

THE TRANSIT ADVOCATE

Newsletter of the Southern California Transit Advocates
February 2014 **Vol. 22, No. 2**



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RTA Gillig 31357 in Riverside at Moreno Valley College on February 1, 2014.

—Joshua Thurman Photo

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Bulletin Board / Members in Action

Bulletin Board:

Saturday February 15th we will hold an election for the vacant Treasurer position. There will also be a discussion of the Metro fare restructuring concepts and a review of the member questionnaires. This will be held at Angelus Plaza, 255 South Hill Street in downtown Los Angeles beginning at 1:00 PM.

January 11th we undertook a trip to explore bus and rail services for San Bernardino and environs (very pedestrian unfriendly!), visited the San Bernardino History Museum at the historic Santa Fe Depot plus had lunch at Molly's, a 50s style café. Participants included Dana Gabbard, Dave Snowden, Perias Pillay, Mark Strickert and two non-members who learned of the event via the LA Streetsblog announcement -- Orion and Steve.

January 25th Dana Gabbard and Nate Zablen worked on comments to be presented at the February 8th public hearing to be held at the Metro headquarters on the service changes for Metro bus service proposed for implementation in June 2014. We will request a block of time and have copies on hand of the comments to submit formally along with sharing them with reporters, interested members of the audience, etc. The hearing starts at 9:00 AM.

The newsletter editor has decided to discontinue the Members in Action column. The installment this month will be the final one.

Our website has been updated to include the revised bylaws and issues of the newsletter through May 2010. It is still under development and webmaster Charles Hobbs hopes to add new features shortly. Volunteers to

assist this effort are welcome. As always suggestions for club activities (study tours, transit facility visits) and assisting in making them happen is much appreciated. Contact the Secretary: dgabbard@hotmail.com or 213.388.2364.

Members in Action:

J.K. Drummond visited the new permanent Transportation exhibit at the Banning Mansion Museum in Wilmington. He also had the lead letter to the editor in the Daily Breeze on January 30th. The letter discussed the recent seating restrictions in place at Union Station.

Andrew Novak was on hand in Pomona during the early morning hours on January 26th as the Union Pacific (UP) "Big Boy" was brought out of the Los Angeles County Fairground and onto the Metrolink San Bernardino line. The Big Boy, numbered 4014, is one of the largest steam locomotives ever built an UP purchased the 4014 from the Rail Giants Museum in Pomona with plans to return her to operating condition. The 4014 lived at the Fairgrounds for 51 years! 🚂 🚂



*UP 4014 only hours away from leaving
Pomona on January 25, 2014.*

-Andrew Novak Photo

Transit Updates

Big Blue Bus

Effective January 8th passengers on Route 3 and Rapid 3 now have to request a special Metro TAP card transfer when transferring to the Green Line at Aviation Station. The special transfers are good for one on Metro Rail and cannot be reloaded or reused. Passengers will have to request the transfer from the driver at time of purchase.

Effective February 9th Big Blue Bus will make several service changes. Below is a summary of those changes.

Route 1: Saturday trips at 9:18 PM and 9:48 PM and the Sunday trips at 6:55 PM, 7:25 PM, and 7:55 PM from Venice Circle to Santa Monica will be canceled due to low ridership.

Route 2: The 10:50 PM westbound trip from UCLA will be cancelled all week due to low ridership. Weekday service from Santa Monica to UCLA will now operate every 20 minutes from 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM.

Route 3: Several major schedule changes will be made to the service 7 days a week. Two new early morning trips will depart the Aviation Green Line Station seven days a week. On weekdays the service from the Green Line will operate every 11 to 15 minutes. The Sunday morning trip from the Green Line at 6:08 AM will now depart at 6:00 AM. Weekday service from Santa Monica will now operate every 15 minutes from 7:00 PM to 9:15 PM. Service from UCLA to Santa Monica will now operate every 30 minutes from 7:00 PM to 9:15 PM. Weekday service from UCLA to the Green Line will operate every 30 minutes from 9:00 AM to 9:45 AM and 2:00 PM to 2:45 PM. Saturday service from UCLA to the Green Line will now operate every 20-25

minutes from 7:00 AM to 9:15 AM and on Sunday it will operate every 30 minutes from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

Rapid 3: There is a new early morning trip departing the Green Line Station at 5:55 AM. The last trip from the Green Line at 7:05 PM and the 7:50 PM trip from Santa Monica will be cancelled due to low ridership.

