

# ***THE TRANSIT ADVOCATE***

Newsletter of the Southern California Transit Advocates  
April 2013 Vol. 21, No. 4



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*LADOT DASH El Dorado 12318 in San Pedro on 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Pacific Avenue on March 16, 2013.*

*—Andrew Novak Photo*

ISSN 1525-2892

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

### **Newsletter Deadline:**

Our May meeting will be on the third Saturday of the month, May 18<sup>th</sup>, due to National Train Day on May 11<sup>th</sup>. The newsletter deadline for the May newsletter will be on May 3rd. As always early submissions are encouraged and appreciated.

### **Bulletin Board:**

Our thanks to Dave Cook for his presentation at our March meeting.

The guest speaker at our April 13<sup>th</sup> meeting (starting at 2:00 PM) is Don Sepulveda, Executive Officer – Regional Rail at Metro. Diana Kotler, Executive Director of the Anaheim Transportation Network, will be the guest speaker at our July meeting.

We will have booths at Fullerton Railroad Days (May 4-5) and National Train Day at Union Station (May 11), partnering with RailPAC in the former and the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club in the latter. Our expenses for these (even splitting costs) are over \$200. Donations to help support these outreach costs would be welcome with gratitude.

The improved website thanks to webmaster Charles Hobbs now allows announcements of the latest happenings for the club on its front page. Look for further enhancements in the coming months: [socata.net](http://socata.net)

An advertisement for our group will start appearing on L.A. Streetsblog this month. We'll need to set up a paypal account to accept online payments for membership. Assistance in making this happen is appreciated.

The Transit Coalition now has a blog:  
<http://thetransitcoalition.us/blog/>

If you aren't receiving the cyber alerts and other informational e-mails the Executive Secretary sends members periodically and want to be on this mailing, just let him know and you'll be added to the new notification list -- [dgabbarb@hotmail.com](mailto:dgabbarb@hotmail.com)

### **Members in Action:**

Hank Fung attended the City Selection Committee meeting to ratify Ara Najarian as a Metro Board Member on March 7<sup>th</sup>.

Alec Friedman has been very busy of late, including submitting several letters to Metro in support of East San Fernando Project, advocating light rail for the corridor.

Ken Ruben, Dana Gabbard and Charles Powell attended the METRO Citizens' Advisory Council meeting on March 27<sup>th</sup>.

Ruben also attended the METRO Westside/Central Service meeting on March 13<sup>th</sup> and Long Beach Transit's 50th anniversary event on March 15<sup>th</sup>. 🚃 🚃



*Are you interested in getting your SO.CA.TA newsletter in PDF?*  
*We now offer the SO.CA.TA newsletter in PDF format to our members. The PDF newsletters are available a week before the meeting and are in full color. If you would like to get the PDF newsletter instead of the printed version email us at:*  
[rtd1121@yahoo.com](mailto:rtd1121@yahoo.com)

# Transit Updates

## Amtrak

Effective June 1, 2013 smoking will be banned on Amtrak's Auto Train. This was the last train where smoking was still allowed on board.

## AVTA

Effective March 25<sup>th</sup> the Antelope Valley Transit Authority (AVTA) made several service changes. Below is a list of those changes.

Route 1: Weekday frequencies have been increased to every 30 minutes from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM and hourly in the evening.

Route 6: Service has been reduced to peak hours only, seven days a week.

Route 10: Service has been reduced to peak hours only on Monday through Friday. The route has also been modified to travel along Palmdale Boulevard and 10th Street W. Several new bus stops have been added.

Route 15: This new route has been created to serve the residence of Pearblossom. The new route begins at 47th Street E. and Avenue R and from there travels east to Pearblossom. The service operates Monday through Friday during peak hours only.

Routes 785, 786, and 787: Service has been adjusted on these three commuter routes in responses to passenger demand.

Route 790 (North County TRANSporter): A new trip from Newhall to Palmdale departing at 3:15 PM has been added due to increased ridership.

