

TRANSIT UPDATES

Metrolink plans to increase all fares by 4% effective July 1, 2004 (to keep up with the costs of maintaining the equipment).

Fares will also be adjusted in July of 2005. At that time, the distance-based fare system will be changed. Currently, Metrolink fares are determined by the number of zones a rider passes through. (For example, LA Union Station to Chatsworth is a three-zone trip—but so is LA to Simi Valley, even though Simi Valley is about 10 miles further away). There are several instances of this "zone fudging" throughout the Metrolink system (Corona vs. West Corona, the "split zone" stations at Fullerton and Burbank, etc.) The 2005 fare restructuring will do away with the zones. Instead, fares between any two stations will be determined by the driving distance (not rail distance) between the two stations. (Proposed fares can be determined by visiting http://www.metrolinktrains.com/fare_calc/)

Metro will convert 25 parking spaces at both the North Hollywood and Universal City Metro Red Line stations to paid permit parking. A monthly parking permit will cost \$39, plus a one-time processing fee of \$4.95. Permits will be renewed automatically cancelled by the user.

The following MTA bus route changes are effective June 27, 2004 or later:

- Line 107 (54th St) will be eliminated; replacement service will be provided primarily by the Slauson and Chesterfield DASH routes. #681 will be extended along a short portion of the #107 route into Slauson Blue Line station. A new line #607 will cover the

Inglewood portion of #107.

- #442 (LA-Inglewood Express) is to be cancelled once #740 (rapid bus over route of #40) is implemented
- #124 (El Segundo Bl), #202 (Alameda St) and #209 (Arlington Av) will lose weekend service; #209 will also lose midday service
- #446-#447 (Express via Avalon Bl) will be rerouted via Albertoni directly into the Artesia Transit Center (#52 and #352 will handle service on Avalon north of Albertoni). In addition, service on the Harbor Freeway Transitway will be adjusted to provide a more consistent frequency. Finally, #550 may be shortlined so that every other bus only goes as far south as Carson/Vermont.

Several LADOT DASH lines will receive extended hours and service. The following routes will provide service every 20 minutes, and will operate until 8 p.m.:

- Highland Park/Eagle Rock
- Lincoln Heights/Chinatown
- Southeast Los Angeles
- Wilshire Center/Koreatown

DASH Hollywood will also get later service (until 8 p.m.) but will keep its 30-minute headways.

The following routes will get Sunday/Holiday service (running from 9am to 6 p.m.):

- Crenshaw
- Highland Park/Eagle Rock
- Hollywood
- Lincoln Heights/Chinatown
- Mid City
- Southeast Los Angeles
- Wilshire Center/Koreatown

Fares will remain 25 cents per boarding.

BULLETIN BOARD

Nancy Michali gave an informative presentation on MTA's Metro Connections program (aka hub and spoke) at our March 13 meeting. Ms. Michali will be making a return appearance at one of our meetings this fall seeking input as the program enters its next phase.

Chris Carson of the L.A. County League of Women Voters will be the speaker at our April 10 meeting.

Our Compton/Carson study tour is scheduled for Saturday April 24. Details at our April 10 meeting.

Reminder: SO.CA.TA and our Orange County affiliates will have adjacent booths at Fullerton Railroad Days the weekend of May 1-2. Drop by to say hello. We should have updated transit guides for sale plus blow-out prices for Metrolink videos and books.

The Center For Transportation Excellence (CFTE) has recently launched its second survey of Congressional candidates regarding their views on public transportation. In the 2002 election cycle, candidates from around the country shared their perspectives on the role public transportation plays in local communities. Go to <http://www.cfte.org/state/survey.asp>, identify your district and candidates, check to see if your candidates have responded, and contact your candidates to ask for a response.

The Pacific Bus Museum Orange County excursion has been delayed. They hope

to have it in early June.

