

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CA.TA Notes

Our thanks to Damien Goodmon for his informative presentation at our May 12th meeting, which drew the largest attendance from the public we've had since Governor Dukakis's appearance in February, 2006.

At our June 9th meeting, Ed Clifford of MTA will provide a status report on the Metro Connections program. Member Bill Vallow will offer a brief presentation on the Motor Bus Society, of which he happens to be President this year.

No guest speaker has been scheduled for our July 14th meeting, as we anticipate needing plenty of time for discussion of the latest round of Metro service cuts. Expect the MTA legal notices to appear in your July 1st newspapers.

Members who assisted with our booth at Fullerton Railroad Days or dropped by to say hello included Charles Powell, Russ Jones, Lionel Jones, Andy Novak, Edmund Buckley, J.K. Russell, Erik Griswold, Charles Hobbs, Kymberleigh Richards, John Andoh, Chaffee Yiu, Armando Avalos, Dave Snowden, John Ulloth, Barry Christensen, Woody Rosner, John Bouman, Kent Landfield, Ken Ruben, and Dana Gabbard. As always it was a great event and we look forward to the 2008 Railroad Days.

President Lionel Jones, Vice President Mark Strickert, and Executive Secretary Dana Gabbard each received a letter dated May 1st from OCTA CEO Arthur T. Leahy (evidently sent to a mailing list of key

stakeholders) explaining the agency's stance in re negotiations with its coach operators.

Our comments to the city of Fullerton re: redevelopment of the Transit Center were printed verbatim in the Mid-May issue of the *Fullerton Observer*:
<http://www.fullertonobserver.com/artman/uploads/fomidms.pdf>

Other Doings

A meeting on the La Cienega - Jefferson Exposition Line Station Transit - Oriented District Plan will be held Saturday June 9th from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Baha'i Center - Fredrick Douglass School, 5755 Rodeo Road in Los Angeles. For more information, contact Jordann Turner, L.A. Department of City Planning at (213) 978-1379 or Jordann.Turner@lacity.org

Longtime activist Ron Milam will teach a class on Strategic Planning at the L.A. Eco-Village, 117 Bimini Pl (near 1st and Vermont) in Los Angeles on Saturday June 23rd from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Cost is \$75 (lunch not included - sliding scale available); pre-registration required: 213/738-1254 or crsp@lqc.org - more information at <http://laecovillage.org/strategicplanningmilam.html>

Save the date! The 2007 Alternative Car and Transportation Expo will be held Oct. 19-20, at Barker Hangar in Santa Monica. The inaugural one last year had impressive attendance and we are making arrangements to again have a booth: <http://www.altcarexpo.com/index.html>

Exposing the Expo is another NIMBY website: <http://www.exposingexpo.com/> . 🚗

MTA FARES INCREASE – Hank Fung

On May 24, 2007, the Metro Board adopted a fare increase, the second in almost thirteen years and the first increase in the cash fare and discount passes since 1994. The compromise proposal, carried by Supervisor Molina, was a 20% across the board increase every two years, with the staff proposal for sharply increasing the day pass cost at \$3 to \$5 while encouraging use of monthly and discount passes by keeping the rates of increase reasonable. In addition, the 25 lowest performing bus lines are to be evaluated for possible restructuring or cancellation; a 25¢ off-peak discount fare was introduced for seniors and the disabled (although the criteria for the fare is different than the normal senior fare, thus requiring staff to research implementation issues). Furthermore, in the next few years staff will be evaluating peak hour fares and/or a distance based fare structure (similar to Metrolink).

The road up to the fare increase was, as with much of the MTA Board, convoluted. In May 2004, Roger Snoble declared at a budget workshop that the structural operating deficit was solved. Indeed, the MTA Board had adopted a plan just the year before to increase pass prices by \$10 a year and move to a day pass system by eliminating transfers. However, discount passes were kept the same due to the public outcry. Indeed, the 2007 fare increase percentage is about the same as the increase proposed in 2004 for the discount fare categories. The goal was to generate about \$28 million in additional revenue through fares, which occurred, and then some: between fiscal year 2004 and 2005, an additional \$44 million in fare revenue was generated,

Metro Fare Changes (adapted from MTA website chart)

