

TRANSIT UPDATES

MTA is proposing the following service modifications, effective June 24. (Public hearings will be held—check the calendar for details)

- #10-11-48 will be rerouted from Maple Ave to Main St. north of Adams
- #20 on Wilshire will terminate at Veteran Ave. Except for owl service, #720 will be the only MTA service on Wilshire west of Veteran (Federal Bldg.)
- New Limited #376 will operate over the route of #76 (Valley Bl)
- #107 (54th St) would be cancelled (possibly replaced in part by LADOT DASH service)
- #209 (Arlington) south of Imperial would be deleted, if not the entire line
- Service on #439 (LA-LAX Airport-Redondo Beach), #442 (LA-Inglewood) and #550 (San Pedro-West Hollywood) express lines may be cancelled
- Off-peak service on #444, #446 and #447 (Avalon) may terminate at Artesia Transit Center, with only the #445 providing continued service into Downtown Los Angeles. (Peak hour service on all these lines will continue to serve LA)
- Two new Rapid Bus Lines, #705 (over

route of #105 Vernon-La Cienega) and #751 (Soto St)

Effective Feb 15, new rules apply to Long Beach Transit passengers using Metro-to-Muni transfers purchased from a rail ticket machine: these tickets must be accompanied by a rail ticket when boarding a LBT bus. These transfers will not be valid if presented with any kind of MTA pass (daily, monthly, etc).

The new owners of the Torrance Del Amo Mall are forcing Torrance Transit to remove their terminal north of the mall. Present plans call for the use of the old Montgomery-Wards Auto Shop on the east end as a temporary stop. Torrance Transit in conjunction with various city departments is working with the developers to resolve this problem.

All Metrolink monthly pass holders are eligible for free weekend travel on Amtrak Pacific Surfliner trains between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo, from now, until April 30. Weekend is defined to include Friday as well as Saturday and Sunday. However, this promotion is not in effect on April 9, 10, and 11.

This is a notice of a proposed SO.CA.TA bylaws amendment as required by Article 12 of the SO.CA.TA Bylaws. This bylaws change may be voted upon at the Feb 14 meeting or later. Ratification requires a 2/3rds vote of approval by the members present.

3.4.8--At its pleasure the Executive Committee shall confer emeritus status to a past President who no longer holds office. The title shall be held by only one individual at a time. Shall be an ex-officio of the Executive Committee. Shall in the absence of the Newsletter Editor be allowed to vote only to break a tie.

BULLETIN BOARD

Hines' presentation on personal rapid transit, originally scheduled for the Feb 14 meeting, will be postponed until May. Upcoming speakers: March 13, 2004-- Nancy Michali of MTA will be making a presentation on initial concepts of MTA's hub and spoke proposal and April 10 Chris Carson of the League of Women Voters will talk on transportation issues.

Our thanks to the members who participated in our letter writing exercise at the Jan. meeting.

The Hub & Spoke Committee will have its next meeting Feb. 28 starting at 11:30 a.m. in Phillippe's (near Union Station) in one of the 2nd floor dining rooms.

The Attorney General's office has a pamphlet on the Ralph M. Brown Act (the Open Meeting law). Copies are free and

can be requested by calling 800-952-5225.

Los Angeles County is in the midst of updating its General Plan (for unincorporated areas) with community workshops slated to be held during the month of March throughout the county. Further information: (213) 974-6417 or http://planning.co.la.ca.us/gp_update/drp_gp_home.htm

Latino New Urbanism & Transportation & Mobility; Transportation and Urban Design: Solutions for Greater Mobility is a conference being held Friday, February 20, 2004 at MTA, beginning at 8:30 a.m. Further information: (626) 969-5599 or <http://tluc.net>

Fe. 9-13 is Transit Takes Action Week. For information on how you can help impact TEA21 reauthorization in Congress see <http://65.114.146.18/>

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Hank Fung has been appointed to the city of Pomona's General Plan Citizens Advisory Committee.

Attending the Jan. 15 Friends of the Green Line meeting were Bart Reed, Kent Strumpell, David Snowden and Lionel Jones.

Bart Reed, Lionel Jones, Mark Strickert, Anthony Curzi, Kevin Devlin and Dana Gabbard attended the Jan. 21 MTA Citizens Advisory Council meeting. Tom Rubin was extensively quoted in the article "Killing Time on Ghetto Blue" (Jan. 23 L.A. Weekly).