For more information contact AVTA at 661.945.9445 or online at: [www.avta.com](http://www.avta.com)

## Big Blue Bus

The eastbound Route 12 stop on Venice Boulevard at Robertson Boulevard (in front of Del Taco) has been moved to the eastside of the intersection. This change will be effective until further notice due to Metro Expo Line construction.



## Flyaway

Effective July 1, 2013 Flyaway will be increasing fares on their LAX to Van Nuys Service. The new one-way fare is \$8. Starting this spring will also be a new Flyaway route from LAX to the La Brea Avenue Metro Expo Line Station. This new La Brea Flyaway will charge a special \$6 one-way fare for the first six months at which time it will be increased to \$7 one-way.

Since October 2012 passengers can purchased fares for the Van Nuys and Union Station Flyaway services on-line at:

<https://efleet.digital-dispatch.com/bauerslax/>



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## ***Transit Updates Continued***

### ***Metro***

Effective February 3<sup>rd</sup> the eastbound Line 534 stop at Colorado and Ocean has been temporarily discontinued. The Colorado and Ocean timepoint will now be observed at Olympic and 5<sup>th</sup>. The westbound stop is unchanged.

The Dodger Stadium Express has returned for another season for every home game. Buses will board passengers at Bay 3 of the Gateway Transit Plaza on the eastside of Union Station. Buses leave Union Station every 10 minutes, starting 90 minutes before game time through the 3rd inning. Same day Dodger ticket's will once again be honored as fare on the buses. Standard Metro fares also apply to this service. Buses will drop passengers off inside Dodger Stadium behind Center Field. Service will run the same route in reverse after the game. Return service runs until 45 minutes after the final out.

For more information contact Metro at 323.466.3876 or online at: [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net)

### ***Metrolink***

Special Angels Express trains have returned for another baseball season. Beginning April 9<sup>th</sup> trains will begin operation to all weekday home games that start at 7:05 PM. There are trains from Los Angeles, Oceanside and from the Inland Empire on Fridays. Train 6502 departs Los Angeles and Train 643 departs Laguna Nigel/Mission Viejo both at 5:50 PM. On Fridays Train 899 departs Riverside at 5:01 PM and terminates at Orange where game passengers can transfer to train 643. Train 6503 (to Los Angeles) and Train 644 (to Oceanside) depart 30 minutes after the game ends. Special Train 898 (to Riverside) departs Orange after passengers arrive

on Train 644. On Friday nights with Fireworks trains will depart the stadium 45 minutes after the game ends.



### ***Montebello Bus Lines (MBL)***

Effective February 11<sup>th</sup>, MBL made changes to their Line 50 schedules. On weekdays service begins at 4:15 AM (westbound) and 4:05 AM (eastbound) from Washington and Greenwood. At night service ends at 10:48 PM (westbound) at Whittier and Garfield and 9:42 PM (eastbound) at Adelfa and Ashgrove. On Saturdays service begins at 5:02 AM (westbound) and 4:54 AM (eastbound) from Washington and Greenwood. At night service ends at 10:40 PM (westbound) and 10:21 PM (eastbound) at Whittier and Garfield. For more information contact MBL at 323.558.1625 or online at: [ridembl.com](http://ridembl.com)



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

**Illinois Railway Museum at 60!:** 2013 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Illinois Railway Museum (IRM) in Union, Illinois. The IRM collection contains close to 400 pieces of equipment including everything from trolleys to main line freight and passenger equipment. They also have an operational trolley loop and mainline. The museum also has an Electric Trolley Bus (ETB) for the operation of historic ETBs. For more information or to view the collection visit:

[www.irm.org](http://www.irm.org) Congratulations IRM!



**Bronx Station Revival:** On March 15<sup>th</sup>, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) rededicated their 180<sup>th</sup> Street Subway Station in the Bronx after a two-year rehabilitation project. The ornate station was built in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and serves the Bronx Zoo and the New York Botanical Gardens.