Regular	Current	7/1/07	7/1/09
Regular Cash Fare	\$1.25	\$1.25	\$1.50
Token	\$1.10	\$1.25	\$1.50
Day Pass	\$3.00	\$5.00	\$6.00
Weekly Pass	\$14.00	\$17.00	\$20.00
Semi-monthly Pass	\$27.00	Eliminate	Eliminate
Monthly Pass	\$52.00	\$62.00	\$75.00
EZ transit pass (multi-agency)	\$58.00	\$70.00	\$84.00
Regular - Other	Current	7/1/07	7/1/09
Zone 1 surcharge, Cash	\$0.50	\$0.60	\$0.70
Zone 2 surcharge, Cash	\$1.00	\$1.20	\$1.40
Monthly Pass zone surcharge, per zone	\$15.00	\$18.00	\$22.00
Owl/Late-Night/Off-Peak Fare, Cash	\$0.75	\$1.25	\$1.50
Interagency (Metro to Munis) Transfer	\$0.25	\$0.30	\$0.35
Senior/Disabled/Medicare	Current	7/1/07	7/1/09
Cash	\$0.45	\$0.55	\$0.65
Cash - Off-Peak (65+)	none	\$0.25	\$0.30
Zone 1 surcharge, Cash	\$0.25	\$0.30	\$0.35
Zone 2 surcharge, Cash	\$0.50	\$0.60	\$0.70
Day Pass	\$1.50	\$1.80	\$2.15
Monthly Pass	\$12.00	\$14.00	\$17.00
EZ transit pass	\$29.00	\$35.00	\$42.00
Monthly premium, per zone	\$7.50	\$9.50	\$9.50
Interagency Transfer	\$0.10	\$0.10	\$0.10
Student Monthly Pass	Current	7/1/07	7/1/09
K-12	\$20.00	\$24.00	\$29.00
College	\$30.00	\$36.00	\$43.00

although the actual amount generated per boarding only increased slightly due to the increased number of trips taken thanks to the day pass.

However, the cost of Metro service ballooned partly due to the added service

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FARES INCREASE cont'd from pg. 3

required by the Consent Decree. Despite being in the waning years, in 2005, the court ordered additional service to be provided, thus increasing Metro's bus operating costs per 16% over a two year period. At this time, Roger Snoble, MTA's CEO, began mentioning a structural deficit in presentations to the Governance Councils and the MTA Board. In 2006, MTA covered an estimated \$112 million operating deficit, which was covered with reserves and one-time revenues. Zev Yaroslavsky even proposed a fare increase in 2006, an idea that went nowhere with his counterparts on the board. Some argued that the operating deficit was just an accounting exercise, and quietly at the Technical Advisory Committee an MTA deputy admitted as much. However, a capital deficit would have required breaking various commitments to contractors and to the Federal government on construction projects, none of which MTA was willing to do.

The Metro Board kept postponing a workshop to be held about the budget and the operating deficit. from December all the way to March. Indeed, even the staff report about the deficit kept being postponed. In February and March, "fare restructuring" presentations were given to the Sector Governance Councils urging support of some form of fare restructuring. At this stage, most of the Governance Councils were willing to support some form of fare restructuring, although no specifics were given. Finally, things had come to a head and Roger Snoble announced at the March board meeting of a public hearing to be held in April, which was later rescheduled to May due to public noticing concerns. Any later and the Metro Board would not be able to

adopt a budget that included a fare increase.

The response to the Snoble plan was roundly negative. The Bus Riders Union, which would have probably withered away after the expiration of the Consent Decree, suddenly found new life as they pointed to 166% increases in the cost of a day pass and 400% increases in senior passes over an 18 month period. The Los Angeles Times and Daily News weighed in against the proposal, as did most of the quoted academia and riders on the street. Compromise positions were taken by SO.CA.TA, which presented a fare increase proposal of their own that was seriously considered by Metro staff. Various citizen proposals also floated around and were evaluated.

