

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CA.TA MEETING NOTES

Our thanks to Rod Goldman of MTA for a interesting status report on the Metro Connection program at our March 11 meeting.

Donna Goolay, a member of the Bus Riders Union, made a presentation at our March 11 meeting seeking our *support* for extending the Consent Decree beyond its Oct. 2006 expiration. We engaged in a polite discussion of the pros and cons of such a action, sharing concerns some of our members have. Our thanks to Nate Zablen for facilitating Ms. Goolay's appearance.

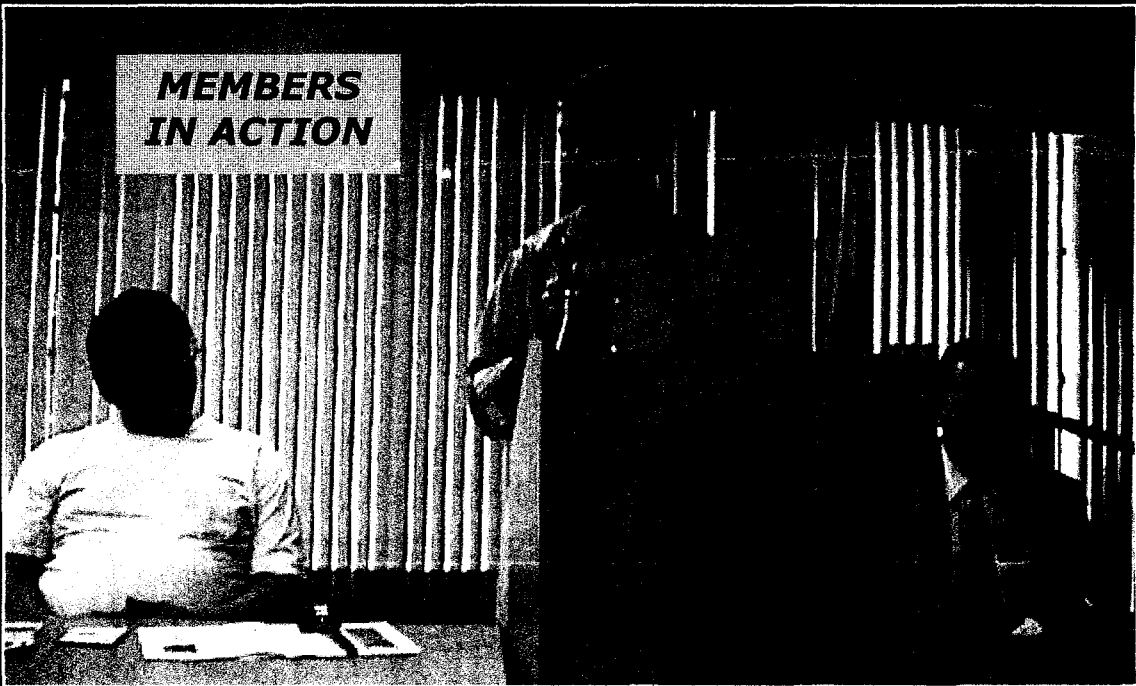
At our April 8 meeting, we anticipate spending a significant amount of time going over

possible recommendations for MTA service changes first presented at our March meeting.

Other Meetings

The Southern California Association of Governments presents its 6th Annual Regional Housing Summit on Thursday, April 20, 2006 from 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Torrance Cultural Arts Center, Toyota Meeting Hall, 3330 Civic Center Drive in Torrance. A key topic to be discussed will be how to integrate transportation and local land use planning. There is no cost to attend and lunch will be provided. For more information contact April Grayson at (213) 236-1858, or email grayson@scag.ca.gov 🚗

MEMBERS IN ACTION



Mark Strickert, Gov. Michael Dukakis, and Ken Ruben — Alan Michelson photo

Among the members to thank for their parts in the Michael Dukakis event at our February meeting: Hank Fung, Dana Gabbard, Curtis Raymond, Kymberleigh Richards, Dave Snowden, Mark Strickert, John Ulloth, and Nate Zablen. 🚗

