

TRANSIT UPDATES

Santa Clarita Transit

On March 5th, Santa Clarita Transit debuted its new Route 8, connecting Santa Clarita and The San Fernando Valley with regular daily bus service. Route 8 operates every 30 minutes between McBean Transfer Station in Santa Clarita and the Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink Station.

MTA Metro Rapid – Dana Gabbard

Fliers on the bus announce new line 734–Sepulveda Blvd. North Metro Rapid Bus, to start June 26 or later. It is proposed to run from Sylmar/San Fernando Metrolink station to Ventura Blvd/Sepulveda weekdays from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., with 10 minute service during peak hours, 20

minute off-peak. Two-thirds of the service hours will be new service, the other third reallocated from the local Line 234. The revised local will operate 10-13 minute frequency during peak, 30 minute midday and off-peak.

Proposed stops: Sylmar/San Fernando Station, Van Nuys Blvd./Laurel Canyon, on Sepulveda at Devonshire, Plummer, Nordhoff, Roscoe, Saticoy, Sherman Way, Van Owen, Victory, Sepulveda Station (Orange Line), Burbank, Magnolia, and Ventura.

Comments/concerns can be sent to SanFernandoValley@Metro.net, or via mail: Metro San Fernando Valley Sector Office, 9760 Topanga Canyon Blvd., Chatsworth, CA 91311



BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CA.TA MEETING NOTES

At our March 11th meeting, Rod Goldman and Ed Clifford of MTA will make a presentation on the status of Metro Connections.

At the April 8th SO.CA.TA meeting, attendees will have a chance to preview the 2006 Southern California Transit Guide. The Guide is scheduled to be released in time to sell at our Fullerton Railroad Days booth, May 6-7 at the Fullerton Transportation Center.


Among discussion topics during the general meeting, in March and/or April, will be the Metro Connections committee's service change proposals, an Earth Day booth opportunity, planning for our

booth at the Fullerton Railroad Days, and potential study tours/field trips this coming year.

A report on the 2005 Day After Thanksgiving Study Tour will appear in the April 2006 Transit Advocate newsletter.

The annual MTA Sector Council meet & confer event will be Wednesday March 29, at 4 p.m. in the MTA Board room.

The Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority website: <http://buildexpo.org/>

The twelfth annual Rail~Volution conference will be held in Chicago, IL November 4-8, 2006. Information on their website, www.railvolution.com, or by mail to Rail~Volution, 1120 SW Fifth Avenue Suite 800, Portland, OR 97204 

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Bart Reed, Kymberleigh Richards, and Dana Gabbard attended the Mobility 21 Coalition meeting, Feb. 10 at Caltrans District 7's new Administration Building in downtown Los Angeles. Among the speakers were L.A. Council Transportation Committee Chair Wendy Greuel, State Senator Richard Alarcon, and Congressman Earl Blumenauer (who represents Portland, Oregon).

Kymberleigh Richards had a letter supporting the western extension of the Red Line ("Extending the subway") in the March 3 Daily News debunking a letter of George Timko ("IQ of elected") published Feb. 24.

Mark Strickert attended the February MTA Gateway Cities Sector meeting.

Charles P. Hobbs went to the VCTC Unmet Needs on Feb. 6.

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MEMBERS IN ACTION cont'd from pg. 2

Charles Hobbs and Ken Ruben spoke at Santa Monica Big Blue Bus community meetings. Proposals included replacing local transfers with a day pass, interlining routes 4 and 9, midday headway reductions on the 5 and 8, and ending the 12 at Pico and Robertson rather than Pico/Rimpau. Input was requested on a proposed "Rapid 10". Hobbs

asked about the proposed "Rapid 7" and they said it was about 2 years away. New bus shelters were proposed, ala MTA's on Wilshire. Ruben said they were not transit-user friendly, as they are not helpful to those waiting in inclement weather. MTA's "Metro Connections" also came up, which Ruben also said was not transit-user friendly.

