

THE TRANSIT ADVOCATE

Newsletter of the Southern California Transit Advocates

March / April 2016

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*Metro Rail Gold Line train
westbound from Down-
town Azusa station 3/5/16*

Photo by Mark Strickert

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Our "headway" is every other month, with deadlines for the rest of 2016 on Wednesdays April 27th, July 6th, September 7th, and November 2nd. The April/May deadline was moved back a week to have a shot at getting the newsletter out in time for Fullerton Railroad Days, or at least well enough ahead of the Expo Line Santa Monica extension opening.

Southern California Transit Advocates plans to have booths at both the above events. This year's Fullerton Railroad days will be held on Saturday, April 30th and Sunday, May 1st, at its usual spot in the parking lot just northeast of the Fullerton train station. Volunteers are needed to staff the booth and bring the SOCATA banner, flyers, and newsletters. Information on the event is at <http://www.scrpa.net/scrrdays.htm>.

SOCATA also expects to have a booth for the Expo Line extension opening. The new Culver City to Santa Monica section is currently scheduled to begin carrying passengers on Friday, May 20th, though Grand Opening events and locations have not arrived here as of press time.

Another line extension opening soon is Metrolink's Perris Valley addition to the 91 Line. This will happen sometime in late March or early April (as of press time, unofficial sources say Monday, April 4th). Dana Gabbard was able to attend the dedication ceremonies last December 11th, and offers a report elsewhere in this issue.

Based on the attending crowds, the kickoff of the Gold Line extension from Pasadena to Azusa on March 5th was a huge success. I made it out to the SOCATA booth at Azusa Downtown station, though will wait a few weeks before going back out to ride the line. SOCATA president Nate Zablen offers this editorial:

"What momentous events for public transit in Southern California! On March 5th the long anticipated Gold Line Extension serving the cities of Arcadia, Monrovia, Duarte, Irwindale and Azusa (2 stations) will open. On March 1st the long awaited NoHo to Pasadena daily Metro Express Service Line 501 began. There will finally be a light rail line running deep into the San Gabriel Valley and an all-day express bus link between the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys.

"Ridership will probably be modest in the first few weeks of service on both lines. However, as word gets out that there are alternatives to driving on the clogged 134 Foothill Freeway there will be a steady increase in patronage of these lines. Sure, there is absolutely no guarantee that vehicular traffic will decrease because of these new services but this will give commuters additional options to avoid the stress of freeway driving and traffic jams. I urge all of you to experience the pleasure of visiting the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys without having to deal with road rage or very slow local buses where multiple transfers may be required to reach your destinations."

Hank Fung renewed the www.socata.net domain name for \$19.98 for two years. He notes this is an in-kind donation to the group and is not seeking reimbursement, just acknowledgment in the next newsletter. Thanks!

Contributors to this issue include JK Drummond, Dominick Falzone, Alek Friedman, Hank Fung, Dana Gabbard, Andy Novak, Perias Pillay, John Ulloth, and Nate Zablen.

TRANSIT UPDATES

Arcadia Transit

New fixed-route service from Arcadia Gold Line station to City Hall, Santa Anita, Westfield Mall, and the County Arboretum debuted on March 5th. Service runs roughly every 25 minutes every day, and fare will be free until June 15th. Not coincidentally, the City of Arcadia will change its dial-a-ride program on June 15th, limiting rides after that date to seniors and disabled.



First trip for Arcadia Transit's new fixed route, at Arboretum 3/5/16 — Mark Strickert photo

City of Burbank

The city is holding a community meeting regarding a proposed pedestrian bridge between the Airport Regional Intemodal Transportation Center and the airport. The meeting takes place Wednesday, March 16th, 5:30 to 7:30PM at Bob Hope Airport. Details at <http://www.burbankca.gov/home/showdocument?id=34669>

Flyaway

Per Dominick Falzone:

"The Flyaway airport bus system has added 2 additional stops for service to Los Angeles International Airport. The new stops are near the

Metro Orange Line busway's Woodley Station, and at the downtown Long Beach Transit Mall.

"The buses which stop at the Orange Line are an added stop for the route already serving the Van Nuys Airport's Flyaway bus terminal.

"The Long Beach Transit Mall provides connections to Los Angeles [city] Department of Transportation buses, Metro buses, Metro Blue Line light rail trains, Long Beach Transit buses, and Torrance Transit buses. Downtown Long Beach itself has a large population of residents and hotel guests.