So after all the sturm und drang around the State Capitol the infrastructure negotiations imploded. Bill Bradley on his blog New West Notes (<http://www.newwestnotes.com/>) conjectured that legislative Republicans' howling about dams was a stalking horse for their general pre-disposition to say "no". My March 23 letter in the Oakland Tribune lauded Senate President Pro-Tem Don Perata as being "...the only player in the infrastructure bond drama who acted like an adult". Despite brave talk about a bond for the November ballot on transportation prospects seem to be fading quickly.

The mind reels that the MTA Board is actually caught up in the issue of what color to give rail lines and other fixed guideway projects. As I blurted to Lisa Mascaro of the Daily News ("~~MTA Trying Purple Prose,~~" March 13) "We want good service. We don't want public relations". And I'll leave it at that. At least MTA has finally placed decent maps at the Patsaouras Transit Plaza to guide users looking for nearby bus stops. Of course this is an idea I first championed over 5 years ago when I was a Passenger Advisor. But at least it finally got done, even if belatedly.

Then we have this proposal to close the Orange Line the end of October to have a half-marathon run along it one Sunday morning. We submitted a letter (posted on the front page of our website) noting all the reasons why this was a bad idea. And thankfully the MTA Board has asked for further information. Can we hope sanity will reign and this idea is shelved? Stay tuned...

Meanwhile, another reason for consterna-

tion is Senate Bill 1507, introduced by Senator Bob Margett. This piece of legislation would take one of the citizen seats on the MTA Board held by Los Angeles and give it instead to the smaller cities (which currently have 4 seats on the Board). Our letter to the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee notes our opposition in rather blunt terms: "[SB 1507 is] a meaningless shuffling of the deck chairs that in no way addresses core issues of governance that plague the MTA Board. Instead this bill panders to the worse sort of parochialism fed by myopic anxieties against the city of Los Angeles held by certain interests." Hopefully in a month or so I'll be able to announce this misguided effort has been consigned to oblivion, where it belongs.

In one of the odder recent bits of transportation news a man whose rare Ferrari was destroyed in a high speed crash told officers at the scene he was police commissioner of the San Gabriel Valley Transit Authority Police's anti-terrorism division. *San Gabriel Valley Transportation Authority?* I had never even heard of this entity, and it is my informal hobby to track obscure entities. Thanks to the diligence of some Los Angeles Times reporters ("Another Turn in Ferrari Saga", March 8) it was soon revealed the Authority is a tiny non-profit run by Yosef Maiwandi out of an auto repair shop Maiwandi owns in Monrovia. It owns a few buses and provides rides to disabled people and senior citizens in Monrovia and Sierra Madre. Amazingly the article quotes Maiwandi that he formed the Authority's Police Department "... in part because he

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS cont'd from pg. 3

has long been interested in police work. He also found that having a police department allowed him to do background checks on potential volunteers more quickly and seek federal money for security on the buses." Federal money? If you look at the Authority's website (<http://sgvta.org/>) it lists Committees, agendas and includes grandiloquent phrases such as "local, countywide and region wide roles of SGVTA must be balanced among the interests of individual jurisdictions, the county, and the region as a whole." As I asked on our member board, is somebody trying to build an empire out of an obscure paratransit provider? Weird!

After mis-handling by the Community Redevelopment Agency during the past few years MTA is taking the lead on rehabilitating the old Red Car depot in North Hollywood (adjacent to the Orange Line station). Sadly the delay means the cost has skyrocketed. In fact Ty Schuiling of the San Bernardino Associated Governments at a recent SCAG meeting I attended stated factors are causing construction costs to go through the roof and will have a great impact on our ability to build large-scale projects. Be prepared for some sticker shock...