See also "Service Sectors" reports below. 🚌

MTA SECTOR MEETING REPORTS

Westside/Central — Ken Ruben

Lionel Jones and I attended the MTA Westside Sector Governance Council on February. We both opposed the 220 being eliminated. I gave the SOCATTA statement, then commented on the 220 as a user of that service. We both recommended as an alternate, the 550 being rerouted as part of the northern part of the 220. Lionel also commented on the "failure" of the Rapid 717 as not being to move at Rapid Speeds during the rush hours.

Steve Cunningham, Director of Transportation for Culver City, said by June, that Culver CityBus would be ready to take over the 220 portion on Culver Blvd. and to the Marina except for Sunday. The Council will have had made its decision by the time you receive this newsletter.

San Fernando Valley — Nate Zablen

High capacity articulated buses will soon be running on Van Nuys Blvd on both Rapid lines #761 and local line #233. Rapid Bus line #734 will begin service on Sepulveda Blvd. on or about June 26th. Larger capacity "compo buses", smaller than articulates but larger than the regular rapids, will run on line #750 on Ventura Blvd. Santa Clarita Transit is inaugurating soon bus ser-

vice between Sylmar and Santa Clarita. LADOT Dash service in the San Fernando Valley is expanding the Van Nuys Studio City shuttle to reach Sherman Way.

Over 20 members of the public were at the Metro SF Valley Service Sector Governance Council Meeting on March 1st. SO.CA.TA members who spoke during public comment were Mike Baron, Bart Reed, and Nate Zablen. Paul Dyson, member of the City of Burbank Transportation Committee, Rail PAC President, and Transit Coalition member, urged the Governance Council to support the extension of the Orange Line to the Bob Hope Airport Metro link Station. In her closing remarks, Vice Chair Kimberleigh Richards expressed some skepticism of the plan.

Councilwoman Wendy Greuel, Chair of the Los Angeles City Council Transportation Committee, spoke about her efforts to get Los Angeles a greater share of transportation expenditures from Sacramento. She emphasized that Proposition 42 money needs to go to public transit. She stressed her belief that there must be "synergy" and "connectivity" in our transit systems. She talked about a "seamless" system where one could travel easily between different transportation modes. 🚌

We won! But why? I guess we shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth regarding the MTA Westside/Central sector pulling their proposal to truncate route 20 at Westwood Blvd. and eliminate route 21. But I am sure those ideas are just deferred, due to be re-proposed in the next 12-24 months.

The late Pat Moser often bemoaned to me the NIMBY opposition that had prevented the extension of the Red Line along Wilshire past Western to the Westside. How he would have cheered if he had lived to witness the recent announcement that the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors voted overwhelmingly to support the extension along with supporting the MTA's proposed trial of an exclusive bus lane along Wilshire Boulevard during peak traffic periods. Amazing!

At our Feb. meeting we adopted a motion to support the high speed rail component of Senate Bill 1024 and oppose the inclusion of funding for maglev as part of the infrastructure proposal floating around Sacramento. I prepared letters expressing our stance and sent them to the Governor, Senators Torlakson and Perata (the sponsors of SB 1024) and other appropriate bodies.

I am impressed to note on occasion the Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District holds evening board meetings, and telecasts them on the city cable channel. Bravo!

MTA's Office of Inspector General recently issued a report on lost and found procedures. Along with uncovering defects in the way lost and found items are handled, OIG received information that cash allegedly had been stolen from a wallet while it was in the Lost and Found area of a bus division.

Surveillance revealed a Transportation Operations Supervisor (TOS) had indeed taken \$50 for the wallet in question. When confronted with the evidence the TOS admitted taking the money. The case was turned over to the L.A. City Attorney, who reported the TOS pled guilty to one count of petty theft, and was ordered to pay \$50 restitution, a \$150 fine, 12 months probation and 5 days community service. MTA no longer employs the TOS. (Agenda item #34, Jan. 19, 2006 MTA Executive Management and Audit Committee meeting).

The Signal Feb. 2 article "City Remaining Vigilant with Its Transit System" [<http://www.the-signal.com/News/ViewStory.asp?storyID=8832>] was a tad too gung-ho regarding security cameras placed on Santa Clarita Transit vehicles. Agency staff will look at footage in response to complaints on such serious matters as vandalism and more trivial ones like talking too loud on a cell phone. In some instances they have even made referrals to Deputy Sheriff Bob Schneider who is described as having made "quite a few" arrests due to the cameras. I acknowledge catching vandals on tape and prosecuting them is not a bad thing. But am I the only one uneasy about Big Brother keeping an eye on us while we ride the bus?

