

# ***THE TRANSIT ADVOCATE***

Newsletter of the Southern California Transit Advocates  
June 2012

Vol. 20, No. 06



## **Inside This Issue:**

- Bulletin Board (pg. 2)
- Members in Action (pg.2)
- Transit Updates (pg. 3)
- Transit Topics (pg. 5)
- Public/Legislative Affairs (pg. 6)
- 3 weekends, 4 events (pg. 7)
- Photos of the month (pg. 11)

*Metro NABI 7990 at Division 7 in West Hollywood  
in May 2012*

*—Eddie Anthony Photo*

ISSN 1525-2892

## Bulletin Board / Members in Action

### Bulletin Board:

Our thanks for Dave Cook of Energy Conversions for his presentation at our May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting on its concept of converting Metrolink's locomotives to CNG/hybrid. Among those who assisted with our booth at National Train Day at Union Station May 12<sup>th</sup> or stopped by to say hi include Ken Ruben, John Ulloth, Bart Reed, Jose Arevalo, Chaf-fee Yiu, Nick Matonak, Dave Snowden, Perias Pillay, Nate Zablen, Joe Dunn, Dominick Falzone, John Andoh and Dana Gabbard.

Reminder: the Torrance City Yard Open House (20500 Madrona Avenue) is being held Saturday June 9<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

We will have a booth at Chatsworth train station during the opening celebration for the Orange Line extension Saturday June 30<sup>th</sup>. We are also working to arrange a pre-view tour. If you are interested in participating contact the Executive Secretary: [dgabbard@hotmail.com](mailto:dgabbard@hotmail.com) or 213-388-2364.

Paul Condran, Equipment Maintenance/Fleet Manager at Culver CityBus, has offered us an opportunity to see their new Excelsior Buses, hear a short presentation and ride them. This would be during a weekday and held at the Culver CityBus yard. If this would be of interest to you contact the Executive Secretary and let him know what days/time work best for you.

On Sunday August 26<sup>th</sup>, The Pacific Bus Museum will be hosting their Annual Open House and Flea Market at the Shinn Street yard in Fremont, California. For more information visit: [www.pacbus.org](http://www.pacbus.org). In conjunction with the open house the Norcal Bus

Fans will be operating an excursion on Saturday August 25<sup>th</sup>. For more information on this excursion visit [www.norcalbusfans.com](http://www.norcalbusfans.com)

### Members in Action:

Joseph Dunn attended the special May 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Metro Board regarding the objections of Beverly Hills to the Purple Line extension tunneling under Beverly Hills High School. There was no time to hear public comments at the meeting so those who requested to speak were given the opportunity to make comments at beginning of the regular Metro Board meeting on May 24<sup>th</sup>. Dunn was among those who signed up and therefore he also attended the regular Metro Board meeting on May 24<sup>th</sup> and at it presented his comments.

In addition Dunn attended at the Metro Headquarters Building the Metrolink fare increase meeting held May 24<sup>th</sup>. At both meetings on the 24<sup>th</sup> Dunn represented SOCATA.

May 23<sup>rd</sup> Ken Ruben and Dana Gabbard attended the monthly meeting of Metro's Citizens' Advisory Council. On May 29<sup>th</sup> Ruben rode the first southbound run of Culver CityBus's new Excelsior New Flyer #7116 from Westwood and National on line 3 at 6:14 AM. He was the third passenger on the bus.



# ***Transit Updates***

## ***Coach America***

The United States Bankruptcy court has recently approved the sale of Coach America who had filed for bankruptcy protection on January 3, 2012. Pending due diligence the results of the sale are as follows. Stagecoach (Coach USA/MegaBus) has purchased the nine properties including the Anaheim and Sacramento locations in California. These facilities will likely be rebranded as Coach USA and Stagecoach has expressed interest in using these nine locations as possible hubs for MegaBus service. This would be the second time MegaBus has been to California.

