



TRANSIT UPDATES

Help keep all of your fellow SO.CA.TA members informed!! If you notice any new, modified, or cancelled transit services, please call us at 213-254-9041!

Note: Information **Metrolink** services is on page 5.

Construction has started on the **MTA Metro Red Line** segment between Hollywood and North Hollywood.

Also, the MTA Board has approved both the San Fernando Valley Bus Restructuring Plan and the Metro Green Line Bus-Rail Interface Plan.

Long Beach Transit #15 (Del Amo) is now part of #191 (Santa Fe Ave); #161 (South St) is now part of #192 (Santa Fe Ave). (#193 and #194 are shortlines that operate between Downtown Long Beach and the Del Amo Blue Line station, only).

Foothill Transit has added additional weekend service to #480 (Los Angeles-Montclair Express). Service is now provided every fifteen

minutes between Downtown Los Angeles and Eastland Center (West Covina); with 30-minute service beyond Eastland.

Foothill has also rerouted #691 (Claremont-Monrovia-East Pasadena Express) to serve Arcadia). Two peak-hour round trips operate each weekday (except holidays)

Orange County Transportation Agency has also made a few changes:

#1 (Pacific Coast Highway) is now bike-rack equipped.

#257 (Diamond Bar-Santa Ana Express) now also stops at the Pathfinder Road park/ride lot

All service on #320 (Brea-Yorba Linda) and midday service on #382 (Irvine-Costa Mesa) has been cancelled due to low ridership.



FROM THE EDITOR

Announcements and comments about SO.CA.TA

• A new feature, starting with this issue, is the "Route Of The Month" (on Page 6). Each month, a different route will be showcased. Hopefully, this will increase everyone's familiarity with the different transit routes and operators in the five-county Los Angeles area!

• As always, *The Transit Advocate* needs articles, letters, photographs and research (newspaper clippings, etc.) from all members and interested non-members. If you see an interesting, transit-related article in the newspaper, consider sending a copy (preferably two copies) of the article to Box 41198, Los Angeles 90041. Material for publication should be received two weeks before the scheduled SO.CA.TA meeting date

-Charles P. Hobbs, President/Newsletter Editor

WHAT MTA SHOULD DO NOW

C.P. Hobbs, President
and Newsletter Editor

Editors Note: This represents the author's opinion only and is not necessarily an official position of SO.CA.TA

Some of the stuff that happened with the MTA (i.e. methane gas under Wilshire, the recession, etc.) was beyond the control of the agency.

I think, though, the MTA and its predecessors brought a lot of this on themselves, with the continued political infighting, bad accounting, and almost non-existent planning. Everyone asks, why is there no line between Downtown and LAX? or a line to some of the entertainment venues? Because no one really planned for it.

Some of these lines (10-60 Corridor in particular) had no real plan behind them; MTA just spent millions on planning them because some politician asked them to. Every politician wanted a line in his or her district, and they operated on a "Me First" basis, with very little regard for a connected system, or the people who would actually have to use it.

Now here we are. MTA has no money, possibly less likelihood of Federal funding, and certainly very little credibility with the public, in light of the recent construction problems, bus fare increase, etc.

Enough is enough. The Red Line extensions (at least to North Hollywood, Pico/Rimpau and East LA/Atlantic Bl) will get built. So will the Pasadena Blue Line, but possibly in a reduced-cost form (portions single tracked, some stations temporarily omitted, perhaps terminated at Del

Mar Bl. rather than Sierra Madre Villa). Don't expect to see any of this stuff open until 2002 at the earliest.