Route 4: Most trips will be adjusted by 12 minutes either earlier or late.

Route 5: Buses will continue to detour on Broadway due to Expo Line construction on Colorado Avenue.

Rapid 7: Extra westbound service will begin at Crenshaw Boulevard instead of Fairfax in the morning. Service adjustments will also be made to reduce overcrowding in the early afternoon.

Route 9: Northbound service in the morning will also be improved to reduce overcrowding. Early afternoon adjustments will be made to better serve Palisades Charter School and midday service will now operate every 30 minutes.

Route 11: This line will be discontinued.

Route 14: Northbound evening trips that end at Wilshire and Yale will now end at Bundy and Wilshire.

Bus stops have also been removed on the following routes. Contact Big Blue Bus for exact stop locations. Routes 1, 2, 7, Rapid 7, and 8.

For more information contact Big Blue Bus at 310.451.5444

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Transit Updates Continued

Foothill Transit

On February 3rd, Foothill Transit began operation of Line 495 from the new Industry Park & Ride lot to downtown Los Angeles. The bus operates express from the Park & Ride Lot into Los Angeles making stops along the El Monte Busway at Cal State LA and County USC Medical Center before entering downtown Los Angeles. The new route operates rush hour only and operates from Industry to Los Angeles in the morning and to Industry in the afternoon. For more information contact Foothill Transit at 800.743.3463 or online at:

www.foothilltransit.org



iShuttle (Irvine)

Starting February 9th, the Irvine iShuttle will be adjusting the start times for several trips on Routes A, B, C and D. For details on these changes contact the iShuttle at 949.724.6287 or via email at

info@irvineshuttle.net

LADOT - DASH

Effective January 6th the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) started service on the Lincoln Heights/Chinatown line 30 minutes earlier from the following locations: Counterclockwise at Broadway and Avenue 18 and at Vignes and Cesar Chavez. On the Clockwise route service begins earlier at Vignes and Cesar Chavez and

at LAC+USC Medical Center. The last trip in both directions still begins at 6:30 PM.



NCTD (Oceanside)

On February 1st the North County Transit District (NCTD) opened their new San Luis Rey Transit Center in North Oceanside at the corner of Vandegrift Boulevard and North River Road. Along with the opening of the new center the following service changes were made to bus lines serving the new transit center.

Line 303: The route deviates to serve the new San Luis Rey Transit Center and continues to serve Town Center North.

Line 309: The Mission Avenue trips have been extended to the new transit center. The buses will stop on-street at College and Silver Bluff near Town Center North but will not enter the shopping center. The Douglas trips now terminate at the San Luis Rey Transit Center and Saturday service has been added to improve daytime frequency to every 30 minutes.

Line 311: The route ends at the San Luis Rey Transit Center and no longer serves the Town Center North.

(Continued on Page 8)

Transit Topics By Andrew Novak

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

Battle Bus: At the start of World War I in 1914, over 1000 London buses, their drivers and mechanics were commandeered for the war effort. The buses were used to transport troops to and from the front line and also served as ambulances. The buses were fitted with protective wood boards and also painted in khaki colors for camouflage. The London buses travel to France, Belgium and even Egypt. To mark the 100th Anniversary of the war, the London Transport Museum is restoring one of the last remaining B-type buses that was used in the war. The bus, numbered 2737 will be restored to its war time appearance. For more information visit: www.ltmuseum.co.uk/battlebus



London Transport Museum Photo

WES Turns 5: On February 2, 2009, service began on the 14.7 mile Westside Express Service (WES) commuter rail service from Wilsonville, Oregon to Beaverton, Oregon in the greater Portland area. The line operates during rush hour only and uses a fleet of four Colorado Railcar built Diesel multiple unit (DMUs) and two former Alaska Railroad

Budd built RDCs. The two RDCs are used as back up vehicles when the DMUs are down. There has been talk of extending the line as far south as Salem Oregon. Happy Birthday WES!



