

TRANSIT UPDATES

The Downtown Connector is under consideration again. In MTA's newest Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP), the following appears: Explore the feasibility of a Downtown Light Rail Connector that connects the Metro Gold Line, Metro Blue Line, and Exposition light rail lines through downtown Los Angeles.

A few MTA buses in the bright orange "Local" paint scheme are on the streets now.

To promote the new Rail-to-Rail program, all Metrolink monthly passes (regardless of coverage area) will be valid for fare on the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo, every Saturday and Sunday until November 16th. The passes will also be valid anywhere along the San Bernardino line, again, every weekend until November 16th.

Antelope Valley Transit now operates to the Trade Center transfer center, which is about 2/3 of a mile southeast of the mall proper itself. The mall still remains served, on the street only, by AVTA Line 7 every 1 1/2 to two hours, and by the other lines at the corner of Avenue P and 10th Street West. Santa Clarita Transit 795 also stops at Trade Center.

Another new AVTA service is the Lake Los Angeles Shuttle, which confusingly runs every 30-90 minutes to connect to a bus that runs every hour (Line 9 to the Trade Center). It provides new service to unincorporated Los Angeles County.

- The route structure south of the Trade Center has changed dramatically,

with Lines 1, 2, 3, 9, and 96 swapping ends and routes.

- Line 4 also changes to serve the new courthouse and AVTA headquarters.
- Line 5, 11, and 12 stay the same.
- Line 6 now acts as an extension of every other Line 1, instead of operating directly to the Antelope Valley Mall. Connecting service to the Los Angeles basin commuter services through the stops at the Park and Rides and service to the Pelona Vista area has been eliminated.
- Aside from deviating on all trips to Highland HS, Line 7 remains the same.
- Line 92 no longer runs south of Lancaster City Park.
- Line 95 operates west of Lancaster City Park on Avenue K-8.
- Line 97 has been extended to Lancaster HS.

The long-awaited RTA Commuterlink buses are now in service. As promised, the routes are:

- 202 - Murrieta-Temecula-Oceanside
- 204 - Montclair-Riverside
- 206 - Temecula-Elsinore-Corona
- 208— Riverside-Moreno Valley -Perris-Temecula

All of these routes operate weekdays only, providing bidirectional peak service. Regular RTA fares are charged on all except 202, which has a special fare of \$4.

New Omnitrans fares went into effect Sept. 2. Regular fare is \$1.15 or a day pass for \$2.75. Senior/Disabled fare is \$.50, with no change in the day pass rate (\$1.25). The 10-trip pass has been replaced with a 7-day pass (\$16/\$8). 31 day passes are still available (\$41/\$20.50). Unused fare media can be refunded until Oct 3. (pg. 7)

BULLETIN BOARD

Our thanks to Ed Clifford and Haim Gefen of MTA for their presentation at our Aug 9 meeting on MTA's draft revised Transit Policy. As a follow-up they will be making a presentation on MTA's hub and spoke proposal at our Jan. 10, 2004 meeting. Rick Peterson of Amtrak Thruway will be the speaker at our Sept. 13 meeting. Oct. 11 a representative of the Southern California

Association of Governments will make a presentation on the 2004 Regional Transportation Plan. Nov. 8 Lt. Michael J. Parker of L.A. Sheriff's Dept. will discuss security on the Red and Gold rail lines.

At our Sept. 13 meeting we will also discuss whether to take positions on SB 314 (the 1/2 % sales tax proposal) and Proposition 53 (the Infrastructure funding measure on the Oct. ballot). Plus schedule our Compton/Carson study tour and begin discussions of our annual day after Thanksgiving trip. And decide where to hold our annual Holiday Banquet this year.

The next SO.CA.TA study tour is a follow-up to our exploration of OCTA's new owl service. An itinerary is posted on our website and will be distributed at our Sept. 13 meeting. If you wish to join us mid-trip contact in advance the trip leader at (714) 393-4206 to coordinate.

Save the dates: Nov. 17 will be the 2nd annual transportation summit for L.A. County at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. Also we understand Rail-Volution 2004 will be held in Los Angeles!

L.A.-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency is holding a Workshop Saturday Sept. 13 from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at the MTA Headquarters Building (east of Union Station), Windsor Room, 15th Floor; for more information contact Linda Culp: (619) 595-5357 or lcu@sandag.org.

