time to miss the bus we had wanted to catch. So we grabbed a westbound line 18 bus (#7703, a NABI low-floor) with 14 passengers (all ride counts exclude trip participants). This passed thru the active commercial district of Pico Union along Sixth Street. Meanwhile Andy, Armando and Dana, much to their dismay, had water leaked on them by the air conditioning ducts.

After we arrived at Western and Wilshire Ken Ruben bid us farewell and caught a westbound line 20 bus. At 10:10 p.m. we boarded a Metro Rapid line 720 (#7116,

NABI low-floor) westbound with a standing load. We deboarded at Westwood Blvd. Woody decided he needed to catch up on his sleep and caught an eastbound line 20 bus. Meanwhile the rest of us at 11 p.m. caught Big Blue Bus route 2 (#3842, a New Flyer low-floor) going south. We jumped off in downtown Santa Monica, at which point Alan Michelson decided to head on home.

The rest of us explored the environs before catching the last BBB rt.7 eastbound bus of the night (departing Broadway/4th at 11:50 p.m.). This was another New Flyer low-floor (#3827). At Colorado it had 12 passengers. By the time we were on Ocean Blvd. near the Pier ridership had grown to 18 passengers. As we continued on there was some boarding and deboarding - one highlight (or lowlight) was when Lionel Jones was nearly knocked over by a young woman getting off. As we continued thru West Los Angeles we had a long stretch with no one boarding until Fairfax when to our delight member Charles Powell joined our little band of riders. We arrived at Pico-Rimpau Terminal at 12:27 a.m. as scheduled, which is the end of the line. We explored this historic site (originally where Bay City Transit Pico bus service met the Red Cars which were never extended past Rimpau on Pico).

At 12:42 a.m. MTA line 30 pulled up to the boarding platform at the Transit Center. This was yet another NABI low-floor (#7501). 4 passengers boarded besides us. As we went east on Pico I glanced out the window and noticed a number of persons in the street. Than I became aware that various parties were facing off in what looked like an impending street rumble. Much to my relief we continued moving and quickly the street fight was left behind.

Soon we arrived in downtown Los Angeles and witnessed the 1 a.m. line-up. We made our way over to 6th and Broadway

where line 18 does its layover after midnight. This time we were riding it eastbound; there were only three passengers when the bus (#7462) started its run at 1:10 a.m. As we passed thru the dark night there was some boarding and deboarding but by Atlantic ridership had dwindled to 2 passengers. Surprisingly 4 boarded at Commerce Shopping Center. Near the end of the line most members hopped off at a convenient 7-11 where they spent time with some interesting characters. Meanwhile Dana and Phil rode to the end of the line and the layover in a quiet suburban street for about 10 minutes before pulling out for the trip back to downtown. The others were glad to reboard the bus and shared stories of their experiences at the 7-11. After riding end to end our verdict was the line had very low ridership in owl hours.

Now was the time for a guilty pleasure, as we hopped off the bus at 5th and Hill to catch line 156 which operates into downtown only during late night hours. At 3:13 a.m. we boarded the NABI low-floor (#7512) with 7 passengers and soon we were riding on the freeway segment

along the 101 before exiting at Vermont. At Western/Santa Monica Blvd, five people boarded. After going eastbound on Santa Monica Blvd. with few riders the bus began to fill up when it made the turn onto Highland (evidently a lot of those boarding were patrons of the various clubs in the area that had just shut down for the night). As we continued on toward the San Fernando Valley the load began to ease.

At Ventura Blvd. and Vineland we hopped off to catch the line 150 bus waiting there (this is a timed transfer). It was a 1996 Neoplan (#4579) that departed at 3:50 a.m. As we made our way west along Ventura we witnessed low ridership comparable to what we saw on the line 18 earlier that morning.

Shortly after the turn onto Topanga Canyon we hopped off and had breakfast at Denny's. Afterward via line 750 and the Red Line we began going our separate ways. . So, should we do another owl trip for summer 2003? And which lines do you think we should explore?

