

BULLETIN BOARD

At our Feb. 12 meeting we will engage in a discussion of Metro Connections.

The Executive Committee proposes the following changes to the bylaws:

3.4.5. - strike first sentence (describing membership of Executive Committee) as redundant of 3.3.

6.1.2: clarify actions that can be taken (addition in capital letters): "Executive Committee shall have the authority to waive, OR TEMPORARILY POSTPONE, PAYMENT OF regular membership dues for one year on a case by case basis with documentation of special circumstances."

Also the suggestion has been made to reconsider the current ex-officios on the Executive Committee.

It has been proposed that tiers of membership categories (e.g. "platinum", "gold" and "silver")

be created for those wishing to make larger annual donations. Input from the membership regarding this is welcome.

Public meetings on the Strategic Business Plan for the L.A. to San Luis Obispo portion of the LOSSAN rail corridor will be held next month. These will include:

March 1: Oxnard (tentative)

March 2: Santa Barbara

March 3: Santa Maria

March 3: San Luis Obispo

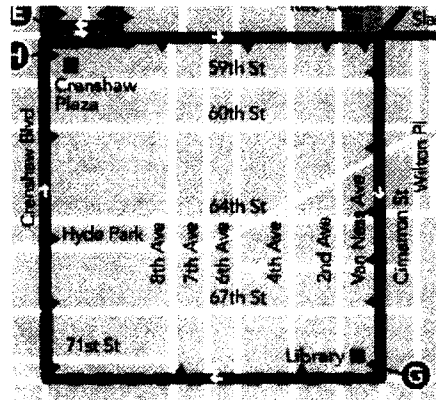
Further information will be posted in the coming weeks at <http://www.lossan.org>

A public hearing to consider an increase in Long Beach Transit fares will be held on Monday, February 28, at the Long Beach City Council Chambers, 333 W. Ocean Blvd. from noon to 2 p.m. and from 4 to 6 p.m.

Foothill Extension News is a newsletter with the latest on the proposed Foothill Extension of the Gold Line. You can request to be added to the mailing list via the project website <http://www.foothillextension.org/> or (626) 471-9050. ■

TRANSIT UPDATES

LADOT is now operating a new DASH line in the Hyde Park area of Los Angeles. This new "Hyde Park Shuttle" operates every 20 minutes between 2 and 6 p.m. on weekdays, and between 12 noon and 5 p.m. on Saturdays. The route is a large one-way loop via Slauson, Van Ness, Florence and Crenshaw. ■



Beyond the tragedy of the Jan. 26 Metrolink accident, I was disturbed at how quickly the usual suspect anti-rail critics came out of the woodwork to avail themselves of the opportunity to retail their usual arguments in the mass media. One friend commented the victims had barely stopped bleeding before these folks were on airwaves spouting their same tired viewpoints they have uttered a hundred times in op-eds, quotes, etc. Such opportunism seems callous and distasteful even in this era of desensitization. Have they no shame or sense of propriety?

When Howard Fine of the L.A. Business Journal contacted me seeking comments on MTA's plans to enhance the rideshare program I was careful to not exaggerate the extent to which incentives can persuade people to use transit or rideshare for commuting: "These sorts of strategies can help encourage people to stick with transit or ridesharing, even if they encounter obstacles like crowded park-and-ride lots or occasional late express buses".

I was more pointed when making comments for the Jan. 23 L.A. Daily News article "Hahn's Traffic Jam" on L.A. Mayor James Hahn: "This guy [wants credit because] he fills a pothole, wants to make right-hand turns [easier]. That's just part of the job, ... We need the spokesman for the region. ... It's really frustrating. He just doesn't seem to get it. The subway happened because Mayor Bradley put himself on the line. It took 20 years, it's true. ... That's how things happen. This mayor hasn't taken the risk."

