

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CA.TA Notes

Our thanks to Margaret Kemp of Flexcar for an informative presentation (and a door prize given away afterward) at our August 11th meeting. Members wishing to try this service can register on its website [<http://www.flexcar.com/>] using the promo code freelax to waive the \$35 annual membership fee.

At our September 8th meeting, we will have a discussion of some proposed bylaws revisions. Plus some preliminary considerations of our holiday banquet locale and Day-after-Thanksgiving trip.

Upcoming speakers include Cathi Coles of the Pasadena ARTS bus system in October, and a presentation on the new Regional Transportation Plan by staff of the Southern California Association of Governments in Feb. 2008.

We have learned the Buena Park Metrolink station official opening will be Saturday Oct. 6th (scheduled train service began on Sept. 4th). And the Alternative Auto Expo at Barker Hanger in Santa Monica is scheduled for Oct. 19-20. We are in the midst of exploring our participation in both events.

In Other News...

Member Pesach Kremen has begun a Yahoo group called Transit User Equality, which he describes as dealing with "the unfair treatment by Landlord's, Merchants, and Employers in San Diego giving free parking or other benefits or information for auto users while doing nothing to transit users... It is a moderated group as I will not toler-

ate SPAM or certain individuals that might be a pain in the butt." Further details at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/transit_user_equality

The Train Riders Association of California is having its annual conference Saturday, November 3 in San Diego, with an excursion (previewing the Sprinter) on Sunday, November 4. Details at <http://www.calrailnews.com/events.html>

The Sixth Annual Southern California Transportation Summit will be held at the Ontario Convention Center on Monday Nov. 5th. Further details at <http://www.mobility21coalition.com/>

Saturday, September 29 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Huntington Library is holding its second Los Angeles Archives Bazaar. This free event showcases exhibits from 40 historical collections and archives including Wally Shidler's collection of transportation ephemera. This will be at Friends' Hall, 1151 Oxford Road in San Marino (lunch provided); further details: (626) 405-2100


The public hearing for the San Diego Association of Governments' Draft 2007 Regional Transportation Plan and its Environmental Impact Report will be held Friday, September 14 from 10:00am-Noon at 401 B Street, Suite 800 in San Diego. Further details: (619) 699-1916

The Southern California Regional Airport Authority now has a website: http://www.scr_aa.org/

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) PLACE Program (Policies for Livable, Active Communities

and Environments) is pleased to announce the release of a Request For Initiatives (RFI) that will promote changes to the built environment (i.e. streets, parks, transportation, etc.). Successful applicants will pursue policy change (i.e. community design, land use, zoning, street standards, general plans, etc.) and physical projects (i.e. bike lanes, sidewalks, trails, traffic calming, lighting, public playgrounds, parks, etc.) that help people to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives. PLACE RFI 2007-01 solicits applications from cities, community-based organizations, schools, and for-profit organizations.

DPH will fund up to five Applicants at approximately \$100,000 per year for three years and five months beginning on or about February 1, 2008. The RFI and corresponding documents can be downloaded from: www.lapublichealth.org/place. A Bidders' Conference will be held on Tuesday, September 11th from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon at:

Department of Health Services
Administration Building - First Floor Auditorium
313 N. Figueroa St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012 

A GREAT LOOP TRIP *Dana Gabbard*

For our Spring study tour, we choose a trip that included riding the new Silver Streak, experiencing the about to be truncated Omnitrans 90 and making a great loop back to downtown Los Angeles through Orange County via RTA's 149, the OCTA 50 and MTA's 460. April 21 was the date set for the trip and at 9:25 a.m. I caught the east-bound Silver Streak NABI low-floor articulated vehicle F1625 (dubbed on the side "Spirit of South El Monte") in downtown Los Angeles at 7th and Olive. The sign above the windshield proclaimed our coach operator was Philip L 090420. I was the only passenger initially.