What was more interesting, however, was the reaction at Metro affiliated organizations. Members of the Technical Advisory Committee, an obscure body composed of various city staff members and the Automobile Club of Southern California, criticized the proposal at their May meeting, especially the increases in discount passes. TAC members raised concerns about increased shifts to more expensive paratransit and impacts on municipal operators. At the TAC meeting, Metro staff admitted that the dramatic increases in discount passes were unlikely to go through. Heavy criticism also flowed out of the Governance Councils, who felt that this fare increase was too extreme and would drive individuals back in their cars or to municipal operators. Metro staff, for their part, were extremely cagey after the fare increase proposal was released, refusing to answer questions from the public at their presentations to the Governance Councils, or release internal document sand scenarios showing the impact of the fare

increase on the budget. Subtly, though, staff presentations de-emphasized the 2009 numbers and concentrated on explaining the 2007 pass prices and the \$2.00 base fare. About the only person that did support the staff proposal was Metro Citizens Advisory Committee chair Roger Christensen, although even he advocated slowing down the rate of increase.

Much criticism was also given about the fare increase process, and to that end "fare forums" were scheduled to obtain more input from the public, at times and places more convenient for them to attend. Despite this, the fare forums were sparsely attended due to weak publicity. Metro staff did not advertise these fare forums other than through small newspaper ads and the web site. Virtually no information was given to bus and rail riders until just a week and a half before the final public hearing, and with no information about how to submit a comment for the record. At times, the Bus Riders Union appeared to be the only organization informing riders of a fare increase, prominently highlighting the 2009 numbers in each of their fliers and exhorting individuals to turn out on May 24.

On May 24, about 1,500 people showed up to the Metro headquarters to watch the public hearing, with over 320 individuals signed up to speak, and the entire third floor converted to an overflow viewing room. Yet as the morning dragged on, people left and only about 200 people actually stepped up to the microphone, with a little over a hundred people watching the final Board discussion.

It appeared that in the days before the public hearing, Gloria Molina's staff and the staff of a few other board members had quietly

worked on a compromise proposal. Mayor Villaraigosa also presented a proposal and released it to the public a few days before the public hearing, hoping to get support, although he mostly found criticism directly towards the fiscal sustainability of his plan. The Molina proposal was even discussed by a few speakers during the public hearing and observers gave it the greatest chance of passing, which it ultimately did, though not without some verbal fireworks provided by the Mayor and Supervisor Yaro-slavsky. However, Villaraigosa was able to keep all of his members in line, even fiscal conservative Bernard Parks, into supporting his proposal. Afterwards, Eric Mann, leader of the Bus Riders Union, threatened federal and state lawsuits and even a fare strike, although such strikes have been less than successful in other cities. The projected fare increase, according to the proposed 2008 budget, will generate approximately \$32 million in revenue, although \$5 million of that will be allocated to tokens and taxi vouchers under the Immediate Needs Transportation Program.

One of the unknowns is how this fare increase will hurt municipal operators. Because of the arcane way the funds are distributed to bus operators in Los Angeles County, any increase in revenue without a change in the cash fare results in a greater funds being given to Metro, and funds taken away from other operators. Thus, other agencies are contemplating either only raising pass prices in future fare increases, or even lowering fares and eliminating transfers in order to keep up with Metro's attempts at increasing its share. Reform of the "Formula Allocation Process" will be a hotly contested topic on the Board in the future. 🚌

When editor/publisher Ari L. Noonan of the online *The Front Page* asked my opinion of the MTA's recently adopted compromise fare restructuring for his article "MTA Rate Hikes Earn a Thumbs up from No. 1 Bus Rider", I described the process by which it was reached as "ugly as sausage-making." Mr. Noonan also noted that I was amused at the theatrics that erupted between Mayor Villaraigosa and Supervisor Yaroslavsky.

To be honest, I am humbled to admit having spent some seven hours in the MTA Board Room attending the fare hearing from start to end I am not sure I fully understood all the nuances of the political theater that played out before my eyes. While I do think some of the concerns about the Villaraigosa proposal were legitimate, I suspect its loss also was a result of a distaste at Villaraigosa presenting himself as sole champion of the underclass which likely made the Board members predisposed against whatever he offered. Meanwhile Supervisor Burke took advantage of the testimony to stealth through added funding for her pet project the Immediate Needs program (co-administrated by a key ally, First AME Church) and promote her rail station gating ambitions.

What a joke the Bus Riders Union has become. They drew only a few staffers speaking on behalf of obscure electeds and a smattering of South L.A. Pastors and representatives from a few minor community organizations. Sure, Eric Mann exhibited organizing prowess in having a large and vocal group of supporters show up for

a weekday event. But by taking the hard-line "no fare increase" stance all that was achieved was to press the social equity aspects. But that just meant Molina had a trophy she could claim with her proposal to burnish her image as an advocate of the underclass (adroitly snatching the prize from right under Mayor Villaraigosa's nose).