Remember the fictitious Aqua Line that caused consternation on the Westside a few years ago? Now one of the pranksters who pulled this hoax, Karen Weise, has posted her story on the net: <http://www.berkeleyprizecompetition.org/essay/2003/essays.cfm?winners=98>

You can term Foothill's proposed "Silver Streak" Metro Rapid-like version of its route 480 and the new "Express" version of the

Gold Line as two ideas that while well intentioned really don't make sense. And in both cases it is partly because implementation is being done on the cheap (versus the baby bullet express for Caltrain in the bay area that cost \$163 million for passing sidings and has been a roaring success). Sometimes you don't get what you don't pay for...

When I heard Yvonne Burke requested a report on putting turnstiles in MTA's rail stations, I was incredulous. Couldn't someone have informed her this has been studied before and found to not pencil out? I guess not. Is it any wonder I avoid attending MTA Board meetings unless absolutely necessary?

The latest mania among privatization proponents is to gush over Chicago's recent sale of the franchise to operate the Skyway toll system for \$1.83 billion (by the way I understand the money was just put in the general fund--not reinvested in transportation). Interestingly our co-founder Steve Crösmér, who makes his living as a truck driver, sent me the year in review article published by The Trucker magazine [<http://www.the-trucker.com/>] in its Jan. 1-14 issue that decries the new franchise arrangement for resulting in higher tolls to discourage trucks from using the route during peak hours.

Feb. 16 I attended the monthly meeting of the Plans & Programs Technical Advisory Committee at the Southern California Association of Governments. And witnessed several members bridle at how the growth forecast process for the Regional Transportation Plan was being handled. Turns out the bumpy process by which the forecast during the last RTP cycle was arrived at had created lingering distrust and concern which SCAG isn't addressing with how it is preparing the new forecast. I expect when push comes to shove SCAG will have to take these issues

seriously.

At the Feb. 14 Access Services, Inc. Community Advisory Committee meeting item #10 was Operations Administrator Brian Selwyn's Report on Standing Orders for ASI paratransit users. This included the stunning information "... an important factor mitigating the granting of Standing Order trip requests is the high rate of cancellation of these types of trips. It is inefficient to schedule and route trips that are consistently cancelled. For example, in January 2006, 16% of all Next Day trips reserved in the West/Central and Southern services areas were cancelled by the Access Paratransit rider. During this same period, 29% of Standing Order trips were cancelled by the rider in these two service areas." This adds to the cost of providing this service, mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act. No wonder the National Transit Institute this month is putting on a Workshop on Managing the Cost of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit Services in Austin, Texas. Wonder if anyone from ASI is attending...

Faithful Reader asks why Lines 333 and 368 have stops that don't jibe with the route maps in the schedule, much like the new stop at Beverly Glen that isn't shown in the Metro Rapid 720 schedule.

Obscure entity of the month: Inland Empire Transportation Coalition, which advocates creating an alternative to the 91 freeway for linking Orange and Riverside Counties (including a possible tunnel). And the President is none other than Moreno Valley businessman Bob Wolf, a former member of the California Transportation Commission.

As of late January the Antelope Valley Transit Authority has 8 vehicles down due to

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PUBLIC AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

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problems with their Detroit Diesel Series 50 engines and the vendor says they cannot fix the problem although the equipment is still under warranty. An Interim Vehicle Maintenance Plan is being implemented to hopefully resolve the situation, which threatens AVTA's ability to provide continuous service.

YEOW!

I'll conclude by noting member Juanita Del-
lomes reports she has been getting calls
from elderly riders of MTA line 255 with con-
cerns about changes being made to the
route. Would anyone like to take on work-
ing with this group of concerned users? 🚌



The former MTA/Greyhound bus terminal in Whittier. The building, 6703 S. Comstock (at Bailey), now houses the Friends of the Whittier Public Library bookstore. Photo MTA Library, forwarded by Andrew Novak