John Ulloth, Dana Gabbard, Bart Reed and Anthony Loui attended the Jan. 29 event marking the publication of The New

Transit Town: Best Practices in Transit-Oriented Development, by Hank Dittmar and Gloria Ohland .

Chris Flescher attended a meeting on transit oriented development held in San Francisco Jan. 30. And his letter on parked cars blocking sidewalks was published in the Jan. 20 Daily Californian. Another letter on the current fiscal situation at VTA was published in the Jan. 8 San Jose Business Journal.

Feb. 2 Michael Divindo and Charles Hobbs provided input at the annual Ventura County Transportation Commission unmet needs hearing. Divindo also attended VCTC's Jan. 9 Board meeting.

Kevin Devlin and Joseph Dunn attended the Feb. 5 Metro Westside/Central Service Sector Governance Council meeting. ■

Well, the MTA Board is between a rock and a hard spot with the latest special master ruling. Maybe the appeal will result in Judge Hatter trimming the number of buses they are ordered to acquire. Agency management seem to hope delivery of higher capacity buses in the coming year will provide some relief of the chronic overcrowding that has plagued the busiest routes.

The flood of MTA change proposals pursued by the various sectors may call for a change in the way we prepare positions. Maybe for each sector we should have a point person who monitors proposals and coordinates input from members familiar with the service area in question. What do members think of this idea?

For years I have sought in vain an explanation why MTA's P2000 LA Standard Light Rail Car procurement was so troubled. Now buried in a document on the Integrated Project Team (IPT) whose avowed goal is to avoid a repeat of the P-2000 debacle with the new 2550 rail vehicles are two sentences that may give a hint of what happened with the P2000s: "The IPT's rail-operations based staff provides the 2550 Program with a more practical technical focus than a construction-based technical approach. This paradigm shift is the primary lesson learned from the P2000 contact". (MTA Board Operations Committee Jan. 15, 2004--agenda item #26, page 5).

The same Operations Committee meeting mentioned in the previous paragraph had a report received and filed on "Efficacy of Reestablishing the MTA Transit Police Department" (agenda item, #27). I doubt the MTA Police are likely to be reconstituted. As then MTA Board member James Cragin pointed out in 1996 when the policing partnership was approved, once MTA disbanded

its Police it would be difficult if not impossible to ever reestablish it. I guess I should be blasé but I can't help being angered at the revelation that MTA policing costs doubled between 1995 and 1999. The report points out all things being equal bringing the Police in-house would save MTA between \$10 and \$20 million annually. Yet the obstacles to bringing back the MTA Police are daunting. And the clear bias of the MTA Board members whose governmental units have a fiscal stake in MTA not forming its own Police I think pretty well means this is one report that quickly will be gathering dust.

Does anyone understand why the municipal operators evidently don't like the new ability of rail station ticket machines (also known as TVMs) to sell Metro-to-Muni transfers to MTA pass holders? A recent meeting of the Bus Operator Subcommittee had a motion approved to ask MTA to re-program the ticket machines so persons who ride rail lines with MTA pass (including day passes) "wouldn't be able to transfer from rail to a muni bus with an interagency transfer". MTA Pass holders have always been able to buy muni transfers on the bus - why is it any different to buy them from rail TVMs? Already Long Beach Transit has instituted a even more sweeping policy that the "Muni to Metro transfer is not valid with MTA passes": <http://www.lbtransit.com/events.html#metro>

The release of draft environmental documents has given the California high speed rail project the first splash of media attention in a long time. Public hearings are upcoming (check the Authority website after Feb. 13 for time and location: <http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov/hearings/default.asp>). It looks more and more like the \$10 billion bond will be bumped to the Nov.

2006 ballot, providing time for support to build.

interesting fact of the month: Access Services, Inc. (L.A. County's ADA para-transit agency) received over \$600,000 from MTA as reimbursement for ASI's strike related expenses.

Speaking of ASI, the city of Los Angeles Commission on Disability has been monitoring the agency during the past tumultuous 12-18 months. At the Dec. 3 Commission meeting Commissioner Overton asked Jess Segovia of ASI whether applicants are informed of their right to appeal if the examiner determines they do not qualify for certification. Mr. Segovia responded per the meeting minutes, "the person is not informed of their status at the interview because there have been incidents of violence if they did not get approved. Instead, they will receive a letter..."