Meanwhile, MTA should:

1. *Clean up those buses.* Some of them look pretty gross. Environmentally correct or not, few people would give up their car for the sublime privilege of crowding onto an MTA bus full of graffiti. Non-MTA carriers, such as Long Beach, Foothill, LADOT, etc. don't have this problem nearly as bad as MTA. That's why everyone crowds onto LADOT's #423 to Encino, (and overcrowding the Encino park/ride lot while MTA's #427 to Canoga Park runs almost empty. People just don't have much confidence in the MTA buses, period. (And forget the excuse "well, unlike those fancy suburban buses, we run through the ghetto.") Long Beach, Torrance, Gardena Bus Lines also run through some of the worst places in town, and they still manage to keep their buses clean and reasonably free of graffiti)

2. *Concentrate on improving service on the most heavily used routes.* Develop more limited-stop routes (#310 and #315 are steps in the right direction, but we need more, more, more!)

3. *Be more aggressive in abandoning lines for other operators to pick up.* Yes, it's a big blow to MTA's ego, and the union might get mad. So what? I'd rather have the best possible service on the heavy lines, and Foothill or LADOT handle the outlying service and neighborhood shuttles, than diluted service everywhere because MTA feels it must "do it all".

(cont'd on page 6)



RED LINE ON WILSHIRE?

Elson Trinidad *
and Kraig Meyer**

Editor's Note: This article was originally posted to the Internet in response to the MTA Citizens' Advisory Committee resolution regarding including a Wilshire Red Line route in the Supplemental Environmental Impact report.

Part of the reason that the line was originally diverted away from Wilshire was local opposition to a station at Crenshaw and Wilshire, in the belief that it would attract crime. Statistics from the existing Blue and Red lines, showing a decrease in crime in areas near Metro stations, should allay that fear.

Actually, these fears were mainly held during the 1980s, when this "Metro Rail" thing only existed in the form of blueprints and artist's renderings. At the time, the residents along Wilshire, particularly those who live between Crenshaw and LaBrea, heard the word "subway" and images of bums and prostitutes riding graffiti-adorned clickety-clackety subway trains filled their heads.

Fast-forward to the early 1990s, when these same people saw the Metro Blue Line, Metrolink and the Red Line at last and realized that a lot of these riders were not bums and hookers - but people like themselves! And a number of them were impressed with the cleanliness and low crime experienced on the trains. (Not to mention the fact that they realized the economic benefits of these trains like higher property values and the like).

So what did they do? They got angry again!

They wanted a piece of the pie! They were furious that the MTA decided to make unwise decisions based on political gerrymandering with the detour of the line through Crenshaw and Pico...

...But it was too late...

...or is it?

It's important to let both Riordan and Waxman know that there is community support for a line down Wilshire. Please write and point out that a Wilshire alignment will have greater ridership (according to MTA's own studies) and will thus be more economically and environmentally feasible!

Not only does a straight alignment through Wilshire offer higher ridership by serving existing tourist, cultural and commercial centers, but the cost of the line will be considerably less, even if it would call for a deep-bore subway.

Regardless of what you used to think about the subway, it's time to think about the FUTURE. Do let them know about your support on the Wilshire Alignment.

The Honorable Henry Waxman
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

Mayor Richard Riordan
200 No. Spring St, Room 305
Los Angeles, CA 90012

###

*-Nonmembers of SO.CA.TA



MTA LONG RANGE PLAN

Dana Gabbard
Vice--President

Along with almost certainly adopting in March the staff recommendation Long Range Plan, the MTA Board is reviewing proposals aimed at doing more with less, such as the use of "railbuses" (DMU) for corridors that already have track (e.g. Burbank/Glendale). Approved rail projects are having their budgets scrutinized in hopes of cost savings being realized.

To placate disgruntled board members with in-limbo pet rail projects, MTA outlines conditions under which additional revenues could be obtained for these in 10 years. But who believes MTA even in 2005 will be able to get an additional 1/4% sales tax or a similar measure?

