

# *THE TRANSIT ADVOCATE*

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*Metrolink cab car 638 is one of the agency's new Hyundai-Rotem cars currently being delivered.*

*— Photo courtesy of Metrolink*



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## ***Bulletin Board / Members in Action***

### **Bulletin Board:**

Saturday, June 12 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm the City of Torrance is holding its annual City Yard Open House. This is at 20500 Madrona Ave. at Spencer St. Event is free and among the displays is the first public showing of a historic Torrance bus which the city is acquiring from member Paul Castillo with the intention to restore it.

The Pacific Electric Railway Historical Society has an ever-growing online archive of Pacific Electric and Los Angeles Railway imagery, information, artifacts, ephemera and more: <http://peryhs.org/>

Angel Flight Foundation is now taking donations via a link to its website: <http://angelsflight.org/>

Amtrak California now has an online store: <http://store.amtrakcalifornia.com/>

We encourage members to regularly check the calendar on our website. We have upgraded the calendar and you can 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:**

Andy Novak's article on Pacific Railroad Society Big Dome to the Bay Excursion he helped organize appeared in March 2010 Wheel Clicks, newsletter of the PRS. Novak also had several photos of Las Vegas buses appear in the Feb.-Mar. issue of The Paddle, newsletter of the Pacific Bus Museum.




Attendees of the April 17th Joint Rail Passenger Association of California/National Association of Railroad Passenger Regional Annual Meeting and Conference included Jerry Mar-

tin, Ken Ruben, Jerard Wright, Bart Reed, Nate Zablén and Dana Gabbard.

Alek Friedman attended the April 19 Subway extension meeting in Beverly Hills and was quoted in the Streetsblog Los Angeles article "Will the Metro Board Overload '30 in 10' with Highway Projects".

<http://la.streetsblog.org/2010/04/20/will-the-metro-board-overload-30-in-10-with-highway-projects/#more-43351>

Bart Reed and Kymberleigh Richards were quoted in the Daily News article "Metrolink fares going up 6 percent"

<http://la.streetsblog.org/2010/04/20/will-the-metro-board-overload-30-in-10-with-highway-projects/#more-43351>   

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### ***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!*

# Transit Updates

## **El Monte Station**

In April 2010 Metro began construction on a temporary bus terminal on the eastern side of El Monte Station. The construction closed the southeast parking lot, removing approximately 450 parking spaces. A new parking lot has opened on the site of the former Chevrolet dealership next to the freeway on the west side of Santa Anita Avenue. The new temporary bus terminal is expected to be completed in late summer.



*A vintage photo of the El Monte Station in the SCRTD days. (SCRTD Photo)*

## **Foothill Transit**

Effective April 11th, Foothill Transit made several changes to their service. Lines 185 and 480 will operate every 30 minutes during peak hours, and every 60 minutes throughout the midday (10:00AM -1:00PM). Line 291 will run every 20 minutes during peak hours and every 30 minutes during the midday. Due to low ridership during the on weekend mornings, four trips on Line 187 have been removed and service will operate every 60 minutes between 4:40AM 6:00AM.

## **PVPTA**

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors recently approved the disbursement of

\$408,200 to the Palos Verdes Peninsula Transit Authority (PVPTA) to continue public transit services for the Fiscal Year 2010-2011. The funds come from the Fourth Supervisorial District's allocation of Proposition A Local Return Transit Program funds.

## **Riverside Transit Agency (RTA)**

Effective May 9th, RTA has discontinued service on New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day due to low ridership. Along with the discontinuation of service on the above holidays, select trips will be eliminated on the following routes, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 32, and 42. Service improvements will be made to the following routes, 1, 7, 8, 22, 50, 79, 206, and 208.

## **Orange County Rail Projects**

Rail projects throughout Orange County received a financial boost in April when the California Transportation Commission allocated more than \$357 million to fund construction. The commission allocated the money as a result of state bond sales last month. The projects are part of the voter-approved Proposition 1B and Proposition 116 bond programs to fund transportation projects throughout the state.