The Downtown News notes the City of Los Angeles Street Furniture program is finally going forward. The first automated public toilet is being installed at the southwest corner of Fifth and San Julian Streets in downtown. Also in downtown prototype vending kiosks and bus shelters have been erected at Broadway and First and First and Spring streets. We hope later this year to have a representative from the vendor Viacom give us a status report on the program at one of our meetings.

Friday April 16 the California Senate Select Committee on Alameda Corridor East will hold a hearing on SB 1397, a proposal to have the South Coast Air Quality Management District adopt a Locomotive Emissions Reduction and Mitigation program. The hearing begins at 2 p.m. and will be held at the Norwalk Arts and Sports Complex, Sproul Room, 13000 Clarkdale Avenue.

Saturday April 17 the Metro South Bay Sector Governance Council is holding a meeting at MTA Division 18 (Carson) from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. This will be followed by an open house from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Division 18 is located at 450 W. Griffith Street in Carson. The closest public transit service are MTA lines 52, 130, and 205, at Victoria/Figueroa. Parking is available at the division. Further information: (310) 225-6040. (to pg. 7)

MTA LIBRARY

ONE GATEWAY PLAZA

15TH FLOOR

LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

What I found interesting about the March 26 transportation funding dog and pony show held by two legislative committees and a city council committee down at the MTA building was that the emphasis was on the immediate economic benefit of transportation spending, i.e. engineering and construction jobs. The long-term economic benefit of improved mobility was given short-shrift. But I guess in an era of term limits long term benefits are totally off the radar screen.

Also very odd was when Senate Transportation Committee chair Kevin Murray asked me after I had made my public comments whether our members understood the intricate money dance going on with transportation trust funds being tapped to shore up the general fund. I noted our members are quite savvy but it isn't reasonable to expect anyone who isn't an insider to be able to track and understand what is happening with transportation funding--most of us lack access and/or the time to delve into such arcania. Which of course is why the folks in Sacramento so far feel fairly safe in siphoning transportation funds to help relieve the general fund crises.

MTA appears to be in a major budget bind. The California Transportation Commission seems leery of the extent the MTA wants to use federal GARVEE bonds as a bridge for the cutback in transportation-funding for capital projects. MTA goes so far as to state a Non-GARVEE bond scenario requested by the CTC is submitted "under protest" (item 32, March 25 MTA Board meeting). At the March 1 Budge Workshop the powerpoint presentation notes several risks that may

cause a hole in the budget. These include: ATU health and welfare mediation arbitration smaller than assumed reduction in Workers' Compensation claims ASI service plan calls for \$10 million more than planned increased pension costs

And of course the possibility of additional service mandated by the consent decree. And meanwhile a report to the March 18 MTA Operations Committee meeting on the state of the Bus Divisions (item 23) lays out the need in the near future to spend millions in unbudgeted capital expenditures to repair the existing facilities plus yard expansion to accommodate planned and mandated fleet growth. Is this when the agency begins searching under the coach cushions?

mind-numbing idea of the month: "Recommend to the LACMTA Board that they re-instate a Trolleybus Plan similar to that included in the 1992 Thirty-Year Integrated Transportation Plan" (item 2, Advance Technology Vehicle Consortium March 18 agenda)

I first learned of Don Phillips from Ken Ruben. Ken and I are in agreement that Phillips is one of the top reporters on the transportation beat in the U.S., covering it for the Washington Post along with articles for magazines like Trains. Recently Phillips left the Post due to some sort of dispute and has now landed at the New York Times. Ruben recently was kind enough to have the Times e-mail me a link to Phillip's eye-opening March 31 article on problems Union Pacific is having similar (though so far not as severe) to those experienced in the summer of 1996 when UP suffered a melt-

down with boxcars sometimes spending weeks on sidings. This caused such havoc in international trade and the agriculture sector that the feds finally stepped in and exercised emergency powers to clear up the backlog. Phillips reports right now every day there are trains spending hours on sidings trying to get in and out of the L. A. Basin. Let us hope this doesn't turn into another meltdown.