Transportation Management Services (TMS) will be acquiring the other California Coach America locations including Los Angeles (Amtrak Thruway, Vista, and Flyaway), San Francisco and the recently closed facility in San Diego. It is unknown if TMS will continue operating as Coach America or rebrand the locations. Finally MV Transportation has purchased the Coach America LADOT contract which operates both DASH and Commuter Express routes in the San Fernando Valley. (With this purchase MV will be the exclusive operator for Commuter Express and have a significant portion of the DASH services.)

## ***AVTA***

Antelope Valley Transit Authority will begin operation of the new service on July 16<sup>th</sup> from the Palmdale Transportation Center to the Newhall Metrolink eventually replacing Santa Clarita Transit Line 795. The service will connect with select Metrolink Trains and operate Monday thru Friday. More details as they are made available on this new service.

## ***Big Blue Bus (Santa Monica)***

Effective June 17<sup>th</sup> Big Blue Bus will be making changes to their bus service. Below is a list of those changes.

- Route 5 will now operate between Santa Monica and the Metro Expo Line station in Culver City via Robertson Boulevard. The route will no longer serve the Pico Rimpau Terminal.
  - Route 12 will now end at the Metro Expo Line station in Culver City and no longer serve Robertson Boulevard north of Venice Boulevard.
  - Route 11 and Sunset Ride will operate on summer schedules.
  - Crosstown Ride will operate every 20 minutes all day
  - The Downtown Ride and will VA Commuter routes will be cancelled.
  - After 8:00 PM all buses serving UCLA will stop at the Ackerman Terminal
  - Big Blue will also now be using 60-Foot articulated buses on the Rapid 3 and the Rapid 10 routes
- Finally there are new service hours for Big Blue Bus: Store and phone assistance from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM Monday thru Friday and 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM on Saturdays. The Store is located at 223 Broadway in Santa Monica and the customer service number is 310-451-5444.

## ***LADOT***

Beginning in June, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) will begin accepting TAP cards as fare payment on both DASH and Commuter Express Routes. Later this year all LADOT paper passes will be converted to TAP cards.

*(Continued on Page 4)*

## *Transit Updates Continued*

### **Los Angeles County Beach Bus**

Once again the Los Angeles County Department of Public works is offering bus service to Santa Monica from various points in Los Angeles County. Several of the routes now require reservations due to heavy ridership in past years. Buses operate from Altadena, Castaic, Charter Oak/Duarte, East Los Angeles, La Crescenta/La Canada Flintridge, Lancaster, Palmdale and Topanga Canyon.

Most of the service operates from mid-June to Labor Day. For more information on times and pick up locations visit

[http://www.ladpw.org/PDD/beach\\_bus/](http://www.ladpw.org/PDD/beach_bus/) or call 888-769-1122 Reservations can also be made on line.

### **Long Beach Transit**

Starting May 23<sup>rd</sup> Cal State Long Beach students, faculty and staff will now be able to use their valid ID cards as fare on any Long Beach Transit bus 365 days a year under the U-Pass program. Between June 14<sup>th</sup> and August 12<sup>th</sup>, Long Beach Transit will once again offer their popular Museum Express service from Long Beach to various area museums and attractions. For more information on both or to make reservations for the museum express visit <http://www.lbtransit.com/> or call 562-591-2301.

### **Marina del Rey Shuttle/WaterBus**

The popular Marina del Rey shuttle bus and WaterBus are returning for the summer season. The shuttle bus operates from Palya Vista to Marina del Rey and portions of Venice on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from May 25<sup>th</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> with service on Thursday evenings for the classical concerts at Burton Chace Park. On Friday and Saturday service operates from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM and 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM on Sun-

days with a gap in service from 3:15 PM to 4:15 PM to accommodate the driver's lunch break. The bus service is free of charge.

The Marina del Rey WaterBus will operate



Friday, Saturday and Sunday from June 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 3<sup>rd</sup> with special service on Thursdays to the concerts at Burton Chace Park. Service runs from 5:00 PM to Mid-

night on Friday, 11:00 AM to Midnight on Saturdays, and 11:00 AM to 9:00 PM on Sunday. The Sunday schedule will also be observed on July 4<sup>th</sup> and September 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Fare is still \$1 for the WaterBus. For more information or to download schedules visit [www.beaches.lacounty.gov](http://www.beaches.lacounty.gov). Information is also available from the Marina del Rey Visitors Center at 310-305-9545.