It was a quiet morning, slightly overcast, as we made our way along Olive past Pershing Square then up to Bunker Hill and California Plaza. 1 person boarded at 5th Street. Upon reaching 1st St. and the County Municipal

Courts building we made a turn east, downhill. At Hill St. adjacent to one of the Red Line Civic Center station portals Charles Powell and Kymberleigh Richards boarded. We noted inexplicable the interior message board at the front of the bus had a crawl proclaiming "Happy Holidays". As we continued Silver Streak F1622 in the opposite direction passed us. At the Alameda stop circa 9:39 a.m. Russ Jones and Carlos Osuna boarded before we entered the El Monte busway. We noted none of us had been given the ticket you are supposed to as proof of purchase when boarding. And also that the driver seemed a bit edgy in demeanor.

Settling in for what would be a long trip, we compared the amenities of this bus versus the similar ones MTA has. While Foothill had

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GREAT LOOP TRIP cont'd from Pg. 3

used the MTA's contract to acquire these artics, it was clear they had customized some aspects - the touch tape to signal a stop, for example, was slightly different as was the seat design. At this point we spotted a downtown bound Metrolink train streaking by us on the tracks in the middle of the 10 freeway, next to the busway lanes.

At El Monte Station 1 deboarded while 2 boarded; also the driver quickly jumped off for relief with the new driver Lynn H 2128. Also boarding was a fare inspector (whose uniform stated he was "safety officer" M. Rodriquez). When he asked for our tickets we explained the driver hadn't given us any. Mr. Rodriquez commented that this wasn't the first time that particular driver had neglected to give out tickets when driving the Silver Streak. At this time we now noticed one other aspect of the bus was identical to MTA buses--a "stop requested" announcement.

1 person got off at the freeway stop at Puente Ave., and 1 got on at West Covina Parkway/Toluca. As we passed a Taco Place in La Puente called Boca del Rio the driver gave it her personal endorsement as a good place to eat. Soon after we spotted a West Covina Go West shuttle bus (for the red line). Then we hopped onto the freeway and soon were going up Kellogg Hill past a roadside windmill. Next we passed Donahoo's Golden Chicken, a Pomona landmark. Pomona also contained several elegant buildings in the classic style with stained glass windows, including Pilgrim Congregational Church and the YMCA. At Pomona TransCenter the last 4 passenger got off. We spotted a 684 (which subsequently was

shortened to start/end at Cal Poly) and departed empty.

We continued along Towne, a tree lined Boulevard. Russ noted his experience riding the Silver Streak is it seems to have no set route in Pomona. About then a motorcycle club rumbled by, a cluster of hogs going through suburbia. After entering Montclair we passed the old transit center and noted it is now the site of a new Police Academy under construction. At 10:58 a.m. we arrived at the final stop, the Montclair TransCenter. And to our delight Charles Hobbs joined us at this time.

While waiting it was noticed the Omnitrans bus stop signs carried promotional slogans: "Buy a Monthly Pass - It's like a half off sale vs. a day pass over 31 days". At 11:15 a.m. we boarded along with 3 passengers Omnitrans route 90, New Flyer low floor #0023 (built in 2000) with driver Gaylord #1199. There were 5 boardings along Monte Vista, and we passed a small park/ride lot adjacent to the 10 freeway which had a Union Pacific Caboose on display. Now we got onto the aforementioned freeway and began motoring along at a good clip.

Spotted alongside the freeway was a mini amusement park called Boomers. Getting familiar with our surroundings it was pointed out the covering of the seats had an intricate pattern that worked the Omnitrans logo into the design. Interior display placards celebrated 30 year employees, warned of security cameras ("You are on candid camera"), and implored riders to aid buses staying on time by arriving at stops early and have their fare ready before boarding. By now the bus was truly booking along through classic suburbia - a landscape filled with malls, industrial parks, etc. adjacent to

the freeway.