How hard up is MTA financially? A Dec. 13 memo to staff from MTA CEO Roger Snoble outlined several cost cutting moves to close a projected \$40 million deficit in the enterprise fund (which supports transit operations and capital programs) including a hiring freeze (with only bus operator positions exempted) plus a freeze on purchasing furniture, office supplies, etc. Are they almost at the stage metaphorically of digging under cushions looking for loose change?

I thoroughly enjoyed the socko presentation on the Expo line made by Anthony Loui at the Jan. 26 MTA Citizens' Advisory Council meeting. Expo promises to be a showcase for many of the innovations in light rail project planning pioneered by various agencies in the U.S. and Europe. I know this has me jazzed as I haven't been about a project in a long time.

Lest they forget may be the moral behind MTA staff noting in a report on possible rewards to enhance its safety program that one bus operator still wears a belt buckle awarded years ago by the RTD. One wonders if such devotion would similarly be attached to a buckle given by MTA... (agenda item #34, MTA Operations Committee Jan. 20 meeting).

surprise of the month: MTA Board member Martin Ludlow at the Jan. 19 Executive Management and Audit Committee offered a motion for staff to prepare a report on the feasibility of creating an MTA Counsel. And the motion goes so far as to note the inherent conflict of interest of having County Counsel serve as MTA counsel while the County Supervisors sit on the MTA

Board. WOW!

MTA Board member Tom LaBonge opines in the Dec./Jan. Metro Investment Report "Well, I think that bus lines should be spokes from the station stops of the light and heavy rail. That is very important to have. I think that our bus lines should be shorter. Right now, the Western Avenue bus runs all of the way down to Imperial Highway on Western. Maybe it should run half as far and connect with another bus coming the other way. We could look at increasing the frequency of bus service through that method. We could still provide the service, but without these super-long bus lines that take an awful lot of time to get across town." Which is all well and good as long as it isn't you who is dumped off at some corner and forced to wait for a connecting bus to continue your trip...

A small ray of hope in re TEA21 reauthorization in the new Congress is a recent Congressional Budget Office projection has Highway Trust Fund receipts being sufficient that the funding package may be large enough (circa \$300 billion over six years) to be able to address the donor/donee issues that helped stall previous negotiations.

Great moments in transit history: Sept. 25, 2003 Emina Darakjy, chair of the MTA Independent Citizens' Advisory and Oversight Committee, after waiting 4 hours to speak starts to make a presentation to the MTA Board on the Committee's Prop A & C FY 2002 Audit . After 2 minutes of reading the letter outlining the findings (which would have taken approximately 3 1/2 minutes to read verbatim) MTA Board

member Zev Yaroslavsky informed Ms. Darakjy it was not necessary for her to continue. The minutes of the Jan. 21, 2004 ICAOC meeting indicate "Ms. Darakjy stated that [the interruption] was not only rude but also shocking as it was Director Yaroslavsky's initiative that formed the ICAOC."

State Senator John Campbell of Orange County in the Feb. 14 edition of Political Pulse notes while he is concerned about the suspension of Proposition 42 which would divert funds from transportation projects to fill the state budget gap: "That said, I don't want to raise taxes. I'll support the suspension as long as the only other option would be to raise taxes." This viewpoint doesn't take into account indirect impacts that result from not investing in infrastructure. Being stuck in gridlock has a cost in lost productivity. Car repairs from damage caused by an increased number of potholes in neglected pavement is another. Until we can effectively argue investing in transportation is an investment in our future economic viability the line of thinking espoused by Senator Campbell will stymie any resolution of the transportation funding crisis.

interesting quote of the month #1 - "If we do not take the steps necessary to plan how to accommodate growth so that we grow in a healthy fashion, with an economy that can support all the things that are brought by growth, then all five of those counties are going to suffer. If we instead engage in some kind of cooperative planning, and cooperatively implement those plans, we can have in all five counties a healthy, job-producing economy, and therefore healthy communities." for-

mer Governor Pete Wilson, Dec./Jan. Metro Investment Report.

