

Bulletin Board / Members in Action

Bulletin Board:

The guest speaker at our Feb. 13th meeting is Kim Turner, General Manager of the Torrance Transit system. Our thanks to Ben Wong for his exciting presentation at our Jan. meeting about the effort to collect signatures for the Local Taxpayer, Public Safety and Transportation Protection Act. We urge members to visit the website for the campaign to place the measure on the November ballot and help gather signatures: <http://www.savelocalservices.com/>

We have been informed Railroad Days 2010 has been approved by both the Southern California Railway Plaza Association and the Brea Downtown Owners Association for May 1 & 2. More details to follow. National Train Day will be May 8, and we are in communication with the organizers regarding the Union Station event.

We encourage members to regularly check the calendar on our website. We have now upgraded the calendar and you can now get an e-mail reminder 3 days before any listed event (the feature is included in the pop-up box when you click on an event listing).

<http://socata.net/calendar.htm>

Members in Action:

Ken Ruben attended the San Gabriel Valley Sector Governance Council and the Westside Central Sector Governance Council meetings held respectively on January 11 and 13. He along with Dana Gabbard and Charles Powell attended the Metro Citizens' Advisory Council meeting on Jan. 27th.

Mike Barron, Nick Matonak, and Bart Reed attended the San Fernando Valley service change proposals in Van Nuys on February

3rd. Nate Zablen presented the SO.CA.TA positions at this hearing.

Kymberleigh Richards presented the So.CA.TA position in support of the adoption of the final EIR Report for Expo Phase 2 by the Expo Authority Board at the Board of Supervisors Hearing Room on February 4th. Jerard Wright, Nate Zablen, Bart Reed, and Roger Christiansen also gave public comment at the hearing.

Ken Alpern's latest CityWatch (citywatchla.com) columns include "Putting Our Money Where Our Mouth Is: Helps Get Federal Bucks", "To the Westside: Are You Feeling the Power?", "The Wilshire Subway: Oh, Say, Can You Sea?" and "How about a Rail Line All the Way to LAX in 2010?" 🚊 🚂

The 2009-2010 Transit Guide is now available!

For anyone who uses public transportation in southern California, the Transit Guide is a must have. The guide has a complete list of all the bus and rail transit from Santa Barbara to San Diego.

You can purchase the Transit Guide on our web site at:

<http://socata.net/guide.html>

You can also order the 2009-10 Transit Guide by sending a check or money order for **\$15.00** to:

**Southern California Transit Advocates
3010 Wilshire Blvd. #362
Los Angeles, CA 90010**

*Get yours today
before they are all gone!*

Transit Updates

Beach Cities Transit

On Dec. 11th, BCT and Metro bus passes were no longer available at 1820 Kingsdale Avenue. The service window has been relocated to Redondo Beach City Hall. Bus pass sales and will be transacted from Door E, 7:30am-5:00pm, Monday through Friday.

Transportation Concepts took over operation of BCT on Jan. 1st from First Transit. The new contract is for three years and includes operation and maintenance of the fixed ride and dial-a-ride service.

Become a friend on Facebook at: [facebook.com/BeachCitiesTransit](https://www.facebook.com/BeachCitiesTransit) or follow BCT on Twitter [@RedondoBeachBCT](https://twitter.com/RedondoBeachBCT)

Metrolink

New Metrolink schedules go into effect on Feb. 15th. Below is a summary of the service changes.

Orange County Line Weekend Service will be reduced from 8 trains to 4 trains as follows: Trains 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659 and 660 are suspended until at least June 30, 2010. Operating in place of the above 8 suspended trains will be 4 new trains 661, 662, 663 and 664. The midday pair (662 and 663) will operate to Irvine instead of San Juan Capistrano due to ongoing track construction.

Inland Empire-Orange County Line (IEOC): Trains 852 and 853 (mid-day Riverside-Oceanside round trip) are suspended until further notice. Monday – Friday Service: Schedule adjustments to Train 851.