At Ontario Mills 1 passenger de-boarded while 5 got on. Soon after Charles Powell loaned his cell phone to one rider who was in some sort of distress (late for an appointment?). And at a offramp a CHP office was spotted patting down a vagrant who evidently had been standing there begging for change from drivers waiting to enter the freeway. Only 1 boarded at the South Fontana Transit Center. We continued, passing railyards and unremarkable scenery.

Two got off at Arrowhead Medical Center while 1 boarded. As we approached downtown San Bernardino we passed the Carousel Mall, which evidently is now closed. Upon arriving at the San Bernardino Transit Mall at 4th and Arrowhead, we had a brief layover. Eight got off here while three got on. A sign at the bus stop declared "No loitering". After continuing on we had 5 board at 4th and F. Next we looped by the Metrolink Station where one passenger boarded. Among the trains stored for the weekend were cars from the Sounder service that operates in Seattle and environs (leased to Metrolink while Sound Transit works to increase capacity in their right-of-way so they can operate more trains). And onto the freeway again we went, passing through yet more suburbia. At the Mt. Vernon stop 1 got off while two boarded.

And then back on the freeway, buzzing past a RV Expo. At the intersection of the 60 and 91 we threaded our way through a massive construction zone. And at 12:50 p.m. we arrived at the Riverside downtown terminal. This is drastically downsized from its glory days (the fire dept. took over the building that used to be the depot) while slowly RTA works toward its eventual replacement with

a new transit center near the Metrolink station, to be partially paid for with a 2005 federal earmark of \$750,000. Evidently the city has long complained about the transit hub being in downtown. I guess it is an image thing.

We now had a few hours to relax and have lunch. Several of us made our way to the nearby Pedestrian mall along Main Street. While Charles Powell went off in search of Gram's barbeque [<http://www.gramsbbsq.org/>], Russ, Carlos, Kymberleigh, and I enjoyed pizza at Antonious Pizza Café. I split with Kymberleigh a delicious and filling Hawaiian style pizza, consisting of Canadian bacon, pineapple and (unexpectedly) cashews. After a leisurely meal everyone made their way back to the terminal to see off Charles Hobbs and Carlos who had decided to catch the 90 in the other direction at 2:45 p.m. (it was vehicle #9704) and go on their merry way (they had come mostly to ride the 90 before it went away). With some more time left before our next ride we explored the terminal, whose amenities are adequate but nothing to get excited about -- benches, shelters and some information kiosks. It was noted nearby eateries to grab a quick bite include Michael's Burgers and Tio Tacos. Also while we were there Sandy Gilmore's Hot Dogs had a cart selling the usual soft drinks, snacks, etc (they left at 3:15 p.m., saying "things are slowing up"). We also discovered one stretch of curb in the terminal is used for taxis during layover. At this point Mr. Powell raised aloud the question of whether his MTA employee badge would be accepted by RTA (it should be but some drivers don't seem to know this).

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GREAT LOOP TRIP cont'd from Pg. 5

At 3:41 p.m. we boarded RTA route 149, a NABI bus #2144. The RTA operator didn't honor Kymberleigh or Russ Jones' Metro badges, although the Omnitrans and (later) OCTA operators did. And off we went onto the freeway and again through suburbia. As we pulled in to the Galleria at Tyler stop we noted besides the shelters and kiosks that the terminal had it also featured vending machines for Gatorade and soft drinks. 6 boarded at this location. It was also noted this vehicle we were riding, much like the Omnitrans one, had placards urging passengers be considerate to their fellow riders and that the agency is hiring new drivers. As we continued we passed the Castle Park amusement complex, and several under construction suburban housing tracts (22 Top at Palo and Aberhill Ranch), plus the ubiquitous industrial parks and the Air Kids Party Zone, a facility for holding birthday celebrations and similar events for kids.

