

Bulletin Board / Members in Action

Bulletin Board:

Our thanks to Kim Turner, General Manager of Torrance Transit, for an informative presentation at our Feb. meeting. Alex Clifford, Executive Officer for High-Speed Rail at Metro, will be the guest speaker at our March 13 meeting.

Metrolink has new e-newsletters. Subscribe via the online form:

<http://metrolinktrains.com/e-newsletter/>

Save the date: 2010 Los Angeles Business Council Sustainability Summit, April 6 at the Getty: <http://www.labusinesscouncil.org/>

We have reserved a booth for National Train Day May 8 at Union Station.

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:

Dana Gabbard, Craig Weingarten, Jerry Martin-Kosis and Ken Ruben attended the Metro Service Sector Governance Council Meet & Confer meeting held Feb. 14th. Gabbard presented a list of concerns on our behalf, now posted on the SO.CA.TA website.

Mike Baron and Nate Zablen gave public comment at the LADOT public hearings on service reduction proposals and fare increases for the San Fernando Valley in Van Nuys on February 24th. Member Bart Reed was present at the public hearing.

Ken Ruben attended the Westside Sector Governance Council on February 10 and

read SOCATA's official statement into the record.

Ken also attended a high-speed rail presentation along with Bart Reed in Burbank and it was on February 8 and the CAC Meeting on February 24.

Andrew Novak had several photos published in the July-September 2008 issue of Motor Coach Age. An adapted version of Andrew's "Big Dome to the Bay" store appeared in the March 2010 issue of Wheel Clicks. 🚗 🚗 🚗

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 Barbra 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!*

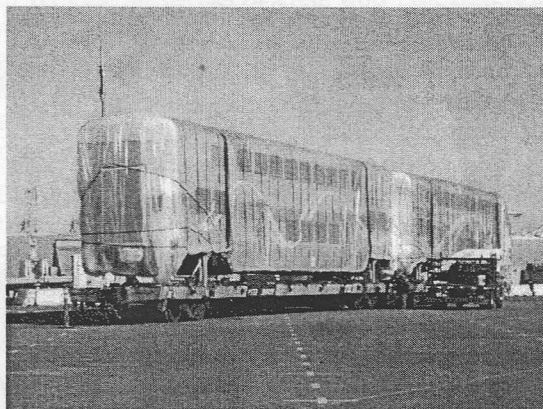
Transit Updates

LCF Shuttle

The city of La Canada Flintridge (LCF) has placed a second vehicle in service on the LCF Shuttle during peak travel times. The bus operates on Foothill Boulevard during peak times and then operates the entire length of Glendale Beeline Route 3. Ridership has increased 5% annually on Route 3 and that prompted the city to fund the additional vehicle with Prop A sales tax money. The LCF Shuttle is operated by Glendale Beeline. The city of La Canada is considering several other transportation options including service to Pasadena in conjunction with the Pasadena ARTS service.

Metrolink

On March 2nd, the first two brand new Metrolink cars arrived at the Port of Long Beach from South Korea. The new cars feature a new collision-absorption technology called Crash Energy Management (CEM) and are built by Hyundai-Rotem and is an order for 107 cars. Once these cars are placed in service, Metrolink will retire the popular Comet Cars.



Two new Metrolink Cab Cars in Long Beach.
(John Anderson Photo)

CSUN Shuttle

California State University, Northridge (CSUN) has selected Diversified Transportation to perform contracted shuttle-bus services. The contract will begin during the Spring 2010 semester and will provide transportation for students and employees. Diversified Transportation is a subsidiary of Tectrans Inc., operating a wide variety of contracted transportation services out of its Pomona, Van Nuys and Long Beach terminals. Tectrans Inc. is a transportation and technology firm headquartered in Los Angeles with operating subsidiaries throughout Northern and Southern California, and in South Florida. Diversified Transportation currently operates shuttle bus services for several other college campuses in Southern California.

San Bernardino Associated Governments

San Bernardino Associated Governments selected HDR to help develop the Redlands First Mile Project, which will extend Metrolink commuter rail service to a new proposed multi-modal transit center in downtown San Bernardino. The first phase of the fast-track project as a construction cost of more than \$50 million and is scheduled for completion in mid-2013.