Sept. 18 Friends4Expo are holding a meeting at Hamilton High School (2955 Robertson Boulevard) beginning at 7:30 p.m. MTA's consultants will give a detailed update on their preliminary engineering work for the Exposition light rail project.

Big Blue Bus is holding a community meeting on its bus yard expansion plans Wednesday, September 17, from 5:00-7:00 pm at the yard, 612 Colorado Avenue in Santa Monica.

The Metro Gold Line Eastside Extension Review Advisory Committee is meeting Thursday Sept. 11 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Boyle Heights Senior Center, 2839 East 3rd Street; further information: (213) 922-3023.

The Rail Right of Way/Abandoned Rail Corridor Evaluation Study Nelson/Nygaard is conducting for Caltrans has a website: <http://www.cal-rail-row.info/>

Foothill Transit Stores in Claremont, Duarte, Pomona and West Covina will now be closed the 2nd and 3rd Saturdays. During the 1st and 4th they will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (the Puente Hills Mall location will continue to be open seven days a week).

It is fascinating that while Tom McClintock extols the expansion of freeways as part of his campaign for Governor concurrently a group of bureaucrats are working overtime to address the impact of the budget crisis on air quality conformity. Many of the transit projects McClintock sneers at are essential to our region being able to get clearance to spend federal funds via the conformity process. The days one could indiscriminately lay pavement as McClintock preaches are over. His total lack of understanding of this dimension of our state's challenges (conformity impacts all the large populated areas) speaks volumes.

Boy, the agenda packets I get from the L.A./San Diego/San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency [<http://www.sandag.org/index.asp?committeeid=48&fuseaction=committees.detail>] are chockablock full of interesting news. The latest one included these tidbits: L.A. Union Station Run Through Tracks project is moving forward to the 35% design stage. The environmental document is expected next March. Also by March Caltrans will have the study it commissioned on how to do intercity rail service should Amtrak's budget troubles become critical. Lastly in March there is the possibility of an additional Surfliner trip to Santa Barbara that would also extend to San Luis Obispo if it can be done within the current budget.

Given the complexity and implications of the draft revised transit service policy MTA staff are currently preparing I recently wrote MTA Chair Zev Yaroslavsky to suggest that this deserved a thorough review by means of a Board workshop. In his re-

sponse Chairman Yaroslavsky expressed the current committee structure provides ample opportunity for the Board members and public to provide input on the policy. Interestingly at the American Public Transit Association Intermodal Operations Planning Workshop held in late July in L.A. Roy Nakaweeda, a BART Director, asked after a presentation on the draft revised policy whether the MTA Board were aware of it yet. When essentially told no, Nakaweeda cautioned that this was not good news.

I wholeheartedly agree with Chair Yaroslavsky's comments in the Aug. Metro Investment Report that extending the Green Line into LAX should not be held hostage to the fate of the Airport's Master Plan and that the extension should be done now instead of delayed any further.

I am also glad to learn Foothill Transit's facelift of the El Monte Station is underway and is due to be finished by November. At last we will again have a transit center plus much needed repairs done to the bathrooms. Hooray!

Amid all the huzzahs heaped on the Gold Line Authority I found it interesting the recent peer review of the Expo project noted the design of the new project incorporated "lessons learned from [Pasadena Gold Line] regarding operational constraints resulting from inadequate system elements such as SCADA, headway design, PA systems, etc."

fact of the month: as of August 1 for legal services Foothill will pay a \$4000 retainer

for up to 25 hours of General Legal Services from Richards, Watson and Gershon. Additional hours will be billed at \$175/hour for attorneys and \$125/hour for paralegals. (source: minutes of July 30 Foothill Executive Board meeting).

We may put on an event on transit in other parts of the world at the Ken Edwards Center in Santa Monica early next year. It would be educational to expose the public and our members to different ways of providing mobility. Cost to rent the Center is very affordable and it is a good chance to do outreach outside our usual Angelus Plaza locale.

