

# TRANSIT UPDATES

Due to budget constraints, Metro Rail service will be reduced at the June Service Change:

- the span of service on the Red, Gold and Green Lines will be cut by one hour (at this time, we are not sure if that is early morning or late evening, or both)
- After 6:30 p.m. all Red Line trains will run with only four cars (down from six)
- All evening and weekend Red Line trains on the Wilshire branch will run with only two cars
- Midday and (non-event) weekend Gold Line trains will run as single-car trains.

On May 14 and 15, repair work will take place on the Blue Line between Artesia and Del Amo stations. Therefore, trains between those two stations will be replaced by shuttle buses on those two days.

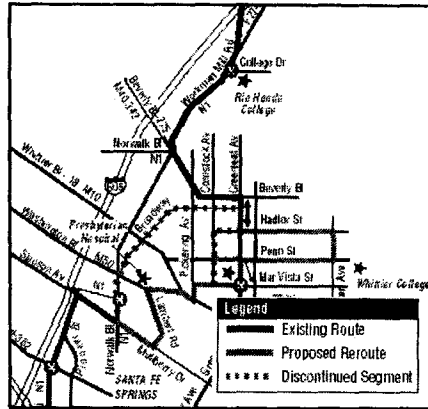
Construction has started on the Gold Line extension to East Los Angeles. This includes a bridge over the US-101 freeway near Union Station and a tunnel on First St.

Plans for the "Exposition Line", a 9.6-mile light rail line connecting Downtown to Culver moved ahead when the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) board of directors approved up to \$640 million in funding.

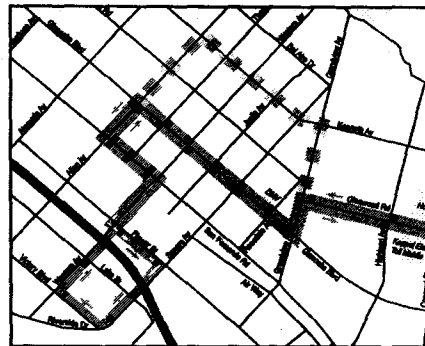
In other MTA news, MTA has been ordered to add 134 new Rapid Buses, according to the BRU Consent Decree Special Master. And, only a third of the cost of adding these buses can be gained by reducing local service....The MTA has until July 31 to develop a plan to implement the new Rapids.

MTA #270 is proposed to be rerouted to serve Whittier College. Service on Broad-

way would be dropped (but possibly operated by a LA-County-operated shuttle service in July 2005). Also, Foothill and/or Norwalk are considering operating this route, so stay tuned....



Glendale Beeline #7 has been rerouted to serve Glenoaks Bl, abandoning service on Grandview, Kenneth and Allen.



Norwalk Transit is now operating the Whittier Transit system. This service is still being operated as Whittier Transit, so the fares and routes stay the same....at least for the next six months....

Victor Valley Transportation Authority is holding a meeting on May 16 regarding the future of its commuter services to Rancho Cucamonga and San Bernardino. (They may be cancelled this year due to high costs and relatively low ridership) ■

## **BULLETIN BOARD**

At our May 14 meeting Nancy Michali will provide a status report on Metro Connections. We will also discuss the possible conflict of our July 9th meeting with the opening of the San Diego Trolley Mission Valley extension.

Available for sale at the meeting will be back issues of our newsletter and the new edition of the Transit Guide. Our thanks to the Special Projects Committee for their hard work to make the new Guide possible: Armando Avalos (2005 Chair), Lionel Jones, Andy Novak and Mark Strickert.

We will rendezvous for our Saturday May 21 study tour of MTA contracted bus service at the Division 18 open house (450 W. Griffith St. in Carson). The event runs from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., after which we will proceed to a nearby bus stop and catch the first bus of the tour.

We are exploring long-term options for acquiring office space and welcome input, leads, contacts, etc. members may wish to make/share regarding this.

Another concept being considered is establishing different classes of membership. We are curious whether members would like designations for providing a certain level of donation each year. Also what if any special rewards should be offered as incentives?

Our booth at the 7th annual Fullerton Railroad Days was a great success. Thanks to the last minute addition of historic Santa Fe 3751 steam train as an bonus attraction

the event had excellent attendance. We shared information on a wide range of transportation issues, gave away transit trinkets, premiered the new Transit Guide and sold the last of our stock of Simburger videos. Helping with the booth were Mark Strickert, Andy Novak, Lionel Jones, Edmund Buckley, Woody Rosner and Dana Gabbard. Members who dropped by to say hello included Anthony Loui, Carlos Os-cuna, Paul Castillo, Chaffee Yiu, Kirk Schneider, Don Stanwood, Charles Hobbs, Charles Powell, Armando Avalos, Ken Ruben, Kent Lanfield, John Ulloth and Craig Weingarten. A tip of the hat to Craig Barnes who did our badges but couldn't attend due to a recent foot injury. Get well soon, Craig!