HDR will provide services including preliminary and final engineering, environmental documentation and permitting, right-of-way acquisition, transit-oriented development (TOD) assistance and other potential on-call services for the project. The project is a critical part of a larger vision for the San Bernardino Associated Governments and the cities of San Bernardino and Redlands in creating a downtown urban TOD. The new hub will offer increased opportunities for transit, including a potential stop for future high-speed rail, and economic development benefits that will lead to a revitalized of the downtown area as well as cities along the travel corridor. 🚆



2009 Day After Thanksgiving Trip Part 2

Continued from Last Month:

Only to have the train NOT depart at 8 a.m. Word spread we were waiting for a delayed Ventura County Line train to facilitate any transferring passengers. Finally 1-2 stragglers were seen to board, followed moments later by our 8:11 a.m. departure.

I was aboard car 115, surrounded by a mixture of newbies and SO.CA.TA members (including Nick Matonak, posting updates as we rode along on Twitter). In our discussions leading up to the trip one aspect Kymberleigh and I discussed is unlike our bus tours my trip report this time wouldn't contain the usual ride counts due to the attributes of train travel.

Maybe I could eyeball the ebb and flow of passengers in my vicinity or get some idea how many were getting on and off. As a practical matter I knew I would mostly be able to comment if a lot of people were crowding a platform we approached and surged aboard, and such like--nothing comprehensive as to overall ridership of the trains we were on unless I trudged the whole length of the cars.

That devoted to giving a complete report I am not. I didn't even have a clear idea how many people had joined us, due to the chaos of our boarding that resulted in participants riding in various parts of the train. My hope was in Orange when we deboarded I would be able to be able to get an idea of how many of us there were.

The members I had spotted included Carlos Osuna, Nate Zablen, Charles Hobbs and Ken Ruben plus the aforementioned Woody, Lionel, Kymberleigh and Nick. Non-members included Warren Quon, Eugene Salinsky, Craig Thompson, Jan Hilander, Joe (first

name only), Barry Smith, Patricia Remick, Jerry Pass.

As we pulled out of Union Station I pointed out the sights -- the private rail cars on the siding, D20 (the Red Line yard), Amtrak's maintenance facility and the BNSF Hobart Yard. We rode the Alameda flyover and went a few miles before stopping. This began a 25 minute delay (8:34 a.m.-9:01 a.m.) which we eventually learned was due to a signaling computer failure. The entire Coast Line was stopped. Nick's GPS said we were in Commerce and his check of Metrolink's twitter page showed no updates about the situation had been posted.

We were now becoming a tad concerned about making our connection in Orange. Remember, we were delayed leaving Union Station and this further delay wasn't helping matters. Our next train to get from Orange County to the Inland Empire in the reverse commute direction was a connection that we could not easily recover from missing due to the way Metrolink structures its service. There was some initially blue skying of riding to Oceanside and via RTA CommuterLink routes make our way to Riverside. Not an option to be enthused at. Understandably by now we were saying to ourselves the fervent mantra "We'll make it (we hope)!".

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Marathon committee sessions, more micro-management, and a minor So.CA.TA victory are all in this month's report on the Metro Board of Directors.

Ridley-Thomas & Legal Expenses: Director Mark Ridley-Thomas, still trying to make a mark at Metro that doesn't backfire, has now taken on the issue of the agency's legal expenses. Concerned that the long, drawn-out battle with Tutor-Saliba from when the Metro Red Line was under construction, he first attempted to force an audit of Metro's legal expenses by way of the County Board of Supervisors. When that tactic failed (in fact, his motion at the Hall of Administration failed for lack of a second), he enlisted the aid of Antonio Villaraigosa to co-author a motion for the Metro Board.

What resulted was a motion in which the Mayor apparently deleted all of the incendiary language of the original motion and directed the Inspector General's office to create an inventory of the past five years' claims and litigation; evaluate the "efficacy and effectiveness of current policies, procedures and practices" in terms of case and risk management, adherence to industry best practices, and the approval of payouts and settlements; and provide context, background and analysis to the Board on how litigation costs are managed.

Straightforward enough ... until you consider the varying types of cases Metro handles. Should non-litigated risk management claims be reviewed? What about open cases for which evaluation would override attorney/client privilege and reveal strategies to the opposing side? What monetary threshold is so low that every minor case ended up being reviewed, at the high cost of using outside expertise as part of the audit? Would the

previous audit conducted by the state suffice in terms of evaluating effectiveness of current policies? Should a peer review using APTA's legal unit comprise part of the process?

As the long, tedious discussions of those questions continued for the better part of a half-hour, even Ridley-Thomas seemed to tire of the intricate details of what I'm sure he thought was a simple matter of commissioning an audit. At one point, in a somewhat frustrated tone of voice, he stated that "the issue is supervision of use of resources, cost control measures, and protocols", then tried to keep the audit from being limited to closed cases before County Counsel Charles Safer pointed out that making information on open cases part of a audit that became part of the public record and prejudice pending litigation.