IEOC Line Weekend Service will be reduced as follows: Saturday / Sunday Service: Trains 856 and 861 (Oceanside-Riverside Saturday Only round trip) are suspended until further notice. Trains 857 and 858 (San Bernardino-Oceanside Saturday and Sunday round trip)


are suspended until at least June 30, 2010. These trains may resume seasonal service on July 1. Trains 859 and 860 (San Bernardino-Oceanside Saturday and Sunday round trip) will continue to operate on their current schedule (with a minor adjustment for train 859 at Oceanside due to ongoing track construction).

Schedule adjustments on other lines. See Metrolinktrains.com for more details.

Santa Barbara MTD

Due to the Haley Street at De La Vina Bridge Replacement construction project, the MTD announced detours on specific routes. Construction is scheduled to begin on Monday, January 11, 2010, lasting until the spring of 2011.

From the Transit Center to Santa Barbara City College (SBCC), Lines 5 and 16 will now turn right on Cota Street to Castillo Street, then turn left on Castillo Street. The last stop toward SBCC will now be De La Vina Street at Ortega Street, prior to the construction zone. From SBCC to the Transit Center, Lines 5 and 16 will turn left on Bath Street at a temporary bus stop, continue on to Cota Street, turning right on Cota Street to Chapala Street and then left on Chapala Street.

These detours will remain in place until construction is complete, in the spring of 2011. For more information or assistance with trip or detour planning, call 805-963-3366 or go to www.sbmtd.gov. 



2009 Day After Thanksgiving Trip

SO.CA.TA has been doing the Day After Thanksgiving trips since 1995. It's an opportunity for our members to investigate transit services that don't run on the weekend. It's also an opportunity for friendship and camaraderie among members.

Most of our trips have been along the lines of "Let's see how far we can ride local bus lines." We've been to San Diego, Santa Barbara, Bakersfield doing that, and understandably some of us were now looking for something a bit different.

Thinking back to the "New York Subway Riding Marathons" of the 1970s, Charles Hobbs came up with the idea of riding as many Metrolink routes as possible within a day. After a bit of schedule studying he came up with a plan to ride nearly every Metrolink line (only the Riverside Line, with its rather inconvenient schedule, would be totally left out).

When Charles Hobbs' suggestion was selected I could immediately see this had appeal to both our members and quite likely interested members of the public, if publicized correctly. What really got the ball rolling is when Kymberleigh Richards mentioned our trip plans to Metrolink Board Vice Chair Richard Katz. Katz enthusiastically placed Kymberleigh in contact with Metrolink's p.r. people. Before we knew it, the trip details were the subject of an entire page of the Nov. issue of Metrolink Matters (http://www.metrolinktrains.com/metrolink_matters/).

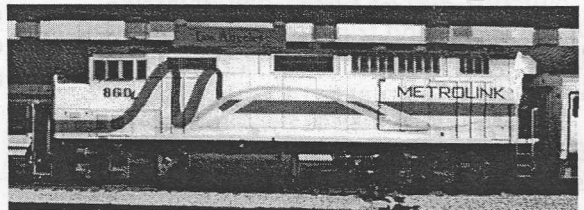
We had in a few instances in the past contacted agencies for clarification of questions we had in preparing for tours and even had one or two agencies send ambassadors to greet our arrival to their area or even ride

along with us during the first stage of our exploration. But this Metrolink trip was going to involve several magnitudes of official recognition beyond anything we had experienced before. A favorite book of mine is a biography of film director Frank Capra titled *The Catastrophe of Success*, after a phrase originated by playwright Tennessee Williams. This year's day after Thanksgiving trip sure left me understanding just what he meant.

Due to this fortuitous timing we obtained stacks of the newsletter to hand out at our booth at the Gold Line extension opening celebration in early November, promoting the trip. And I worked up a press release for local blogs to generate calendar listings and coverage. Plus a special write-up for Streetsblog L.A. that was a bit more informative. Along with a shoutout to Kevin Roderick of L.A. Observed, since he ran a note about our line 622 owl trip of a few years ago.

The Tuesday before the trip I sent out a media advisory to target any day of coverage, e-mailed to media along the corridors we would traverse, news radio and the local television newsrooms (if it was a slow news day maybe we'd garner an interview during our early afternoon lunch break at Union Station).