The responses by L.A. mayoral candidates Mayor Hahn and Councilman Villaragosa to our questionnaire on transportation issues was posted on the front page of our website. Besides sending press releases publicizing this to numerous media outlets the responses were the subject of a letter by the Executive Secretary's published in the May 7 L.A. Times. This resulted in several hundred hits of our website during May 7-9.

The MTA Sector Governance Council annual meet & confer meeting will be held Monday May 23 starting at 4 p.m. in the MTA Board room.

The San Diego Electric Railway Association will have a preview of the Trolley extension June 25 along with a tour of the Trolley yard. Cost and details to be announced shortly; for additional information e-mail [jpapulas@sdera.org](mailto:jpapulas@sdera.org) ■

For some time Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger was rumored to be preparing a major transportation initiative dubbed Go California. Turns out it was introduced as a package of three bills in mid-February promoting toll lanes, streamlining project delivery and beginning in 2007 preclude raids on Proposition 42 transportation funds. I agree with Randy Rentschler, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, who stated in the Feb. 25 San Francisco Chronicle ("Governor's Plan Pushes Toll Roads, Speeds Up Building"): "While these are all good things, nothing is really going to substitute for the state really investing in the transportation system. We're not going to go anywhere in this state unless we do something about the lack of investment." I would just add a GAO report last year outlined the pitfalls of tolling, which based on several projects around the country seems to work only in limited circumstances and falls short of being the magic bullet certain boosters tout it as (e.g. Mr. Poole at the Reason Foundation).

Ironically despite Schwarzenegger touting himself during the recall campaign as being tough enough to tackle California's woes, it is Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez who has introduced a package of proposals to partially deal with the current transportation funding crisis. Not that I think much of Nunez's gas-price anxiety pandering and (again?) proposing bonds as the solution.

I was quoted in the article "MTA Benefits From Surging Gas Prices" in the April 12 San Gabriel Valley Tribune that gas prices will have to skyrocket before some people

change their commuting patterns. Those changes come when gas costs \$5 to \$6 a gallon. I concluded "It's not until they get socked in the pockets that they might change". I was also quoted in the May 5 Tribune article "Foothill Transit OKs increase in bus fares" that Foothill faced two choices: cut back service or raise bus fares. I then noted "Every agency all over the country is struggling. The cost of doing business is up. The only other alternative is cut back on service and nobody wants to wait an extra 30 minutes for the bus."

Much to my surprise a "Conference" sponsored by Labor Community Strategy Center on the Future of Transportation was held at USC in February [<http://www.thestrategycenter.org/projects-centertranspstrat-conference.html>]. This event didn't even appear in Change Links, the local leftist calendar of events. Which makes me suspect attendance was by invitation only. The list of attendees posted on the LCSC website includes several funding foundations along with a collection of groups (local and a few from out of the area) from the far-left end of the political spectrum. Evidently the event was the launching pad for a new LCSC project, the Center for Transportation Strategies, which is bidding to be national in scope. I always suspected Eric Mann hoped to eventually expand his bus campaign to the big leagues. He has the funding and infrastructure to be credible. But I wonder if his narrow politics and ham-fisted centralized "command and control" style of governance can fly when interfacing with groups outside L.A. Even lefties resent outsiders running the show, however in sync the mes-

sage being delivered is with their philosophy. Should be interesting...

Talk about too little, too late! Former L.A. Mayor Richard Riordan is quoted in the April 25 Daily News article "Consent decree drives different reactions in L.A." by Lisa Mascaro as now admitting "Entering into the consent decree was a mistake I will take part of the blame on. I certainly thought I was going to get something very different than I did. The board of the MTA has the duty to give the best, most flexible transit ... In my opinion, the consent decree makes this extremely hard to do, or impossible"

I glanced at the Special Master's latest ruling (posted on The Transit Coalition website: <http://thetransitcoalition.us/>) and noted his expression of concern that the agreement is coming to a close with the New Service provisions still unimplemented. Could this be a hint he'll agree to the extension the BRU wants?

fact of the month: Metrolink CEO base pay has been increased to \$199,000 retroactive to June 30, 2004 (per Attachment 1, agenda item #20 Metrolink Board April 22, 2005 meeting).