"Flyaway buses currently pick up LAX airport-bound passengers from 7 locations---Van Nuys Airport, the Metro Orange Line Woodley station, Union Station, Hollywood, Westwood, Santa Monica, and Long Beach. Flyaway buses have discontinued service to 2 additional locations---the Expo Line La Brea station, and the city of Irvine.

"Los Angeles World Airports has completed its legal obligation to expand Flyaway service, according to its website. The Flyaway buses are a service of Los Angeles World Airports. Los Angeles World Airports is a department of the Los Angeles city government, which owns Los Angeles International Airport and Van Nuys Airport.

"In addition to the Flyaway buses, Los Angeles International Airport has service from Metro buses and trains. The municipal bus systems of Santa Monica, Culver City, Torrance, and Redondo Beach also travel to the airport.

"The Los Angeles city government pays private companies to operate Flyaway buses, airport shuttle buses which operate on the streets, and Los Angeles Department of Transportation buses ("DASH" and "Commuter Express" routes). The city government may operate its own buses on

the airfield, itself. The city of Redondo Beach pays a private company to operate its Beach Cities Express bus routes. The cities of Santa Monica, Culver City, Torrance, and Long Beach operate their own buses 280 have been extended to connect with Azusa Intermodal Transit Center, also now served by a commute-hour Line 496 to downtown Los Angeles; Line 272 now connects with the new Duarte Gold Line Station; and Lines 284 and 488 have been extended to the Citrus/APU [Citrus College and Azusa Pacific U] Gold Line Station.

Line 272 will no longer travel along Commerce Dr. and Rivergrade Rd. in Baldwin Park, and will not longer serve the Baldwin Park Metrolink.

Line 284 has been extended to Foothill Blvd. and Citrus Ave., just north of Citrus College.

Line 488 will no longer travel on Cameron Ave. between Vincent Ave. and Citrus Ave. in Covina, instead routed along Rowland Ave. Line 488 customers may use Line 281 which travels along Cameron Ave. in West Covina.

Line 499 has an added trip, leaving Via Verde Park & Ride at 5:20AM



Foothill Transit planners will be meeting the riding public at various locations during the first half of April. Check www.foothilltransit.org/meettheplanner for locations and dates.

Los Angeles Dep't of Transportation

Commuter Express 438 operates two different weekday westbound trips at 3:45 PM, one from Downtown to the Beach Cities, and another to the Marine Park and Ride Lot. LADOT suggests checking the headsign on the front of the bus before you board.

Los Angeles METRO

New Line 501 began daily express service on March 1st, serving limited stops in North Hollywood, Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena. <https://www.metro.net/riding/line501/>

The Expo Line extension from Culver City to Santa Monica starts Friday, May 20th.

City of Monrovia

The city has revived its weekend evening shuttle bus, to connect their Old Town restaurant district with the new Metro Rail Gold Line extension. Stops are at the Monrovia Library, on the southbound side of Myrtle Ave. just south of Palm Ave., and at Station Square, southbound Primrose Ave. south of Pomona Ave. Service operates Friday and Saturday, every 30 minutes from 5:00 PM to 9:45 PM, with \$1.00 fare or transfer/pass/TAP from Metro or from Foothill Transit.

City of Newport Beach

Mass Transit Magazine reported that the city will apply for a grant from Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) to begin a shuttle route for the Balboa peninsula. The shuttle is expected to operate only on summer weekends, to partially replace service OCTA is removing with

cutbacks to its route 71. Article online at http://www.masstransitmag.com/news/12164209/newport-beach-pursues-grant-to-help-pay-for-planned-shuttle-service?utm_source=MASS+NewsViews+Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MASS160126002

San Bernardino Associated Governments

3rd Street in San Bernardino has been officially and permanently closed at J Street, as of February 4. The street closure is related to track work to extend Metrolink to the San Bernardino Transit Center. Because of the street closure, the Omnitrans, Pass Transit, and VVTA routes that used to directly serve the San Bernardino Depot now stop 1½ blocks south at the intersection of Metrolink Way/Giovanola and 2nd Street. Mountain Transit also now uses those stops, but their smaller cutaway buses also still stop at the Metrolink gate when parking lot reconstruction allows. Amtrak Thruway buses still have a stop at the main depot, but have to stop out on 3rd Street east of the depot during lot rebuilding. The railroad track work also currently affects where many Metrolink runs pick up and drop off.