The rail projects that received funding include: \$11.5 million for the Metrolink Service Expansion Projects and grade crossing enhancements, \$8.25 million for Tustin Metrolink station parking structure, \$15.4 million for Fullerton Metrolink station parking structure and \$12.3 million for Metrolink fiber optics in Orange County. Construction of these projects has been on hold pending the funding from the state. The commission's action will mean an infusion of millions of dollars into the local economy and creation of jobs.



## 2009 Day After Thanksgiving Trip Part 4

*Continued from Last Month:*

We reached Glendale at 1:19 pm and after another Metrolink train whizzed by in the opposite direction. At 1:25 pm we were at the Downtown Burbank station. Continuing, a ditch appeared paralleling the tracks containing a creek with bulrushes (I guessed it doubled as a flood control channel).

Bob Hope Airport station was reached at 1:31 pm, from which we spotted another cemetery before continuing through yet another industrial area. 1:37 pm we passed through the Van Nuys station and noted the DASH buses at the stop in its parking lot. Not far from the Van Nuys station we passed the Van Nuys Airport, another general aviation facility, similar to the Fullerton Airport we saw this morning.

By 1:45 pm we were at Northridge station and I spotted one of those large standalone public restroom structures next to the station. This just like the restrooms the City of L.A., with much ballyhoo, began spotting about the city a few years ago only to have NIMBYism cause the pace of placement to slow to almost nothing. Five minutes later we were at the station in Chatsworth.

After Chatsworth we entered the tunnels that carry us through the Santa Susana Mountains into Ventura County, passing beautiful scenery along the way. We had to wait outside the Simi Valley station for an Amtrak train to clear. At 2:08 pm we finally entered the station, which I noticed has a soda machine on the platform. Continuing, the countryside was rural with some of the adjacent landscape riparian in nature. We arrived at our destination Moorpark at 2:20 pm After a 10 minute layover, we began our trip back toward L.A.

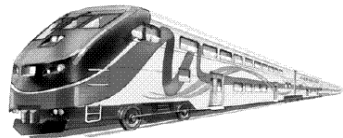
I decided to join most of the remaining group clustered in the front car (the one with electrical outlets), #196B. The return trip was mostly uneventful, although at one point I spotted some horses. After about an hour we deboarded at Glendale.

Some explored the historic depot building while we awaited our next train. Charles Hobbs reported that the station is unstaffed, but left open during the day for anyone who wants to see it. Inside there is a small model railroad, restrooms, and a Coke machine. As Hobbs complained, perhaps it should be known as a Joke machine. If you pushed the button for Coke, you got water. If you pushed the button for water, you got root beer. And so on.

We boarded the Antelope Valley line after about a 20 minute wait. This time we rode in a Comet car, #316A, which is one of several cars Metrolink has leased from UTA is Salt Lake City Utah. On the Antelope Valley Line we were now paralleling San Fernando Road and arrived at Sun Valley station at 4:14 pm As we continued toward Lancaster we passed cement plants with mounds of earth were spotted along with other industrial concerns in a rather barren landscape.

By now the sun was far enough toward setting that everything was suffused with twilight. Further things of interest spotted were recycling plants, yet another general aviation airport (this one with a separate heliport) and a yard for CityRide buses.

*(Continued on Page 10)*



## ***Metro Board Report for April 2010*** by *Kymberleigh Richards*

**The New Math Is 30/10:** As expected, the major issue before the Board this month was the official support of Antonio Villaraigosa's "30/10 Initiative" which seeks to have the feds loan Metro the money for all twelve Measure R transit projects and get all of them at least started by the end of the decade. While the final vote was unanimous, there was a lot of comment – at three committee meetings and before the full Board – that is worth reporting.

Immediately muddying the matter was a motion by Janet DuBois and Pam O'Connor, who represent parts of the county where there are fewer transit projects than the rest of the region, which adds to 30/10 a request to develop a financing and funding mechanism to accelerate highway projects as well. (That got folded into the main motion as an amendment by Richard Katz, thus preventing a lot of contentiousness.)

Mike Antonovich further muddied the matter at the next committee, saying he "disliked the lack of highway projects in 30/10" and expressing concerns that the exact costs of the projects are not yet known. He also called for the Foothill extension to Claremont to be given equal standing with the Measure R projects when applications for New Starts funding are filed in the future, claiming Metro will be committed to the Purple Line extension all the way to Westwood with its New Starts app and that commitment will delay the Claremont extension. And they haven't even started building to Azusa yet!