I enjoyed the presentation on Access Services, Inc. presented at the March 22 MTA Citizens' Advisory Council meeting by Mark Maloney of MTA and Jess Sagovia of ASI. I am awaiting responses to some questions I submitted. Meanwhile one tidbit that puzzles me is that ASI may soon cut its night owl fares to match MTA's 75 cents fare that it charges at night. But that is done as part of the consent decree and may well expire in October. Hopefully ASI will endorse flexibil-

ity with the language in their Option 3 that specifies they charge "twice the lowest fare of comparable fixed route service available at that time". Otherwise they may have to revisit the issue in just a few months.

Flabbergasted is how I reacted to the news that San Francisco is actually studying the possibility of implementing congestion pricing ("Move to charge toll for driving in core of downtown area" San Francisco Chronicle March 28) much like they have in London, which involves charging a flat fee to drive downtown during business hours. London's program has reduced congestion and helped fund mass transit. I guess traffic is really getting bad in the Bay Area if they are contemplating biting this bullet for relief!

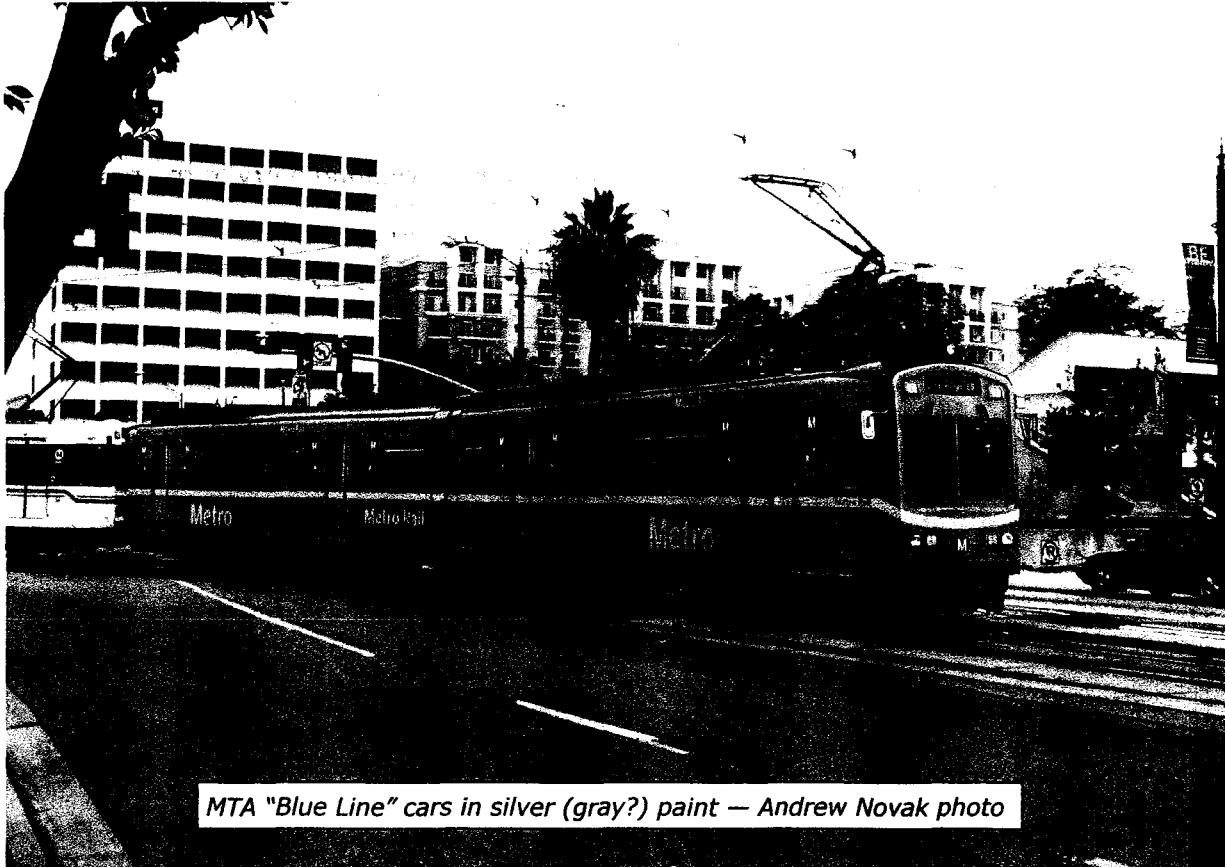
While perusing the Board agenda for MARTA, the Mountain Area Regional Transit Authority which provides service in Big Bear, Crestline, Lake Arrowhead, etc. I found this fascinating entry in the report of operating activities: 02/23/06 - Driver of #M47 forgot to remove the fuel nozzle from the bus before pulling away from the pump at the Crestline County Fuel yard. No damage to the bus; however, the fuel nozzle was damaged. The county has repaired it and all reports have been filed.