After another pontification that tried to "prevent the threshold from compromising the integrity of the audit" he tried to put forward a motion to develop protocols and policies on labor negotiations before again being shot down by Safer on grounds that those negotiations were not part of the agenda item and therefore such a motion would violate the Brown Act. (CEO Art Leahy came to the rescue on the last point by accepting the motion as a "direction to staff" in the current contract negotiations.)

My question, after sitting through this and other such grandiose ideas on Ridley-Thomas' part, is: When will the Supervisor finally settle in to his role on the Metro Board and stop trying to appear as if he, and only he, knows how to govern the agency?

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Siel, the blogger known as Green LA Girl [<http://greenlagirl.com/>], recently posted this tidbit from a Big Blue Bus community meeting: "Speaking of Paul Casey, he mentioned that one of BBB's "medium-range" goals is form a second freeway express route between Santa Monica and the Valley when the NB carpool lane in the Sepulveda Pass is completed."

So how messed up is TAP? Montebello patrons are now complaining fares are being deducted a second time from TAP cards when they stand too close to the fare reader (per remarks made by Jose Medrano of Montebello Transit at the Dec. 10, 2009 meeting of the Access Service Transportation Professionals Advisory Board).

And Big Blue Bus is proposing to have its own day pass and 30 day pass that are to be magnetic cards NOT TAP. This follows Long Beach Transit last year implementing its own magnetic card monthly pass and Foothill Transit seeking Metro's permission to modify their fareboxes to accept a magnetic card. Do you note a trend of the munis seeming to have a lack of confidence in TAP?

The one hopeful sign is comments made by Metro CEO Art Leahy at the Feb. 16th Sector Governance Council Meet & Confer meeting acknowledged TAP is deeply troubled and that this state of affairs is unacceptable. Leahy has appointed Richard Hunt (formerly General Manager of the San Fernando Valley sector) to aid Matt Raymond in getting TAP back on track. Hunt is a can-do type, so his appointment gives some hope Metro is finally serious about making TAP work. For more about the Meet & Confer meeting see my [la.streetsblog](http://la.streetsblog.org/) write-up: <http://la.streetsblog.org/>

I'll conclude by noting Access Service's Jan. board box included a report that when they did follow-ups with people denied eligibility that many admitted they had sought an ASI card not because they needed paratransit but so they could use the card to ride regular buses for free via the "free fare" program. Understandably ASI outreach materials are being revised to minimize the number of people applying who don't need or qualify for complimentary transit as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act. 🚌 🚌 🚌

Foothill Transit Public Hearings Coming Soon

Foothill Transit will be having a series of public hearings on several proposed service changes.

Below is a list of the hearing dates and locations.

Wednesday, March 24th, 6:30pm

El Monte Station

Metro - San Gabriel Valley Office
Council Chambers Room
3449 Santa Anita Ave., El Monte

Thursday, March 25th, 6:30pm

Duarte Community Center

1600 Huntington Dr., Duarte

Wednesday, March 31st, 6:30pm

Industry Manufacturers Council

Council Chambers
15651 Stafford St., City of Industry

Thursday, April 1st, 6:30pm

Ganesha Community Center

1575 N. White Ave., Pomona

For more information visit:

www.foothilltransit.org

OCTA Service Changes

Effective March 14, 2010, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) will make several significant changes to their system. These changes are in response to a loss of state transit funding and decreased sales revenue.

Below is a summary of those changes. For more details visit www.octa.net/marchchange or call (714) 636-RIDE.

Night Owl Elimination OCTA will no longer operate Routes 43, 50, 57, and 60 between 1 am and 4 am.

Route Eliminations The following routes will be eliminated with no direct replacements: 62, 74, 75, 131, 147, 164, and 693.

Weekend/Holiday Route Eliminations

The following routes will no longer operate on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays: 24, 76, 172, and 193.

Saturday Route Eliminations The following routes will no longer operate on Saturday: 86.

Sunday/Holiday Route Eliminations The following routes will no longer operate on Sundays and holidays: 51, 82, and 85.

Frequency Reduction The frequency will be reduced on the following routes on weekdays: 24, 25, 30, 35, 37, 50, 55, 64, 66, 71, 72, 76, 82, and 145.

The frequency will be reduced on the following routes on weekends: 29, 50, 55, 66, and 89.

Midday service will be eliminated on Route 21 between 9 am and 2 pm.

Route Restructuring: The northern segments of Routes 29 and 59 will be replaced with new Route 129.