(Continued on Page 8)



METROLINK

Metro Board Report for January 2010 by Kymberleigh Richards

Heading into another new year, it was business as usual for the Metro Board of Directors, with clueless public comment, endless questions by Board members resulting in time management problems, and the world coming to an end. (Okay, so I made that last one up just to see if you were paying attention.)

Ridley-Thomas Asks, Staff Responds, Board Doesn't Understand Answers: Metro Planning staff has responded to all of the points in Director Mark Ridley-Thomas' motion from October regarding funding options for the Gold Line Foothill extension, the Crenshaw/LAX line, and (reluctantly) all other underfunded Measure R projects. Sadly, the answers given the Planning and Programming Committee led to more questions.

A few of the non-revealing revelations:

- Borrowing against future Measure R funds to accomplish such things as accelerating the timeline for the Regional Connector will require a substantial recovery by the economy, and by extension the sales tax receipts that make up Measure R funding ... and the acceleration has been pushed to the limit, so there isn't room to fit more projects into that list;
 - The "magic bullet" of benefit assessment districts would provide 4% of a project's construction costs, at best, and the process of securing the agreement of 50% of property owners in a district is difficult, at best;
 - Most feasible fund sources were already identified and programmed in the Long Range Transportation Plan approved in October; and
- The financial assumptions from June used for the LRTP are already proving to be unportable due to the "significant negative

changes in sales tax receipts, fares, and state funds during the economic downturn."

Nevertheless, discussion of that staff report went on, and on, and on, as the Board attempted to prove by their questions that the answers were somehow circumventable. The stock phrase "it's the economy, stupid" comes to mind ...

None Of It Looks Good, In Fact: For the first time since Proposition C was passed in 1990, the 40% of that sales tax revenue that is used for transit operations by Metro and other operators in Los Angeles County had more demands placed on it than there was revenue available.

Staff blames this on a combination of the economy and the loss of the State Transit Assistance funds, and says that overall sales tax revenue to transit is down \$130 million and fare revenues are down over \$13 million from projected revenues in the current year budget as of December. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see where this is going ... there are reductions in service coming in next year's budget.

Fairfax By ... 2019: The timeline for going after federal New Starts funding for the Westside Subway Extension was released and, presuming the Board doesn't hiccup along the way and delay any part of the process, there should be a draft environmental impact report to comment on by the end of this summer (it's about 60% complete now) and a full funding agreement could be in place by 2013. That would put the tentative opening date for Wilshire/La Brea and Wilshire/Fairfax Stations around 2019, according to the timeline in the staff presentation.

(Continued on Page 8)

Public and Legislative Affairs By Dana Gabbard

The Omnitrans Board of Director's has selected Milo Victoria as the new CEO. He was given a five-year contract with an annual salary of \$220,000. Victoria mostly recently oversaw bus operations at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) following long stints at Metro and RTD.

In other Omnitrans news, they have started to investigate the possibility of becoming a transit district via state legislation (per agenda item #20, San Bernardino Associated Governments Feb. 3rd Board meeting). Omnitrans currently is a Joint Powers Authority; being a district would allow it to seek voter approval of a property or local sales tax to support its operations. Which means relying less on our unreliable friends in Sacramento.

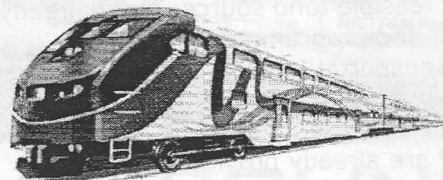
Meanwhile Foothill Transit (per the minutes of the Dec. 11, 2009 Executive Board meeting) is exploring the feasibility of Foothill merging with the Pasadena Area Rapid Transit System (ARTS). One benefit of doing this cited by Foothill staff is a merger would mean ARTS' miles and fare units would be included in Foothill's statistics, resulting in more federal and sales tax money via the Formula Allocation Process. The Executive Board instructed staff to continue discussions with the City of Pasadena and return at a future Board meeting with findings. We'll keep an eye on this.

