

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CA.TA MEETING NOTES

Our thanks to Anna Karna of Metro for an informative presentation on the 511 program; the Los Angeles County version is slated to begin soon.

Metro Board member (and former Board Chair) Pam O'Connor is the speaker at our August 9th meeting. We will also have a final vote on the proposed bylaws revision, and the proposal to increase SO.CA.TA member dues to \$30.00 (\$12 for limited-income) as of January 1st, 2009.

Friday Sept. 12th, we are doing an informal exploration during evening peak period of Foothill's Silver Streak and line 481. The following day we'll share our impressions with Foothill CEO Doran Barnes, who will be the speaker at our September meeting.

The public hearing on proposed changes to Metro Lines 33 and 333 will be held at their Westside/Central Sector meeting on August 13th at 5:00 PM. Speaking of sector meetings, The San Gabriel Valley Sector governance council will not meet in August.

The annual Metro Service Sector Governance Council Meet and Confer meeting will be held Wednesday August 20th, 4:00 p.m., in the 3rd floor Metro Board Room at One Gateway Plaza.

Scans of the schedule brochure for Compton Renaissance Transit have been posted by the blogger who calls himself Rogedog92:

<http://metroriderla.com/2008/04/11/the-elusive-compton-renaissance-transit-system/>

Saturday August 2nd our summer study tour involved an exploration of the 5 OC Flyer express routes OCTA operates serving the Orange County Fair. An article on the trip will appear in an upcoming issue, but here are some key initial impressions of the participants:

- * The key to the service staying on schedule is it avoids the monstrous back-up at the entrance to the fair by using a side gate and a shortcut past the horse paddocks; the drop off is adjacent to the front entrance to the Fair
- * The buses were immaculate and all the vehicles ridden were New Flyer low floors, in good running shape; one bus did have a broken farebox
- * Unsurprisingly, travel pattern for use seems to be going to the fair in the morning and departing late afternoon/early evening; most of the buses we rode mid-day were empty
- * We are puzzled why the I Shuttles serve Tustin Metrolink station with a half-hourly headway on weekends, when the station has only a few trains serving it then
- * Transit Centers in Orange County are models of good design and include amenities of the sort all bus users appreciate: pay phones, benches, shady shelters, bathrooms and water fountains

So, unless some last minute glitch happens the 1/2% additional transportation sales tax for L.A. County will be on the November ballot. Is it perfect? No, but it will do a lot of good things and my slogan is we should not let the perfect be the enemy of the good (Voltaire first said that, by the way). With 100 days or so until the election it should be a wild ride...

Of course there will be plenty of various and sundry that will rail against this proposal. Much like the recent mania among some homeowner groups to denounce growth, demand development cease, etc. It is perfectly encapsulated by the woman with a sign that proclaims she is proud to be a NIMBY at the recent farcical/incoherent "Take Back Our City" rally of (fill in the blank) malcontents held outside L.A. City Hall: http://la.curbed.com/archives/2008/07/take_back_our_city_rally_report_plenty_of_antidevelopment_signs.php?o=0

I am gratified to learn at the July 24 Metro Board meeting, L.A. County Supervisor Yaroslavsky took up during the discussion of the sales tax proposal Kymberleigh Richards' point made during public comment that "equity" is not simply measured by where one lives, but also by where one needs to go, and that projects need to be ranked based on total potential ridership. Thankfully Yaroslavsky, along with Mayor Villaraigosa and a few others, understand what is at stake and are at work with key allies to put on a campaign to counter the negativity that has dominated public dis-

course during the past few decades post Prop 13. Despite the obstacles this measure may actually pass!

Recently I ran across a comment on a blog that the funds from the proposed new L.A. County sales tax should be for buses, and that with two billion dollars we could have lots of new bus service begin within months. This shows utter ignorance about the complexities of bus operations. For example, it takes 18-24 months to get a bus from the manufacturer once it is ordered. Also Metro is near capacity at its existing yards and is years from opening the two new yards currently being planned. Plus who would drive these buses, clean and maintain them? Words fail me.