Santa Monica Big Blue Bus

Route 1 - service extends south to Marina Del Rey. Service discontinued between Main St. and Windward Ave., and Venice Blvd. and Walgrove Ave. In anticipation of new Metro Rail service from Santa Monica to downtown Los Angeles (Spring 2016) routing will change to serve the Downtown Santa Monica Station on 4th St. and Colorado Ave., no longer serving Broadway or Santa Monica Blvd. between Ocean Ave. and 4th St. or Ocean Ave. between downtown and Pico Blvd.

Route 2 - new stop, at EB Pico & Main

Route 3 - bus stop removal: WB Manchester Ave. at Lincoln Blvd.

Route 3M - route will become the new Route 18

Route 5 - in anticipation of new Metro Rail service from Santa Monica to downtown Los Angeles (Spring 2016), additional service will operate between Century City and Palms Station during weekday morning and evening peak periods (5:45 AM-9:45 AM and 2:45 PM-7:15 PM), all westbound trips operate up to 9 minutes earlier, will no longer serve the stop SB 4th & Santa Monica, and new stops added at EB Santa Monica & 4th and SB 6th & Santa Monica

Rapid 7 - new stops, at EB Pico & 4th and NB 4th & Pico

Route 8 - new routing in downtown Santa Monica: at Ocean Park Blvd. and 4th St., route 8 will now pass under 4th St. instead of going up and over 4th St. Use bus stops at 5th St. and Ocean Park Blvd. to access this area. Stop removed at Ocean Park & 4th and EB Santa Monica & 6th, and added at 5th & Colorado

Rapid 10 - in anticipation of new Metro Rail service from Santa Monica to downtown Los Angeles (Spring 2016), Rapid 10 will serve bus stops at Bundy & Olympic (adjacent to Bundy station) and at Santa Monica & 17th, and no longer serve stops Santa Monica & 18th or WB Santa Monica & 16th

Route 12 - in anticipation of new Metro Rail service from Santa Monica to downtown Los Angeles (Spring 2016), Route 12 will serve bus stops at WB National & I-10 (adjacent to Palms Station), and adjacent to Westwood Station at NB Westwood & Ashby and SB Westwood & Exposition. Route 12 will no longer serve stops at National & Cardiff or National & Manning

Rapid 12 - in anticipation of new Metro Rail service from Santa Monica to downtown Los Angeles (Spring 2016), Rapid 12 will serve existing

bus stops at WB National & I-10, adjacent to Palms Station, and will be removed from National & Manning, WB Palms & National, and EB National & Venice

Route 16 - new weekday only route, every 30 minutes between West Los Angeles (Wilshire Blvd. and Bundy Dr.) and Marina Del Rey. Route will serve the 26th St./Bergamot Station.

Route 18 - former route 3M becomes new Route 18 and will serve UCLA, downtown Santa Monica, and Venice Beach/Abbot Kinney

Route 41 - Crosstown to 17th St. Station-SMC. Service south of Pico Blvd. is discontinued, and will only operate in a clockwise direction. In anticipation of new Metro rail service (Spring 2016), Route 41 will serve the 17th St./SMC Station.

Route 42 - will begin on the day rail service opens at 17th St./SMC Station. Only operates in a counterclockwise direction (the opposite direction of Route 41)

<http://bigbluebus.com/Routes-And-Schedules/ServiceChanges.aspx>

bigbluebus.com/expo

Southern California Association of Governments

SCAG, in cooperation with Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and San Bernardino Associated Governments, is initiating a study of potential connectivity improvements between the San Gabriel Valley and the San Bernardino Valley. Some of the objectives will be to understand the viability of connecting with the Ontario International Airport as well as coordinating with future extensions of the Metro Gold Line and with the Metrolink San Bernardino and other lines. There will be two rounds of community meetings in the coming months, so

it will be important to come out to see the presentation and provide comments to staff and consultants. Check the following website for details, including meeting dates and locations when announced: <http://www.scag.ca.gov/programs/Pages/InterCountyTransitRail.aspx>



Regional connections in action. Above, Montclair Transit Center hosts Metrolink, Foothill Transit, and Omnitrans.