I attended the Foothill Transit Governing Board annual meeting May 4 and found it a much less exuberant event than prior ones I went to. My impression is now the expansion period is at a close that overseeing a stable system isn't nearly as appealing to the politicians of the San Gabriel Valley. The goody bag handed out at the end was symbolic of downsized expectations as it contained merely a mug and plastic model bus. Past bags have overflowed with lar-

gess, but I guess that too is over. Board member John Fasana even noted that Foothill is now a mature system. And speaking of Mr. Fasana he was unable to muster the votes from his cluster to be re-elected to the Board. No explanation was offered as to why this was so, merely that another attempt to have the cluster make a selection would be held on the 27th just before the Foothill Board meets that morning. Maybe Mr. Fasana is getting grief again from his parochial/myopic colleagues (a la the brouhaha over composition of the San Gabriel Valley Metro Sector Council)?

Two additional nuggets I gleaned at the meeting: MTA is talking to Foothill Transit and Norwalk Transit about transferring Line 270 to one or both of them. And the plans to construct Foothill's new administrative building in Glendora are on hold as they consider instead moving into what was cryptically described as "an existing structure".

In contrast the meeting of the Los Angeles County City Selection Committee the following night in Culver City had a buzz running thru it. This is the entity (whose membership includes every Mayor in Los Angeles County) that appoints the four elected officials that represent the smaller cities on the MTA Board. After years of getting their agendas I jumped at a chance to finally attend one of their gatherings (normally held at a locale in Montebello decidedly not transit friendly). Of course the main meeting just rubber stamped the decisions of the quadrants--appointing Lancaster Mayor Frank Roberts and Long Beach Councilwoman Bonnie Lowenthal to 4 year terms on the MTA Board that expire Jan. 1, 2009. (to pg. 9)

## **SAN DIEGO EXCURSION 2004** Dana Gabbard

For our 2004 day after Thanksgiving trip we decided to explore suburban service in the San Diego area. Director Armando Avalos volunteered to act as trip planner. Thus it was on Nov. 26, 2004 a number of members boarded Amtrak Pacific Surfliner train #564 departing Los Angeles Union Station at 7:20 a.m. riding car 6451. This initial band included Russ Jones, Ken Ruben, Woody Rosner and Dana Gabbard. Around 7:52 a.m. the first stop was made at Fullerton station where they were joined by Charles Powell, Guillermo Merino, Andy Novak and Chet Herring. Among the train crew was Steven McNamara who had been on the 1st run of the recently added additional Surfliner trip to San Luis Obispo.

We arrived in San Diego at 10:17 a.m. and made our way across the street to American Plaza Trolley station where we met up with Lionel Jones, Ed Buckley, Chaffee Yiu and Yiu's younger brother. At this point Powell and a few friends went off to do a separate morning trip to see Point Loma via rt.26. The rest of us at 10:39 a.m. caught the trolley's Orange Line, vehicle #2045 going east thru downtown. As always downtown San Diego was dotted with construction sites (it is in the midst of a development boom). Past downtown we spotted auto shops, salvage yards and warehouses in a distinctly working class neighborhood with churches, cemeteries and trailer parks.

At 11:04 a.m. we arrived at Euclid station, where Mark Strickert and Armando Avalos were waiting for us. Strickert has taken an

earlier Amtrak train from Los Angeles, getting off at Solana Beach station to take an assortment of different buses to Euclid station. Among the amenities at the adjacent transit center were a hot dog stand, benches, shelters and a portapot-style bathroom. There were trees and a flood control channel one crossed going from the trolley platform to the transit center. At 11:23 a.m. we caught our first bus, MTS rt.916 a New Flyer C40 #2153 with 9 passengers (all ride counts exclude trip participants) and cushioned seats. All 800 and 900 series bus routes are operated by a contractor, in this case ATC Vancom. We made our way up a hill, then along a residential street. At one bus stop the sign had attached a notice "bus turn" to warn operators of an upcoming turn on the route. The landscape turned rural as we went thru the East County/El Cajon area. A driver from Laidlaw who boarded the bus told us this route gets busy as it serves a local Wal-Mart and other shopping venues.