I was surprised to learn the Public Policy Institute of California in a recent survey of Los Angeles County residents found a majority of likely voters favored by 52% to 40% the \$10 billion bond for the high speed train system linking L.A. and the Bay Area. This majority held up for Democrats (56%) and Republicans (51%) as well as majorities in all demographic groups. Maybe this will encourage some of our local politicians to finally take an interest in the project? The full survey can be seen on PPIC's website: <http://www.ppic.org>

question of the month: now that OCTA is silencing the "stop requested" announcement can MTA be far behind?

The latest reports are that First Transit has dodged the bullet and is satisfying the Performance Improvement Plan specified by the Foothill Transit Board as an alternative to terminating First Transit's contract for the Arcadia/Irwindale facility. But don't imagine the contractor is taking anything for granted as Foothill Transit's management and board show every sign of continued scrutiny of its performance.

At the March 18 MTA Board Operations Committee meeting Deputy CEO John Ca-

toe announced the Transit Services Bureau has been provided \$50,000 to assign deputies on an overtime basis "...to target areas along Wilshire in an effort to reduce traffic collisions, specifically the 720 Rapid Line". This 'Wilshire Project' will last from March 1 to June 30, after which an analysis will be made of its cost/benefit to Metro that will judge the value of continuing this type of program.

happy discovery of the month: UC Berkeley's Institute of Transportation Studies has a Technology Transfer Program that provides training for city, county and other public entity staff on various transportation specialties. For more information: <http://www.its.berkeley.edu/techtransfer> or (510) 231-5681. I have long felt a connection between cutting edge research and the folks on the front lines was needed and am delighted to learn such a program exists--proof taxes are not always wasted!

After years of acrimony, expensive legal maneuvers and often overheated NIMBY rhetoric the 1.7 mile rail siding in Encinitas NCTD sought to address a choke-point on the coast route has finally opened. And to the surprise of no one the dire warning opponents made have proven untrue.

I was quoted in the April 2 San Gabriel Valley Tribune article "Region's Transit Plan Unveiled". After a decade of seeing one plan follow another I no longer take these sorts of multiyear documents too seriously. Especially once one ventures beyond the first few years they often constitute a collection of trial balloons and wishful thinking. After all in 2-3 years a new plan will be drafted so nothing is set in stone (to pg. 6)

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Richard Parker and Hank Fung attended the March 10 MTA unmet needs meeting in Santa Clarita. Parker testified about the need for connections between the Santa Clarita and the soon to open Palmdale Metrolink stations and concerns about the lack of fixed route service to Lake Hughes, Leona Valley, Green Valley and Elizabeth Lake.

In Early March Chris Flescher visited the offices of the Transportation and Land Use Coalition in Oakland and the Center for Appropriate Transportation in Berkeley. April 2 Flescher attended a meeting of Santa Cruz Metro on proposed future rail service.

A big thank you to those who participated in our March 20 Hub and Spokes Commit-

tee meeting: Andy Novak, Armando Avalos, Lionel Jones, Dana Gabbard, Mark Strickert, Paul Castillo, Carlos, Robert Meinert and Ken Ruben.

April 3 the Special Project Committee had a work session to update the Transit Guide. Participants included Dave Snowden, Lionel Jones, Andrew Novak, Armand Avalos, Charles Hobbs, Dana Gabbard, Robert Meinert and Craig Weingarten. A special thank you to Mr. Snowden for arranging the venue with computers to facilitate the work.

Bart Reed, Lionel Jones and Ken Ruben attended the March 25 MTA Board meeting. Ruben spoke on behalf of RailPAC in favor of the motion supporting the high speed rail project selecting the Antelope Valley routing between L.A. and Bakersfield.

(Public and Legislative Affairs, from pg. 5) except the early years of any such plan.