The San Gabriel Valley Tribune with its March 8 editorial "Don't divert Gold Line funds" acts as if a pot of money for the Foothill extension is sitting in some bank account and must be protected from evil Los Angeles interests that covet funds for the Red Line extension along Wilshire. Our friends in the San Gabriel Valley seem utterly in denial about the hard facts of transportation funding, and in fact seem to respond to every setback for their vanity pro-

ject with howls. I suspect they want to set up the Wilshire project as the scapegoat when the Foothill project falls flat on its face when confronted with Federal Transit Administration cost/benefit criteria for funding.

Meanwhile we hope to begin work on organizing a series of workshops in the Wilshire corridor, in partnership with key stakeholders, that will conduct preliminary outreach on the subway project. Don't forget, the current transportation funding bill expires in 2010 so we need to start working now to build community consensus.

I'll conclude with my amazement that the review of MTA's Transit Security arrangements continue apace (agenda item #8, March 6 MTA Executive Management and Audit Committee meeting). And the staff report appears fairly honest despite all the politics surrounding this issue. But to paraphrase James Cragin, a former Gardena city councilmember who was on the MTA Board when the original security partnership was adopted, I am fairly sure the chances of MTA reconstituting its own Police Dept. are remote at best. Oh, well. 🚊



MTA "Blue Line" cars in silver (gray?) paint — Andrew Novak photo

Nov. 25, 2005 we undertook our 10th annual day-after-Thanksgiving trip. Some background: the concept for trips on this day was originally conceived by Charles Hobbs, who noted the day after Thanksgiving offers a rare opportunity for exploring public transit: since it isn't a holiday per se most agencies operate regular services yet many people get the day off from work so one can ride services or travel to places not easily accessible during weekends. Over the years we have explored transit operating in such places as Banning, Santa Barbara, San Diego, Bakersfield, southern Kern County and Palm Springs. A number of proposals were offered for our 2005 trip. It was noted that while we have twice been to Ventura County, in both cases we mostly rode in the Ventura/Oxnard/Ojai area. Andy Novak's successful trip proposal was to explore bus service at the other end of the county, in Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley.

And so it was early that Friday morning Ken Ruben, Dana Gabbard, Lionel Jones, Armando Avalos and Andy Novak gathered at the fish tank in the East Portal building adjacent to the Gateway Transit Center. From there we made our way to the Union Station Red Line station and caught a North Hollywood bound train at 6:45 a.m. (a married pair of Breda cars #591/592). At 7th/Metro station Mike Milroy joined us. As we continued along the train acquired almost a seated load. At 7:15 a.m. we arrived at North Hollywood station.

Crossing Lankersham we waited a bit to see if any stragglers were on the train after ours before boarding the Orange Line westbound at 7:31 a.m. It was a NABI articu-

lated low floor #9226 with 24 passengers (all ride counts exclude trip participants). Along the way we had only minor boardings and alightings. One highlight was traversing the open spaces of the Sepulveda Basin. Meanwhile the bus had slow attrition as riders dribbled out and few got on as we continued. At 8:10 a.m., we arrived at Warner Center Transit Hub (such as it is).