Fact of the month: Sunline Transit General Manager C. Mikel Ogelsby has an annual salary of \$176,106.66 (per the Sunline Board May 28 meeting minutes, agenda item #22).

Metrolink is about to propose a 25¢ charge for its tickets to include transfers for connecting transit service, and \$11 added to monthly passes. This as Metrolink copes with the escalating cost of reimbursement to operators of connecting service. We anticipate public hearings on this to be held in the coming months and will keep our members informed as this develops.

Kymberleigh Richards has confirmed for me the \$20.5 million of CNG Fuel Credits that partially paid for the delay in the recently proposed Metro service cuts were in fact

one time funds. That means next year unless some other source of revenue is found to fill Metro's systemic budget gap the cuts may yet have to be implemented. Stay tuned...

Bill Bradley's *New West Notes* blog reports the Governor at a July 9th rally in Sacramento came out in favor of the bullet train bonds on the November ballot, stating "It is ridiculous that we have the same speed trains today as we had 100 years ago." With his savvy and fundraising prowess behind it the bonds (which are polling well) just may pass.

At a recent press conference on the latest state budget crisis threatening to again divert millions of state transportation funds

to the general fund Jim Earp, the original proponent of Prop 91 on the Feb. ballot who eventually urged people vote against it, was asked if Prop 91 had passed would we be in this situation? His answer was "no, we got hosed and Prop 91 would have protected us". We understood why he took the stance he did at the time, but it is unsurprising he is learning you can't make deals with the Legislature and expect them to be honored.

I'll conclude this month by noting member Anthony Loui is leaving Metro to join the FTA Office of Planning in Washington D.C.. Anthony is a great guy and I know we'll all miss him. Come back and visit, Anthony! And good luck in your new job! 🚌

TRANSIT UPDATES

MONTEBELLO BUS LINES

The Montebello City Council recently approved a two-tier fare increase for the city's bus service.

Effective August 24th, 2008:

Adult - \$1.00

Student - 75¢ (only with valid school ID)

Seniors (62+) - 50¢

Also, local transfers will be eliminated.

In July, 2009, the Montebello adult fare will rise again, to \$1.10

SANTA BARBARA MTD

Dana Gabbard cut & pasted this from the latest agenda (website so far has no details):

Public Hearings regarding further consid-

eration of a fare increase will take place on:

- Monday, August 11th - 5:30 PM in MTD's Auditorium (located at 550 Olive Street)
- September 15th - 5:30 PM in MTD's Auditorium

Both meetings will be televised. 🚌



PUBLIC WORKS SHUTTLES TOUR — Dana Gabbard

Our original plan for the 2007 summer study tour was to ride the OC Flyer routes OCTA operates for the Orange County Fair. Then the bus operators at OCTA went on strike. It got complicated and while an unofficial Flyer trip did happen, we ended up deciding to re-schedule the official one for 2008. Next we designated August 25 as the date we would do a replacement late summer trip. After a very spirited discussion following our August 11th meeting (at one point a trip to Moreno Valley to partake of exceptional Chicago-style Pizza appeared to be the frontrunner) we settled on Hank Fung's proposal of an exploration of the Los Angeles County Dept. of Public Work shuttles. The following Sunday Hank posted an itinerary on the member board, noting "Unfortunately, there is no way to realistically do ALL four DPW shuttles, so I am not going to bother." I sent a copy of the trip plan to Woody Rosner (who has no computer access) and the two of us informally decided to meet up for the start of the trip in downtown Los Angeles.

Around 8 a.m. on the 25th Woody and I rendezvoused at the Yoshinoya restaurant on 7th Street near Olive. I had grabbed two sausage McMuffins from the nearby McDonald's to supplement a hearty breakfast of a Chicken Bowl (skinless) and root beer; Woody had a beef bowl, coffee and some orange juice. Around 8:40 a.m. we strolled around the corner and in minutes boarded Foothill's Silver Streak. It was a 40 foot bus, F 1114 with David G 2001 as the operator. There initially were 2 passengers. 3 boarded at Hill & 1st. The park south of City

Hall was being used for a movie shoot with tables of breakfast goodies surrounded by a feeding crowd of technicians, etc. Among the vehicles present poised to grace the scenes to be shot was a faux rubber wheeled trolley, marked Mason and Powell (which made me suspect downtown L.A. was being used to double for San Francisco). One person boarded at City Hall and 5 at the Alameda entrance to the busway.

