

THE TRANSIT ADVOCATE

Newsletter of the Southern California Transit Advocates

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Inside This Issue:

- Bulletin Board — page 2
- Transit Updates — page 2
- Sleepbus — page 4
- Santa Barbara-Ventura Commuter Rail — page 5
- Mobile Fresh Bus — page 7
- Members in Action — page 7

*Test Train on the Metro
Rail Expo Line extension,
just west of the
"Westwood/Rancho Park"
station*

Photo by Alek Friedman

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BULLETIN BOARD Mark Strickert busnrail@yahoo.com

Southern California Transit Advocates (SOCATA) group.

will have a booth at one of the Expo Line Santa Monica extension opening events on May 21st. As of press time, station location was still to be announced. Dana Gabbard asks for any ideas on what sort of materials we should have to fill our tables at events, such as the Trains magazine Trackside Guides and Anaheim streetcar proposal flyers Dana was able to procure for the Fullerton Railroad Days booth. We need volunteers for the Expo Line opening booth; Please let us know ASAP if you can help. The slots for the Expo Line preview rides have been taken, but if any other opportunities become available Dana will share that information.

Dana also notes that we are planning an event this fall for the Wilshire Corridor subway extension, which will use up the remaining funds from the APTA grant we obtained some years ago.

Dana Gabbard reports our finances are in very good shape even after paying for the booth at Fullerton Railroad Days.

Andy Novak is mulling a revival of our organized group riding of transit to explore service. SOCATA used to have such "study tours" three or four times a year. If/when Andy comes up with a tour and itinerary we will share it with the

John Ulloth has volunteered to chair a transit photo contest to generate interest in our group. "The purpose of this contest is to capture images of transit operations to be used to promote transit use & ridership throughout Southern California (ranging everywhere in California from San Luis Obispo south to the Mexican Border)," and to promote SOCATA. He'd like 3-5 members with an artistic eye to help jury the effort. Entries would be taken until December 1st, 2016. Let us know if you are willing to assist this effort. For full information, contact Transit Photos, c/o PO Box 7232, Van Nuys, CA 91409.



The SOCATA newsletter "headway" is every other month, with deadlines for the rest of 2016 on Wednesdays July 6th, September 7th, and November 2nd. Please note new mailing address for newsletter items: Mark Strickert, PO Box 1171, Rialto CA 92377. E-mail still goes to busnrail@yahoo.com, and texts to (909) 685-1977.

Contributors to this issue include Alek Friedman, Hank Fung, Dana Gabbard, Andy Novak, John Ulloth, and Nate Zablen.

TRANSIT UPDATES

Anaheim Resort Transit

ART has a new Angels Express route from the Disneyland/Convention Center area to all Angels home games. This complimentary service, funded by The Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Review Committee (MSRC), picks up from the Anaheim Convention Grand Plaza, GardenWalk (Katella Avenue side), and the Disneyland

Transportation Center from 90 minutes until 30 minutes after the start of each game. Return service will begin at the bottom of the 7th inning. Angels fans can also take the ARTIC Sports Complex line from any of the ARTIC Sports Complex line stops to the Angel Stadium via Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center. <http://rideart.org/angels-express/>

TRANSIT UPDATES continued

Los Angeles METRO

Expo Phase 2 to Santa Monica opens on Friday, May 20th, following a "VIP celebration" that is scheduled to start at 10:00 AM. There will be free rides on Expo Line beginning after VIP celebration through midnight on Saturday the 21st. Community celebrations will to be held on the 21st at several of the stations.

Re: the Metro service changes for June, Hank Fung notes that all changes were approved from the original proposal with the exception of transfer of Line 270 south of El Monte Station to Norwalk Transit, cancellation of Line 460 Downtown-Norwalk segment, and adding stops on Line 577 plus eliminating express fare. Also, there is a "receive and file" so the Board may have delegated their powers to the service councils, including for Tier 1 service, although as the ultimate decision maker they reserve the right to overrule, so the 190/194 change may still be killed if the unions can get 7 board members to stop it. [Document Link](#)

Nate Zablen tells us Metro is seeking public input on the proposed fiscal year 2017 (FY17) budget. A Budget Public Hearing will take place 1:00 PM on Wednesday, May 18th in the Board room at Metro HQ. There will also be presentations at each of the May sector meetings. Comments can also be submitted via an online form at <https://www.metro.net/about/financebudget/budget-comments/> or by email to budgetcomments@metro.net through May 13th at 5:00.