We stood around in the early morning chill, watching some of the buses that serve this location passing through before departing on MTA line 161 westbound at 8:26 a.m. This was a Neoplan CNG #4570 with minimal ridership. At the Topanga Canyon stop a small crowd was waiting and boarded. In fact we ended up with a seated load and 8 standees. These were the day laborers, gardeners and domestic that are the bread and butter of the 161. At the stop a pastry seller had boxes of tasty goodies for sale, plus a catering truck stationed itself nearby to serve the waiting bus riders. At Fallbrook 10 more people crowded onto the bus. Once we reached Calabasas riders started getting off. Soon after we did a bit of operating via the freeway. At one point a sign for the (weekend only) Calabasas Trolley was spotted.

Next we made our way through an industrial park, followed by some open countryside. Running along a frontage street adjacent to the freeway we passed a Pet Hospital and the Wood Ranch BBQ. This was followed by a visit to suburbia past a gated community, as our members observed what a beautiful sunny day it had become. Now we passed the Lindero Country Club, befitting the upscale character of the area we were passing through, followed by grey

hillsides. The bus driver was friendly and not at all perturbed at operating a busload of transit advocates. At 9:37 a.m. we arrived at the City of Thousand Oaks Community Transportation Center.

A plaque at the facility noted it opened in July 2001. The first thing noticed is the Center is a bit off the beaten path -- nothing within easy walking distance. In terms of amenities, though, it shines: bathrooms, newspaper racks, pay phones, bus bays, shelters with benches. All through the miracle of dedicated transportation funds to provide the central hub for a system that has service operating every 80 minutes or so!

At 10 a.m. we boarded our first Thousand Oaks Transit bus, route 2. It was an Orion 5 CNG high-floor #554-025 with 1 passenger. We soon entered the city, passing Curigan's steak house and the Thousand Oaks Mall. Placards on the bus proclaimed "Take Pride in your Ride". At Janss Marketplace we had 3 boardings. Soon we encountered a parked car blocking a bus stop. At Moorpark Road two more boarded. The route entered a residential area, then followed a winding road through hills green from recent rains. Next we passed Redwood Middle School and the Conejo Valley Plaza shopping complex, followed by La Reina High School and Los Robles Hospital and Medical Center. At Mountclef Road three deboarded. Then we were passing Cal Lutheran University. The adjacent Lutheran Church had a display giving times for traditional and contemporary worship services. Now we entered an area of wide arterials, passing the local DMV office and Thousand Oaks High School (the sign out front proclaimed "Go Lancers!"). The school anchored an elaborate recreation complex of athletic fields and tennis parks. Nearby open space included a dog park,

community garden, playground and more athletic fields. From this we plunged back into suburbia, running alongside yet more dense green hillsides. A Thousand Oaks dial-a-ride vehicle passed us, as we continued past churches and numerous commercial establishments (obviously the locals like to shop!). We arrived back at the Transportation Center at 11:09 a.m.

During our short wait at the Transportation Center a VISTA 101 bus going north came through. Then at 11:20 a.m. we caught the Thousand Oaks Transit rt. 1 bus, an Orion 5 CNG high-floor #554-023 along with 2 passengers. We went a short distance on the 23 freeway before swinging by the Library/Senior Center/Teen Center complex. This was followed by operating through a residential area. At one point we had about 10 people boarding, some of whom it turned out were on their way to the Oaks Mall. We continued through Newbury Park past a youth soccer tournament and through an industrial park before arriving at the Oaks Mall at 12:20 p.m. At this point we had our lunch break. Dana and Ken Ruben tried what turned out to be an excellent eatery at the Mall with a Coca Cola theme (with memorabilia as decorations). Michael Milroy went to the Transportation Center and via VISTA bus took a break from the tour to explore Moorpark a little. The others stayed on the bus to a nearby fast food outlet adjacent to a hobby shop they wanted to explore. After the excellent meal Dana and Ken made their way back to the Transportation Center via a short ride on TOT rt. 3 (a Thomas SLF CNG bus #554-035). The others just walked over to the Center from where they ate. Regretfully Andy had to drop out of the

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trip at this point due to a persistent headache.