The northern segments of Routes 43 and 47 will be replaced by new Route 143.

The northern segment of Route 53 will be replaced by new Route 153 and the southern segment of Route 70 will be replaced by new Route 90. 🚍 🚍 🚍



Metrolink Public Hearing Coming Soon

On April 2, 2010 Metrolink will hold a public hearing to consider various train eliminations and fare increases for Fiscal year 2010-2011.

The hearing will be on the agenda of a Special Meeting of the SCRRA Board of Directors on:

April 2, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.

Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)

818 W. Seventh Street, 12th Floor -
Board Room Los Angeles, CA 90017

For more information visit:
www.metrolinktrains.com

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Metro Board Report Continued

A Post-Script To John Walsh's Reign Of Terror: Last month, we reported that long-time gadfly John Walsh was shot down by Diane DuBois in her role as chair of the Planning and Programming Committee last month for his attacks on Antonio Villaraigosa and other comments on non-Metro matters. Now comes word that, prior to the January Board meeting, Walsh was brought into the Board Secretary's office and "read the riot act", as he referred to it during public comment. His response to being called out on the carpet was to complain bitterly during comment on the Chair's Report that having public comment without a quorum present made it "unofficial". Someone needs to tell him about the parliamentary workaround called "meeting as the committee of the whole".

So All We Really Needed To Do Was Ask?:

So.CA.TA PLAC co-chair Dana Gabbard attended the most recent quarterly Meet and Confer of Metro's Sector Governance Councils and distributed a list of things we as an organization wanted Metro to focus on in the future. Among the attendees was Mike Bohlke, long-time deputy to Yvonne Braithwaite-Burke and now providing the same functions to Director Pam O'Connor ... and as proof of the importance of those deputies and the behind-the-scenes discussions they can foster, O'Connor introduced a motion to examine the problems at Artesia Transit Center, specifically the lack of public restroom facilities there and at other transit centers. Given that this was on the list Dana distributed and a mere nine days elapsed between the Meet and Confer and the Board meeting, I leave it to you, the reader, to guess from where that motion originated.

Here Comes Another Board Committee: A motion to rename the ad-hoc Sustainability Committee to encompass the goals of Senate Bill 375 (the 2008 state legislation to curb greenhouse gas emissions) ended up being a motion to form an entirely new SB 375 committee, which will not only include Metro Board members, but also the planning directors from SCAG, the City and County of Los Angeles, air quality management districts, and subregional executive directors. Among the first issues to be confronted by the new committee when it is formed: Creating a countywide forum to address issues and expectations under SB 375. Expect Sacramento to be watching this experiment.

Gloria Molina Watch: It's a toss-up as to which of this month's mind-boggling bits of business from the First District Supervisor boggles more ... one came during the discussion of a contract modification for improvements to the present Gold Line yard, converting the storage building into a rail car body repair shop. Gloria attempted to add an amendment to limit the modification to \$800,000 ... which is what it already said

The second was in the ad-hoc Congestion Pricing Committee, when Gloria, making a point that all the projects along Interstate 10 need to be coordinated, used as an example how recent sewer line installation in her neighborhood caused the street in front of her driveway to be torn up twice. Acting Chief Planning Officer Doug Failing acknowledged her concern and assured her the I-10 projects would all be coordinated ... at which point Gloria repeated the story of her driveway and the sewer line.

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Metro Board Report Continued

She had a third moment in the sun, which I will reserve for the last item in this month's column.

Too Much Excitement, Not Enough Actual Knowledge: With a headline like that, you might think I was talking about some Board member's pet project, the ongoing push from the Foothill Gold Line Authority for their so-called "shovel ready" project, or public comment in general. No, this month I feel the need to call out the labor community, who not once but twice took up more public comment time than necessary to show their support for both the Gold Line extension and the changes to the Regional Connector scoping. The reason they need to be called out is two-fold:

First, the tone and wording of their comments leaves the impression that they believe these projects are imminent for approval and contract awarding (far from the case), and second, their continued focus on the phrase "these projects mean union jobs" when they should know by now that the Metro Board cannot consider that when making decisions. (During the Measure R Project Delivery Committee meeting, Chair Pam O'Connor had to cut off a labor union rep for exceeding the public comment duration with those kinds of comments.) In case someone is forwarding my column to County Labor Federation head Maria Elena Durazo, I hope she will soon send the word that the labor message is beginning to sound tedious and uninformed.