TRANSIT TRIVIA

Last month's question was:

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

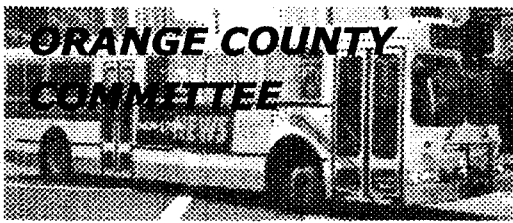
The answer:

Anaheim, Riverside, Norwalk, San Clemente, Pomona, Santa Clarita (3)....

This month's question:

Name four of the eight revenue-service funiculars that have operated in LA County

(Answer will be revealed at the January meeting, and in next month's newsletter)



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

OCTA Accepts Transfer From Metro Rapid Bus Scott Holmes has been hired as the Manager of Planning, Scheduling and Customer Advocacy. He will manage the Service Planning and Scheduling Sections and will fulfill the role of Customer Advocate within the Operations Division. Although Scott has been working on special projects for a few months at OCTA, he comes from MTA where he had experience scheduling and transportation planning functions. He also supervised the Customer Information staff for a period of time. It will be interesting to see how OCTA takes advantage of their new Customer Advocacy position. Best of luck, Mr. Holmes!

New OCTA Assistant CEO, Out Of the Loop Richard J. Bacigalupo has been named the new Assistant Chief Executive Officer for the Orange County Transportation Authority. Mr. Bacigalupo comes from his position of Executive Director of RTA in Chicago. He previously served as the General Counsel of the RTA and in the Office of the Chief Counsel of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (now FTA) in Washington, D.C. Welcome, Mr. Bacigalupo!

New Newsletter Transit Advocates of OC and Rail Advocates of OC are cooperating on a combined printed version of the newsletter each group has been sending its people by e-mail for the past couple of years. Many people on the mailing list still have no e-mail access, so those not also dues-paying SOCATA members have missed out on much of our news and activities up until now. The printed version is another by-product of TAOC's APTA grant. We also expect to post some copies at libraries and other community newsracks.

The We-Mean-It-This-Time OCTA March 2003 Service Changes Several changes were added to the service change due to customer comments. Unfortunately, several improvements announced in the Public Hearing Notice had to be postponed till the June service change.

- 29 - Sunday: add a SB 9:53 trip from Brea Mall to Beach and La Habra
- 33 - Saturday: add earlier and later round trips
- 35 - Saturday / Sunday: add earlier and later round trips
- 37 - Sunday: add earlier and later round trips
- 38 - Weekday: extend one WB afternoon short turn trip to full route
- 42 - Weekday: add one earlier EB morning trip; increase afternoon frequency to 20 minutes for short turns and 40 minutes for long turns (from current 30 and 60)
- 43 - Weekday: add NB short turn trip at 11:03 pm, add SB short turn at 10:52 pm; change short turn SB at 11:22pm to a long trip starting at 11:06; change SB 5:16 am trip to 5:06 am
- 47 - Saturday / Sunday: Extend NB short

trip to Brea Mall from Balboa at 7:43 pm; Add SB short at 9:42pm to Fullerton Transportation Ctr.

59 - Saturday: add more round trips; unclear as to when

70 - Sunday: add earlier morning EB short turn trip

72 - Sunday: add earlier EB and one later WB trip

75 - Weekday: Reroute into Tustin Metrolink station. Will provide quasi-express service to and from Tustin Marketplace, Irvine City Hall and Newport Transportation Ctr. (Note: Buses not timed to meet trains.)

80 - Weekday: Combine most of the current routing with the 173; new route will be called the 173. Frequency will be increased to hourly

147 - Weekday: add another SB short to Fullerton Transportation Center, leaving Kraemer and Birch at 4:40pm. They were going to cancel the only NB afternoon trip, but this was decided after the public hearing, so OCTA staff decided to hold off and delete the run in June to give better notice, although there will be no public hearing

173 - Weekday: Combine with route 80, deleting section south of 17th and Orange. The frequency will be reduced to hourly. The new route will still be called the 173

205 - Sunday: extend SB 6:41 am short turn trip to full length

216 - Weekday: OCTA changed their decision to cancel the 216.