We arrived at the Cal State University Los Angeles busway stop at 9:07 a.m. and made our way via elevator and overhead walkway to the University transit plaza. It is a fairly impressive with information kiosks, a Metrolink ticket machine (with a validator), a digital display, benches, trash cans and trees for shade. Craig Weingarten had arrived ahead of us, and after a few minutes Hank Fung showed up.

After a short wait at 9:25 a.m. our first bus arrived, for the El Sol City Terrace/East Los Angeles College route--an El Dorado cut-away L-303 that picked up two passengers besides us. Going south we crossed over the 10 freeway and passed a nice bus shelter whose bench had metal shaped into the "waffle" criss-cross pattern that is so uncomfortable to sit on (which is likely why it is designed that way). At City Terrace Dr. 4 boarded, then one more boarded at Eastern and Lotta Dr. Continuing along Eastern, we passed a hillside lush with plantings and numerous urban single family dwellings. Then we entered Monterey Park, which has a more suburban feel, and passed East L.A. College. At Collegian Ave 5 deboarded. As

we turned at Atlantic we passed an outlet of the famed The Hat chain, plus had two more get off. Confirming the suburban vibe, we passed a shopping center called Monterey Park Village which included the usual suspects (Staples, Ralphs Grocery, Rite Aid, Foot Locker, and Radio Shack). At 9:47 a.m. we arrived at the end of the line, adjacent to the under construction Gold Line eastern extension at the Belvedere Park L.A. County complex. The location had some shade and concrete benches to sit on, while nearby the aforementioned bucolic park with a lake and numerous activities beckoned.

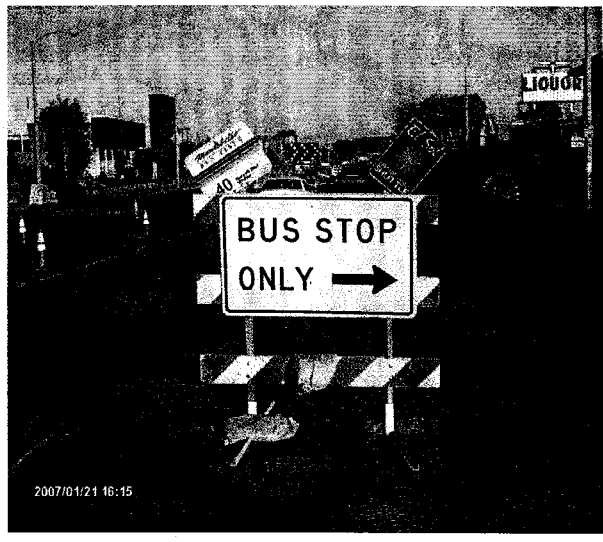
We crossed the street to LaVerne off 3rd Street and after a few minutes boarded the El Sol Union/Pacific route, bus L-301. The other riders consisted of two kids and their Mom. The route was quite urban, passing through neighborhoods of single family dwellings. And while driving the bus operator chatted on a cell phone. At Garfield High eight boarded. Two go on at Clela Ave. and Whittier, followed by three more at McDonnell/Whittier, then two off at McBride/Whittier. At Ford Blvd. we turn South off Whittier. At that intersection Metro has a customer center and we could spot a line of people waiting to buy their monthly bus pass. And now Armando Avalos boarded and joined our group, plus three got on while three others got off. At Downey Road 12 piled on the vehicle, and we now had standees. By now we were wondering why this loop route operates once an hour per direction (albeit offset by 30 minutes); it obviously needs more service. At Olympic/Gage two debarked. We passed Eastman School and continued through a residential then a commercial area. Two debarked at

Olympic/Indiana, then nine got off at Indiana/Whittier, and two boarded there. At Ruben Salazar Park 3 got off, and as we continued there was steady activity as people boarded and debarked. At 1st/Indiana two got off and we passed the portal to the underground portion of the under construction eastside Gold Line extension.