### **Metrolink**

On May 15<sup>th</sup> Metrolink discontinued sales of 10-trip tickets. Existing tickets will still be valid until June 28, 2012. For more information visit [www.metrolinktrains.com](http://www.metrolinktrains.com). Metrolink also approved a fare increase which will take effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Metrolink riders will also be able to use their valid passes and tickets to ride Anaheim Resort Transit buses to/from the Anaheim Station this summer.



*(Continued on Page 9)*

## Transit Topics By Andrew Novak

This month in Transit Topics we have a few things you might have missed from the world of transit.

**ART Routes 18/19:** On May 12th Charles Powell and I decided to ride the two new Anaheim Resort Transit Routes 18 and 19 which serve Buena Park and the MainPlace Mall in Santa Ana. Both of these routes began in early April and we were curious to see how these routes were doing. We first



rode Route 19 to the MainPlace and were the only passengers on the bus. The stop location at the MainPlace mall is near the food court, and Westfield has put the schedule of this route on the wall inside the mall. The schedule on the wall

matched what the buses were operating on, however this is not what ART had posted on their website.

We then rode Route 18 over to Buena Park from Disneyland and once again we were the only people on the bus, both directions. It seems hard to imagine on a Saturday evening that there would be no one traveling to/from Knott's Berry Farm, maybe the 45 minute one-way travel time discourages people. Near Medieval Times in Buena Park we noticed the above pictured shuttle stop sign for the ART bus. This sign was made from an old hotel marquee sign and is probably the world's largest bus stop sign.

Despite being such a large sign, the bus we were waiting for that night did not stop there. We found out from the driver, we caught her across the street, that none of the drivers stop at that sign. A couple weeks later I did observe an ART bus actually stopping at this stop so maybe it depends on the driver. The driver did tell us that Disney cast members do use this route on weekdays. It will be interesting to revisit these lines in a couple months and see how they are performing.

**Golden Gate Bridge at 75:** On May 27<sup>th</sup> the Golden Gate Bridge celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday! Happy Birthday GGB!

**Fox Pizza Bus:** My tanks to Dana Gabbard for passing on the information about this new food bus. Chef Michael Fox and event planner Jordan Hieshetter imported a Scottish double-decker buses and have converted it into a mobile pizza kitchen. The bus travels the food truck circuit and the owners claim it is the only mobile enclosed wood-burning oven in the country. To find the pizza bus visit them at: [foxpizzabus.com](http://foxpizzabus.com)



*The above photo is from the Fox Pizza Bus website.*

## *Public and Legislative Affairs* By Dana Gabbard

I am gratified to note stakeholders in Long Beach have put together a Older Adult Transportation Task Force pulling together the key players to address access to transportation for seniors (Long Beach Post "Task Force to Address Senior Transportation Issues" May 29<sup>th</sup>). This will only become a bigger and more challenging issue over time given demographic trends.

Curious why the city of South Pasadena cancelled its Gold Link shuttle? Ridership was so low the average cost was over \$25 per person. The money to run it instead went to an expanded Dial-A-Ride program. Reminds me of a conversation I had years ago with Joyce Rooney when she was the transit person for West Hollywood (she is now working for Redondo Beach). They had a bar hopper shuttle for folks to park at the Pacific Design Center lot, transport them to the strip and allow them into the wee hours to jump on and off as it made its way up and down Sunset Boulevard. It was coming in at \$15 or so per passenger and so it was cancelled. Sadly some politicians in the city have recently suddenly decided to do a similar shuttle, despite obviously having no clear idea of how to avoid it becoming a similar money hole. Torrance a while ago similarly had to make hard choices due to expanding Dial a Ride costs (for the same demographic reasons I cited above) that they met by ending a lightly used fixed route. These are hard times.

