

BULLETIN BOARD

Our thanks to Paul Dyson of RailPAC for his informative presentation on Proposition 1A (the high speed rail bonds) at our October 11th meeting. He was joined by Matt Meltzer of Nat'l Assoc. of Rail Passengers (NARP). Also Erin Steva of California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG) attended to recruit interested members to join their campaign on behalf of the bonds.

It was decided that this year's holiday banquet will be held at the historic Clifton's Cafeteria, 648 S. Broadway in downtown Los Angeles. Details will be in the December newsletter.

At our Nov. 8th meeting, we will have a presentation on Metro's congestion pricing pilot project--this will begin promptly at

1:00 PM, followed by the business portion of the meeting. The By-Laws amendments mailed with the October newsletter were not modified at the October meeting and will be subject to a ratification vote. Also, nominees for the 2009 SO.CA.TA Board of Directors will be taken, with the election next month.

Our Day After Thanksgiving annual study tour this year will be in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. The itinerary is being sent to members as a separate sheet in this month's newsletter.

The schedule for the Metrolink 2008 Holiday Toy Express has posted on their website: http://metrolinktrains.com/documents/news_updates/MetrolinkHTFlyerEngweb.pdf



*Omnitrans mascot "Buster" promotes transit at various events, including this 8/16/08 appearance at an Inland Empire 66ers baseball game in San Bernardino
— Mark Strickert photo*

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Those who assisted with our booth at the Alternative Car Expo or dropped by to say hello included Armando Avalos, Matt Barrett, Alex Friedman, Hank Fung, Dana Gabbard, Charles Hobbs, Lionel Jones, Kymberleigh Richards, Ken Ruben, Alex Schaffer, and Chaffee Yiu. We shared our space with Darrell Clarke and Mike Milroy representing the Sierra Club. Plus, Clarke on behalf of Friends 4 Expo Transit provided an eye catching display on the Expo light rail project and informational sheets on its status. Attendance was significantly improved by the move to the new venue (Santa Monica Civic Auditorium vs. Barker Hangar) and we very much look forward to our participation next year

Mark Strickert attended the Omnitrans "sbX" E Street Corridor BRT Project meeting in Loma Linda on October 2nd. Omnitrans was also supposed to have a Short Range Transit Plan Open House at the same time and place, but only the sbX easels and consultants were found in the room

A number of members attended the various Westside Corridor meetings recently held by Metro in Beverly Hills (BH), Westwood (WW), Santa Monica (SM), West Hollywood (WH) and Miracle Mile (MM)--these include Ken Alpern (WW), Roger Christensen (SM, WH), Dana Gabbard (SM, WH, MM), Bart Reed (BH, MM, WW), Kymberleigh Richards (BH, WW), Alex Schaffer (WH), and Nate Zablén (WW)

Paul Castillo attended the Sept. 26th Foothill Transit Board meeting

Attendees at the APTA Expo in San Diego included Armando Avalos, Hank Fung, Lionel Jones, and Mark Strickert

Mark Strickert and William Vallow were course judges at the Omnitrans Rodeo on October 25th

Bart Reed is among the members of the Metro-link safety panel

http://www.metrolinktrains.com/documents/Board_Agenda/101008_special_board_mtg_agenda.pdf

Kymberleigh Richards had a letter in the Oct. 15th *Los Angeles Times* responding to comments by the Bus Riders Union outlining their opposition to Measure R: <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/letters/la-le-wednesday15-2008oct15%2C0%2C1463800.story?page=3>.

Ken Alpern has a similar article in CityWatch, "Dereliction of Duty!", on the opponents of Measure R: <http://www.citywatchla.com/content/view/1696/75/>

Kymberleigh Richards had a letter to the editor ("Legit Reason") in the Sept. 16th *Daily News* explaining why all of the public meetings on the proposed subway extension took place on the Westside: http://www.dailynews.com/letters/ci_10491851

Richards attended the LA Business Council Transportation Forum on October 7th, the Metro Regional Connector public meeting on October 16th, and along with Dana Gabbard was at the Mobility 21 Transportation Summit October 20th.

Ken Ruben attended the San Gabriel Valley Sector Council Meeting on October 13th, speaking only for himself on the passing of METRO employee and close friend Victor N. Carlucci, Jr.