We arrived at Massachusetts Trolley Station at 11:43 a.m. The transit center had benches, phones and a refreshment center (aka soda machine). At 11:52 we boarded MTS rt.875, the Lemon Grove Shuttle, an El Dorado National RE #8057 with molded plastic seats and zero passengers. This is one of the County Transit System lines operated by Laidlaw. We made our way along residential streets and looped thru the parking lot of a senior center, then passed a middle school. Eventually we did get one passenger. At one point the route descends a very steep hill. Continuing

along Washington Street we had 2 passengers while passing thru a commercial district, then 4 passengers. The bus was late and while scheduled to arrive at Lemon Grove depot trolley station at 12:06 p.m. we actually got there at 12:14 p.m. and had to dash to catch our connecting Orange Line train back downtown, boarding vehicle #2048. By 12:45 p.m. we were in downtown San Diego, deboarded at Civic Center and walked over to the Wendy's on Broadway/1st Ave. where we reunited with the folks who had gone on the Pt. Loma side trip.

After an enjoyable repast (and after several dashed across the street to get schedules at the Transit Store and plastic buses at the Greyhound station) we walked up 1st Ave. to C Street and at 1:55 p.m. caught the first northbound MTS rt.980 bus of the day. This is also known as the Inland Breeze, operating with an El Dorado National RE #2081 painted red with special logo and padded seats; boarding with us was 1 initial passenger. At 5th/B we had 4 additional passengers board. Some of the regular riders shared with us their experiences on this route, complaining that the equipment often breaks down. In freeway running one distinctly senses the bus rocking back and forth. Also at the start of the month the route often is assigned new drivers who have a propensity to not turn up causing missed runs. One rider asked we pass along to the powers that be that employer subsidies for bus passes would do a lot to encourage ridership. The bus initially runs on historic freeway 163, a two lane parkway that resembles the Pasadena Freeway. We whizzed along past a wooded median. Soon the highway expanded to freeway size (5 lanes) and went thru suburbs.

Now we entered a HOT lane on I-15 - 2 lanes in the peak direction. Besides car-pools and buses solo drivers can use this facility, paying the toll with an electronic Fastrak device. The tolls help pay for the Breeze bus. Soon we were passing thru a residential area of Poway, then a commercial one, and lastly passed a Hospital. At 2:40 we deboarded at Rancho Bernardo and Promerado. And then to our surprise as the bus made a left turn the passenger side mirror hit a speed limit sign next to the bus stop sign.

At 2:50 p.m. we caught MTS rt.845, a Bluebird Transhuttle #578 painted for "Poway Transit" (with a logo on the side) and carrying 2 passengers and driven by Carol the operator who we soon learned used to drive for San Jose's DASH shuttle. Oddly the farebox was actually behind the driver. This line winds its way around Poway. We got a real tour of the city, including churches, a golf course and residential areas. Then we passed the Blue Sky Ecological Reserve, followed by a high school and the performing arts center. Now things became more rural, following by a return to a residential setting. A park we passed had a train locomotive on display. Also a western theme seemed to dominate the look of local businesses (antique shops, etc.). After a lay-over we continued thru pastureland and looped by a senior center which we were informed in the past had been flooded by a nearby creek when rainstorms turned it into a roaring stream.

We deboarded at Kirkham & Stowie at 3:53 p.m. and had time for snack and bathroom breaks in a nearby Jack in the Box. At 4:20 p.m. we caught our last bus - (to pg. 8)

(from pg. 7) MTS rt.830 which did not honor our day passes and cost \$2.50 (\$1 for senior/disabled). This is a fairly new express operated under contract operated by Coach USA/Goodalls charter division and the one we rode had only one passenger for the entire route. But the coach was plush with cushioned seats and even a TV for entertainment, an MCI commuter style vehicle. It runs express along the 15 freeway and MLK freeway straight into downtown San Diego and by 5:20 p.m. we were

at Broadway/Kettner and dispersed our separate ways (Mark Strickert stayed overnight in San Diego and spent Saturday further exploring transit there on his own).

Thanks to Ed Buckley, Mark Strickert, Russ Jones and Lionel Jones for submitting corrections/additions to a draft of this article. And to Andrew Novak for allowing me to borrow some details from the trip write-up he did for his News & Views newsletter. ■



Above: #875 Lemon Grove Shuttle at Massachusetts Station  
Below: MTS Route #916 at Massachusetts Station

Above: #830 Commuter bus  
Below: Poway Transit. All photos by Andy Novak



(PLAC, from page 5)

But what impressed me was the cozy, chummy atmosphere -- almost like members of a secret club gathered in ritual and pomp confirming their entry to high precincts of local politics. In my public comments I noted several examples of local councilpersons who recently graduated to the state legislature, which is the trend thanks to term limits. I shouldn't doubt in a few years some of the folks arrayed before me will have their names on doors in the state Capitol. These are the creme de la creme of our local politicians, and it was clear from their back-slapping relaxed attitude they know it and exult in it. I feel like I peeked at a hidden world that is generally out of sight of the general public. Amazing!