**AC Transit Gilligs:** On March 28<sup>th</sup> the first 10 AC Transit Gilligs entered service on several routes in Oakland, California. These buses are part of an order of 65 buses built in Hayward, which is in the AC Transit service area. AC has dubbed these buses "A Better Ride" and are the some of the first new buses since the agency purchased the controversial Van Hool buses.



**Sky Harbor People Mover:** On April 8<sup>th</sup> a new automated people mover begins service from the Sky Harbor Airport in Phoenix to the economy parking lot and the 44<sup>th</sup>/Washington Valley Metro Light Rail Station. The trains will run about every three minutes and end at Terminal 4 at the airport.

**Fullerton Station Access:** Steps have now been completed connecting the western end of the Fullerton Train Station with northbound Harbor Boulevard. These stairs are part of the improvements made after the completion of the new parking structure and connector bridge on the west side of Harbor Boulevard.

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

Per LA Streetsblog, Laura J. Nelson is the new reporter for the transportation beat at the Los Angeles Times. I've already traded some e-mails with her and she seems whip smart and enterprising, attributes that have been mostly lacking in coverage at the Times since the unceremonious firing of Steve Hyman some years ago. And this is a great time to be covering the beat as projects abound and hopes are soaring!

A little bird tells me one of the alleged big wheels of local advocacy has not kept with the times and now lost a major donor. So now you know what the excessive pleading for donations reaching a fever pitch is about.

A new poll by the Public Policy Institute of California shows support of the statewide bullet train project is firm despite the recent sour grapes vented by the perpetually unhinged Quentin Kopp and given far too much press coverage than it deserved. Savvy political reporter Bill Bradley in a recent post for the Huffington Post summarized the findings "Most California voters are for a big high-speed rail project. But at a lower level of spending than what was presented in the poll. At the higher figure, the support level of 43 percent is the same as it was last year. Meanwhile, 59 percent say high-speed rail is an important priority for the state. ... Frankly, the PR effort for high-speed rail has been atrocious all along". That last bit I'll second.

As I had long suspected would someday happen, longtime Metro critic John Walsh has disowned his previous tacit support (albeit at arm's length) of Eric Mann and the Bus Rider's Union. And there is a precedent -- years ago Walsh abruptly went

from lauding Congressman Frank Wolf as someone who would make Metro accountable to declaring him the Metro Board's "pet wolf". I am wondering if the other shoe will drop soon and Mann finally fold the BRU tent -- but since the Labor Community Strategy Center form 990 for 2011 (viewable on Guidestar.org) shows a \$1 million dollar funding increase versus 2010 maybe he will continue squeezing the issue for all he can get out of it for the nonce.

A different little bird has whispered to me that many rail fans think Mr. NCTD overreacted regarding the Sprinter situation and now the agency is unnecessarily having to spend vast sums on the temporary bus bridge. Opps!

Who at Access Service mis-used e-mail for personal reasons while on company time? That is my question after reading the draconian new e-mail policy the agency is adopting. They must be reacting to something specific, right?

When asked about a sensitive situation regarding a withdrawn marketing initiative the first reaction I got from the p.r. folks was "It is best that I remain silent". Followed up by the usual non-answer answer.

What is the Southern California Regional Interconnector Project? The Union Station run through tracks, which will finally happen thanks to funding from the bullet train project.

SO.CA.TA Director Ken Ruben overhears some interesting stuff. Art Brown, big wheel of regional transportation politics, was heard to declare that the coast rail governance

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## *Public and Legislative Affairs Continued*

effort I have covered extensively on Streetsblog looks to be in danger of falling apart amidst the same bickering that sunk the previous effort 10+ years ago. Don Sepulveda (Metro's point person for regional rail) told Ken when asked if he had seen my piece for Streetsblog on Metrolink systemic governance problems "Oh, you mean the one that is half wrong?" Ouch!

I'll conclude by noting the passing of former Metro CEO Julian Burke. To learn more about the important things he did that we all benefit from read my piece "Memories of Julian Burke" on Streetsblog. Farewell, Mr. Burke. You did good! 🚊 🚇

## *Transit Tropics Continued*

**Verizon Buses:** In New York City Verizon is now operating a fleet of 25 cutaway buses used to transport technicians to and from job sites. The use of these buses has taken 250 service trucks off the street reducing congestion and parking issues.