Above are photos of the WES DMUs (top) and one of the two ex-Alaska RDCs at the WES maintenance facility in Wilsonville on December 28, 2011.

-Both photos by Jay Roberts

Norcal Excursion: I will conclude this month with a plug for an upcoming bus excursion. On March 1, 2014 the Norcal Bus Fans will be hosting one of their famous bus excursion in the San Francisco area on vintage buses. For more information visit the Norcal Bus Fans at: www.norcalbusfans.com



Are forward facing seats a problem for the transit industry? On December 13, 2013 Foothill Transit received a letter from NABI Bus, LLC (NABI) notifying Foothill Transit of a situation that could potentially expose certain bus riders to injuries. The issue brought up by NABI is related to the first row of front-facing flip-up seats where no barriers exist immediately behind the open areas intended for wheelchair use. The letter indicates that three passengers on buses similar to NABI's were thrown forward from these seats in hard-braking incidents or collisions and these passengers sustained serious injuries. NABI specifically noted that none of their buses were involved in these accidents.

On January 10, 2014 the America Public Transportation Association (APTA) conducted a conference call to review and address the concerns relative to the front-facing flip-up seats. The purpose of the call was to provide more information concerning the experience of transit agencies, and to discuss the steps taken to-date to address the problem. APTA will not provide specific recommendations to transit providers. APTA also indicated at this time no consideration is being given to adding seatbelts on public transit buses. APTA will update its bus procurement guidelines to include the installation of barriers. We will keep an eye on this issue.

The latest California transit agencies to join or contemplate joining the Bus Rapid Transit trend: Riverside Transit and Fresno Area Express. Meanwhile sbX in San Bernardino County will soon begin operations -- the first true BRT in southern California!

The long anticipated history of the modern rail revolution in Los Angeles by Ethan N. Elkind has finally been published: "Railtown:

The Fight for Los Angeles Metro Rail and the Future of the City."

I will write a review of this book once I have had a chance to read it.

Laura Nelson, intrepid transportation reporter for the L.A. Times, recently tweeted that polling shows 58% of LA County residents support an ADDITIONAL sales tax for transportation projects on the 2016 ballot, and 53% in 2014. I wonder if enough marquee projects can be gathered on a project list to generate enough political support countywide to make passage even at 2/3's (much less the 55% that some hope for via new legislation that is at best iffy for passage any time soon) possible. It is an idea... Laura Nelson, intrepid transportation reporter for the L.A. Times, recently tweeted that polling shows 58% of LA County residents support an ADDITIONAL sales tax for transportation projects on the 2016 ballot, and 53% in 2014. I wonder if enough marquee projects can be gathered on a project list to generate enough political support countywide to make passage even at 2/3's (much less the 55% that some hope for via new legislation that is at best iffy for passage any time soon) possible. It is an idea... Kudos to LA Observed columnist Bill Boyarsky for his commentary "LA 2020 Commission cool toward public transit, noting " I was disappointed that the commission took such a superficial and wrong-headed look at so important a subject". Meanwhile Jon Christensen for High Country News www.hcn.org in his essay "Brave New L.A." has noted how urban rail is "creating a different backbone for a city long defined by cars and freeways". That seems more in touch with the transformation than the Commission. 🚗 🚗

In Memory of Neil Bjornsen 1945-2014

Metro Citizens' Advisory Council (CAC) chair Neil Bjornsen passed away unexpectedly of a heart attack in late January 2014.