Ruben attended the Jewish Federation forum on October 16th, covering the local and state propositions on the November 2008 ballot. He I put on the literature table copies of Dana Gabbard's write-ups on both propositions

Members Jerry Pass and Nate Zablén attended and gave comment at the Downtown Los Angeles Regional Connector Transit Corridor Project Update Meeting, held by Metro on October 21st at the Japanese American National Museum.

Andy Novak's report on the Western Transit 45th anniversary trip to San Diego appears in the August issue of *Western Transit*.

Correction from previous column:

Jerard Wright attended the annual Meet and Confer on August 20th in his capacity as a member of the Metro Westside/Central Sector Governance Council, not as a SO.CA.TA member.

Everywhere you turn transit agencies are mulling fare increases and/or service cuts (e.g. OCTA, Torrance, Long Beach). All this amidst record ridership growth and a consensus that addressing greenhouse gases must include encouraging more use of transit. But all the praise in the world is meaningless so long as Sacramento robs us in the service of petty insular politics, something that won't change anytime soon.

Borrowing a page from Keith Olbermann, here are my two nominees for worst person in the world this month:

Richard Tolmach, who has been using his "California Rail Foundation" credential in service of his anti bullet train jihad. The high speed rail blog declares "The CRF is a fancy name for Tolmach and two friends, who comprise the entirety of the organization. It has no website, no phone number, no members, no email list. It's basically Tolmach's effort to look like something other than a gadfly."

<http://cahsr.blogspot.com/2008/10/drowning-in-sea-of-truthiness.html>

Next, we have L.A. County Supervisor Gloria Molina who finally provoked fellow Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky with her continual whining that the eastside "only" is getting a light rail line to denounce what he dubbed her "selfish nonsense" and leave the October Metro Board meeting [per a Oct. 23 entry on Steve Hymon's Bottleneck Blog].

Meanwhile, in endorsing Measure R the Daily News mentioned that L.A. County Supervisors Michael D. Antonovich and Gloria Molina are "supporting another sales tax in

the spring that will give their regions more of the revenue from any sales tax." The reference is cryptic enough I am unsure what it is about. These politicians and their antics are sure becoming tediously boorish.

I have been a very busy person pumping out commentary on the ballot measures for our friend Damien Newton's Streetsblog L.A.:

More Reasons to Vote for Measure R:

<http://la.streetsblog.org/2008/10/10/dana-gabbar-more-reasons-to-vote-for-measure-r/>

Yes on High Speed Rail:

<http://la.streetsblog.org/2008/10/15/dana-gabbar-yes-on-high-speed-rail/#more-1256>

Also with Kymberleigh Richards I co-authored an op-ed responding to the opponents of Measure R, which the Daily News has posted on its website: http://www.dailynews.com/opinions/ci_10829264

But I have nothing on transit advocate deluxe Jane Reifer of Orange County, who promoted transit use while appearing recently on the PBS Now program. Way to go, Jane! <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/440/index.html>

Member Erik Griswold recently shared with me an interesting point: if the Metrolink San Bernardino Line continues adding service it will soon achieve a frequency of near transit levels (a la Long Island Railroad). And thus one has to question the wisdom of pouring billions into the Gold Line Foothill

extension which east of Pomona would run on the paralleling old Sante Fe ROW. It just seems very redundant.

Claudette Moody, who for years was part of Metro's government relations department before becoming Pam O'Connor's Board deputy, has moved over to Parsons Brinkerhoff as a deputy for governmental relations. Karen Heit, who was Bonnie Lowenthal's deputy until she resigned from the Board in September, will be O'Connor's new deputy.

My reading of the new report to Southern California Association of Governments on the regional Maglev it has promoted is the technology doesn't do all that much better for performance versus what you get with conventional high speed rail--and of course maglev comes at an enormous extra capital cost (the report seems to avoid this aspect). I guess the city of L.A. was true to their promise when it joined the Joint Powers Authority that it would demand the analysis from the consultants be a fair comparison of the two modes. The maglev boosters will be talking out of all sides of their mouth trying to avoid admitting their vision is melting... http://www.scag.ca.gov/maglev/pdf/mgtf102208_Cambridge.pdf

Access Services, Inc. Community Advisory Committee Chair Shawn Solomon is at it again. At the August 12th meeting he declared the recent audit of ASI by Metro's Inspector General Office is suspect because he wasn't allowed to grill the people at the contractor who conducted the service satisfaction survey. "To prevent me from talking to the contractors, makes me suspect of their intentions," declared Solomon. This poor soul is unable to accept 80% of ASI users rated it as being satisfactory, so of

course somehow it is the fault of the survey takers. Words fail me.