At Corona there is a stop at Grand and Main where 4 boarded, one of whom had a bike. This is also served by the Corona Cruiser Blue Line. And we noticed this stop had an old style IEC 149 sign with an OCTD logo on it. Back on the freeway we passed a horse herd heralding a more rural setting, very green and bucolic. A river flowed nearby as we went through the famous pass on the 91 leading from Riverside to Orange Counties. In Anaheim Hills our first sight of re-emerging civilization was the Nohl Mall, followed by a tow truck yard near Linda. We arrived at The Village at Orange at 4:37 p.m. (this formerly was known as Mall at Orange). At

this point Charles Powell decided to go his own way and jumped aboard an OCTA bus. At 5:10 p.m. the remnant of our group boarded OCTA route 50, a NABI low floor #2305 with 22 passengers--a very busy bus!

Soon we were moving along a classic suburban commercial corridor of restaurants and other businesses. We even had someone with a bike board the bus. Kymberleigh noted the annunciator began its announcements with the connecting street (e.g. Batavia and Katella) whereas most do it with the street you are on being announced first *. 6 deboarded at the Century 25 complex. The busy bus had lots of riders getting on and off as we passed such local landmarks as Angel Stadium and the Pond before arriving at Harbor Blvd. at 5:29 p.m. where we got off.

[* - *No...actually, OCTA annunciators give the streets at an intersection in alphabetical order - ed.*]

Minutes later, at 5:33 p.m. we did a brief 3 minute trip on OCTA route 43 #7404 north to the Disneyland bus stop. From there Russ took the Disneyland Resort Express back to LAX then the Culver City 6 home. Dana and Kymberleigh at the same location caught MTA Line 460, a NABI low floor #7473 with 18 passengers at 6:04 p.m. After an uneventful trip to downtown Los Angeles they split up to make their separate ways home. Overall an interesting and enjoyable study tour!

My thanks to Russ Jones and Kymberleigh Richards for suggestions that enhanced this trip report. 🚗

Public and Legislative Affairs - Dana Gabbard

I am vexed. The entire "rob transit" to balance the budget scenario played out in Sacramento just as we feared. There is buzz among activists of potential lawsuits but nothing definite so far. What happened? Bill Bradley on his blog *New West Notes* opined that the Republicans in the legislature feel they have little stake in Los Angeles, which is solidly Democratic. To them shortchanging us for transportation, etc. is of no consequence as part of their strategy to use their leverage under the 2/3 rule for passing a budget in this state. As Bradley eloquently summed up the problem, "there is clearly a lack of understanding/appreciation [by the Republicans] of the importance one of the world's largest and most dynamic cities [is] to California as a whole."

An example of this twisted mentality is the August 22 op-ed in the *Orange County Register* by one wignut local official from behind the Orange Curtain extolling perpetual roadbuilding as a magic bullet for traffic relief and takes uninformed potshots at L.A. mass transit. Good grief, talk about frightening ignorance and mis-information! <http://www.ocregister.com/opinion/county-transportation-road-1816614-public-transit>

One small comfort is the threat to kill the bullet train with a near zero budget didn't happen. The California High Speed Rail Authority has funding for next year of \$20.7 million, which is adequate to allow the continuing preparation of environmental studies. The next question is whether the 2008 bond vote happens or is to be

"delayed" again. Stay tuned.

At the August 15th Metro Citizens' Advisory Council meeting a presentation was made on the draft Long Range Plan update. Except we were informed no plan has yet been drafted until Board feedback provides direction, as was supposed to happen at the Workshop held the next day. And even then it is to be merely an update of the 2001 plan solely addressing whatever has changed in the intervening six years. Talk about a no risk approach!

So I was digging around the L.A. County website investigating the perpetual extension of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC) contract to run the Hahn Shuttle in the unincorporated area of Willowbrook adjacent to Rosa Parks Blue Line/Green Line station. My interest in this was piqued by the recent rather harsh audit issued with no fanfare by the city of Los Angeles Controller's office of a now discontinued contract LADOT had with WLCAC [<http://www.lacity.org/ctr/audits/WattsFinal62707.pdf>]. I was intrigued to see the latest amendment to the county's contract with WLCAC include the stipulation that only John Zeigler of the County Dept. of Public Works provides direction to the contractor and it even gave his e-mail address. So I asked him about the status of the solicitation process for a new operator of the Hahn Trolley and Shuttle Service. His response was "We are continuing our contracting process. Our goal is to submit both a recommended contractor and agreement to the County Board of Su-

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PUBLIC & LEGISLATIVE cont'd from Pg. 7

pervisors by the end of this year." Politics heretofore had stalled this process. Might be interesting whether the winds of change mean this will no longer be the case. We'll soon know...