After being rebuffed all the BRU could offer was vague threats of legal action (which I have serious doubt will get much of anywhere) and thanking Villaraigosa (and his bloc) for voting against the Molina proposal. Would the BRU still have had nice things to say if the Villaraigosa alternative had been enacted instead? Of course not. At one point the woman sitting in front of me asked where the L.A. City Council members were. I explained only Mr. Parks was present, as he is the mayor's council-member appointee to the board. Which makes you wonder, what if Mann had been willing to compromise--see the handwriting on the wall and wring the best concessions he could from the Board to improve service and pressed the case by building a coalition. Imagine having Councilman Rosendahl being recruited to urge that any funds from the increase be directed to enhance Rapid service and secure bus-only lanes among major arterials like Wilshire. Or the BRU announce their campaign aimed at the legislature to secure the spill-over funds and demand they be used to rollback the fare increase post-haste. Then the endless line of speakers would have been working on a real goal and have a trophy of their own as an outcome. Mann's

impotent campaign convinces me the BRU will be all but kaput in 36 months.

Meanwhile our Executive Board is crafting a letter to the Board outlining concerns regarding various aspects of the adopted restructuring. At the very least, we will continue our striving to be the informed voice of reason in these debates.

45 people showed up for our first Subway to the Sea meeting held May 22 at the Westwood Presbyterian Church. 45! We collected names and e-mail addresses, shared information and had some very thoughtful comments (along with a few less informed ones). A big thank you to Jody Freest Litvak of MTA for providing an update on the corridor studies just starting. Also thanks to Mayra Newbon and Javier Torres of the Church for their cooperation and assistance. And my gratitude to co-organizer Kymberleigh Richards. We generated publicity in the *Daily News*, *Daily Bruin*, a number of blogs and even the *L.A. Times*' Traffic Bottleneck blog. So we must be doing something right. We hope to shortly announce the date/place/time for the other 5 corridor meetings. And onward to exhaustion!

Anyone who ever rode a bus that was whacked by an overhanging tree branch can appreciate Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District General Manager Sherrie Fisher's grateful mention in her Administrative Update dated May 2: "A special thank you goes out to the Randy Fritz, Santa Barbara city arborist, who ensured the trees along the routes have been sufficiently trimmed to accommodate the height of our new buses. These buses are 11' 6" tall." That is good news, indeed!

I am curious that the Spring 2007 issue of *Metro Quarterly* (published by MTA) on p.13 states the new Rapid Express service "grew from a suggestion of the Westside/Central Service Sector Governance Council". HUH? The way Zev was all over it, you'd have thought it was his idea. Or is he just acting like it is?

Steve Miller of Amtrak California in the latest California Operating Timetable [#35 - <http://www.amtrakcalifornia.com/rail/go/amtrak/news/may-21-schedule-changes/additions/index.cfm>] includes a "Personal Note" regarding his impending retirement remarkable for its blunt honesty: "One of the reasons for making this move is uncertainty over the future direction of the bus program. A good example is the changes made to Route 37, which I feel will be disastrous to ridership. Despite my recommendations against the changes, management chose to ignore the steadily improving ridership of the previous schedule in favor of focusing on the dubious prospects of one-day trips from Fresno. As a result, I feel it is time to turn [the] bus program over to someone with different ideas." YEOW!

We've just recently been added to the board agenda mailing list for SunLine Transit. So I was perusing the minutes of the April 25 meeting when I ran across the extended comments of Councilman Alan Seman from the city of Rancho Mirage, one of the members of the board, essentially complaining his city doesn't get its "fair share" of bus service. General Manager C. Mikel Oglesby tries diplomatically to respond, explaining that with limited

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PUBLIC & LEGISLATIVE from Pg. 7

resources at this time SunLine is in no position to meet the sort of unmet needs Councilman Seman raises. Which sounds like the general state of the transit industry nationwide at the moment.