The other shoe has now fallen regarding past Metro Deputy CEO John Catoe as he announced plans to resign as WMATA CEO in the wake of the tragic June 22, 2009 rail crash that killed nine. To me he had the misfortune of taking control of an agency that has a long history of mis-management,

regional political intrigue and inadequate funding that he was unable to correct during the three years he ran it. Catoe stated his feeling that the resignation would provide an opportunity for the agency to "move beyond distractions." And I take him at his word.

Here is a tidbit I didn't know, from the material presented to the Metrolink Board at its Jan. 8th meeting: any lounge car they added selling refreshments to generate income would have to sell and deliver food and beverages to any disabled passengers at their seat per the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To have an attendant just doing that obviously blows any chance for the enterprise to show a profit. Metrolink staff note Amtrak have been allowed to continue to sell food and beverages onboard under ADA exemptions for existing equipment.

I'll conclude with one further tidbit from the aforementioned Metrolink Board meeting: "Just 5% of Metrolink riders connect to another Metrolink train at L.A. Union Station. Hence Metrolink-to-Metrolink transfers are not a primary market." If you concluded that means the "simplified network" concept for Metrolink the Transit Coalition has recently touted doesn't reflect reality or has merit then you have company because that is what I think as well... 🚆 🚆 🚆



Long Beach Transit Service Changes

On Feb. 14th, Long Beach Transit (LBT) will make a variety of service changes. Below is a summary of those changes.

Route 62 In order to meet greater demand to serve the Artesia Blue Line Station, Route 62 will be incorporated into Route 61, thereby providing more frequent service. The northern-most segment of service in the current Route 62 from Artesia Blvd. to Alondra Blvd. will be eliminated. However, much of that segment will become incorporated into what will be the new Route 72 (Orange Ave.).

Routes 61, 63 and 66 On the southern segment, service on Atlantic will be extended past 6th Street all the way down to Ocean, and then go into the Long Beach Transit Mall. The downtown segments currently looping around 7th and 6th Streets down to Ocean will be eliminated. However service on these streets will continue to be provided by a number of other routes. Route 66 will now end at Atlantic and Artesia, and no longer go to Artesia Blue Line Station.

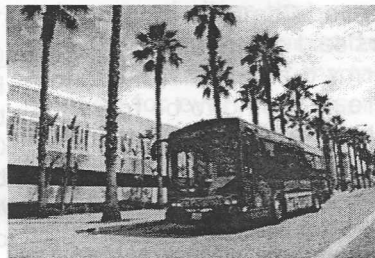
Route 7 will split into two routes, 71 and 72. The southern segments of both routes will continue south on Alamitos Ave. south of New York St. down to 1st St. and then go into the Long Beach Transit Mall. They will serve the Long Beach Transit Mall via 1st St. and Broadway. The current loops of service on 6th and 7th Streets will be eliminated. A northbound loop of service will be added by traveling west on Anaheim, north on Atlantic Ave., and east on New York back to Alamitos.

Route 71 will then continue north on Alamitos to Orange as does the current Route 7.

Route 72 will continue north on Alamitos to Orange, but will make a loop westward on Artesia to Atlantic and back up to Alondra,


then continue north as does the current Route 7. This loop replaces the northern-most segment of Route 62, which will be eliminated.

Routes 181/182 These routes will now end at the downtown Long Beach Transit Mall instead of going east to Colorado Lagoon. In downtown, they will travel south on Pacific, east on 1st St., south on Long Beach Blvd., west on Ocean, and north on Pacific. Route 181 will travel west on 3rd to return to Magnolia. Service east on 4th St. to Colorado Lagoon will be picked up by the revised Passport B service.



Passport B / East Village and West Gateway This route will have major changes. The downtown loops will be replaced with

service from Pine west to Cesar Chavez Park via 3rd, Golden, 4th St. and down Maine to Broadway. It will then travel south on Pine to east on Ocean, north on Elm and then east on 4th Street. The route will then travel east on 4th street (replacing the current Route 181/182 service on 4th St.) to Appian (east) and end at Nieto.