Below, Mountain Transit, Victor Valley VVTA, and Omnitrans all meet at San Bernardino Transit Center ... with Metrolink to come, and perhaps also Redlands Rail and Pass Transit

-- Mark Strickert photos



Transit Topics Andrew Novak

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

Metra Highliners: On February 12, 2016 Metra officially retired their Highliner Electric cars. The fleet of Highliners first entered service on the Illinois Central on May 31, 1971. Cars 1501-1630 were built by St. Louis car in 1971 and cars 1631-1666 were built by Bombardier in 1978-1979. When new these cars replaced 1920s era interurban cars on the Illinois Central electric line. The electric line operates from Chicago south to three destinations, Blue Island, University Park and South Chicago. Metra assumed operations of these lines in 1987. In 2006 Metra received the first new order of cars and between 2012 and 2016 received a second order of cars which ultimately replaced the original Highliners. Twenty four of the cars have been donated to various railroad museums while the balance of the fleet will be scrapped.



A string of Highliners lead by 1593 is parked at the shop in 1976. -Brue Petty Photo

Greyhound Station Closures: Last month we reported on the closing of the Greyhound Station in Fresno. Sad to say we have two more iconic Greyhound Stations to mention

that will soon be closed. It was announced in December that the Wichita, Kansas station will close and Greyhound will move operations to the downtown transit center. The San Jose, California operation will soon move to the Diridon Station (Caltrain/Amtrak/ACE and VTA). While both of these closures will improve connections to local transit services, it marks an end of an era in intercity bus travel in the US.

Rapid Transit Press : Our friends at Rapid Transit Press completed several great issues of their famous News and Views in 2015 and 2016. In the grand tradition of "Interurbans," "Western Railroader" and "Western Transit" some of these issues include stories on the PCCs of Pennsylvania, 2015 Year in Review via Photos and PCCs of the Shaker Heights Rapid Transit (Cleveland, Ohio). Stories in progress include Shaker Heights Part 2, 2 years of Winterail and the Columbia Park & Southwestern.

For more information contact RTP at:

Andrew Novak - Post Office Box 2383 - Downey, CA 90242 or at rtd1121@yahoo.com



Perris Valley Line dedication Dana Gabbard

Metrolink extension to Perris dedication ceremony, an eyewitness account

Occasionally being an advocate comes with some perks. I have for years been monitoring the slow but steady progress of the extension of Metrolink between Riverside and Perris. My interactions with the lead agency for the project, the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), included arranging for Deputy Executive Director John Standiford to be a speaker at one of our meetings and Community Relations Manager Eliza Echevarria be one of the panelists for the Big Rail Little Rail panel I moderated at the Rail Users' Network 10th Annual Conference, Making the Transition from Roads to Rail, held in Los Angeles on March 27, 2015. Evidently the agency considered me from these activities a stakeholder for the project and it sent me an invitation for the dedication of the line to be held Dec. 11, 2015. Since at that time my work schedule gave me Fridays off I was able to attend. I shared the invitation with the membership in case any of them also wanted to attend and John Ulloth, then editor of the newsletter, availed himself of the opportunity.

Getting from Los Angeles to Perris via public



transit is time consuming (which of course is something the line will alleviate). One advantage of doing it during a weekday is the Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) operates an express bus Monday through Friday, route 204, during peak hours between Montclair and Riverside. To get to Montclair I elected to use Foothill Transit's Silver Streak express route from downtown Los Angeles. Once in Riverside I took RTA route 22 which had a stop at the train station which also includes bays for buses and is already being used as a transit center.

It was a cold, cloudy, windy day which threatened rain. Thankfully large tents had been erected for the festivities. The turnout of stakeholders and officials was heartening, with RCTC estimating it as being over 350. Besides remarks by various dignitaries lunch was served followed by the dedication ceremony at trackside. After the ribbon cutting attendees were given a preview ride of the new line for a short distance (Downtown Perris to Hunter Business Park and back). Also train enthusiasts were able to take an up close look at a special guest at the event, a steam train (VC2) provided by the

nearby Orange Empire Railway Museum (OERM). Plus the atmosphere at the station was enhanced by the presence of the adjacent historic Perris Santa Fe Depot, built in 1892 and restored thanks to a partnership of the city of Perris and OERM via a federal transportation enhancement grant augmented with funds provided by the city.

The line when it opens will be operated as an extension of Metrolink's 91 Line. From its current terminus in downtown Riverside the extension stretches 24 miles and includes 4 new stations in Riverside Hunter Park, Moreno Valley/March Field, Downtown Perris and South Perris. As mentioned above, RCTC is the lead agency for the project, in partnership with the Federal Transit Administration, Southern California Regional Rail Authority (Metrolink), March Joint Power Authority, County of Riverside, City of Perris, City of Riverside and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. The estimated cost of the project is \$248.3 million (excluding the 1993 purchase price of the San Jacinto Branch Line which is the right-of-way being used). While initially this will be a weekday only service many rail activists hope it will eventually provide weekend service to access the OERM in Perris which has electrified track for the operation of the historic streetcars in its collection (which include several PE Red Cars and LA Railway Yellow Cars), at least during special events like its annual Spring festival.