Oh, and ASI is still suffering dire financial straits, having to take belt tightening measures less than 4 months into the new fiscal year: "The financial transactions for the period ending Oct. 2003 resulted in an over-budget position. Staff is aggressively managing the budget for fiscal year ending June 2004 and preventive measures have already been initiated to control costs for the balance of the fiscal year" (board box item, #3, Jan. 9, 2004: http://www.asila.org/calendar/agenda_display.cfm?agendatype=1)

I am thinking later this year of putting on a special event with a panel of 3 MTA drivers plus a mechanic and service attendant who would discuss the world of MTA bus service behind the wheel and behind the scenes. Few bus users have an idea of what providing transit service entails and it might be a useful educational exercise to have a public event

where such operational aspects are in the spotlight.

MTA staff propose to enhance the yet to be implemented Universal Fare System with new technologies, which "will result in a minimum 6-month delay in the UFS schedule" (MTA Board Operations Committee Jan. 15 meeting, agenda item 37, page 3). Just another reason to expect it will be a while yet before UFS sees the light of day.

Wonder how much of a hit MTA ridership took due to the strike? -9.14% according to a presentation made by MTA Deputy CEO John Catoe at the same Operations Committee meeting referred to in the foregoing paragraph (agenda item 24).

In their championing of buses people like Tom Rubin and Robert W. Poole, Jr. stress the flexibility of buses versus fixed rail. Among the alleged advantages of building facilities for buses like busways is the vehicles can deviate as needed to serve demand. An example is MTA line 485 which runs on the portion of the El Monte busway from downtown Los Angeles to the off ramp to Lake, after which it continues on surface streets to its terminal. So the last thing you'd want to do is limit the flexibility of a bus facility. And that is why the MTA Board dubbing the East-West Rapidway "The Orange Line" is the height of idiocy. This essentially limits use of the busway to a single route running end to end. One would have thought the fact the existing busways we have (the El Monte and Harbor) were not given colors for identification should have been a clue why this was a bad idea. Oh, well...■

I will try to fill the OC news-gap when time and potential conflicts-of-interest permit. I know now that March could be difficult, as I expect to be out of town at a work-related class, but I will what send news bites I may have to whomever might be able to take this on in my place. Reporters are needed on a regular basis, especially from TAOC.

Centerline received a "Recommended" rating from the Federal Transportation Administration's New Starts Ratings for Fiscal Year 2005. This on the heels of the "Locally Preferred Alternative" route finally being settled, and then approved 9-2 by the OCTA board. The finalized starter route will be from Depot at Santa Ana to John Wayne Airport, with a spur line to Santa Ana College. The 9.3 miles will include the ¼-mile subway at South Coast Plaza. Once the environmental reports are finished and approved, OCTA anticipates that construction will start in 2006, and It would be completed in 2009. The Metro Gold Line East Los Angeles Extension and the San Diego Mid-Coast Extension were also on the "Recommended" list, but NOT the Metro Exposition Line (problems with capital funding?).

OCTA will likely have a public hearing for the June 04 changes, at the 3/12/04 board meeting, despite there being few additions or subtractions to service. Watch the OC Section of the online member board for further developments.

Yes, there will be a March 04 Bus Book, effective 3/14/04. The biggest changes to note might be to the individual route maps of anything that connected with MTA, as most of those connection locations have either changed or are no longer possible. As things stand now, the Foothill 285, the

minimal replacement for the former MTA 471, connects with OCTA only at LaHabra/Beach and Beach/Gregory.

There is a new "OCTA Store" at OCTA HQ, at the 1st floor reception area @ 600 S. Main. They sell OCTA passes and offer 91 Tollway account applications during normal business hours. The array of OCTA passes expanded; in addition to the 30-day pass and the 10-packs of 1-day passes, one can now also buy 7-day and 15-day passes. Also, the "U-Pass" program allows Cal State Fullerton and UC-Irvine students to swipe student ID in farebox, and "Employer Pass" is available to local businesses. These programs charge 60¢ per use, up to a maximum \$37.50 per month. CSF student boardings are averaging about 1,000 per school day. UCI is using money from campus parking fines to help start up their program.

OCTA kicked in \$500k to help Metrolink lease train equipment not yet being used by Seattle's Sound Transit. Trains would be added to the overcrowded Inland Empire-Orange County Line.

The final Environmental Impact report for Yorba Linda's proposed Metrolink station will be presented to the city council on Feb. 17 at 6:30 pm.

The Rail Advocates of Orange County will have no regularly-scheduled meetings for the time being. They will still keep watch on Centerline progress, Metrolink, and the high-speed rail proposals.

Transit Advocates of Orange County (TAOC) approved sending a letter to the City of Garden Grove's public works director, urging him to support Transit Signal Priority proposed by OCTA. ■