I'll conclude this month with a fond fare-

well to Jean Guccione, the *L.A. Times* reporter assigned to the MTA beat who has taken a buyout and will per the blog *L.A. Observed* now be working in the office of D.A. Steve Cooley. Just another sign of the downward spiral at the Times. Good luck, Jean! 🚌



SunLine shelter on Harry Oliver, down the street from headquarters — Mark Strickert photo



TRANSIT UPDATES

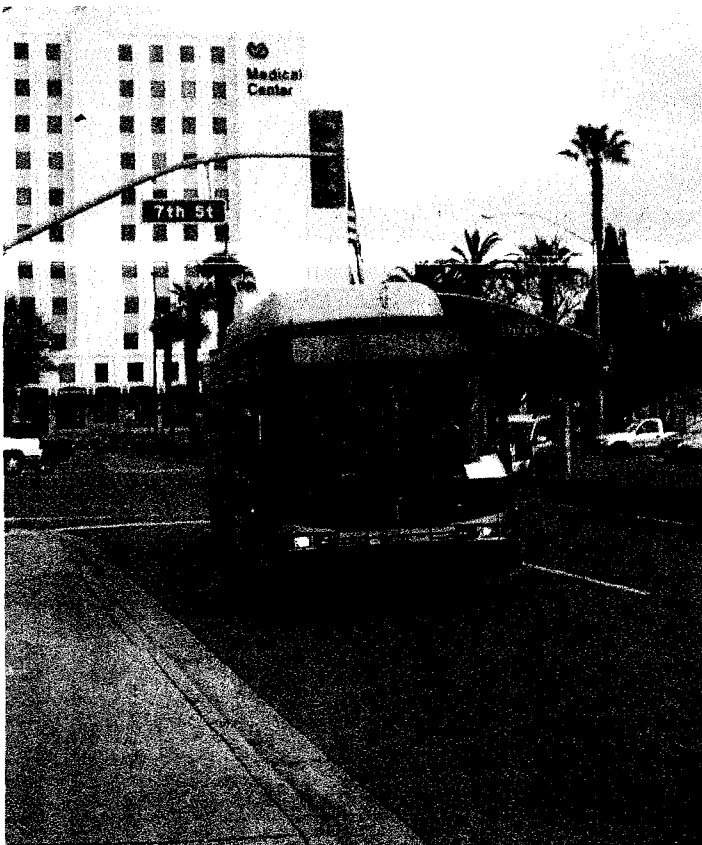
SUNSHINE SHUTTLE

Via Mark Strickert: Found this one out the hard way last week...the South Whittier-area shuttle bus has been re-routed between Gunn/Telegraph and Carmenita/Painter. The eastbound now turns left from Gunn to Telegraph, then R Telechron-R Lakeland-L Laurel-R Beaty-R Painter-R Meyer-L Laurel-R Florence-L Carmenita to Painter. Service hours have been ex-

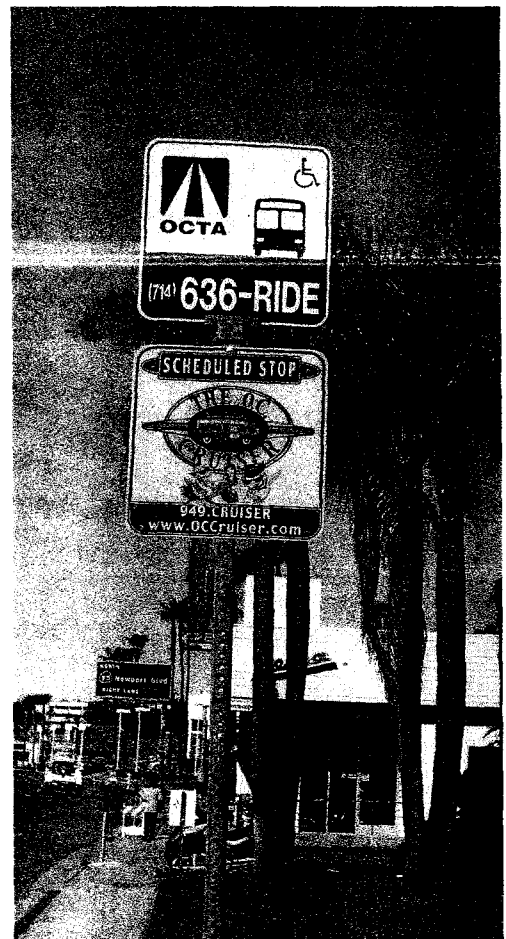
tended...first trip leaves 6:00 AM and last trip leaves 7:00 PM weekdays, and a 5:00 PM trip was added Saturdays.