It has been a very productive period for my contributions to L.A. Streetsblog, as I have written on the new Metro budget and issues related to TAP and the rail station gating. Two of my commentaries have generated a lot of comments and interesting perspec-

tives. Links can found at <http://la.streetsblog.org/author/dana-gabbard/>

Amazing quote of the month: Laurence (Larry) Jackson, president and chief executive officer of Long Beach Transit, "The whole hybrid technology, which is very expensive, compared to diesel and much more expensive than even CNG or LNG, it hasn't lived up to the hype. It's not the Prius; you're not going to be getting 40 miles per gallon. We were achieving maybe a 5, 10, 15 percent increase, but gasoline prices vs. diesel prices vs. natural gas, it's a market consideration in terms of cost, too. We weren't achieving the cost savings that we wanted to." ("Long Beach Transit: Running as a Business" Mass Transit Magazine April/May 2012)

I was dismayed the May 14<sup>th</sup> Daily News article "All aboard for NoHo Depot restoration" indicates currently what the restored North Hollywood Depot will be used for when it is ready to be re-occupied is undecided. Until recently a Metro Customer Center was a prominent aspect of the proposed uses but when I e-mailed reporter Bob Strauss he indicated he heard no mention of that while he worked on the piece. This project ping ponged between Metro and the CRA for years while the Depot got more and more decrepit. North Hollywood activists like Guy Weddington McCreary fought to save the Depot from inter-agency limbo. Very frustrating how long this thing has dragged out. At least it is at last undergoing removal of hazardous materials (lead paint and asbestos shingles), to be followed by a long overdue restoration of the building.

*(Continued on Page 7)*

## ***Public and Legislative Affairs Continued***

Art Marroquin has been doing a bang-up job covering LAX for the Daily Breeze. His May 21<sup>st</sup> piece "Westwood FlyAway bus to continue operating for another year" details just how weak the Westwood route is: a projected 90,901 passengers this year compared to 107,052 in 2011. And what about the promises of L.A. World Airport in a legal settlement reached six years ago with the county, three cities and a community group opposed to airport expansion to have nine FlyAway routes by 2015? "Airport officials are negotiating with the city of Santa Monica to have the Big Blue Bus operate a FlyAway route to LAX, with two stops in Santa Monica and another in either Marina del Rey or Venice. Also under consideration are FlyAway routes originating from the Woodley Avenue/Victory Boulevard stop along the Orange Line in the San Fernando Valley and another from the Exposition Boulevard and La Brea Avenue stop along the new Expo Line." That still leaves them two short of

nine and I know the agency is unhappy at the spiraling costs as Flyaway expands. Whose idea was it to promise nine routes?

My final thoughts are to offer condolences to the family of Allen Thomas, the Metro bus operator slain May 20<sup>th</sup> in a senseless act of violence. As Metro CEO Art Leahy stated "It's a tragedy, everybody at MTA feels horrible about it." And I know our members share in the sense of loss and grief. 🚌 🚌



### ***Three weekends, Four Events*** By Dana Gabbard

I must admit I have some trepidations as it became apparent late April and early May were going to be a busy time for outreaching on behalf of our group. Early in the year I made sure to contact Amtrak to assure we would have a booth at the National Train Day celebration at Union Station. Then through the kindness of a donor and by splitting the remaining cost by partnering with the Rail Passenger Association of California we were able to afford having a booth at the revived Fullerton Train Days. That meant we were committed to two events held on successive weekends in early May that I would be anchoring the booths for our group. Then of course the calendar became even more crowded as suddenly April 28<sup>th</sup> was announced as being the day of the opening celebration for the Expo light rail line. It was not easy but eventually I secured a booth at the event for us. And then I was asked to on the same day attend the evening Flea Market held as part of the Motor Bus Society Spring Convention being held in downtown Los Angeles. This was to make available for sale reprints of our last Transit Guide for the edification of the visiting bus fans. Three weekends with four events!

*(Continued on Page 8)*

## *Three weekends, Four Events Continued*

And so I began working to secure materials (brochures, information sheets, etc.) to stock the booths from various organizations. My experience is the more items on a table for distribution, the better. I also prepared a tabletop sign for the three rail events (Expo, Fullerton and National Train Day) that stated "Free Rail Related Literature" since I find folks otherwise are confused about whether what you put out can be taken. And by gosh my goal in staffing a booth is to publicize our group via our flyer plus give away as much of the literature I brought as possible.