The next three items concern what seems to be a recent epidemic of dysfunctional behavior at local transit agency board meetings. Alan Cantrell, Executive Director of Access Services, Inc., read a statement at the March 8 meeting of ASI's Community Advisory Committee meeting, that includes an admonition "Disrespectful comments, inappropriate remarks or demeaning language are not acceptable" and "the [ASI] employee facilitating the meeting has the responsibility to determine whether or not a particular meeting has gotten out of control, and is authorized to instruct all ASI staff to leave the meeting".

Meanwhile Mary Griffith, a regular at ASI meeting, is now also bestowing her rambling style of public comment at Foothill Transit Board meetings. She is quoted in the minutes of the March 26 Foothill Board meeting as stating "... she would prefer

that staff not speak in a condescending manner to her". After hearing her myself I am not surprised at the response she takes umbrage at.

Lastly Mr. Drew Angel recently started showing up regularly at the Antelope Valley Transit Authority meetings and offering his none-to-well-informed comments/criticisms. At the Feb. 28 meeting the minutes note when Angel spoke out of order to air a complaint AVTA Chairman Henry Hearn eventually advised Angel, "... he had not been recognized by the Chair and that in the future he would be required to conform to meeting protocol".

In the continuing trend toward making internal information less available to the public MTA Management Audit Services is now preparing monthly reports on outstanding audit issues as part of the board box. This means they are no longer listed on publicly available agendas and therefore virtually inaccessible. Although these reports surely fall under the public records act, how will anyone know what to ask for if they are kept shrouded in shadows (per p.8 of the fiscal year 2006 Annual Audit Report, attachment A of agenda item 18, MTA Executive Management and Audit Committee April 21 meeting)?

Along with many transportation stakeholders we submitted letters to chairs of the key state legislature budget committees urging their support of full funding of Proposition 42. I figured it couldn't hurt.

I'll conclude with a farewell to Derek Cheronow, who left as head of Odyssey on March 31. We wish him the best whatever his future endeavors are. ■



## **MEMBERS IN ACTION**

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Hank Fung in a letter published in the April 10 Los Angeles Times titled "Gas Tax Proposal Is a Nonstarter" responding to a previous April 6 Times article "Plan to Lower Gas Tax Floated," on Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez's transportation funding proposal states: "I'm disheartened that the Democrats are proposing to increase the regressive sales tax and make lives harder for the working poor. The working class tends to drive less and use public transit more, and pays a higher percentage of its income in sales tax than the more affluent. The proposal to lower the gas tax but raise the sales tax would tend to encourage people to continue buying large sport utility vehicles and trucks. The long-term solution to fixing transportation problems is to ensure that Proposition 42 is continued, not by playing shell games with the state's voters."

Charles Hobbs, Mark Strickert, and Phil Capo attended the April 14 Gateway Sector meeting.

J. K. Drummond appeared before the Los Angeles City Council Transportation Committee Wednesday April 27th regarding the DASH assessment and disruption of transit by special event detours.

Edmund Buckley was profiled in the April 27 Orange County Register ("The Morning Read: King of the route") in his new role as an ambassador of transit knowledge for his

Among those attending the MTA Board April 28 meeting were Ken Ruben, Kevin Devlin, Bart Reed, Roger Christensen. Ruben along with Dana Gabbard also attended the April 27 MTA Citizen Advisory Council meeting. Plus Ruben attended the April 19 LOSSAN meeting and also Culver City Redevelopment Agency Light Rail Outreach events held April 14 and April 28.

Roger Christensen's article "Curitiba, Other BRT Cities Convert to Rail" appeared in the April issue of California Rail News. Christensen and Dana Gabbard were quoted in the forum in the April 11 Los Angeles Business Journal with their opinions on whether they believe the promises by the two candidates for Mayor of Los Angeles regarding relieving traffic congestion.

Tom Rubin was quoted in the May 9 L.A. Times article "High-Speed Train Plan May Move Forward" on the proposed maglev from Las Vegas to Anaheim: "There's not much possibility of this being a useful part of the transportation system. Why do we want to throw scarce transportation dollars at a pie-in-the-sky kind of thing? Look at what's happened to the Las Vegas monorail."

Bart Reed, Executive Director of the Transit Coalition, is extensively quoted in the May Metro Magazine article "Advocacy Groups Tackle Transit". ■