You don't get much more venerable than Chester Moland, longtime CEO of Golden Empire Transit in Bakersfield and current chair of the Executive Committee of the California Transit Association. He had been at the agency 23 years, working his way up from Administrative Assistant to the top job. So imagine my surprise that he was suddenly on July 11 suspended without pay for 30 days by a unanimous vote of the GET Board, pending a hearing on whether he would retain his job. And with no explanation offered publicly why this action had been taken. Then on August 8 Moland announced he was waiving his right to a hearing and submitted his resignation, with the only explanation being that he was offered an opportunity in the private sector that was "much more lucrative" than his position with GET (as noted in the article "Suspended GET chief Moland resigns", in the Aug. 13 *Bakersfield Californian*). We even sent a public records request to GET and in response were sent a copy of the initial press release announcing the suspension and informed that any further information would constitute an unwarranted invasion of Moland's personal privacy per California Government Code section 6254(c). So Moland is headed for a soft landing in private industry, but that doesn't explain what happened and why. The minutes of the Board meeting between the suspension and Moland's resignation noted a petition signed

by over 100 GET employees was submitted to the Board requesting Moland be kept on as CEO, so unrest among employees doesn't seem the problem. I am exploring one last avenue of inquiry that may shed light on this mystery, but it may well turn out we'll never know the real root of this situation.

A little less mysterious of a severance is that of Tony Grasso, who led the San Bernardino Associated Governments, or SANBAG, since January 2006, only to resign August 2nd. Local media reported friction developed between the SANBAG Board and Grasso, which evidently came to a head over the perceived lack of success the agency had in advocating for its piece of the first disbursement of funds from the infrastructure bonds. Wasting no time to appoint a successor longtime SANBAG staffer Deborah Barmack was unanimously appointed August 15 by the SANBAG board of directors as the new head honcho.

Meanwhile Grasso's predecessor Norm King, SANBAG Executive Director from 1996-2006, plans to retire from being director of the William and Barbara Leonard University Transportation Center at Cal State San Bernardino [<http://leonard.csusb.edu/about/>] before year's end; however, he will continue his association with the center in a reduced capacity. He is the Center's first Director and recently oversaw their initial regional symposium on transportation issues, so I guess he feels now that it is up and running he can shift into a lighter role.

Another transition is happening with David Armijo, former Metro Sector General Man-

ager for (at various times) the San Fernando Valley and Westside/Central areas and for the past 18 months with the Transportation Corridor Agencies in Orange County (the toll road folks), who has been hired by Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) in Florida as its new CEO. I knew something was up when I saw Armijo's job advertised on the TCA website, but the pieces only fell in place when I saw a link to an article on Armijo's hiring by HART in a recent Transit Coalition e-newsletter.