The 68 year old Navy Veteran year had a long career in the transportation industry including working for the Southern California Rapid Transit District, as general manger of a transit agency in Shreveport Louisiana, and most recently the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works where he retired from.

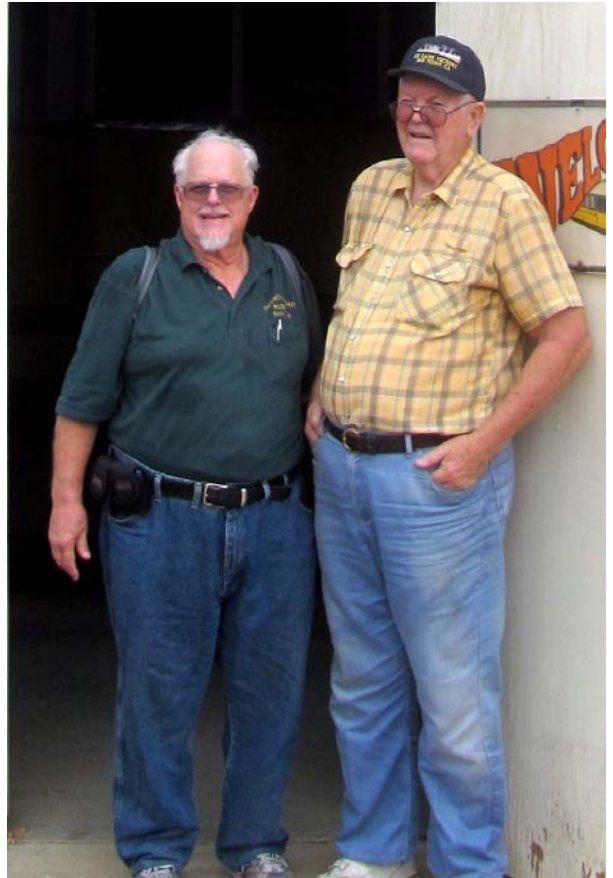
With a lifelong interest in transportation Neil was a member of Orange Empire Railway Museum (OERM), President at Pacific Railroad Society (PRS) and involved with such organizations as the Train Riders Association of California as a board member, the Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada and the National Association of Railroad Passengers as a director.

He was the purser on the S.S. Lane Victory and also involved with Foothill Transit and was on the City of Duarte Traffic Safety Commission.

Neil was a southern California native graduating from San Marino High School. He also held a bachelor's degree in Transportation.

After his retirement, Neil spent time traveling and had a life long love of Hawaii.

Neil had been a member of the CAC since 1977; and they will be honoring him on February 7, 2014. It is unknown if there will be any funeral services for Neil. 🚌 🚌



Neil Bjornsen (left) with OERM Member #1 Ray Ballash at OERM on July 20, 2013 during a special PRS Board Meeting.

-Andrew Novak Photo

Production Note: Deadline for the March 2014 Issue will now be on February 21, 2014 due to the editor's travel plans. Please have all material to the editor by this date for inclusion. The editor can be reach at rtd1121@yahoo.com or by mail at Post Office Box 2383 - Downey, CA 90242. - Thank You.

Transit Updates Continued

NCTD continued

Line 313: This route has been extended to the San Luis Rey Transit Center via State Route 76, Old Grove, Frazee, College and Vandergrift. Buses are not stopping inside the Town Center North and are now on-street at College and Silver Bluff. Weekday service operates every 60 minutes throughout the day.