Morongo Basin Transit Authority

MBTA has been working with Joshua Tree National Park to set up a shuttle service to and within the park. Shuttles will run in to the park from Joshua Tree and from Twenty-nine Palms, every two hours. There will also be a circulator within the park, running every 30 minutes with

stops including Jumbo Rocks, Ryan Mountain trailhead, Hidden Valley, and Barker Dam. From November through February, the service will operate Friday through Sunday, on national holidays, and every day between Christmas and New Year's Day. During the peak visitation months of March and April, the service would operate seven days a week. During standard time shuttles will run 8 AM to 5 PM, and during daylight savings time the service continues until 8:30 PM. MBTA Board of Directors approved service implementation on April 28, 2016 to begin in November 2016.

Orange County Transportation Authority

Route 64X offers limited-stop service between Larwin Square and Westminster Mall, weekdays 6 AM to 6 PM, stopping only at bus connection points along 1st St. and Bolsa Ave.

New OCTA Angels Express Bus service, from Goldenwest Transportation Center in Huntington Beach to all Angels weekday home games that start at 7:05 PM. Buses leave Goldenwest at 5:15, 5:30, and 5:45 PM from Dock 10, and depart Angels Stadium of Anaheim as buses fill up, the last one 15 minutes after the game ends.

Omnitrans

Route 61 - With completion of the Vineyard Ave. underpass under the Union Pacific tracks, 61 returns to regular routing on Airport Drive in the City of Ontario.

sbX - has resumed automatic stopping at every stop. They had switched to on-demand stopping in January, but customers and coach operators experienced problems such as visibility issues with the station shelters.

Mountain Transit and Victor Valley Transit bus passes now can be purchased at San Bernardino Transit Center customer service window.

TRANSIT UPDATES continued

A "Bike Hubitat" has opened at the San Bernardino Transit Center. Members of the Inland Empire Biking Alliance (IEBA) will be on site every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 3 to 6 PM, hosting do-it-yourself workshops on maintaining and repairing bicycles. The group asks for a \$5 donation for tune-ups and consultation. Bicycle parts typically cost under \$5.

San Bernardino Associated Governments

A meeting to gather input for SANBAG's San Bernardino County Public Transit Transportation Coordination Plan will take place June 14th at 11:00 AM at the Helen Gray Education Center, 6601 White Feather Rd. in Joshua Tree. The Coordinated Plan is a comprehensive planning

tool to provide guidance and the rationale for new transportations, improvements and grant request oriented towards three target populations: Individuals with disabilities, older adults and persons of low income. There will be additional meetings in the San Bernardino Valley in the coming months. If you would like more information please feel to contact Nancy Strickert at nstrickert@sanbag.ca.gov.

VVTA

Omnitrans and Mountain Transit fare media now counts as \$1.00 towards Route 15/B-V Link fare, and B-V Link fare media is good for one transfer on VVTA local and County Routes or on Barstow Fixed Route.

Sleepbus

A start-up company has begun operating the ultimate motor hotel ... buses with sleeper cubbyholes for overnight non-stop rides between San Francisco's Caltrain station and Santa Monica Pier. Sleepbus operates a converted Volvo truck with 20 privacy-screened sleeping spots with reading lights and twin-sized beds, plus a lounge area, free coffee and tea, and free WiFi. A bike and up to three bags can travel with you for free.

The website picture reminds me of the old Inland Empire Connection and SunBus "Superbus". As of press time they only have one vehicle, so they can only operate northbound and southbound on alternate nights. A second Volvo is on order, and if ridership warrants expansion they already plan to modify a couple double-decker Van Hools.

Andy Novak says, "Shades of the old Green

Tortoise", and it certainly reminds me of sleeping in the padded overhead luggage racks of two of the Tortoise's converted transit buses in the 1980s.

Thanks Andy Novak for passing along information. <http://www.sleepbus.co/#>



Source: Sleepbus website

Santa Barbara-Ventura Commuter Rail - Dana Gabbard

Savvy rail advocates are far too familiar with the daunting complications to achieving rail improvements. This is a status report about one such effort that is making progress despite the hurdles often encountered in rail advocacy.

