

THE TRANSIT ADVOCATE

Newsletter of the Southern California Transit Advocates
April-Oct 2019 Vol. 27, No. 2



*New Flyer XE60 electric bus for use on the Orange Line
Kenny Uong photo*

Inside This Issue:

- Transit Updates (p. 2)
- From The President (p. 3)
- Beaumont Banning Bus Breakup (p. 4)
- Can We Save LA's Transit (p. 6)
- Metro's Owl Lineup (p. 8)
- Day After Thanksgiving Trip Proposal (p. 10)
- Photos Of The Month (p. 11)

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Transit Updates

METRO

Completion date of Blue Line will be Saturday Nov 2. Free rides will be offered on Nov 2, 3, and 4.

The completion of the Blue Line project means the temporary shuttles (#860, #863, and #864) will be cancelled. Due to popular demand, Metro will continue to provide limited service on #860 (renumbered #456, after the original LA-Long Beach express bus). Four trips will run to downtown LA in the morning and return to Long Beach in the evening.

METROLINK

Changes, eff., Oct 14:

Orange County Line: train #682 leaves LAUS at 6:26 am, 20 minutes earlier than previously. #645 will leave Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo station at 9:25 pm, 35 minutes later than previously

Train #644 - leaves Fullerton at 10:10 pm, 20 minutes later. Will hold at Anaheim (until the end of ball games, etc) no later than 11:30 pm.

Trains #633, #632, #643 and #642, formerly OC-only Fullerton-Laguna Niguel trains, have been extended to LAUS. OC-only trains #634 and #635 cancelled.

91/Perris Valley Line: Reconfigured to provide four commuter round trips leaving Perris in the morning and LAUS in the evening. (Midday service between Riverside and Perris cancelled). New Saturday service - two trains leaving Perris and Riverside in the morning to LAUS, returning in the afternoon/evening. (Still no service enabling someone in the US to ride to Perris and visit the OERM for a day, though!)

San Bernardino Line: Substantial changes on weekend service. Also the last train on Friday nights will now leave at 11:38 pm, for consistency with the last Saturday train.

No changes on the Ventura County or Antelope Valley Lines.

Also, a new Amtrak train is operating, bringing the total number of Pacific Surfliner roundtrips to

13.

SANTA MONICA (BIG BLUE BUS)

New Route 45 provided shuttle service in Downtown Santa Monica through the summer (until Sept 2). Starting at the corner of 5th/Colorado, via Colorado, Ocean, Santa Monica, and 5th back to Colorado, this route links the Santa Monica Expo Line station with the Pier, the Third Street Promenade, and other attractions.

Minor service changes go into effect August 18 for Lines #1, 2, 5, 7, Rapid 7, 8 and 12.

FOOTHILL TRANSIT

New fares eff. Sept 29

Regular Local fares are now \$1.75; the Silver Streak now charges \$3, and Commuter Express routes cost \$5.50. A day pass is \$6, and a local/Silver Streak 31-day pass is \$60. There is a 25-cent discount for use of a TAP card for local and Silver Streak fares.

Also effective Sept. 29: Line #291 peak hour service via Towne and Baseline in La Verne has been cancelled due to low ridership.

All eastbound Line #194 morning trips terminate at Valley and Temple (Cal Poly Pomona).

ANTELOPE VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Effective June 3, AVTA's new Line #748 provides two commuter peak hour trips between Palmdale/Lancaster and the Mojave Air and Space Port.

OCTA

OCBus changes, eff. Oct 13

Line #462 has been replaced with new #862 during OC Streetcar construction. #862 will run 7-days per week.

Lines #55 and #83 will also have their routes modified in Santa Ana, again due to the streetcar construction.

(continued on Page 5)

From The President

The Southern California Transit Advocates held its most recent business meeting on Saturday, August 3rd at Angelus Plaza in Los Angeles. The members in attendance discussed the LA Metro's "Next Generation" bus network study, and resolved to speak against service cuts. Member Brian Yanity gave a power point presentation how metro Vancouver is making itself more transit friendly. I discussed potential transit study tours this summer and fall, including the Day After Thanksgiving, with the hope members will plan some excursions. I reminded attendees that people were expected to fill out renewal applications and turn them in even if they were choosing the option of not sending in dues money in 2019.

The November 9th SO.CA.TA meeting was cancelled. Or, more precisely, it was combined with the December meeting which will most likely be held on Saturday, December 7th (subject to board approval ... keep watching the e-mails for confirmation). Said meeting will begin promptly at 1:00 PM with nominations for the 2020 Board of Directors, followed soon after by elections.