The first meeting of the Southern California Association of Governments' Plans & Programs Technical Advisory Committee (which provides input to the drafting of the Regional Transportation Plan) on Jan. 31 had a decent turnout of stakeholders and an often very lively discussion.

Given certain comments made by OCTA staff at the SCAG meeting I was not surprised at the subsequent news that CenterLine may be placed on the back burner in favor of a rapid bus project on Bristol. Continued lack of support from the Orange County Congressional delegation is a serious obstacle to the rail project being able to compete effectively in the new starts process. Perhaps proving the value of transit with a successful BRT network would enhance the ability of CenterLine to draw support. Of course this strategy means the rail project may well not happen until sometime after 2015. And another snag is certain conformity issues tied to CenterLine implementation.

interesting quote of the month #2 - "If you are trying to solve transportation, you need to look at infrastructure, but you also need to look at demand management because at this point we can't necessarily build our way out of the problem." USC Keston Infrastructure Institute Director Richard Little, Dec./Jan. Metro Investment Report.

Darold Pieper, legal counsel, reported at the Dec. 10 Foothill Transit Executive Board meeting that a recent lawsuit by the Amalgamated Transit Union and the Teamsters that dealt with Foothill Transit and contrac-

tors' employees was dismissed. Pieper stated the courts' opinion was that Foothill Transit had been fraudulently joined in the suit.

Remember Philip Ajofoyinbo who I described in my column last month as being escorted out of an ASI Board of Directors meeting for being disruptive when denouncing the Independent Group recommendations? Turns out attempts subsequently made to contact Mr. Ajofoyinbo regarding his comments so they could be placed in the public record were to no avail.

MTA had given Access Services \$200,000 for a travel training program to encourage the use of public fixed route transit services by ASI certified users when they are able to. This provides clear benefits during these fiscally challenging times by shifting users from service that has subsidies of \$20+ per passenger to one that is about \$2 per user.

I'll conclude by noting instead of devolving into an argument of ideology the proposal by MTA Board member John Fasana to have MTA staff prepare a report on having Orange Line operations and maintenance contracted out will likely not go forward simply due to timing. With the busway only six months from opening there isn't enough lead time for MTA to solicit potential contractors, etc. ■

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Harold Katz had a letter in the Jan. 24 Los Angeles Business Journal.

Ken Ruben attended the Jan. 10 meeting of the MTA Independent Citizens' Advisory Oversight Committee. He also attended the Jan. 25 meeting of the LOSSAN Technical Advisory Committee

Present at the Jan. 27 MTA Board meeting were Ruben, Kevin Devlin, Bart Reed, and Roger Christensen. Attending the recent Friends 4 Expo Steering Committee meeting were Ruben, Roger Christensen and Robert Meinert.

Jan. 22 Ruben and Meinert were present at the San Dimas depot plaque dedication.

Dana Gabbard, Charles Powell and Ken Ruben attended the Jan. 26 MTA Citizens' Advisory Council meeting.

Ken Ruben, Chaffee Yiu and Paul Castillo attended the Jan. 11 MTA San Gabriel Valley Sector Council meeting.

Attending the Jan. 14 South Bay Sector Council meeting were Ruben, J.K. Drummond, Chaffee Yiu and Lionel Jones.

At the Feb. 3 Westside Sector Council meeting Ruben was present along with Lionel Jones and Chaffee Yiu.

Charles Hobbs provided comments at the Sept. 20, 2004 Victory Valley unmet transit needs public hearing: "Requests commuter service extended to Hospitality Lane/VA/Loma Linda (San Bernardino run) to the east and to Ontario Airport (Rancho Cucamonga run). Proposes higher fare (\$6 instead of \$4.50)."

Reminder: if you attend a meeting, have a letter published in a newspaper, 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! ■



Bus bridges at Glendale and Burbank Metrolink Stations. C. P. Hobbs photo