Sometimes, as in this case, the impetus behind a rail proposal is geographic. Santa Barbara, a picturesque coastal community north of Los Angeles, is hemmed in by mountains on one side and the Pacific Ocean on the other. As a result the space available for housing is limited and often unaffordable. Many who work in Santa Barbara live to the south in Ventura County, which is about 30-40 miles away, and commute to their jobs on the 101 freeway which is the only road connecting the two areas and understandably is highly congested during peak commute times.

The 101 corridor is paralleled by the rail right-of-way owned by the Union Pacific and used by two Amtrak routes, the intercity Pacific Surfliner (which operates five daily round trips between San Diego and Santa Barbara, with two extending to San Luis Obispo) and long distance Coast Starlight route (which operates one daily round trip between Los Angeles and Seattle). Logically interest arose among residents in the effected areas to seek a rail option for weekday commuting between Ventura County and Santa Barbara.

In the early part of the last decade a planning effort was undertaken to address congestion along the corridor under the aegis of the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), a regional planning agency. 101 in Motion involved extensive outreach to stakeholders over more than two years. Through the efforts of advocates like Dennis Story of Coastal Rail Now the final recommendations approved by the SBCAG Board in October 2005 included

commuter rail.

101 in Motion was the basis for the project list in Measure A, the Santa Barbara County transportation sales tax passed in 2008. It allocated \$25 million (over 30 years) for Commuter and Passenger Rail Planning and Service Improvements. The rail portion of the \$1 billion Measure A program is overseen by Scott Spaulding, Principal Transportation Planner at SBCAG. Per the Measure A website "Eligible expenditures are capital and operating costs including developing new schedules and service plans, obtaining environmental clearances, negotiating agreements, operating subsidies, rolling stock and related equipment, promotions and marketing, maintenance, connecting transit service, track improvements, station facilities, train and grade crossing controls."

Initial efforts have focused on adjusting the Surfliner's schedule to make it convenient for the use of commuters between Ventura County and Santa Barbara and other communities in Santa Barbara County (including Goleta and Carpinteria) with hopes of eventually augmenting this at a later time with dedicated commuter train service.

A change in the Surfliner schedule involves cooperation from Metrolink, whose commuter service in Orange, Los Angeles, and Ventura Counties uses the same rail right of way as the Surfliner, and right of way owner Union Pacific, which operates freight service throughout California and the western United States. Slots in the busy coastal rail corridor served by both Amtrak, Metrolink, the Coaster (in San Diego County), and freight railroads are at a premium. Negotiations are underway among the key entities to work out a plan to make the schedule change a reality (Union Pacific, Metrolink, Amtrak, the California Dept. of Transportation,

the Ventura County Transportation Commission, and SBCAG). The joint powers authority that previously just advocated for better service but now also directly manages the Pacific Surfliner, the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor (LOSSAN) Agency, is a central party in these talks.

An extensive and growing list of stakeholder organizations and elected officials are providing leadership to the effort. Dennis Story has for years tirelessly worked to build this coalition along with putting on an annual event tied to National Train Day with a demonstration round-trip train ride between Santa Barbara and Carpinteria along with a press conference attended by key elected officials supporting the proposal.

The stakeholders include:

- Rail Passengers Association of California & Nevada (RailPAC) <http://www.railpac.org/>
- Coalition for Sustainable Transportation (COAST) <http://coast-santabarbara.org/>
- Alliance for Sustainable and Equitable Regional Transportation (ASERT)
- Coastal Rail Now (CRN)

The officials include:

- State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, chair of the Senate Select Committee on Passenger Rail
- State Assemblymember Das Williams
- First District Supervisor Salud Carbajal who also is a LOSSAN Board member
- Santa Barbara Mayor Helene Schneider
- Santa Barbara Councilman Gregg Hart
- Goleta Councilmembers Paula Perotte and Michael Bennet

Supervisor Carbajal recently stated regarding the project and its status: "Creating a rail option for commuters traveling from Ventura to their jobs in Goleta and Santa Barbara is critical to our long term plan to reduce congestion on the 101 freeway."

"We've been working for a long time to establish peak hour rail service between Ventura and Santa Barbara counties—with regional control of the Pacific Surfliner service, we should be able to push this across the goal line."