Instead, they will retain 1 trip in each direction daily

461 - Weekday: While OCTA is still canceling this route, a new 463 extension will now serve Hutton Center

462 - Weekday: extend to serve Santa Ana Police Station

463 - Weekday: extend to Hutton Center

to replace cancelled 461

490 - Weekday: first bus ever to Laguna Niguel/ Mission Viejo Metrolink Station, service to Laguna Niguel and Aliso Viejo

Latest on Threat to Kmart Plaza

Service There is a controversy surrounding bus service in the Kmart Plaza area in San Clemente and Dana Point. Local residents were upset about buses making U-turns on Camino de Estrella. Since buses had been asked not to use residential streets, the alternative required Route 1 and 91 buses to make the U-turns by starting a left turn from the right-hand lane, causing confusion to through drivers. Besides this safety issue, neighbors also complained about noise and vibration from early morning buses. An accident occurred a few days after a major community meeting on the topic, forcing OCTA to cancel the U-turns by sending buses back to a previous large turnaround loop. Ironically, this loop on Camino Capistrano and Mira Costa was where OCTA buses USED to turn around until the neighbors there complained about them. Neighbors are again complaining, so OCTA is trying to figure out a new solution.

The options are:

1. Turnaround on the Kmart Plaza property. This seems to solve the most problems, but would cost a lot to make it withstand heavy bus use, and would impact a few homeowners whose houses abut the property. Also, it requires the cooperation of the Kmart Plaza owners, which has been difficult to secure.

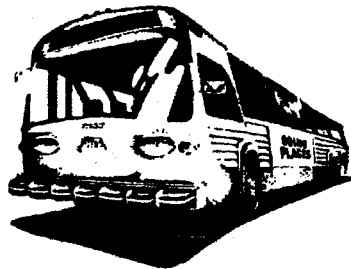
(continued on page 10)

(Orange County, from page 9)

2. Another solution involves sending just Route 1 buses on the Camino Capistrano/Mira Costa loop, and removing the 91's which would then end at Doheny and Domingo. Riders would have to transfer to the 191 to continue to Kmart Plaza. This would solve about half of the neighbors' problems.

3. The most likely solution seems to be removing all but 191 service from the Camino Capistrano/Mira Costa loop, forcing passengers to transfer to 191 buses to access Kmart Plaza. The neighbors prefer this solution as they feel the little buses the 191 uses don't cause noise, vibration, and exhaust problems. 191 service would be increased to replace lost frequency and service hours caused by removal of 1 and 91 buses. OCTA estimates that, unfortunately, this solution will cost about \$400,000 per year to implement. It will also eliminate access for passengers with bikes as the small buses don't have bike racks. Also, a recent OCTA forum for bus riders brought out the fact that riders felt the new transfer area is in a dangerous neighborhood.

Kudos to OCTA for trying to involve riders on this controversial issue. While they have not been able to get the word out as well as they might have, they have shown an unusual concern for the bus rider point of view, at the risk of upsetting the local residents. Here is a quote from their recent Riders Alert: "It is important that bus riders on Routes 1, 91 and 191 are aware of the situation and that decision-makers have the benefit of your input on potential solutions." It's unfortunate that the geography, street structure, and local land use preclude an ideal solution.



MEMBERS IN ACTION

Nate Zablen had a letter in the December 23 Daily News expressing support of a Dec. 18 op-ed by Michael Barack.

Kymberleigh Richards was extensively quoted in the Jan. 1 Daily News article "Busway funding at risk". Also she attended a Holiday Open House held Dec. 11 at the Van Nuys field office of State Senator Richard Alarcon.

Roger Christensen and Cecil Carpio attended the Dec. 9 meeting in Inglewood on proposals for Crenshaw meeting; Roger was joined by John Ulloth and Bart Reed at the Dec. 11 meeting at Crenshaw Plaza on the same topic.

A laudatory profile, by Dan Weikel, of Jane Reifer and her efforts as an Ombudsman to improve bus service in Orange County appeared in the Jan. 5 L.A. Times Orange County edition ("Nice Job for an Angry Rider"). ■