Due to the closure of 1st St. (evidently for a Farmer's Market) we went on a detour. 8 got off at 1st/Hicks. It was noticed the following signs were on the vehicle:

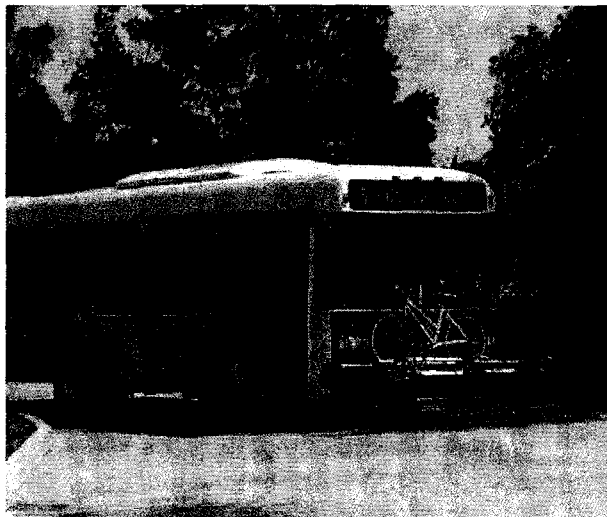
- ☞ Due to Graffiti you are now being recorded
- ☞ No pets allowed except guide animals
- ☞ Deposit exact change

We now passed the Meatland Bakery, had 1 off and 4 board at 1st/Herbert then passed Obregon County Park complex. 1st/Eastern had two get off, after which we passed a Chinese community cemetery. Then we were at 3rd Street and more Gold Line con-



struction in the median. Now we passed multiple cemeteries, one of the cultural hallmarks of East L.A.. At 3rd/Arizona, 1 deboarded. We arrived back at LaVerne at 10:50 a.m.

At 11 a.m. we departed on the Whittier/Saybrook route, vehicle L-307. At Beverly Blvd. we passed a UPS Store, then the 4th Street Primary Center. As with the other routes it is a loop with the two directions designated routes A&B, offset by 30 minutes as to schedule. At Hillview/5th 4 boarded, one got on at Belden/6th. Then we passed the Wesleyan Church for Pentecostals. It was noted on this bus a sign started "No standees in raised area". At 5th/School Ave. 2 got off. Then at Hendricks/Hubbard one boarded, followed by 7 getting on at Olympic/Westside. At this location we passed a curved section of street that parking was allowed along--not something you see every day. Another thing we noticed was the absence of any schedules on the bus. At Nor-side Dr./Olympic one boarded. Then adja-



cent to the Commerce Center at 11:25 we made an almost seamless connection with the Montebello route 10 (a Gillig LF #2110) with 5 passengers. At Findlay Lionel Jones joined us. At Saybrook Park a ranting lady stood at the stop, but thankfully didn't come aboard. At Whittier/Garfield 1 got off while 6 got on, then we continued along the Whittier commercial corridor while having steady boarding and deboarding. About the time we passed Elks Lodge 2051 we reached downtown Montebello. Some highlights include crossing the Rio Hondo Flood Control channel, passing Mario's Tacos as it celebrated its 40th anniversary (there were some Mariachi singers gathered in the parking lot for the occasion) and spotting Clearman's Steak n Stein, a place for hearty eaters. We arrived at Whittier and Sorensen at 11:54 a.m.

After a short wait we caught the South Whittier Sunshine Shuttle at 12:07 p.m. with one passenger and a locked overhead storage bin. Shortly thereafter we passed a shuttered Boy's Detention Center which evidently has been proposed for conversion to a medical facility for adult prisoners much to the consternation of the adjacent neighborhood. At Washington Bl. and Appledale 4 boarded. Continuing we passed the Presbyterian Intercommunity Hospital. 1 deboarded at Washington and Lambert Road. Turning onto Whittier Bl. we passed through a commercial district, with one person boarding at Whittier/Comstock.