Member Robert Meinert <eclecticexplorer@gmail.com> would like members to consider this action:

"I would highly encourage members to write Elaine Chao, Transportation Secretary in the Trump Administration regarding the Highway Bill, which expires in 15 mos.

"The more people who reach her regarding the direction we want to see transportation policy go in this country, the better. There's a strong emphasis on highway & road funding, w investment in autonomous technology.

My own opinion is we focus on buses, BRT, rail, both local & rapid transit, & traditional driving cars/trucks, w some investment in carpool infrastructure, as of the latter, in the Southland.

"In Florida, the first privately-funded high speed rail has started, & that could be a catalyst for the Dep't of Transportation to aid efforts to develop it. Essentially, we have to think outside the box.

"Electric buses have been entering the market as a competitive vehicle to CNG-fueled buses. The spirit of competition allows market response naturally to changing conditions in transportation, as w the rise of electric private vehicles.

"I realize many strongly disagree (with) Trump, but this is something that can bring people together, because all benefit from transit investment. I believe the Purple Line was one item that was subject to some federal funding." 🚗

Beaumont Banning Bus Breakup Charles P. Hobbs

About 80 miles east of Los Angeles lies the City of Beaumont. Immediately to the east of Beaumont sits the City of Banning. The combined population of the two cities is about 75,000.

From the mid-1970s, Banning and Beaumont operated separate transit systems. Beaumont's dial-a-ride system covered the city and the adjacent unincorporated town of Cherry Valley. Twice weekly, a Beaumont bus ran to Calimesa and Yucaipa, where it connected with Omnitrans. Beaumont added a fixed-route loop in the mid-1990s.

Banning Municipal Transit had two routes linking downtown Banning with the northern and southern parts of the city. A third route, between Banning and Cabazon, served an outlet mall and casino. The two transit systems shared a common transfer point at the Banning Memorial Hospital.

The Riverside Transit Agency (RTA) extended its transit service to Beaumont in 1987, enabling connections to Hemet and further into Western Riverside County. Sunline Transit extended a route from Palm Springs to Banning in the early 1990s, but it only lasted a few months.

In late 2002, the cities formed a new transit agency, Pass Transit, following almost two years of discussions about transit improvements. The Memorandum of Understanding between Beaumont and Banning allowed the two cities to continue running their own transit systems under the brand "Pass Transit."

Service along 6th/Ramsey was shared by both cities. Banning ran Line #1, while Beaumont operated Line #2. Both lines provided service to Cabazon. Other Pass Transit routes operated entirely within one of the two cities. Each city kept the fares deposited on its buses. For example, all fare revenue on Line #2 went to Beaumont, even if the fare was paid in Banning.

This arrangement worked amicably for a few years. However, by the mid-2010s, Banning officials were expressing concern that bus fares collected in Banning

should remain with that city. (Each transit agency, to receive certain state funds, needs to get a certain percentage of its funding from the farebox. Banning officials felt that Beaumont's buses operating through their city made meeting its farebox percentage more difficult).

In June 2019, the two cities made a new agreement. Beaumont's Line #2 would no longer enter Banning; it would end at Highland Springs Avenue and Beaumont Walmart shopping center. Line #2 would continue to serve Casino Morongo in Cabazon, but via the I-10 freeway, bypassing Banning. Line #1, operated by Banning, would begin at Walmart, and use its present route to Banning and Cabazon via Ramsey. Both agencies would continue to accept each other's transfers at no cost.

The new agreement is to continue for at least one year. 🚌

(Transit Updates, from Page 2)

Line #26 will be extended to Yorba Linda Bl/ Imperial Highway every day, while Line #59 will be extended to the District (shopping center) in Tustin.

RTA

New fares, eff. July 1:

Fares on local buses are now \$1.75, day passes are \$5, 7-day passes cost \$20 and 31-day passes cost \$60.

Commuterlink (express) buses have a one-way fare of \$3.50, day passes cost \$10, and 30 day passes cost \$95.

Schedule changes, eff. Sept. 8

On Route #1, midday weekend service will run every 15 minutes.

Route #12 will be extended from Tyler Mall to Corona Hills Plaza.

Routes #23, 24 and 61 will serve the Promenade Temecula Mobility Hub, instead of County Center

Route 79 will be extended to Mt. San Jacinto College.

Various routes around the RTA system will have low-ridership trips (mostly early morning or late evening) discontinued.

OMNITRANS

Route changes, eff Sept. 3

Route #11 became Line #12, connecting Fontana Metrolink with Cal State San Bernardino and serving the new Renaissance Marketplace shopping center in Rialto (The route will no longer serve Downtown San Bernardino)

Route #22 was also rerouted in Rialto to serve the new Renaissance Marketplace.