Antonovich also requested that Art Leahy report to the Board within 60 days as to where he expects operations funding for the 30/10 projects will come from; Leahy went beyond the Supervisor's request in offering an up-

dated report every 60 days until all the projects are in revenue service.

The question of why traditional bonding is not an option was raised by Gloria Molina, and the answer may surprise you. Because Measure R revenue is projected over a 30-year period, only 75% of the revenue in the second and third decades can be borrowed against, says chief financial officer Terry Matsumoto; that would leave a \$2 billion gap in funding under a traditional bonding model.

Never one to let motion specifying a clear direction go forward without distraction, Mark Ridley-Thomas (with a little help from Antonovich and John Fasana) added language to support public-private partnerships in the planning, design, delivery, and operations, prioritizing not only the Measure R projects but virtually everything else in the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Our local labor unions smartened up a bit (perhaps someone leaked them a copy of my recent column criticizing their choice of words for public comment?), with one representative mentioning congestion in almost the same breath as unemployment and the following speaker taking the hint by hyping "increased mass transit" rather than union jobs.

Commenting at the Board meeting were Denny Zane (MoveLA), Jerard Wright, Bart Reed, Erin Steva (CalPIRG), and Hilary Norton (FAST). And our own testimony at three committee meetings and the Board meeting.

*(Continued on Page 8)*

## ***Public and Legislative Affairs By Dana Gabbard***

It appears Mayor Villaraigosa's 30 in 10 proposal to accelerate construction of key transit projects funded by Measure R is creating major buzz, as witness the recent labor demonstration on its behalf, favorable comments by Senators plus the Mayor taking advantage of President Obama's visit to lobby the Prez to support the plan. Obama was noncommittal but that it was even discussed is remarkable.

Also remarkable is that the recent attempt to zero out the bullet train bonds (Assembly Bill 2121) fell flat. As noted in my Streetsblog commentary "High Speed Rail Project Has Mojo, But Expect a Bumpy Trip", this is a sure sign of how politically potent the statewide high speed rail project has become. Wow!

Interestingly Linda Gamberg who handles Marketing & Public Information for Big Blue Bus posted a comment to the blog Curbed L.A.'s article "Ka-Ching! Big Blue Line Fare Hike Worries Riders" that is rather eye-opening as to their standoffish attitude toward TAP: "There have been months of discussion internally at the Big Blue Bus and with other regional transit providers about if/when to adopt the TAP Card.

Unfortunately, our current farebox equipment cannot read them. The decision BBB faces is whether to invest in boxes that do, or whether to invest in next generation techno that would read even more universal payment methods (like a credit card). We look forward to keeping everyone posted as decision are made... " Certainly doesn't seem to be a love note for TAP, does it?

Here are some gleanings from the April 17th RailPAC Annual Meeting:

\*Desert XPress (the steel wheel high speed

project to initially link Victorville and Vegas) promises its design will have interoperability with the California high speed rail project. So if the XPress extension to Palmdale occurs and it links up with the California system there, run throughs the way trains cross boundaries in Europe would be possible

\*Unsurprising parochialism of L.A. officials in re the bullet train. They seem to only contemplate travel to L.A., and can't conceive that some people would want to travel through to go further north or south. The L.A. river "restoration" advocates are especially myopic.

\*Board of Director Chair Keith Millhouse described a quite testy exchange he had with Senator Barbara Boxer at a recent local listening session. When he pressed for aid in paying for positive train control to prevent collisions, she said first he should commit to having a second engineer in the cab of all trains. Millhouse tried to explain that as just one vote among 11 he could not on the spot make any promises. This rubbed Boxer wrong way. Months later a colleague told Millhouse during a lobbying trip to Washington when the subject of Metrolink was mentioned to Boxer she barked "Metrolink? Oh, its that Millhouse".

\*The partisan divide at the federal level with the growing agitating about the deficit could imperil Amtrak funding in the coming fiscal year.