At the Oct. 22nd Metro Citizens Advisory Council meeting Metro bus procurement guru Richard Hunt explained where we stand with replacing the aging RTS buses. As Division 6 (Venice) lacks CNG fueling facilities originally the plan was to get some gasoline hybrid buses for it (and by the way, Hunt explained the California Air Resources Board classifies gasoline as an alternative fuel while diesel is verboten--that is why Metro was not looking at diesel hybrids) but the bids submitted were way high. Metro is getting six prototype gasoline hybrids as part of its Advanced Transit Vehicle Consortium to become familiar with the technology and hopes eventually issues regarding range and cost will be resolved, after which it will acquire some gasoline hybrids to run out of Division 6. Meanwhile Metro will run CNG buses out of the Venice yard, fueling them at either one of its other yards or (if a deal can be worked out) at the Big Blue Bus yard. Hunt admits this isn't an optimal solution but asserts the fueling will generally occur while vehicles are dead-heading from routes near the yards. Gosh almighty!

All I'll say about the recent PUC administrative judge ruling on Expo light rail grade crossings is stay tuned, as the full Commission still has the final say: <http://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/efile/PD/92649.pdf>

And I'll conclude by noting the whispers I've heard that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) a decade ago vigorously promoted transit agencies make lease-back deals with AIG to generate additional

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income. Now that AIG has gone bankrupt and agencies all across the U.S. (including Metrolink and Metro) are facing a big financial hit FTA is trying to avoid responsibility

claiming it merely provided oversight. For shame, FTA--come clean! I agree with Metro Board member Richard Katz the feds should pitch in to help clean up the mess they helped create. ☹

TRANSIT UPDATES

FlyAway

Per Dave Snowden:
Effective January 1st, 2009, one-way fares for Union Station and Van Nuys will increase from \$4 to \$6, while Westwood fares will increase from \$4 to \$5. Airport employees will see their discount fares go from \$2 to \$4.

The Los Angeles City Council approved a 15-month, \$7.4 million contract for Coach America Los Angeles to operate FlyAway between LAX and Van Nuys

FOOTHILL TRANSIT

Silver Streak - weekend service reduced to 20-minute headways
178 - extended to Baldwin Park Metrolink during peak times
185 - The northern terminus moved to San Gabriel Ave. and Foothill Blvd.
Lines 269, 285, and 286 - weekend service span reduced to 7:00 AM-8:00 PM
272 - rerouting to serve the Baldwin Park Metrolink Station; Also, the line will travel in both directions along Duarte Rd. no longer traveling south on Buena Vista between Huntington Dr. and Duarte Rd., or in the Commerce and Rivergrade corridor
284 - reroute to Lone Hill Ave. between Covina Blvd. and Foothill Blvd.
291 - 20-minute headways between 9:20 AM and 1:20 PM weekdays

GOLDEN EMPIRE TRANSIT

Service changes effective October 5th included:

- * Improvements to 30-min. headways on routes 1 (Saturday), 10, and 13
- * Decreased headways to hourly on route 15
- * New Sunday service on route 14, every 90 minutes

RIVERSIDE TRANSIT

Public hearings on two proposals, for annual fare increases over 5 years beginning in May, 2009. Link to both charts on RTA website, www.riversidetransit.com.

Wednesday November 12th, 6:00 PM - RTA, 1325 Third St., Riverside

Thursday November 13th, 3:00 and 7:00 PM, Moreno Valley Council Chamber, 14177 Frederick St.

Friday November 14th, 3:00 and 6:00 PM, Beaumont City Hall, 550 E. 6th St.

TORRANCE TRANSIT

Fare increases proposed, including base fare up from 50¢ to \$1.00, upping the minimum age for seniors to from 60 years to 65, and higher monthly pass and zone charges. A public hearing will be held in the Long Beach Civic Center Library on November 12th at 5:00 PM. The Torrance City Council is expected to be vote at its December 9th meeting, and if approved will go into effect on January 5th, 2009. ☹