At 3:02 p.m. we caught a VISTA East County bus northbound #63199, a Van Hool bus model C2045L with 2 passengers. It was a plush coach of the type commuters or tourist ride. We went by Westlake/Townsgate (famed weekend layover for MTA route 161) and the Thousand Oaks Library/Teen Center complex before continuing on the 23 freeway to Moorpark. After stopping by Moorpark College we continued via the 118 freeway through hilly wide open spaces to Simi Valley. At 3:50 p.m., we arrived at Simi Valley Town Center. This transit stop was undergoing renovation with incomplete shelters and other signs of ongoing construction.

At 4:15 p.m. we caught Simi Valley Transit route A eastbound, #4520 a New Flyer C40LF with 6 passengers. In our short jaunt through Simi Valley we spotted a commercial truck center and an auto mall, traveled through residential and business districts and spotted a church and Red's BBQ. At 4:31 p.m. we reached the Civic Center area, where we deboarded and crossed the street to catch the last bus of the trip.

At 4:34 p.m. we caught Simi Valley Transit route C, #4516 (same make as route A). We passed the Simi Valley Metrolink station before heading along highway 118 up the Santa Susana Pass through stark hills and down into the San Fernando Valley. 8 passengers made the trip over the pass. At 5:07 p.m. we arrived at the end of the line, Chatsworth Metrolink depot. From here we dispersed--Ken Ruben and Dana Gabbard

took a downtown L.A. bound Metrolink train while others made plans to ride MTA route 245 and connect with the Orange Line (Mike Milroy missed catching back up with us but eventually made his way back to the San Fernando Valley on his own).

What did we learn? Michael Milroy based on his observations offers these recommendations:

- ⬇ Thousand Oaks' headways are so infrequent (80 minutes, with a 2 hour break in the middle of the day) as to be entirely useless, especially for a city of 117,000 (2000 census) that is part of 2 metropolitan areas (Ventura County and LA). Smaller buses operated at 30-minute headways during peak periods, and 60-minute headways at midday and on Saturdays (and Sunday if they offered 7-day-per-week service) would seem to be a minimum.
- ⬇ VISTA services would be more useful, it seems to me, if they were operated as Limiteds within cities, with stops maybe 2 miles apart in larger cities (Oxnard, Ventura, Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley), and maybe 1 mile apart in smaller cities such as Moorpark and Fillmore).
- ⬇ Simi Valley C would be more useful if it was extended to the Town Center. 🚌



Andrew Novak photo

TRANSIT CHANGES

El Monte Bus Station dock assignments

The "lower-level" bays are now open at El Monte bus station. The new bus stop area is at ground level, next to the parking structure west of the main terminal. The new area will be served by Foothill Transit lines 178 and 269, and by Metro lines 170, 176, 267, and 268. Each route has its own assigned bay. All other Foothill and Metro lines will continue to serve the circle... express lines to Los Angeles stopping at slots 1-5, and all locals and other express lines using slots 6-10. Riders will continue to have to listen for PA announcements for which bay their line will use. Greyhound will continue to stop at the curb on the east side of the station's lower level, and El Mote Trolley will continue to not serve the El Monte bus station.

SF Valley - Kymberleigh Richards

Line 761 is now running with a combination of 40' and 45' (compo) buses. The compos will operate on Line 750, starting in June. Both of the Van Nuys Blvd. lines (233 and 761) will be operated with 60' articulated buses starting in June.

Line 734 Sepulveda Rapid will also start in June. It was not reported whether that line will use 40' or 45' buses.

Line 741 Reseda Rapid is now scheduled for a December '06 start.

Four weekend round-trips (two morning peak, two afternoon peak) on Line 161 will be extended to Warner Center, beginning July 1, and be scheduled to connect with the National Park Service shuttle (ParkLink) that runs around the Santa Monica Mountains. There will be an introductory period during which Metro passes will be accepted for the ParkLink fare.