*(Continued on Page 7)*



## Public and Legislative Affairs Continued

\*All Amtrak routes less than 750 miles must be state supported by 2013 -- When Stephen Gardner (Amtrak VP of Policy and Development) was asked what would happen if states refused to fund existing short distance routes he spoke of mediation by the Surface Transportation Board. He said STB could impose a settlement. It sounds like STB could compel a state to fund a service that currently it does not. I am being assisted by Ken Ruben and Paul Dyson to follow-up on this topic and possible implications.

Kymbereligh Richards informs me at a recent Metro Committee meeting that Rick Thorpe of the Expo Authority stated the line should reach La Cienega by mid 2011 and Culver City in 2012. The L.A. Dept. of Water and Power evidently is the big villain causing the delay.

I'll conclude by noting John Fong, head honcho of the city of L.A. CityRide program, is retiring. Our best wishes and thanks for all his hard work over the years to improve the mobility of seniors and the disabled. 🚌 🚌 🚌



### Photos of the Month



*The newest additions to the Golden Empire Transit (GET) bus fleet are these <CNG> powered New Flyer C40LFRs. The buses were photographed at the GET yard in Bakersfield by Wayne Doran on March 23, 2010.*



## ***Metro Board Report Continued***

Before I leave the subject, I'd like to send kudos to Pam O'Connor, who is recuperating from knee surgery and was scheduled to participate via teleconference from her Santa Monica home. Instead, she made arrangements to be driven to the Board meeting and limped to her seat to be there for the discussion and vote. What a trooper!

The BRU Must Feel Like Rodney Dangerfield Now: The other major matter taken up by the Board was the Bus Riders Union's demand for a new public hearing on the July 1<sup>st</sup> fare increase. Going in to the meetings this month, it looked like they had gotten some support from Antonio Villaraigosa, with a motion to have the CEO report on whether or not a public hearing would be merited ... but that abruptly changed when the motion was about to be heard in committee, with Villaraigosa, Rita Robinson, José Huizar, and Mark Ridley-Thomas suddenly introducing a substitute motion calling for a special Board meeting instead, to receive public comments and provide an update on the implementation of the fare increase. As you might expect, the BRU was not happy, but the last-minute timing of the substitution caught them unprepared to comment, and their lukewarm response in committee caused John Walsh to say they were "not like the BRU of old". No respect at all ...

And then, when the matter came before the full Board, the BRU made one of the biggest missteps in their history. Ara Najarian had announced at the beginning of the meeting that it would be necessary to break into closed session shortly after noon in order to deal with several matters that were held over from the previous month for lack of a quorum. When that time came, the BRU demanded (yes, I said demanded) that the mo-

tion on the special Board meeting be dealt with first. Najarian tried to accommodate them by offering to take up the matter quickly if the BRU would consolidate their speakers; they, of course, refused. At that point, Mark Ridley-Thomas urged flexibility and a ten-minute public comment period so the Board "could dispose of the matter".

I don't have to tell you what the outcome was, but I will report that my private conversations with several Board members since then would indicate that the BRU no longer has credibility and there will be little, if any, special consideration given to their demands in the future. Just like the late Mr. Dangerfield, they won't get no respect at all anymore.

The Continuing Downfall of John Walsh: Ara Najarian allowed Diane DuBois time under the Chair's report for her to take John Walsh (although not mentioned by name) to task for constant "disrespectful behavior" during public comment, calling it intolerable and demeaning to the process. She focused on the sexual innuendo and outbursts that move off point from the agenda items and suggested the removal of those who continually do so. Walsh stood up and took a bow.

Who's In Charge Here Again? (The Sequel): Having failed to have decisions of construction authorities come before the Metro Board for approval last month, Gloria Molina this month asked for a policy that funds covering cost overruns on any project be taken from other projects in the same sub-region. This led to a heated argument between herself and Zev Yaroslavsky as to what sub-region the Expo Line Phase II is in.