Line #208, express between Yucaipa, Redlands and San Bernardino, was cancelled due to low ridership.

Selected low-usage trips on #1, #3, #7, #14, 15, 22, and #66 were also eliminated.

Omnitrans fares have also changed, effective Sept 2.

Regular Fare - \$2.00, day pass \$6.00, 7-day, \$20.00, 31-day \$60.00

VCTC

Route changes, eff. Aug 29

Lines #90, (Oxnard, Camarillo), #96, and #97 (CSUCI shuttle routes) are cancelled and replaced with new Line #99, a new line running connecting C Street Transfer Center in Oxnard, the campus, and Camarillo Metrolink

Most peak weekday Coastal Express trips (serving Santa Barbara and/or Goleta) have been extended to Camarillo Metrolink. 🚌

Can We Save L.A.'s Mass Transit Alek Friedman

Since 2004, I have been a frequent user of public transportation in Los Angeles. Even though it was far from perfect, it still offered relatively frequent and convenient service (albeit not always reliable), clean buses and trains, and a generally safe environment -- all of which offered a great, inexpensive alternative to driving.

...Up until recently. Over the past five+ years, LA's mass transit has noticeably deteriorated, becoming a very unpleasant, unsafe, and an overall very time-consuming ordeal. Infrequent service, slow buses (with abnormally long run-times), and rising crime and harassment -- especially on our metro-rail trains -- all those factors are, sadly, today's norm. That's in addition to removed Rapid service from some popular corridors.

So, let me get this straight. On the one hand, Metro seems to be "puzzled" as to its continuous and consistent ridership decline over the years. On the other hand, Metro is actually doing everything possible to cause that steady ridership drop, by slashing its services year after year...

I was at the Union Station earlier today - and picked-up a whole bunch of schedules that took effect as of 6/23/2019. And, as expected, I saw nothing better than an even-further reduced service on many bus lines. Well, to no surprise!

Attached please find a perfect example of Metro's "perfect" solution to address its ridership drop: you can see a comparison - I scanned both the December 2018 and June 2019 schedules - to illustrate just how bad the bus service is becoming

in our City of Angels... -- And line 780 is only one example of severely degraded service..

Currently, Metro is in the process of developing the so-called "NextGen" bus study. However, I am skeptical whether this study would actually improve things. Based on the NextGen online information -- as well as Metro's overall reputation and lack of political will -- it's very doubtful LA will be able to create a reliable and attractive mass transit system.

First, a quote from the "NextGen" page on the Metro's website: "The goal of the NextGen Bus Study is to create an attractive and competitive world-class bus system. To achieve this goal, all aspects of Metro bus service are on the table for study, including speed, distance, frequency, time of day, reliability as well as quality of service and safety." -- At least, great to see they have the right idea! I emphasized the "attractive and competitive world-class bus system" part -- because this is the fundamental principle of any public transportation system around the world.

Here is the unfortunate reality: since Metro hasn't been able to provide reliable & safe mass transit till now, I see little chance they will do so in the future. Unless the LACMTA's management system is overhauled -- including replacing its CEO and, perhaps, the board of directors -- in order to turn things around. As mentioned earlier (and I'm sure most readers would agree), by the way things appear - our mass transit service keeps rolling downhill.

I don't understand the logic behind Metro's actions. Why are they even considering this so-

called "Next Gen" bus study - if they cannot seem to comprehend the basics of public transportation?! -- For starters, the more service you cut, the more ridership you lose. And in return, the more ridership you have lost - the more service you are now forced to cut - due to the decreased revenue - forcing to cut their service even deeper... Does that mean, this "Next Gen" study will incorporate the total elimination of LA's mass transit?. -- At least, that's the way things appear. One would think: during the preparation for the "Next Gen" bus study, wouldn't it make sense for Metro to at least (!) try to improve its service for the time being?.. Yes, they certainly should. But in reality, they appear to do everything possible to make our mass transit as miserable and inefficient as possible.

Another reason why I don't have much faith in the "NextGen" study is because of this statement (also from Metro's NextGen website): "Some of the most heavily traveled lines, e.g. Vermont Ave., Western Ave., Ventura Blvd. may not see major changes..." -- And that's where the problem remains, because these (and other) heaviest traveled lines are the ones that actually need major service improvement. So, the fact that Metro already has set plans to "not see major changes" is truly bothersome. Which means, we will end-up back to Square One!