FOOTHILL TRANSIT

Per Dana Gabbard: The April/May *Footnotes* newsletter notes the latest Foothill Transit Bus Book on p.10 erroneously refers to Metrolink accepting the EZ Pass. Also, on page 15 in the Spanish section, a reference is made to a non-existent student discount fare for the EZ Pass. 🚌



Soon to be re-routed...MTA 577X will stay on 7th to downtown Long Beach, rather than left on Channel
— Mark Strickert photo



MEMBERS IN ACTION

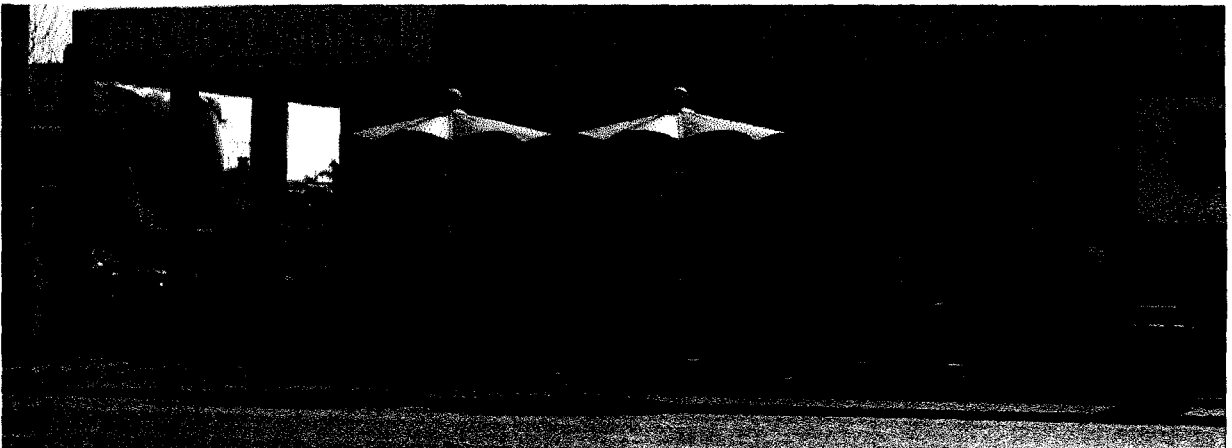
Harold Katz's op-ed "Gridlock" appeared in the May 14th *Los Angeles Business Journal*.

Members at the Fare Forums: JK Drummond, Lionel Jones, and Ken Ruben were at the South Bay sector forum on May 12th. Surrounded by yellow shirts at the MTA Board Room forum on May 19th were Hank Fung, Dana Gabbard, Lionel Jones, Kent Landfield, Kymberleigh Richards, Alex Schaffer, and Mark Strickert. Afterward all except Hank attended the pre-Wilshire corridor meeting consultation at Gateway Denny's, also attended by Nate Zablen. Lionel Jones and Ken Ruben spoke about the fare increases at the regular Westside/Central governance council meeting in May, as did Mark Strickert at the regular Gateway Sector meeting.

Attending some portion of the May 24th MTA fare restructuring public hearing were

Roger Christensen, Hank Fung, Dana Gabbard, Lionel Jones, Perias Pillay, Bart Reed, Kymberleigh Richards, and Woody Rosner. Roger Christensen's testimony at the fare hearing in his capacity as Chair of MTA's Citizen Advisory Council were quoted the following day in the *Daily News* ("Metro raises bus, train fares") and *Los Angeles Times* ("MTA approves steep hikes for bus, rail fares"). Ken Ruben and Dana Gabbard were quoted in the online *The Front Page* on the fare restructuring ("MTA Rate Hikes Earn a Thumbs up from No. 1 Bus Rider"): http://www.thefrontpageonline.com/index.php?ption=com_content&task=view&id=1106&Itemid=41

Those present at our May 22nd "Subway to the Sea" Wilshire corridor community meeting in Westwood included Dana Gabbard, Lionel Jones, Harold Katz, Kent Landfield, Kymberleigh Richards, Woody Rosner, Ken Ruben, Alex Schaffer, John Ulloth, and Nate Zablen. 🚗



How's THIS for a shelter and benches? Eastbound University at 30th, San Diego
— Mark Strickert photo