Speaking of the regional plan, Charles Hobbs found this amusing exchange between the Ventura County Transportation Commission and the Southern California Association of Governments in the minutes of the March 2004 VCTC Board meeting as part of VCTC's comments on the draft Regional Transportation Plan prepared by SCAG:

VCTC: The RTP cites the importance of fare payment system coordination but only discusses the MTA'S smart card (in development stage) rather than the GO VENTURA Smartcard which is used by 6 operators in Ventura County for almost 2 years.

SCAG: Comment duly noted. SCAG apologizes for this important omission. Go Ventura Smartcard system will be included in the final RTP.

surprise of the month: ASI Executive Director Alan Cantrell is quoted in the minutes of the Jan. 5 Transportation Professionals Advisory Committee meeting as stating New York Transit is now using limousine service to provide some trips because it is cheaper than paratransit. YEOW!

I'll conclude this month by noting Sunline has finally hired a new General Manager: C. Mikel Oglesby. I don't envy him the task he faces of bringing order to the "Sun" empire of wheeler-dealer former GM Richard Cromwell. Good luck, Mr. Oglesby! ■

Dana Gabbard, Ken Ruben and Bart Reed attended the March 26 Senate Transportation Committee/Senate Budget Subcommittee no.4/L.A. City Council Transportation Committee Joint Oversight Hearing on transportation funding. Ruben spoke on behalf of RailPAC and in the allotted 60 seconds gave an excellent summary of the major issues for rail advocates. Gabbard stressed in his comments the need for stability in transportation funding.

Tom Rubin was quoted in the March 30 L.A. Times article "Southland Debates Merits of Magnetic Levitation".

Ken Ruben presented our position on proposed service changes at the March 9 MTA Westside/Central Sector Governance Council meeting. Dana Gabbard, Woody Rosner and Kevin Devlin were also in attendance.

Ruben, Rosner, Gabbard, Devlin plus (among others) Lionel Jones, Mark Strickert, Hank Fung and Bart Reed attended the Council's Feb. 26 meeting. Devlin and Ruben also attended the April 1 meeting of the Council.

Members attending the March 27 South Bay Sector Governance Council meeting

and open house at Division 5 included Robert Meinert, Craig Barnes, Chaffee Yu, Paul Castillo, Carlos, Mark Strickert, Guillermo Merino, Hank Fung, Charles Powell, Lionel Jones, Armando Avalos, Andy Novak, Ed Buckley, Ken Ruben and J.K. Drummond. On the same day Dana Gabbard attended the celebration of the opening of the sheriff sub-station at the San Fernando Valley Sector office complex in Chatsworth.

Dana Gabbard, Ken Ruben and Kevin Devlin attended the March 24 MTA Citizens' Advisory Council meeting. Ken Ruben attended the March 26 Metrolink board meeting. Lionel Jones presented our position on proposed service changes at the March 10 South Bay Sector Governance Council hearing.

Reminder: if you attend a meeting, have a letter published in the paper, are quoted in the media or otherwise engage in active advocacy please inform the Executive Secretary so he can be sure it is noted in the next edition of this column. Thank you! ■

(Bulletin Board, from pg. 3)

Saturday April 24 a celebration of the 10th anniversary of Metrolink's Orange County will be held. Contact OCTA or Metrolink for further details when they become available.

Save the date: Torrance's annual City Yard open house will be held Saturday, June 5th from 10 AM - 2 PM. The yard is located at 20500 Madrona Ave. in Torrance.

Sunday June 13 a public grand opening will be held of the renovated Santa Fe depot in San Bernardino between 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Historic steam train 3751 will be on display plus tours and food will be available at the free event. ■

From the streetcar days until the early 1980's, most transit routes started in Downtown LA, and fanned out to the far suburbs. Crosstown routes (not serving downtown) were uncommon. Even a simple trip on Vermont Boulevard from 120th St to Sunset Boulevard required a transfer.