Joe Caronetti Photo

**Cape Cod Service:** Train service to Cape Cod is returning after a 25 year absence. Passengers will now be able to travel from Boston's South Station to Hyannis with newly extended Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) trains which will be named CapeFLYER. Passengers can then transfer to buses and boats at Hyannis to access cape islands and Nantucket or Martha's Vineyard. Service begins Memorial Day and operates through Labor Day.

**VVTA Bus Roadeo:** Congratulations to the VVTA Paratransit Team that took 2<sup>nd</sup> Place in the CalACT Paratransit Roadeo in Clovis, California.

**RTP News and Views:** I will conclude this month with some self promotion. RTP News and Views Jr. Newsletter (Volume 11½, Issue 2, March 2013) has write ups on the SPH&TS Convention in Ventura and report on Winterail 2013. Issues are for sale in either print or PDF, email me at [rtd1121@yahoo.com](mailto:rtd1121@yahoo.com) for more information.

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## ***Transit Updates Continued***

### **NCTD**

The North County Transit District (NCTD) voluntarily shut down their Sprinter service after discovering accelerated wear on the central braking system on each car. During the shut-down, dubbed a Sprinter-Ruption, two replacement bus lines have been established to operate during the shut-down which could last as long as four months. Line 618 operates from Oceanside to Vista and Line 620 operates from Oceanside to Escondido. Line 618 is operated by NCTD while Line 620 has been operated by several private charter operators. The closure of the 22-Mile Sprinter occurred on March 9<sup>th</sup>, which coincidentally was the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the service. For more information and updates on the shut-down visit:

[www.gonctd.com](http://www.gonctd.com)



NCTD Photo

### **Riverside Transit Agency**

Effective March 18<sup>th</sup> the agency made changes to CommuterLink Route 217 to improve connections with San Diego MTS buses at the Escondido Transit Center.

### **Santa Clarita Transit**

From June 9<sup>th</sup> to September 2<sup>nd</sup>, Santa Clarita Transit will once again be offering weekend beach bus service. Buses will de-

part Santa Clarita in the afternoon for Santa Monica and return in the afternoon. Fares will be \$3 each way and more information will be available once the service begins.

### **Sun Line**

SunLine has begun installing Simme seats at various bus stops around the Coachella Valley. These seats are ideal for bus stops without room for a full bus stop shelter. The agency has purchased 22 of the seats from Simme LLC of Eugene, Oregon. Below is a photo of the Simme seats courtesy of SunLine. For more information on these seats visit Simme Seats on line at

[www.simmeseat.com](http://www.simmeseat.com)



### **ZIP Car**

The nation's largest car sharing service now has cars available at Los Angeles Union Station. There are four cars located at Union Station with two in Lot B in front of the station and two near the Mozaic Apartments. The cars can be rented by the day or by the hour. For more information or to register with Zipcar visit [www.zipcar.com](http://www.zipcar.com) 🚌 🚗



## Upcoming Events

### **April 27-28, 2013**

The San Bernardino History & Railroad Museum will be hosting the fifth annual railroad days and steam excursion with former Santa Fe steam locomotive 3751. The event at the historic San Bernardino Station will be open 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Saturday and 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM on Sunday. The steam excursion runs from Los Angeles on Saturday and returns on Sunday. (This may be the last steam excursion for up to two years due to planned construction in San Bernardino.) For more information on railroad days visit: [www.sbdepotmuseum.com/](http://www.sbdepotmuseum.com/)

For more information on 3751 visit: [www.sbrhs.org](http://www.sbrhs.org)



### **May 4-5, 2013**

Fullerton Railroad Days has returned! The event will be at the Fullerton Amtrak Station and will be open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM both days. There will be many displays, vendors, and food options. For more information visit the Southern California Railway Plaza Association at: [www.scrpa.net](http://www.scrpa.net)