Opening of the line has been delayed by utility-related delays in building the layover facility at the South Perris station and by the installation of Positive Train Control in the locomotives, mandated by the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 and described by the Federal Railroad Administration as "communication-based/processor-based train control technology designed to prevent train-to-train collisions, overspeed derailments, incursions into established work zone limits, and the movement of a train



through a main line switch in the improper position". Opening of the line is now expected to occur either in late March or the first week of April. More information about the project can be found on its website: <http://perrisvalleyline.info>.

It was fun to attend and be part of this celebration, a noteworthy milestone in the growth of rail in our region. The next Southern California commuter rail enhancement is slated to occur in 2017 as the Metrolink San Bernardino line will extend one mile to begin serving the recently opened San Bernardino Transit Center. This is a precursor to the eventual start of commuter rail service between San Bernardino and Redlands, a nine mile project slated to open in 2020. More information about the project can be found on its website: <http://www.redlandsrailproject.org/>





MEMBERS IN ACTION

Members staffing or visiting SOCATA's booth at Downtown Azusa station on March 5th included John Andoh, Hank Fung, Charles Hobbs, Samuel James, Perias Pillay, Warren Quon, Mark Strickert, John Ulloth, James Washington, and Nate Zablen.

JK Drummond presented SOCATA's position on the 460 & 485 at the "sub regional" South Bay hearing, despite the initial reluctance of two council members to accept testimony about anything besides South Bay route changes. At the OCTA service cut hearing in January, he presented SOCATA's position against cutting back route 50, and against removing the 30 from Cerritos Center. Mr. Drummond also objected to eliminating all transit in the northeast corner of Orange County. Mr. Drummond also attended a West Carson Transit Oriented District (TOD) meeting.

Hank Fung presented SOCATA's positions on the proposed Metro Service changes before the San Gabriel Valley Service Council on February 6th. He was also appointed to the Metro Citizen Advisory Commission by John Fasana.

Dana Gabbard is a board member of the Rail Users' Network, and a regular contributor to their quarterly newsletter. In the latest issue, he has a piece on the status of the proposed rail service for commuters between Ventura County and Santa Barbara.

Mark Strickert attended the Rancho Cucamonga public meeting for the Transportation Coordination Plan for San Bernardino County. He offered a number of unmet transit needs in the San Bernardino area, including the negative effects of recent service changes (sorry, but improving north-south routes does not make up for cuts to east-west routes). As of press time, input can still be submitted at <http://transportationcoordination.org/sbplan/>. Mark also wants to give a last-second shout-out to a just-announced series of public meetings in April for Omnitrans' proposed West Valley Connector project, which is essentially sbX round 2 on Foothill and Holt Blvds. Along portions of Omnitrans Routes 66 and 61. We should especially be sure the proposed new Bus Rapid Transit route does not hurt service on the existing local routes (like what sbX did with Route 2). The meeting information link is too odd to re-type here ... e-mail Mark at busnrail@yahoo.com and he will forward the e-mail with information, including meeting locations and dates.

Nate Zablen presented SOCATA's positions on Metro's proposed service changes at the public hearings in Van Nuys on February 3rd and at the hearings at the Metro Board Room Downtown on February 6th. At the San Fernando Valley hearing, he noted SOCATA's support for some of the changes in the area, such as the extension of lines 734, 788, and evening & weekend 234 to the Expo Sepulveda Station. Nate did add that with the longer routes there should be no reduction in the current headways. Therefore, more buses would have to be added. He also expressed group support for the Express 501 that would connect the NoHo Red Line Station with Pasadena. 🚌

Yearly Dues for SOCATA:

Individual Members: \$30.00 (Print or PDF)

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 Mark Strickert, busnrail@yahoo.com, texts to (909) 685-1977, or mail to PO Box 1171, Rialto CA 92377

Please enclose a self addressed stamped envelope for returns. Submissions are used at the discretion of the editor and may be edited for space constraints, or for grammar, or spelling.

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 individual authors and not necessarily that of the SOCATA.

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Next SO.CA.TA Gathering:

**April 30th and May 1st:** booth at Fullerton Railroad Days, Santa Fe and Pomona, Fullerton

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