The "Grid Bus System" of the early 1980's not only put crosstown buses on every major street, but also straightened out several bus routes so that they would run consistently on a certain street. So now Vermont would have one continuous bus route from South LA to Hollywood, for example. People used to taking a radial route into Downtown would have to transfer, but usually they would only have to transfer once per trip.

Since most of Los Angeles and its neighboring suburbs have streets laid out in a grid pattern, it would seem, at least at first glance, to be the most logical bus routing pattern. In fact, the grid works pretty well in the high-density, high-ridership areas such as South Central, East LA, West LA and the east San Fernando Valley.

The grid has proven somewhat less effective in less-dense areas such as the western San Fernando Valley, or the South Bay area. Many of the bus routes in those areas get low ridership (they run through residential or industrial areas that have reduced demand during large parts of the service day. These routes become targets for service cutbacks during difficult economic times, making the grid less ef-

fective.

In late 2003, MTA staff proposed a new method of service implementation, called Hub and Spoke (the name has since been changed to Metro Connections). Just like the airline routing pattern of the same name, what Metro Connections proposes to do is reroute several bus lines to serve transit hubs (both already existing and under development).

The transit centers would range from simple on-street bus stops, to high-density mixed used developments. Often, an existing rail station, mall transfer point, or other similar facility will be used as a transfer center.

Linking the transit centers will be different types of corridors:

- Regional corridors would connect each subregion (yet to be defined, but probably having to do with the current MTA sectors)
- Subregional corridors would connect a subregional hub to a community transit center
- Community corridors would connect the community transit center to nearby neighborhoods.

This plan will not only affect MTA routes, but municipal operators (Santa Monica, Foothill, etc.) will also be affected. At this time, just which bus lines are to be rerouted is a mystery. But, we at SO.CA.TA will do our best to keep all members, and the public at large, informed of any planned changes.