This was also going to be my chance to test the sturdy MaXXDaddy folding chair I recently purchase, acquired as a response to events expecting me to sit on the scary looking spindly Thrifty Drug plastic chairs they supplied. A gauntlet of events involving long hours of sitting would be the ideal test of whether the chair was all that the folks who made it promised it to be. I also bought a box of inexpensive pens and some scotch tape. And put together a envelope full of rubber bands, plus made sure to have some scissors, and lastly got some sunscreen with a high SPF number. My long years of experience have taught me these are the sorts of supplies you almost always need.

At one time I tried to make schedules for the staffing of our booths. And found for a volunteer group like ours that just doesn't work. I basically anchor the booths and try to make sure there are a few extra chairs for members to drop in and help out and or take a breather. Sometimes I'll do a walk around of the event or venture out to take a break, use the restroom and maybe grab something to eat while other members hold the fort. And of course the members often

give me eyes & ears on what is happening plus kindly will offer to buy for me something to eat or drink.

My philosophy is to engage the public, answer questions and listen to what attendees have to say. Sometimes folks will slow down, something catches their eye and they may pick up a brochure. Or maybe start up a conversation. Other times they just walk by. You can have a small crowd clustered in front of you or endure long periods of inactivity. The rhythms of an event are complicated -- a lot depends on things like the weather, booth location, the turn out, etc. You just do everything you can preparing the booth as best you can and hope for the best.

April 28th I gathered up the material I had prepared for the Expo booth plus the bag containing the chair and made my way to the nearest eastbound Wilshire bus stop which left me a block from the event site adjacent to 7th/Metro station on 7th Street between Hope and Figueroa. I didn't bring our banner because I wasn't sure we would have the means to mount it. With Ken Ruben's help I set up the chair and put out our stuff. The event (which lasted from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM) was very festive and really had the feeling of being a community celebration. One booth was selling used designer clothes. There were also some of the upscale food trucks that have quickly become a new essential feature of the SOCAL landscape. I gave out a decent amount of material and shared with our members the sense of accomplishment that the long desired Expo line was now a partial reality (Phase II to follow in 2016 or so).

*(Continued on Page 10)*



## *Transit Updates Continued*

### **OCTA**

On June 10<sup>th</sup> the following changes will be made to the OCTA bus system:

On weekdays the 9:17 PM southbound trip on Route 29 will begin at Beach & La Habra instead of the Buena Park Metrolink Station. Route 42 has been rerouted off of Electric Avenue and onto Pacific Coast Highway in Seal Beach. OCTA has also made minor schedule adjustments to various routes.

The OC Fair Express buses have also returned for another year. These special routes operate to the OC Fair on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from July 13<sup>th</sup> to August 12<sup>th</sup> direct to the fairgrounds. Fares are \$1.50 each way and this year passengers will receive a coupon good for \$2 off fair admission. For more information on these routes and where they depart from visit:

<http://www.octa.net/ocfairexpress>

### **RTA**

Effective May 13<sup>th</sup> the Riverside Transit Agency made the following changes:

-Route 1: All schedules have been adjusted to improve connections with Metrolink trains.

-Route 7: All schedules have been adjusted to improve service to the Lake Elsinore Senior Center and Wildomar Assisted Living Center.

-Route 8: Weekday schedules have been adjusted to improve connections to Route 7.

-Routes 11 and 19: Had schedule adjustments to improve connections at the Moreno Valley Mall.

-Route 15: Weekday schedules have been adjusted to improved connections at the Tyler Galleria.

-Route 16: On weekdays buses will now operate every 25 minutes.

-Route 18: Will layover and enter the Moreno Valley College campus.

-Routes 19 and 22: Had schedule adjustments to improve connections at the Perris Station Transit Center

-Routes 20, 22, 23, 24, and 27: Had schedule adjustments to improve connections with other RTA routes.

-Routes 14, 20, 33, and 42: Had schedule adjustments to improve on-time performance.

-Route 21: Will no longer serve the Pedley Metrolink Station.

-Route 202: Additional weekday trips and weekend trips will operate from June 17<sup>th</sup> to September 2<sup>nd</sup> to provide Beach Bus Service to Oceanside.