While many see smart growth as a means to addressing sprawl and associated ills, other are less enthralled. In the Sept./Oct. issue of Sierra magazine two Austin, Texas activists question what it means for their community. Asks one "The city says it will build affordable housing, but its only affordable if you can afford it". This reiterates my sense that often unstated assumptions and fears frame our policy debates before a single word is said. Those who rely just on reason and facts to buttress their arguments are due for a rude surprise.

The Aug. 29 Political Pulse asked "Will Advocates of Prop 53 Just Let the Measure Die?" This is the infrastructure funding measure on the Oct. ballot (along with the recall). Evidently the polling numbers look weak and amid the current political whirl 53 is getting little attention except from foes, like educators and the League of Women Voters. This measure is also an orphan because it was placed on the ballot as part of a deal to obtain

votes for the state budget. Obviously the legislative leadership seems to feel no stake in advocating for it.

Meanwhile the notion of a temporary sales tax to jump start local transportation projects seems to be gaining steam. SB 314 seems to be benefiting from the overall positive response to the opening of the Gold Line plus the perception that funds from Sacramento and Washington, DC will be scarce in the coming years and local funding is the only avenue of addressing transportation needs. Of course it would have to go before the voters and pass by a 2/3 margin, which is a daunting task. But just as San Jose BART helped pass the Santa Clara County measure maybe the prospect of Exposition light rail et al being done within 10 years will spark a yes vote for this measure...

Question: Who claimed the Long Beach Blue Line would be "a ghost train" if built?

Answer: USC Professor Peter Gordon in the Oct. 20, 1985 L.A. Times ("Question of Ridership Light Rails: Visionary or a Step Back?")

I'll conclude this month by praising Access Services for being the first agency to ever send me their board box items. Often agencies send a monthly packet of current operational statistics and other materials to their board of directors. Since these are not items on a public meeting agenda or generally publicized the material is often difficult to obtain or even know exists. Kudos to ASI!

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Donald Stanwood had a letter in the Aug. 9 L.A. Times ("L.A. Needs More Rail Transit") mocking the persistent anti-rail stance of Professor James Moore: "What happened, did your brother get the Lionel for Christmas?"

Ken Ruben attended the Aug. 9 Big Blue Bus Community Outreach Meeting and the Aug. 21 Twilight Dance Series at Santa Monica pier marking Big Blue Bus' 75th anniversary.

Mark Strickert attended the Aug. 28 MTA San Gabriel valley Sector's community meeting on proposed service changes. And

Hank Fung provided comments at the Sector's Sept. 2 public hearing on the proposals.

Michael Divindo attended the Sept. 3 meeting of the Board of South Coast Area Transit in Oxnard.

Woody Rosner, Barry Christensen and Ken Ruben were among those at the monthly informal RailPAC Meeting held in Fullerton.

Andrew Novak was quoted in the Sept. 8 Los Angeles Times article "MTA May End or Reduce Service on 21 Bus Routes" opposing MTA service cuts: "Don't they get it? These are real lives they are affecting."

(updates, from pg. 2)

Routes 100 (Riverside-San Bernardino) and 90 (Montclair-San Bernardino) have been combined into route 90. The stop at Kaiser Fontana has been reinstated, and additional stops have been provided at Riverside Metrolink, San Bernardino Metrolink, and Mt. Vernon/Centerpoint Drive in Colton. Fare is now the same as any other local Omnitrans bus.

Also replacing Omni #30 and #31 in Redlands is the new Redlands Trolley (using faux-trolley vehicles). The routes have been adjusted to provide 30-minute service between Downtown Redlands and the University of Redlands. Although all Metrolink fares will be accepted, there is a promotional 25-cent fare until January 4.

New VISTA buses and routes
New schedules for all VISTA routes went

into effect August 11, 2003. The Coastal Express will have direct Ventura-Santa Barbara express trips, operating weekday peak hours. Service to UCSB was eliminated; replacement service provided by SBMTD #24 from Downtown Santa Barbara. Finally, one mid-day round trip was cancelled due to low ridership.

The Hwy. 126 service will also run on Sunday (same schedule as Saturday). And Ventura College (on both the 101 and 126 routes) is now only a flag stop.

SCAT route #15 will be extended into the Nyeland Acres area (west of El Rio) effective October 1. The new portion of the route loops via Gonzales, Nyeland Rd and Auto Center Dr. Buses will run every 40 minutes, 7 days per week.