Despite setbacks, skepticism expressed by some and institutional challenges the effort has been slowly making progress toward the day in the hopefully not too distant future when a rail option will be not simply a dream but a reality. Kudos to Story and the other activists whose vision and passion has been the foundation to the progress of the effort to date and the eventual success. Their tenacity deserves high praise. Bravo!

My thanks to Dennis Story of Coastal Rail Now, Scott Spaulding of the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, Scott Johnson of Metrolink, Lisa Valencia/Eric Friedman of the office of Santa Barbara County Supervisor Salud Carbajal, Paul Dyson of the Rail Passenger Association of California and Nevada and Jennifer L Bergener of the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor Agency for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this piece.

Originally written for the Rail Users' Network newsletter.



Next Stop, Food Desert Mark Strickert



Mobile Fresh bus, converted from donated Riverside Transit NABI #2214, brings fresh produce and other foods to senior centers and other places not within easy reach of a grocery store. The bus spends several days each month at various locations in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. I caught up with it one morning at the Fontana Community Senior Center, where it parks from 10 to 11 AM every other Tuesday (next visit, May 24th).

While designed to serve seniors, and people who live in "food deserts" far from stores with fresh produce, the store on wheels is open to all.

Another converted Transit facility tie-in ... On the other Tuesdays, the 10 to 11 AM stop is at Sierra and Seville in Fontana, here the Pacific Electric bike trail crosses Sierra Ave. The Fontana stops are in cooperation with Healthy Fontana, a city agency that promotes healthy eating and activities. Their table next to the bus even had a Pacific Electric bike trail brochure, to encourage its use for walking and biking.

Family Service Association www.fsaca.org

Members in Action

Alek Friedman attended Metro's Plummer Park public meeting regarding their \$120 billion investment and draft 40-year plan. He have shared some of my suggestions with the staff, such as while their so-called "bold" plan will be a major improvement, much more needs to be done to truly provide a reliable, efficient, and attractive mass transit system for L.A. County. Alek has also been actively in-touch with LA-DOT's bike division representative, regarding a few new bike racks - on La Brea and La Cienega. While he haven't seen new racks yet, the bright orange markings are a good indicator that racks

are coming. Mr. Friedman's article on the "Roughwest Chief" has been published by Rail-PAC: <http://www.railpac.org/2016/04/27/thanksgiving-ride-on-train-4-the-roughwest-chief/>

Andy Novak is the editor of the ERHA's newly-revived Timepoints newsletter. The newsletter will be sent out quarterly, in digital form. E-mail Andy at rtd1121@yahoo.com for membership information and other particulars,

Mark Strickert visited the Express Service proposal public information table at San Bernardino

SOCATA dues (prorated to end of 2016):

Individual Members: \$22.50 (Print or PDF)

Low Income: \$9.00 (PDF Newsletter)

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.

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Next SOCATA Gathering:

**May 21st:** booth at Expo Line Phase II opening

**May / June 2016 — Issue 271**



**Members in Action continued**

Transit Center, submitting favorable comments on additional morning, midday, and afternoon trips for Express Route 290. There was also a map and scheduled for a proposed new Express Route 208 from Yucaipa to San Bernardino. The same evening, Mark and his kids attended a West Valley Connector scoping session in Fontana. The proposed BRT route is already nearly set, basically Holt Blvd. from Pomona to Ontario, Foothill Blvd. in Rancho Cucamonga and Fontana, and Sierra Ave. from Foothill to Kaiser Hospital/South Fontana transfer area. Consultants were seeking input for the environmental review process, and for setting the portion of the route to connect the Foothill and Holt sec-

tions. Mr. Strickert preferred the Millikan Ave. plan, via Rancho Cucamonga Metrolink and Ontario Mills, to minimize turns (compared to all other given options) and to maximize connections to other routes. He also expressed hope Omnitrans learned from the mistakes of their two-year-old sbX BRT route, including their having taken service hours away from the well-used local routes the BRT will overlay. Not coincidentally, this problem came up at San Bernardino Transit Center that morning, when a table staffer was surprised to see a large number of people waiting at the Route 2 bay ... no surprise really, when they are only running hourly service on a historically 15-minute route.