Passport D This route will be revised at its northeast terminus point. After traveling through CSULB, this route will no longer serve Los Altos Market Center (also served by the 90's routes). From Bellflower it will travel west on Atherton to the Traffic Circle where it will loop around using the Outer Traffic Circle, Los Coyotes Diagonal and Ximeno back to Atherton. 

Metro Board Report Continued

One interesting observation: Wilshire/Beverly Station has suddenly become Wilshire/Rodeo Station on the project map (no explanation given).

Is John Walsh's Reign Of Terror Almost Over?:

Gadfly John Walsh has become infamous in recent years for attacking Los Angeles Mayor (and Metro Director) Antonio Villaraigosa during his public comments. Now, finally, a pushback from the Board has come, from the unlikely source of Director Diane DuBois.

As Walsh started attacking the mayor for "hiding assets during his divorce" at the Planning and Programming Committee meeting, DuBois, who chairs said committee, told him in no uncertain terms that comments on non-Metro matters were not going to be tolerated. And I think he got the message – or at least was a little worried that DuBois had a chat with Board Chair Ara Najarian, because there was precious little anti-Villaraigosa rhetoric the following week at the full Board meeting. Will the wild-eyed Mr. Walsh back down permanently? Time will tell.

Metrolink At One Gateway Plaza?: A plan is being floated to have the perpetually cash-starved Southern California Regional Rail Authority, better known as Metrolink, move into two floors of the Metro headquarters building when their current lease expires in June of next year. On the surface, this seems like a winning situation for all concerned, as Metrolink would pay about \$2 million less over a ten-year lease by moving in to the "Taj Mahal", translating into an immediate savings to Metro of \$1 million, since they provide about half of Metrolink's funding.

And the lease revenue of close to another \$1 million per year is a bonus, even though it will cost about \$2.5 million to "restack" about

half of the building's floors to create two fully vacant floors.

I Didn't Know County Supervisors Could Override EIRs:

But apparently Director Ridley-Thomas does, because he tried (unsuccessfully) to change the use of a parcel Metro is acquiring at La Cienega and Jefferson Blvds. from an Expo Line parking garage to what he calls "alternative uses". Advised by staff that the EIR specifies the use of the parcel, he wisely watered down his motion so that when the Board approved it, the language called for a staff report "exploring opportunities for enhancing transit-supportive development".

Gloria Molina Watch: The Director from the First Supervisorial District was in rare form this month, with lots to say on various levels. On the matter of putting the Expo Line maintenance yard on a parcel owned by Santa Monica College, requiring a land swap: "I don't understand all these delays and I want a comprehensive report." On the Prop C40% revenue shortfall, she proposed action that would have inadvertently eliminated funding for the Eastside Extension enhancements she so dearly wants.

On the question of upgrading the aging Boardroom audio system to allow audio distribution of the meetings over the Internet and better ADA compliance (as well as better equip the conference rooms used for overflow seating at higher-attendance Board meetings), her questioning the \$1 million price tag caused the entire matter to be deferred.

(Continued on Page 9)

Metro Board Report Continued

But her shining moment, which I will use as our Quote Of The Month, came when a citizen group opposing the extension of the 710 freeway to Pasadena decided to attack her during public comment over their perceived lack of support from her. To the statement "we put you in office and we can vote you out" she angrily responded "don't you dare threaten me".

Speaking Of The 710 Extension: The opponents came up with a new tactic to kill the proposed tunnel under South Pasadena, which is to "take the money and build a rail line instead". One commenter even thought the Alameda Corridor should take over the LOSSAN corridor and build a new port near San Luis Obispo to remove the need for the 710 extension! As my committee co-chair would say, the mind boggles ...

Proof That These Meetings Go On Far Too Long: Last month, I reported that the Board meeting went on so long that there was a scramble near the end to keep enough voting members present for the last items. This month, fearing the loss of a quorum, Chair

Najarian recessed the meeting into closed session early, only to find that he had indeed lost a quorum when they came back into open session an hour later. The solution: Mayor Villaraigosa temporarily named Borja Leon, his transportation policy analyst, to the Board for ten minutes in order to have seven votes for the last four items. At this rate, it's only a matter of time before I end up as a temporary Board member under similar circumstances!