With the introduction of a new Hollywood Bowl-operated shuttle to/from Hollywood/Highland Station, the Line 163 Bowl shuttle to/from Hollywood/Vine Station has been discontinued.

Omni Changes For June 06 - Charles Hobbs

- ▣ Rt 62: Will merge with Route 64 (all days to become the new Route 62 which will operate between Chino Transcenter and 19th at Euclid Ave.
- ▣ Route 64: Will terminate route at 19th and Euclid (all days) by eliminating service between 19th at Euclid and Chaffey College. The segment between Montclair Transcenter and 19th at Euclid will merge with Route 62 to become the New Route 62.
- ▣ Eliminate the Red Line (all days) due to low productivity. Routes 8, 15 and the Blue Line will collectively cover the alignment of the Red Line.
- ▣ Eliminate route 140 peak service between Fontana Transcenter and Chaffey College due to no ridership. Routes 14 and 14L will cover the Almeria trip.
- ▣ Also, eliminating an assortment of first or last trips on 11 routes

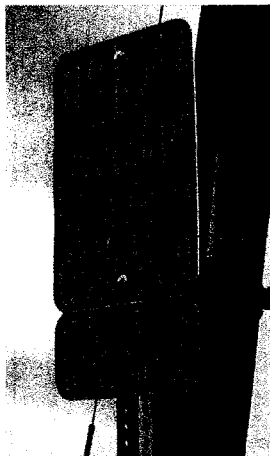
Et Cetera

- ▣ Foothill Transit will remove another color from MTA's consideration when Foothill introduces their new "Silver Streak" limited-stop service from downtown Los Angeles to Montclair next spring.
- ▣ Foothill expects to be moving their headquarters by the end of 2006, purchasing the building at 100 S. Vincent Avenue in West Covina.

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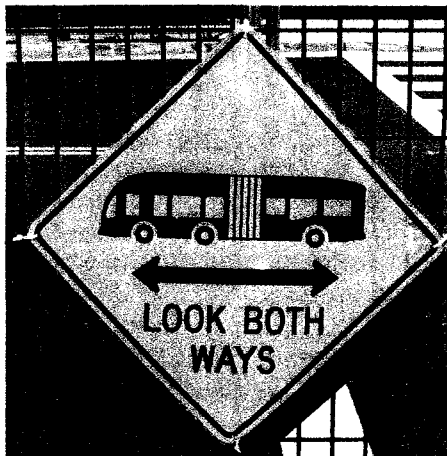
- Metrolink is considering a more permanent weekend operation between Orange County and the Inland Empire. If plans can be finalized in time, the summer "Beach Train" service will run year-round, with three trains each way every Saturday, and two round trips each Sunday.
- Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) will add a new \$13 weekly pass next month.
- The new FlyAway route between LAX and Los Angeles Union Station has been running since March 15th. Buses depart every 30 minutes from 5:00 AM to 1:00 AM, and hourly overnight. Fares are \$3 each way for adults, \$2 for children 2-12, and free for children under 2.
- Arthur Winston, bus maintenance man at MTA's Division 5 (aka Arthur Winston Division), retired on March 22nd after 73 years of service to the agency and its predecessors. He also just turned 100 years old. 🚌



A "Kiss & Park"?

Near a bus stop in unincorporated Orange County

— Mark Strickert photo



👉 "60-Foot Vehicles No One Can See" Crossing Orange Line Busway — Andrew Novak photo

New Generic Anaheim Resort Transit Sign 🗣️

— Mark Strickert photo



MEETING NEWS

The MTA (Metro) regular board meeting, originally set for April 27th, has been re-scheduled for Wednesday, May 3rd. Yes,

same day as the San Fernando Valley sector council meeting.

Please check the meeting calendar (next page). Send any corrections and additions to busrail @ yahoo . com . 🚌