We passed a Norwalk Transit vehicle, operating on one of the routes that Whittier Transit used to operate on before the recent merger. One got on at Painter/Lambert and two at Painter/Mulberry. Now we were in a residential working class area. At Carmenita

and Telegraph 5 got off while 2 got on. Continuing we passed the Community Resource Center for South Whittier, followed by Mayberry Park where 4 got off. The park is an expansive facility with picnic tables and a baseball diamond. It turns out this was the location for bus operator relief as we got a new driver. Then we went past Painter and Meyer where four boarded. We passed through more residential areas, with one boarding at Beaty/Laurel then passed Carmela Elementary School. Evidently this was a more upscale neighborhood, as a house we passed had not one but two satellite dishes on its roof.

At Lakeland and Telechron 1 boarded. We then passed a residence with a U shaped driveway (another sign of a more upscale area). Also one shop announced "free haircuts" (why? no explanation). At Telegraph and Gunn 3 got on. Continuing we spotted a rather elaborate summer community fair being held in the County's Adventure Park-50 plus booths, health screening, and crowds of people obviously having an enjoyable time. 2 people got on at this location. At Mulberry and Mills 3 got off. We were back into a more residential area. 4 boarded at Mulberry and Stamy Road in La Mirada.

About this time it was noted the bus operator was a tad overzealous in braking. We passed the KinderCare Learning Center and Parnell Park before arriving at Whittwood Town Center at 1:02 p.m. After taking a lunch break we boarded MTA line 121, a RTS #1465 with 5 passengers that departed at about 2 p.m. Initially we passed through classic suburban surroundings, including an outlet of the seemingly resur-

recting Little Caesars Pizza Chain. And we passed someone riding a bike, then a mobile home park and an eatery called Pizamania. The ridership overall was moderate, and again we had drawn a driver who was hard on the brakes. Speedy Cash Payday Loans proclaimed the sign in front of a storefront we next passed.

Before long we came upon the rehabilitation facility at Rancho Los Amigos, followed by St. Francis Medical Center at Martin Luther King. Blvd. and Imperial Highway. This facility has taken on a lot of handling the bulk of the medical needs of the surrounding community after the closure of King Harbor Hospital, and its new busy status was signified by the 10+ people boarding at this location. Continuing along Imperial Highway we passed some Public Housing complexes before arriving at Imperial/Wilmington Rosa Parks station at 3:13 p.m.

After a short walk to the nearby Kenneth Hahn Plaza shopping center we commenced exploring the Hahn's Trolley Shuttle system which uses the Plaza as its lay-over/transfer point. We first took route 1, one of the two trolley routes. This was LIS1, a SUMN specialty vehicle with wooden benches and 3 passengers. Along the winding route we passed Bunche Middle School while experiencing low ridership before returning to the Plaza at 3:57 p.m.

We next boarded route 2, a cutaway with 3 passengers, at 4 p.m. A sign on the vehicle noted "No standing". We passed the shuttered King Harbor Hospital, then wound through residential neighborhoods consisting of well kept tidy homes. Reflecting the diverse nature of the area the High School

was passed was named Chavez/Tubman, and a nearby elementary school was named after famed African-American shuttle astronaut Ronald E. McNair (who died during the Challenger accident). In fact we passed numerous schools and park complexes, while carrying fair ridership. At one point we got stuck in traffic on a side street. We noticed the vehicle lacked a buzzer to signal for stops. By 4:45 p.m. we were back at Hahn Plaza.

Now we caught what is known as Hahn's Shuttle, a free route that on that day was being operated with an Aerotech that used to be one of the buses for the South L.A. smart shuttle routes--it even had a defunct smart card reader (duct taped) from its Smart Shuttle days. This route actually winds its way through the King Drew Hospital campus, giving us a close up look at the sprawling then mostly closed facility. We also spotted a DASH Watts bus pass by before returning to Hahn Plaza at 5:05 p.m. Denoting its family orientation, during our various trips through Willowbrook we had passed 3 inflated party bouncers.