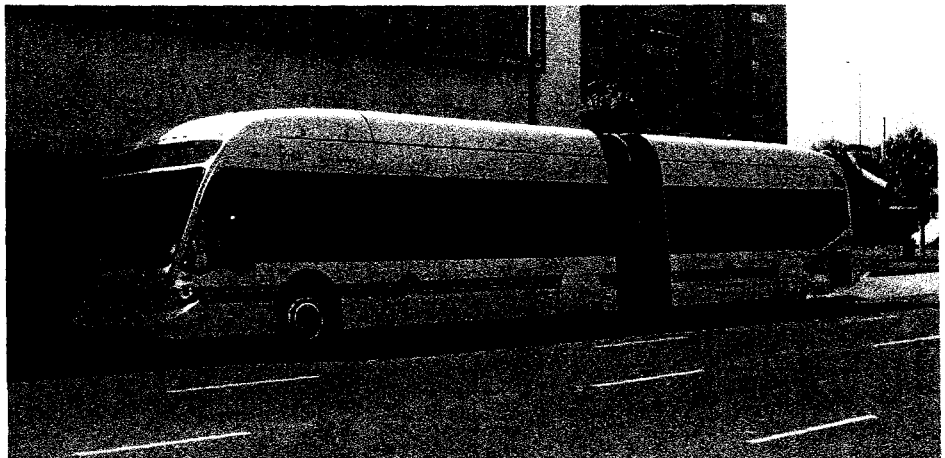
I am sure many of you have seen the Pepsi machines MTA has placed at the entrance to some Red Line stations (with stickers noting such beverages are prohibited from being consumed while aboard the subway). Looks like this is a trend as agencies try to find new sources of revenue in these trying times. The North County Transit District (NCTD) in San Diego county approved at their July 19th Board meeting agenda item #11, a Soda Vending Concession Agreement with Coke for Sprinter and Coaster stations that the agency projects will provide it approximately \$106,000 per year in revenue, including ads on the sides of the kiosks that the machines are in <http://>

www.gonctd.com/agendas/board_07192007.pdf]. And the Metropolitan Transit System of San Diego and environs at its Aug. 9 Executive Committee meeting in grappling with a budget shortfall (item #C1) noted by increasing the price of soft drinks at Trolley stations that approximately an addition \$42,000 could be realized. I guess every little bit helps.

I'll conclude by expressing my incredulity at the resolution the California Counsel of the Blind passed at its April 15 convention in Sacramento. It totally mis-states the new Access Service standing ride cancellation policy, after which they condemn the strawman they just created. Access in response pointed out all the mis-statements in the resolution while diplomatically suggesting in the future "it to be more productive [for the Counsel] to initiate direct communications to discuss areas of concern". Yeah, find out what you are talking about before you set up a fuss--sounds like a good idea to me. The correspondence can be read in the August 17 ASI Board Box, item #4 [http://asila.org/_pdf/BoardBox318.pdf] 🚌

Foothill Transit's 60-foot NABI #F1629, aka "City of West Covina", resting at Olive & 18th before its next eastbound journey.

Mark Strickert photo



MEMBERS IN ACTION

Andy Novak's article on the 4400s - the "Shorties" - ran in the June-July issue of *The Paddle*, newsletter of the Pacific Bus Museum.

Congratulations to Damien Goodman, elected vice chair of the Cherrywood/Leimert Block Club.

William Vallow's letter on transit funding diversion appeared in the August 24 *Los Angeles Times* in edited form. Mr. Vallow was kind enough to share with us his original letter which we have posted on the front page of our website. In addition, Vallow attended the "unveiling" of the 65 foot NABI articulated bus at North Hollywood Orange Line station on August 27th.

The op-ed "Manhattan Project?" by Harold

Katz appeared in the August 27th *Los Angeles Business Journal*.

JK Drummond and Mark Strickert attended the Public Transportation Workshop, August 30th at the Norwalk Senior Center. Norwalk Transit, Metrolink, and MTA had presentations aimed at newbie riders, and the appropriate printed schedules for their services in the Norwalk area. MTA's presentation included their introduction-to-transit video, "Senior's Day Out". This is available on DVD from Dave Hershenson, at hershensond@metro.net.

Making comments at the MTA service change hearings: Mark Strickert and Lionel Jones at Gateway Cities; Hank Fung and Ken Ruben at San Gabriel Valley; Ken Ruben and Joe Dunn at Westside/Central 🚌



Get Your Kicks on Route 187

Several previous SO.CA.TA Study Tours have involved the Montclair TransCenter. This is from the May 2001 trip from San Bernardino to Santa Monica, using bus routes along the old US66

*Mark Strickert
photo*