*(Continued on Page 9)*

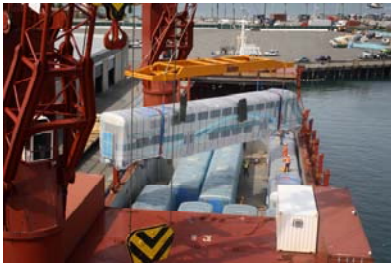


## Metrolink's New Cars

On May 3, 2010, Metrolink unveiled two of their new Crash Energy Management (CEM) cars at their new maintenance facility in Colton. Cab car 638 and coach 211 were open for inspection after speeches by various Metrolink board members and the newly appointed CEO John E. Fenton.

Metrolink will be receiving 117 new cars (67 cab cars and 50 coaches) from the Hyundai Rotem company of South Korea. The CEM cars are the first of their kind in the United States and are designed to be safer if they are ever involved in a crash. The cars have energy absorbing ends and couplers which are designed to keep passengers and crew members safer in the event of an accident.

Testing of the new cars is scheduled for June and July of 2010 and the agency hopes to have the new cars in service by Fall 2010.



*Cab car 638 being unloaded from a ship at the Port of Long Beach. (Photo courtesy of Metrolink)*



*Cab car 638 in Colton during the unveiling on May 3. (Andrew Novak Photos)*



### ***Metro Board Report Continued...***

In the project description appears to put it in the Central Los Angeles region rather than that of Westside Cities; the argument ended when he put forward a motion to have Art Leahy make recommendations for cost containment on projects moving forward.

Quote Of The Month: I'm going to skip the rest of the actions of the Board, because this column has gone on long enough already, but I must report on John Fasana's continuing concerns over the Route 710 North Extension Project. Staff recommendations were removed from the agenda during the committee meetings, and Fasana brought it forward again before the full Board, only to have it carried forward to the May meeting. Ara Najarian gave those who were signed up to speak the opportunity to do so anyway, but most opted to waive ... except for former South Pasadena Mayor Harry Knapp and clueless gadfly Arnold Sachs; the latter's decision to speak caused John Walsh to shout "What are you doing, Arnold? Sit down!"

Maybe Sachs can fight with the BRU over who gets the least respect. 🚆 🚆 🚆

## *Day After Thanksgiving Trip Continued*

At 4:22 pm we reached the Sylmar/San Fernando station and large crowds of people were spotted boarding the train. Then we plunged into the tunnel and into the Santa Clarita Valley.

Some of us began discussing our impressions of the Comet Car. One comment made was it was "a little noisier" and also that it seemed to sway somewhat. I know my first thought upon boarding was the arrangement of seats resembled a school bus - but the seats themselves got high marks for comfort.

After emerging from the tunnel we were in a very rural area, reaching the Newhall station (named for politico Jan Heidt) at 4:27 pm and appropriately the street adjacent to it is named Railroad Ave. We continued past the Newhall business district (which includes a number of eateries plus more than a few auto body repair shops).

Santa Clarita was created out of the incorporation of several communities clustered near each other (Newhall, Valencia, Castaic). The train serves these in succession--Newhall, Santa Clarita and lastly Via Princesa (we reached the latter at 4:48 pm). In the twilight we spotted tract houses before entering a short tunnel. Now the view was blocked by embankments along the right of way as the sun set. It was now dark and basically the only things that could be seen through the windows were the occasional pools of light in the distance and indistinct shapes. Basically we were taking a long long ride to a far flung enclave without sightseeing as a distraction.

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We began the return trip at 5:52 pm, reaching Palmdale at 6 pm and our conductor came through to check our tickets and another Metrolink train whizzed by in the opposite direction. By 6:53 pm we had reached Via Princesa and our progress continued apace: Santa Clarita (6:59 pm), Newhall (7:08 pm). Another Metrolink train whizzed by in the opposite direction. Then Sylmar (7:21 pm), Sun Valley (7:27 pm)[at which Kymberleigh deboarded to make a quick walk to the nearby Metro route 163 layover to catch a bus leaving there at 7:38 pm thus avoiding coming back to the Valley from downtown], Burbank (7:33 pm), Glendale (7:40 pm). One last Metrolink train whizzed by before we finally reached L.A. Union Station (LAX) at 7:50 pm.

Kymberleigh has noted "In the space of twelve hours we managed to go almost to all four ends of the Metrolink system, with the exception of Oceanside (which would have taken so long as to make the rest of the trip impossible) and Montalvo (because it is only served northbound in the evening and southbound in the morning), which is, in my opinion, an achievement in and of itself. We also introduced some existing Metrolink customers to other parts of the system and introduced at least one person to Metrolink itself. Definitely not your typical DAT."