### **May 11, 2013**

National Train Day returns to Los Angeles Union Station from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM. There will be various displays of railroad equipment, model trains, and various organizations. For more information on the event and to locate other local National Train Day events visit the website at: <http://www.nationaltrainday.com>

### **May 18, 2013**

Pacific Railroad Society (PRS) "Ride the Movie Trains" Excursion aboard the Fillmore and Western Railway, "Home of the Movie Trains." We will be departing Los Angeles Union Station around 9:00 AM aboard luxurious motor coaches for the trip north to Fillmore and returning around 6:00 PM. The price includes the motor coach transportation and a BBQ lunch aboard the train. With special kids fares this trip will be fun for the whole family.

For more information or to reserve visit: [www.pacificrailroadsociety.org](http://www.pacificrailroadsociety.org)



### **Western Transit Trip**

The Western Transit Society is planning a special 50th Anniversary Excursion to be held in late August. More details on this trip once details are finalized. For more information visit: [www.western-transit.com](http://www.western-transit.com)

## ***Amtrak Ticketing Changes***

From NARP News (newsletter of the National Association of Railroad Passengers) February 2013 issue.

Paying on-board? You'll probably pay more

In order to be sure you will get the lowest fares, you must pay for your reservation in advance with a credit card at [Amtrak.com](http://Amtrak.com), on the Amtrak mobile app, over the phone (1-800-USA-RAIL), at a QuikTrak machine, or with cash or credit card with a ticket agent at a staffed station.

Under a new Amtrak policy, if you buy your ticket from the train's conductor—whether by cash or credit card—you will now pay the highest fare (known as "Full Y"). You may have been quoted a lower fare over the phone, but that fare only applies if purchased at the time. This policy applies even if the station where you board has no ticket agent and no QuikTrak machine, although the on-board purchase surcharge, which has always existed, still only applies when a ticket is bought on board when boarding from a staffed location.

No more on-board sleeper upgrade discount:

Under the same Amtrak policy change, conductors must sell coach-to-sleeper and Roomette-to-Bedroom upgrades for the same rate offered on-line and over the phone. This change does not apply to the accommodation charges for Business Class or Acela First Class, whose fares do not change based on demand.

Amtrak Guest Rewards® point redemption policy changes

Effective January 1<sup>st</sup> if you redeem points for a free trip and then "no show," you will not be able to have your points refunded

to your account. Redemption reservations must be canceled prior to first scheduled departure for points to be re-deposited into your account or exchanged for a different itinerary.

Since November 1, 2012, those redeeming points for free coach travel can only upgrade to a sleeper, Business Class or Acela First Class by redeeming additional points with Amtrak Guest Rewards over the phone 1.800.307.5000

On January 1<sup>st</sup> Amtrak Guest Rewards introduced a new most frequent traveler tier: Select Executive, achieved by earning 20,000 Tier Qualifying Points (generally through Amtrak travel) within a calendar year. Details at [www.amtrakguestrewards.com](http://www.amtrakguestrewards.com).

For more information on NARP visit: [www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org)

For more information on Amtrak visit: [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)



*Amtrak Train 14, The Coast Starlight, passes through Dunsmuir, California on September 1, 2012. -Andrew Novak Photo*

## Photos of the Month

*Long Beach Transit has painted New Flyer 2415 in the agency's newest paint scheme. Coach 2415 is seen here at Cal State Long Beach in March 2013.*

*—Javon Deonte  
Photo (via Facebook)*



*NCTD Breeze bus 2602 on Line 101. This is one of the new Xcelior buses NCTD has taken delivery of from New Flyer. Culver City and Omnitrans have similar buses and Metro is expected to be purchasing Xcelior buses as well.*

*-NCTD 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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#### **SO.CA.TA officers, 2013**

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Newsletter Prod. Mgr:	Dana Gabbard
Webmaster:	Charles Hobbs

NEXT SO.CA.TA MEETINGS : **April 13<sup>th</sup>** and **May 18<sup>th</sup>** at Angelus Plaza, 4th Floor, 255 S. Hill, Los Angeles

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