The plan also includes several proposals for improving bus service. These include:

- the purchase of 300 new buses (beginning in 2003)

- 140 buses redeployed from duplicative routes as rail lines are opened
- larger buses with increased capacity
- 130 miles of surface streets with bus only lanes, signal prioritization and other measures to improve vehicle speed
- a "mobility allowance" in which MTA turns over the funds it would have used to operate service in certain low demand areas or during off-peak periods directly to local public/private entities to provide alternative transit options (smart shuttles, jitneys, taxi vouchers).

Members with an interest in obtaining the plan should contact Mark Bozgian at MTA at (213) 244-6806.



METROLINK UPDATE

Out of traffic--and onto the rails . . .

- San Clemente Station: A new Metrolink station on the Orange County Line opened on March 6 in San Clemente. (This is not the Amtrak station located at the San Clemente Pier, but a new facility located at Avenida Estacion.

A station at Burbank Airport is reportedly open,

- San Bernadino Line Delays: Construction, weather and vandalism have caused several trains to be delayed. As compensation, Metrolink will continue to accept February monthly passes during March for this line only.

- California Car Delays: Morrison Knudsen, the chosen builder of rail cars for California Amtrak and commuter rail services, has been unable to produce any rail cars to date. This means that Metrolink service between Riverside and Irvine will be delayed further.

- San Diego News: The Coaster, a commuter rail system that operates between Oceanside and San Diego, opened Feb. 27 Five commuter round trips, and one reverse commute trip, are provided. (Current Metrolink and Coaster schedules do not provide for a continuous Los Angeles-San Diego trip, unfortunately)



ROUTE-OF-THE-MONTH

A closer look at some useful services



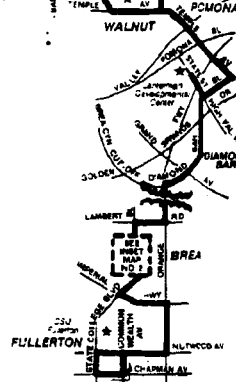
FEATURED ROUTE: MTA #490

WHERE DOES IT GO: Downtown Los Angeles, El Monte Station, Baldwin Park, Covina, West Covina, Eastland Center, Walnut, Mt. San Antonio College, Cal Poly Pomona, Lanterman State Hosp., Diamond Bar, Brea Mall, CSU Fullerton

WHEN DOES IT RUN: Generally, between 5 a.m. and 7 p.m. over most of the route. Additional late night service between El Monte and Eastland until 12 p.m. No service to Fullerton on weekends; no service to Downtown L.A. on Sunday.

WHAT IS THE FARE: \$1.35 between Brea and El Monte; \$2.85 between Brea and L.A.; \$1 additional for travel to Fullerton. Discount fares are available for seniors, students and handicapped.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Call MTA at 1-800-COMMUTE



(from page 3)

4. OK, *HOV lanes* are not the greatest form of transit there is, but since that's mostly all we're going to get for a while, let's use them. If every freeway is going to have an HOV lane, then every HOV lane should have bus service. And not just to Downtown LA, but also to Pasadena, Century City, El Segundo, Burbank, etc. We need to identify other, similar, clusters of employment and provide similar bus service to them. With such improved bus service, we may not have to worry so much about whether a "high occupancy" vehicle should have 2 or 3 people in it

5. *Develop and improve bus feeder service to the existing rail lines* (including Metrolink) Make these connections as "seamless" as possible. Also, *utilize Metrolink more as part of the transit*

system. By that, I mean, develop services towards other markets, rather than the typical commuter. For example, we lost our direct connection bus between LA and Riverside/ San Bernadino. With improved all-day Metrolink service, we can have even faster trips (it was 2 hours with the Inland Empire Bus, now it's 3 hours with a transfer between Inland Empire and Foothill at Montclair; with Metrolink, that trip could be 1.5 hours).

Sure, none of these things is quite as exciting as a brand new high speed subway going everywhere at once. But these things are probably possible within the MTA's limited funds, and will bring in new transit riders. That means more support for transit, and more respect for transit, and perhaps even more funding for transit next November!