Division 9 May Have A New Neighbor: With Metro San Gabriel Valley moving out of the recently constructed building adjacent to El Monte Station, there is a proposal to lower Metro's annual funding for Access Services (ASI) by \$600,000 a year in exchange for

letting them use the vacated space. One hitch: Because federal funds were used to construct the building, and ASI is a "non-profit public benefit corporation" rather than a government entity, a special public hearing will first have to be held, followed by approval by the County Board of Supervisors of an exemption to use restrictions.

Quote Of The Month: John Walsh, commenting on the results of a recent Metro on-board survey of customer satisfaction: "Take the gates and shove them you-know-where!" Don Knabe, Vice-Chair of the Executive Management and Audit Committee: "They won't fit."

Transit Trivia Pursuit: According to CEO Art Leahy, the 1971 RTD base cash fare was roughly equal to the cost of a gallon of gasoline. This factoid came during discussion of a report on the history of the region's transit and the current trends in supply and demand. John Fasana suggested that the report be taken out to the public to show the tradeoffs between supply and demand. I doubt the BRU will buy it any more than they would buy 2010 fares being the same as a gallon of gasoline.

Here's An Experiment That We All Hope Never To Repeat: For reasons I still don't completely understand, all of the Metro Board committee meetings were jammed into a single day instead of being split into two consecutive days. This resulted, naturally, in meetings running over into each others' allotted times, and even the cancellation of the Construction Committee meeting and re-scheduling the Congestion Pricing Committee into its noon slot did not prevent the marathon from running until just shy of 5:00pm.

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Metro Board Report Continued

And Why, You Ask?: Because the Finance and Budget Committee ended up in a lengthy discussion on how to handle the effect of declining sales tax revenues on the Proposition C 40% Fund deficit. Gloria Molina attempted to use the analogy of being able to afford a prom dress, but not having the money to both pay the rent and buy the dress. If any of you understand her analogy, please e-mail me and explain it.

In closing, I invite you to make me feel better about lugging all that paper around, by coming and reading the staff reports and Power Points at the March 13 meeting. 🚆 🚆 🚆

Day After Thanksgiving Trip Continued

But we also spoke with the conductor about our plight. By now our tour group, somewhat official, was the buzz of internal Metrolink communication. Evidently train crews etc. knew we were out and about. Soon we were assured our train would wait for us in Orange. As we passed Norwalk at 9:14 a.m. we breathed a sigh of relief.

I pointed out the former Union Pacific Station that now contains the Old Spaghetti Factory restaurant near the Fullerton station. I also noted the Fullerton Municipal Airport, a general aviation airport we had just passed that seems to have at least one crash per year, which I bet makes its neighbors nervous.

9:45 a.m. we deboarded at Orange and went under the tracks to the opposite side via the recently opened underpass to board our Inland Empire/Orange County Line Train 800. This transfer was a bit hectic but my impression (which others agreed with) is our group had about 30 people, including participants of all ages, ethnicities, levels of experience with Metrolink, etc. I settled into a seat on car #145 and enjoyed the passing scenery as we began making our way toward the Inland Empire. Charles Hobbs noted the scenery includes views of the Santa Ana River, Santa Ana Canyon, and Prado Dam. Railfans would love the triple track through the canyon, along with frequent BNSF freights.

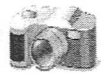
Soon after we passed by the first what of what would be many flood control channels that we would see that day. This was followed by another sight we would see repeatedly -- a golf course and mobile home park on land adjacent to the rail right of way. At a station stop two young women were rather lackadaisical about boarding and came very close to being left behind. You need to be ready when you get on or off a Metrolink train mid-route-- stops tend to be very brief. And we also had a conductor check our tickets, the first of several ticket checks we would have during the trip.

The ticket check also helped clear up a mystery. Kymberleigh Richards had found three orphan 4 pack tickets in the ticket machine we were using at Union Station. She suspected some folks had paid the \$29 and only took one ticket from the slot thinking it was for all four purchasers, not understanding the machine prints up separate tickets although it is sold at one bulk rate. Now with the conductor asking for tickets we found who lacked them and gave the orphans to their rightful purchasers. Boy, we were already learning new stuff about Metrolink service and the trip had barely started.

To Be Continued... 🚆 🚆 🚆

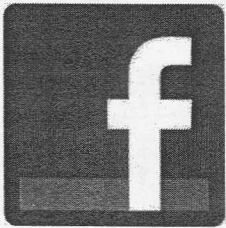


Photo of the Month



This month we take a look at AC Transit (Oakland) Van Hool C3045 #4501 at the plant in Belgium. This new bus is 45 feet long and is a suburban commuter bus. The bus also has seat belts for the passengers.

Photos courtesy of David Chen



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