Figure 1: Pre 1970's radial bus routes

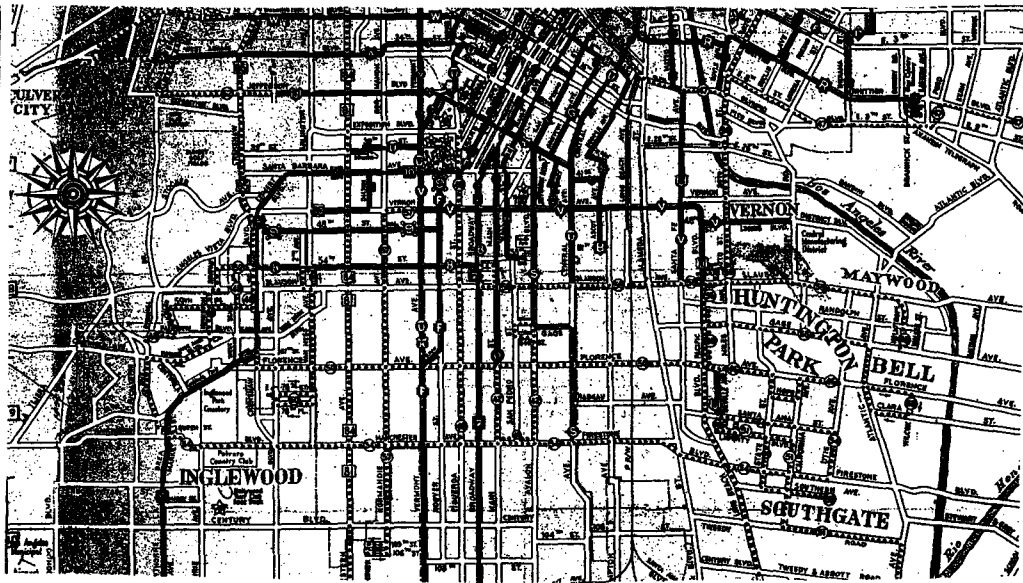
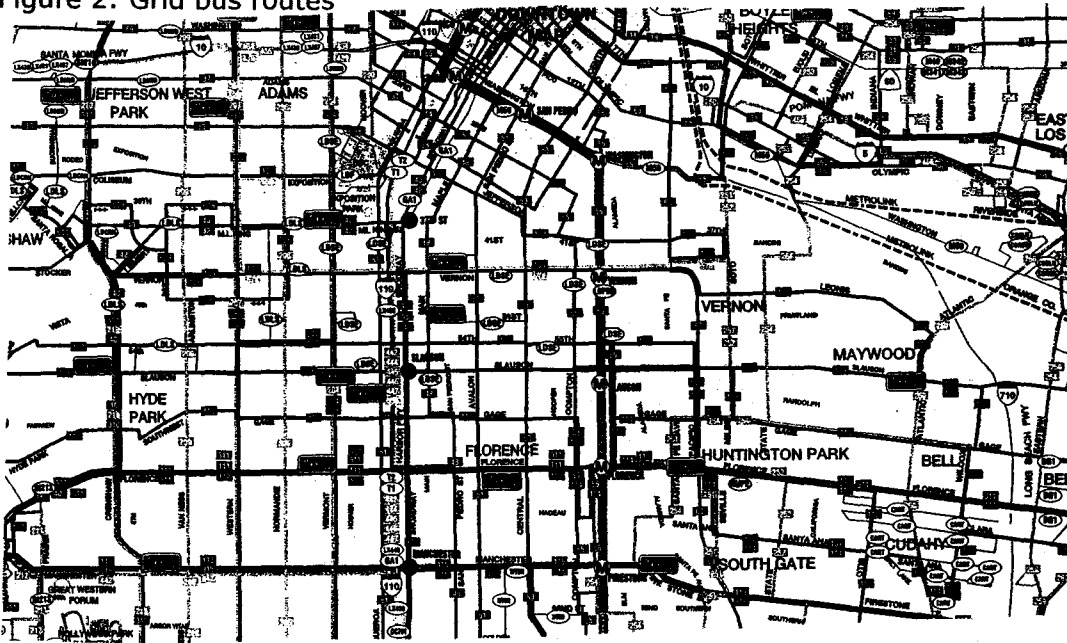


Figure 2: Grid bus routes



(Transit Updates, from pg. 2)

Foothill Transit plans several route changes to the following low-ridership services:

- #184 would be terminated at Rosemead and Huntington, and would no longer serve the Sierra Madre Gold Line station. Service frequency would also be reduced from 40 to 60 minutes
- Frequency on #187 (Foothill Bl) would be every 20 minutes along the entire line
- #189 (Baseline Ave) would run only between Glendora and Claremont, providing hourly shuttle service.
- Weekend service on #191 and #193 (Pomona locals) and #289 (Walnut) would be eliminated
- #272 (Duarte-West Covina) would run hourly (down from 30 minutes)
- #280 (Azusa Av) would run every 20 minutes on weekdays, and every 30 minutes on weekends
- #292 would become a weekday peak hour service only
- #294 (variation of #292) would be cancelled.
- #480 (LA-Pomona-Montclair Exp) would run only every 20 minutes on Sundays
- Low-ridership trips on commuter routes #493,497,498,499 and 699

may be consolidated in order to improve productivity.

There is also a fare increase proposed (mostly having to do with senior/disabled express zone fares). At least three meetings (to be announced) will be held to discuss these changes.

Sunline Transit of Palm Springs plans to discontinue running the Sunlink bus (Riverside-Palm Springs) effective July. Already, the last trip of the day (leaving Palm Springs at 3 p.m and returning from Riverside at 5:30 p.m) has been cancelled. The reason: high cost and low ridership.

An experimental service run by the the Palo Verde Transit Agency, linking Blythe to the Palm Springs area is also about to be cancelled due to high operating costs.

TRANSIT TIP

As of mid-March due to security concerns Amtrak stations no longer allow the checking of packages (a tip of the hat to member Ken Ruben for bringing this to our attention).