-Route 216: Two new stops were added in Orange to improve connections to OCTA bus routes.

### **Santa Clarita Beach Bus**

From June 9<sup>th</sup> to September 2<sup>nd</sup>, Santa Clarita Transit will be operating beach bus service to Santa Monica on Saturday and Sundays. Fares for these special runs are \$3.00 each way (\$1.50 senior/disabled) and monthly passes are not accepted. For more information and details on where the buses pick up visit [santaclaritatransit.com](http://santaclaritatransit.com) or call 661-294-1287  



## *Three weekends, Four Events Continued*

Around 3:45 PM the word spread that vendors could leave early if they wanted. And very quickly the site was virtually emptied. I took a quick taxi ride to my apartment because the bus stops near the celebration were closed to make way for the buses carrying the spillover of folks trying to make their way to the various Expo stations as the trains started to be crowded by mid-afternoon.

After dropping off the chair and most of the material I had left from the Expo booth I took some brochures for SO.CA.TA and the Pacific Bus Museum and by bus went to the FedEx Office at Wilshire/Flower to pick up the Transit Guide reprints then made my way to the nearby Sheraton, headquarters for the Motor Bus Society spring convention. Three flights of escalators below street level and at the end of a long narrow corridor I found the room where the flea market was to be held. I set up at one end of one of the tables provided and sold a few Guides plus gave out some literature.

As a MBS member for the past few years it was nice to finally see a tangible manifestation of the organization. The officers gave a report on future events and news about what is happening at MBS. And then there was the highlight of the night: Andy Novak's slide show of local bus equipment (transit and charter). When folks would ask "what bus is that?" I thought to myself had they bought the Transit Guide they'd know the answer (I had a number of looky loos who leafed through the Guide but didn't buy one --one guy even mistakenly thought it was free until I made him aware otherwise). By the time I got home it was around 10:00 PM and I was glad for the chance to crash.

During the week I made my reservation on Amtrak for taking the Surfliner from L.A. Union Station to Fullerton and back. I also made a reservation at a hotel on Harbor Boulevard near the Train Station. My plan was to come down on Friday evening the 4th with the chair, banner and booth materials and via bus go from the train station to the hotel where I could relax. The train down was full plus the high level equipment proved a challenge getting on and off. I enjoyed dinner at the cafe in the station. The hotel was nice and the continental breakfast the next morning fairly filling. By 9:30 AM. I was at the event getting assistance to roll the flaps up the front of our canopy, put out a variety of outreach material and then settle into the chair. Paul Dyson of RailPAC brought their banner which we displayed below ours. He also brought a large matted poster of the proposed run through tracks for Union Station that got a lot of attention from the attendees.

*To Be Continued...*



*Dana Gabbard and Ken Ruben at the National Train Day Event -Robert Leabow Photo*

## Photos of the Month

*OmniGo Cutaway 9150 at the Yucaipa Transit Center on May 19, 2012 while on OmniGo Route 308.*

*-Andrew Novak  
Photo*



*Omnitrans New Flyer 1241 at the Fontana Transit Center on May 19, 2012.*

*-Josh Thurman  
Photo*

**How to join SO.CA.TA:** Yearly dues are \$30.00 (\$12.00 low income). Dues are prorated on a quarterly basis.

**Submission of materials:** ALL materials for the TRANSIT ADVOCATE newsletter go to Andrew Novak at P.O. Box 2383, Downey California 90242 or to [rtd1121@yahoo.com](mailto:rtd1121@yahoo.com). Please enclose a self addressed stamped envelope for returns.

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

**Opinions:** Unless clearly marked as "Editorial" or "Position Paper", all written material within, including all inserted flyers and postcards, are the expressed opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Southern California Transit Advocates.

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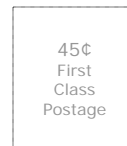
NEXT SO.CA.TA MEETINGS : **June 9<sup>th</sup>** and **July 14<sup>th</sup>** at Angelus Plaza, 4th Floor, 255 S. Hill, Los Angeles

**June 2012 — Issue 235**



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