Hastily we made our way to the Green Line platform where at 5:07 p.m. we boarded vehicle 212B, with a seated load. By 5:23 we had arrived at Aviation station. After a short wait at 5:45 p.m. we caught Santa Monica line 3, a New Flyer low floor #3821 with 10 passengers. Those of us aboard quickly agreed traffic was "really bad". It turns out the 105 near LAX was closed that weekend for a movie shot. After a stop at the LAX transit center we now had 15 passengers, and generally carried good ridership as we went northward through upscale

neighborhoods, passing the Westside driving range/golf course and Otis Art School while traveling along the Lincoln commercial corridor. At 6:06 p.m. we got off at the Playa Vista development.

The map for the Marina del Rey shuttle was a bit vague as to where you are supposed to catch the bus. Luckily a passing Playa del Rey shuttle driver gave us advice on where to stand and soon we waved down the shuttle at a bus shelter near Marina/Venice. It was an ex-Burbank Bus MST-1, #812 with 4 passengers and piped in music. At Fiji Way all the passengers debarked to catch the Culver City #7. With only us SO.CA.TA members aboard we wound our way through the very upscale Marina del Rey area, in some cases along side streets that no other bus serves. We passed Chace Park where the Waterbus docks, and also spotted the Pacific Ocean. By 6:47 we had reached Washington Bl. and Pacific, where our day-long DPW shuttle bus tour ended. We have seen diverse areas, various types of service, and overall found it a very educational experience. 🚌



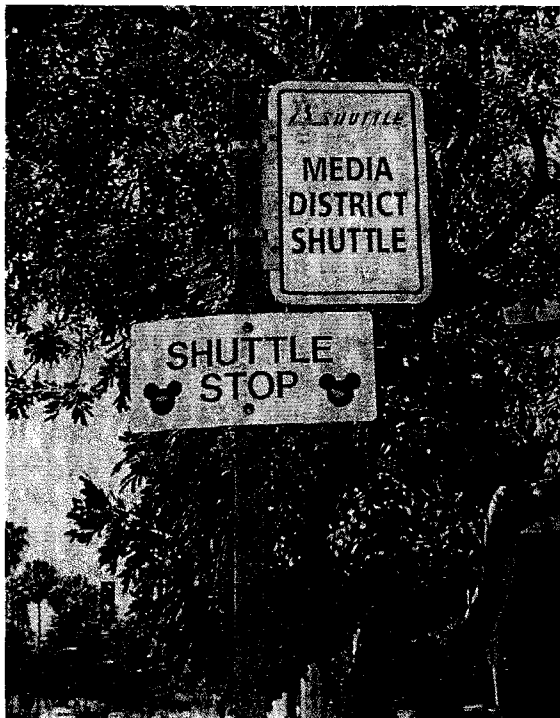
MEMBERS IN ACTION

Kenneth Alpern's commentary "Ten Reasons You 'OTTER' Vote for a Half-Cent Transportation Sales Tax" appeared in *CityWatch* Vol 6 Issue 54, July 4, 2008: <http://www.citywatchla.com/content/view/1382/>

Harold Katz had an editorial in the July 14th *Los Angeles Business Journal* ("Lawmakers Need to Have Tunnel Vision on Subway to the Sea") and a commentary in *CityWatch* Vol 6 Issue 58, July 18, 2008 ("Electeds Keeping LA a Second Class City"): <http://www.citywatchla.com/content/view/1424>

Kymberleigh Richards and Hank Fung staffed our booth at the second annual South Pasadena Clean-Air Car Show and Film Festival July 20th. On the same day, John Ulloth did outreach for us at the National Train Show held at the Anaheim Convention Center.

Ken Ruben attended the July 9th Fullerton Plaza Railway Association Meeting (speaker was George Chilson, President of NARP), the July 23rd meeting of the MTA Citizens Advisory Council, and the MTA Board Meeting on July 24th, but did not make any public comment (the MTA Board did pass the sales tax increase proposal, 9-2 with Gloria Molina abstaining and Don Knabe absent.) 🚗 🚗



SHUTTLE OFF TO...

Signs posed for the Random Camera in Burbank (left) and Norwalk — Mark Strickert photos