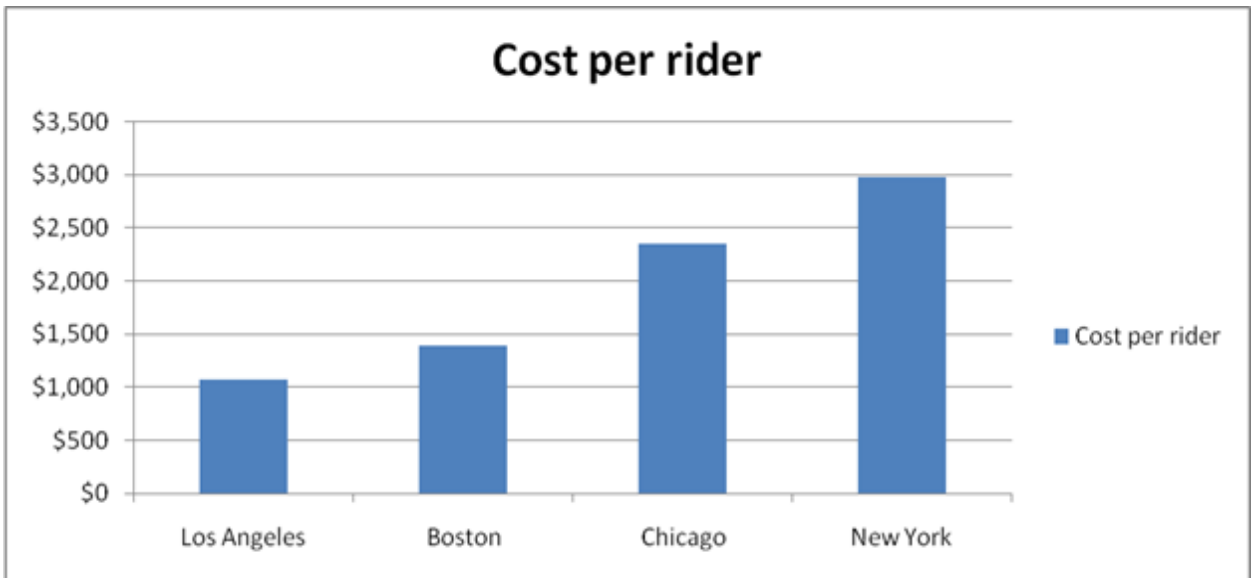
My thanks to Kymberleigh Richards and Charles Hobbs for suggestions and corrections that enhanced this report. 🚆 🚆 🚆

## ***Access Services Free Fare***

Regarding the Access Services' Free Fare Program which has been mentioned in the newsletter from time to time, Andre Colaiace of ASI informs us:

The Free Fare program has been an undisputed success in moderating paratransit cost increases in Los Angeles County. I recently devised an interesting metric for measuring paratransit efficiency called "cost per eligible rider" which I think gives a truer picture of paratransit efficiency than the standard cost per trip/cost per passenger trip measurement that is commonly used (although Access is quite competitive using that metric also.) For example, Chicago has a higher budget than Access but significantly fewer eligible riders so Access' success in encouraging/training people to use the fixed-route wouldn't be reflected in a simple cost per trip metric.

The numbers for the other agencies were from a paratransit peer report that is compiled by New York METRO. I got the Boston budget number from a recently published Boston Globe article on their paratransit system ("Cost of rides for disabled soars at T")



### ***Are you buried in paper?***

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We are now offering the SOCATA newsletter in PDF format to our members.

The PDF newsletters will be available a week before the meeting and will be in full color.

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**Newsletter deadlines** are the Fridays a week before SO.CA.TA meetings, at 6:00 PM Pacific time, unless otherwise announced.

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NEXT SO.CA.TA MEETINGS : **May 15<sup>th</sup>** and **June 12<sup>th</sup>** at Angelus Plaza, 4th Floor, 255 S. Hill, Los Angeles

**May 2010 — Issue 210**



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