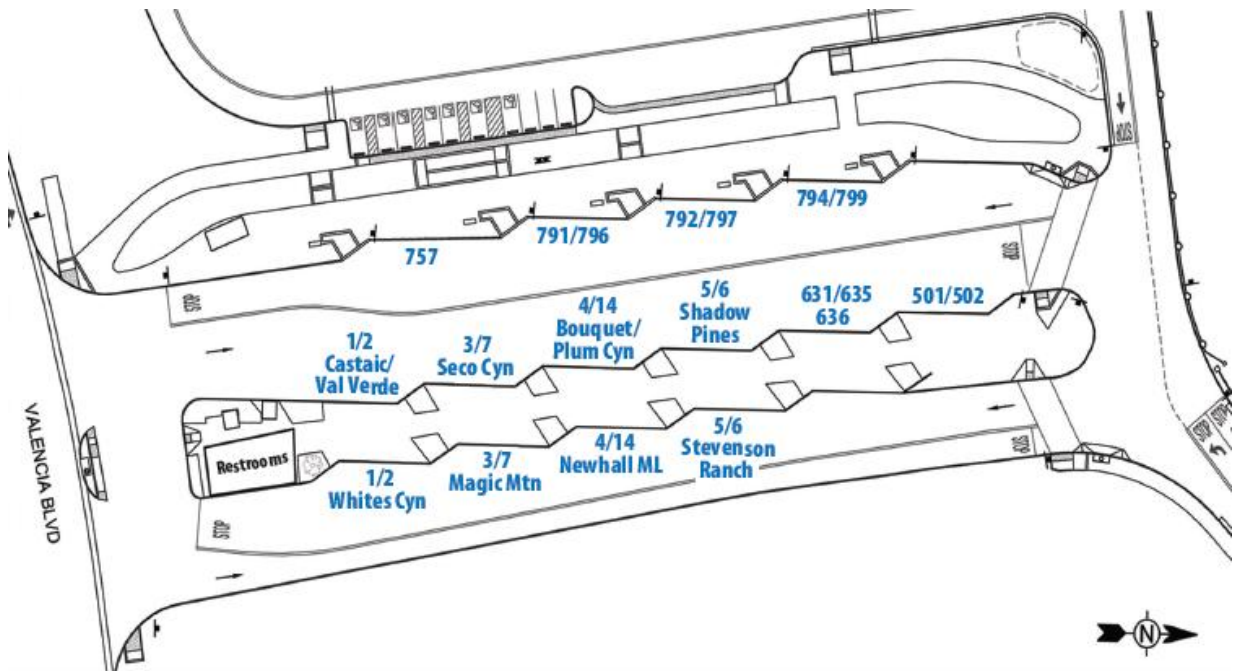
Line 315: The route now deviates in both directions to serve the San Luis Rey Transit Center. The route will also continue to serve Town Center North. With the changes to Line 313, the Old Grove trips are now routed via Old Grove, Mission, Frazee and College. The weekend headway has been adjusted to every 75 minutes to improve schedule reliability.

For more information contact NCTD at 760.966.6500 or online at: www.gonctd.com

Santa Clarita Transit

Effective January 13th all commuter routes began serving the new McBean Park and Ride. The commuter stops at McBean Parkway and Del Monte along with the stop at McBean and Avenue Navarre have been removed. All other commuter stops are still being served.

The stop locations at the McBean Transit Center were also changed. Below is a map showing the new stop locations. For more information contact Santa Clarita Transit at 661.294.1287 or online at: www.SantaClaritaTransit.com 🚌 🚌



Thanksgiving Plans got derailed by Alexander Friedman

Continued from last month...

The first shock that everyone, obviously, experienced was soon replaced by a euphoric feeling, "We are Ok!" Miraculously, every single derailed car remained upright, without overturning or barely even tilting. Just the last coach-car, or two, has slightly tilted, but that was it. As our car attendant eloquently put it, "This was the best case scenario of a derailment!" Truly, we steadily remained on the ground. No smoke, fires, or explosion. The electricity – which was first automatically shut-off – has been restored quickly. And all 218 passengers were totally fine (except the 4 folks, who had to be treated for minor injuries).

What was even more interesting is that our car – first passenger car on the train, just behind the baggage car – derailed with only its rear wheels, while our front ones remained on the track. And that's when I recalled our rough ride (when reaching certain speed): I figured it's quite possible that our car had a defective wheel and/or suspension, causing the roughness of the ride, and potentially contributing to the derailment. Investigation will, of course, determine the true cause.