This month, with the assistance of Public and Legislative Affairs Committee member Jerard Wright, I literally have the staff reports for every agenda item that came before the Board or one of its committees. I will leave said stack of paper at my table prior to the meeting for everyone to sort through, and if there are any items that anyone wants to know the Board's reaction to, you can ask me during the committee report. If this experiment works well, this is how I'll handle it every month. (No matter how many pounds of paper it requires me to schlep.) 🚌 🚌 🚌

Photo of the Month



Southland Transit Gillig 1996 at Division 95 in Baldwin Park on January 23, 2010. This bus began life as Foothill Transit F1005. This bus is regularly assigned to Line 254. (Andrew Novak Photo)

Day After Thanksgiving Trip Continued

Friday Nov. 27 I grudgingly awoke around 6:05 a.m. after taking a brief 15 minute final snooze in the wake of an abortive initial waking. Soon I was at a nearby bus stop and in short order caught an eastbound Metro route 20 bus which took me to 7th and Main from which I caught a DASH route D bus that took me directly into the Patsouras Transit Plaza. By 7 a.m. I was at the fish tank in the East Portal building, among the first to arrive.

Soon Woody Rosner came up with some bagels he bought from Union Bagel at the far end of the station. I was disappointed that the cart that Union Bagel operates in the East Portal building wasn't operating that day. But the news stand that sells various snacks etc. was open. Which was a relief since it was where I planned to obtain my lunch later

It quickly became clear we had indeed gotten the word out, as there were non members in clusters and standing apart milling about seeking to join up with the tour. Kymberleigh had experienced bus problems and only got there at 7:30 a.m. She had a sign with our name we had kept from our booth at the recent Gold Line extension opening celebration. This was displayed to help gather up the tour participants.

Evidently people were wandering all about the far corners of the station looking for us although all the publicity was explicit that the tour meet-up would be in the east Portal building starting at 7:30 a.m. A Metrolink staffer escorted some folks to us and explained while the event was publicized in their newsletter no one had told on site staff about it. A woman mentioned she learned about it from the literature at our Gold Line booth and added she had never

ridden Metrolink before. It soon turned out she wasn't the only newbie joining us.

I started trying to herd everyone toward the nearby Metrolink Ticket Vending Machine. One advantage the trip had was it wouldn't be expensive thanks to the recently introduced Friends and Family 4-Pack, which sells 4 day passes for the Metrolink system for just \$29 (\$7.25 a person). I began having people form up informal quartets to feed their money into the machines and buy these special discount tickets.

They are normally only for weekend exploring but Metrolink explicitly also sells them for use on what it terms "Thanksgiving Friday", along with Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. We were riding the only day regular service operates that this option exists. And as this was the first year the pack option was offered, that made us something of pioneers. Understandably things were a bit disordered. Lionel Jones assisted Kymberleigh in trying to get things organized.

One problem is that Metrolink ticket machines have as their default the purchase of zero tickets. You have to hit a button to set the number of tickets purchased even if it is only one. I have never had a satisfactory answer why this is so. After all, the purchase of zero tickets isn't possible so why have that as the default?

I was getting a bit nervous as the minutes ticked away and we needed to get everyone up to platform 10B by 8 a.m. to board Orange County Line Train 600, the first leg of our journey.

To Be Continued... 🚆 🚆 🚆

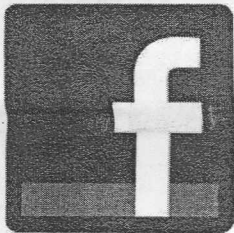
CTA gives green light to mobile gardens



The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) has given the thumbs up to the Mobile Garden project. A mobile garden will be built on a flat car and towed around the system by revenue trains. The plants on the flat car will be low maintenance and require very little water.

For more information visit:
<http://themobilegarden.org/index.php>

Photo at left is an artist rendition of the CTA garden from The Mobile Garden website.



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