Why am I switching back to driving? Sorry, but I'm fed-up with unreliable and slow service; with homeless, transients, and crackheads on buses (who keep getting a free ride), rude passengers who don't know what "Rules of Conduct" means (and drivers who don't give a damn about enforcing such Rules of Conduct), with the worst and clumsiest buses imaginable (the New Flyer Xcelsiors are extremely uncomfortable and rough - in addition to having an ongoing problem with their brakes' wear-out, causing uneven braking and jerking), and totally unsafe environment on our Metro-Rail lines (especially late evening & night hours) - with barely any presence of Law Enforcement. Sorry, Metro - but you are running your own public transit system into the ground!

Unless Metro somehow drastically - and miraculously - changes its current direction (with replacing its CEO and the whole company's strategy!), our public transit system is all but certain to continue its path to its ultimate demise.

Time for a major change, dear Metro 🚗

Metro's Owl Lineup Hank Fung

The Metro lineup is an official practice where late night and owl service buses meet along 7th Street, Broadway, Grand, Olive, Main, and Spring to make a connecting transfer.

The owl routes which used to make the lineup were the #2, 4, 10, 14, 18, 20, 28, 30, 33, 37, 38, 40, 45, 51, 55, 60, 70, 76, 83 and 92. They arrived just past the start of the hour and leave 7th Street at around :11 past the hour.

In addition to the routes above, the following routes have "historically" made the owl lineup even though they do not run past 2 am: #10, 26, 28 (Olympic), 35, 37, 42, 48, 51, 62, 66, 68, 78, 81, 84, and 96.(based on 2008 schedules, the zenith of the bus system).

The note on a timetable will state, "Waits at [name of north/south street] and 7th (or in the case of the 66, 8th and 9th) for transfer connections". If it doesn't say that, it doesn't officially make the lineup. The express lines, Metro Rail, and municipal operators also did not make the lineup.

Over time, lines fell off the lineup. The #4 ran too frequently overnight to make the lineup useful (it is the only Metro route to run more frequently than every 30 minutes after 2 am).

The #60 took too long to come from Long Beach so now it totally misses the lineup.

In the June 2019 schedule change, the #70 and #76 from El Monte Station now miss the lineup. They both arrive 7th St at around :30 past the hour. So if you are coming from the eastside to go west, you are stuck downtown for 40 minutes for a transfer.

Since I checked the 2009 schedules, more routes are dropping the "waits for transfer connections" note. So a late bus could leave you hanging for an hour. (My understanding is that the permanent owl supervisor downtown was dropped years ago.)

Overall, if the bus runs hourly and doesn't make the timed transfer downtown, you are less likely to ride owl service. Thus, the population of travelers drop and the population of those using it as shelter rises. It's bad for the sustainability of late night service. 🚏

[illegible]

Day After Thanksgiving (Nov 29) Trip Proposal Mark Strickert

Los Angeles-Bakersfield-Lancaster "Kite" trip

Local rides or meal stops may be possible where connection time gaps allow.

Metrolink

Leave LA Union Station - 6:19 or 8:29 AM

Arrive Santa Clarita - 7:26 or 9:32 AM

Kern Transit 130

Leave Santa Clarita - 7:45 or 10:55 AM

Arrive Bakersfield GET - 9:44 AM or 12:48 PM

Kern Transit 100

Leave Bakersfield GET - 12:45 or 2:26 PM

Arrive Lancaster - 3:19 or 5:00 PM

Metrolink

Leave Lancaster 6:17 PM

Leave Palmdale 6:26 PM

Arrive LA Union 8:42 PM

Fares

Metrolink LA-Santa Clarita \$ 7.50

Kern Transit \$ 5.00 each bus

Metrolink Lancaster-LA \$11.5

A trip in the opposite direction is also possible, with some AVTA riding including the 790 TRANSporter from Newhall to Palmdale, but there is not much wiggle room between the Kern Transit 130 and the Metrolink back to Los Angeles. Other Great Unknowns include Tejon Pass conditions that day, and shopping traffic especially for the 130 in Laval and South Bakersfield.

Questions or comments to busnrail@yahoo.com 🚌

Photos of the Month



*Above: Riverside Transit Agency, near University of California, Riverside
Below: UC Irvine Shuttle and OCTA bus near University of California, Irvine
(Both: C. P. Hobbs)*



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: We prefer email to cph1776@yahoo.com. Print materials can be sent to 3010 Wilshire #362, Los Angeles, CA 90010.

Please enclose a self addressed stamped envelope for returns. Submission are used at the discretion of the editor and may be edited for space constraints.

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Next SO.CA.TA Gatherings:

**November 16:** "Rail and Transit in Orange County"  
1 - 3 p.m.  
Tranquil Tea Lounge  
106 W. Wilshire, Fullerton  
RSVP: info@calelectricrail.org

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