Luckily for everyone, both locomotives and the baggage car also remained on the track. We couldn't even imagine what would happen if the locomotives were to derail, pulling the whole train with its giant power, to a much worse conclusion...

Our train #20 has "dodged the bullet" by miraculously escaping severe consequences. We are thankful to be alive and to have avoided injuries. Now all was left is to relax

and wait till Amtrak provides other arrangements.

Fast-forward to the next morning. It took over 8.5 (!) hours for Amtrak to finally put us on buses. Even though this unexplainable delay was rather an inconvenience comparing to a derailment itself, nevertheless Amtrak demonstrated its ultimate bureaucracy and miscommunication (too long to describe every detail), leaving a dark spot in our memories. The derailment happened in suburbs, close to a town and several highways; it was definitely not "middle of nowhere". Delay after delay, with little-to-no information from any of the Amtrak bus drivers, and lack of coordination, have left most passengers frustrated and exhausted by the end of the day...

By about 8:15 a.m. we were all first placed in a baggage car – the only car remaining on the tracks – in which we rode for about 300 yards to a temporary "passenger unload" zone. This way, people – many of whom were elderly folks, as well as families with kids – would not have to jump from the train onto the ground, and walk on railroad pebbles for some distance. A brief ride in the baggage car was quite an experience of its own. Not that we felt any differently than cattle in a yard...

By 8:45 a.m. our bus finally left the incident site. We arrived into Washington, DC 10 hours later. If Amtrak were able to coordinate their efforts just a little better, we could have arrived hours earlier. Amtrak did not even provide food (despite what the media reported)...

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Thanksgiving Plans got derailed Continued

But all in all, I am thankful, once again, that our train stayed on the ground and did not overturn; I'm also very thankful to our car attendants David and Steve who were very professional and supportive throughout the entire ordeal. They alone deserve a five-star rating of customer service and for helping so many passengers, in all respects.

Even though a train derailment – as well as Amtrak's mismanagement – leaves bad memories and takes away desire to travel by train for a while, I still prefer rail travel, as opposed to flying or driving. I also have faith in our rail system, hoping that one day we will all witness dramatic improvement – not only in its infrastructure and fleet, but more importantly – in new safety features, track maintenance, and launching Positive Train Control. It's time to embrace the 21st century! And I have faith that – with the hard work of advocacy groups – our wonderful country will finally invest in our rail infrastructure, giving people a reliable, safe, and great way to travel! 🚆 🚆

(Editor's note: The 8.5 hour delay in getting buses to the derailment is not entirely Amtrak's fault. Charter bus company's do not have drivers on stand by like transit agencies. Drivers need to be rested and equipment available. Even for the biggest charter companies getting vehicles on short notice could delay responses by several hours. If Amtrak does not regularly use buses in this region, like Thruway Connections, they might have to find local bus companies.)

The photos at right were taken by the author as passengers were taken off the derailed train.



Photos of the Month

Foothill Transit Orion F1314 is westbound on Bonita Avenue in San Dimas on June 15, 2013.

*—Andrew Novak
Photo*



RTC Wright Street Car 058 enters the Bonneville Transit Center in Las Vegas, Nevada on June 22, 2013.

*—Andrew Novak
Photo*

Yearly Dues for SO.CA.TA:

Individual Members: \$30.00 (Print or PDF)

Low Income: \$18.00 (Print Newsletter)

Low Income: \$12.00 (PDF Newsletter)

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. Please enclose a self addressed stamped envelope for returns. Newsletter deadlines are at 6:00 PM Pacific Time on the first Friday of the month 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 SO.CA.TA.

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Newsletter Prod. Mgr:	Dana Gabbard
Webmaster:	Charles Hobbs
Archivist:	Edmund Buckley

Next SO.CA.TA Gathering:

Feb. 15th, 1:00 PM at Angelus Plaza, 4th Floor, 255 S. Hill, Los Angeles

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