

TRANSIT UPDATES *Have anything to report? Call 213 388 2364*

The **MTA Metro Red Line** is now carrying up to 38,000 passengers per day, and that number is rising much faster than transit planners expected.

MTA plans to increase service in several transit dependent areas, using \$10.4 million in Proposition C money. Lines to be improved include #4, 16, 30-31, 33-333, 45-345, 60, 66-67, 81, 90-91, 152, 163, 204-354 and 206. Also, new peak hour limited service will operate on Florence (#311) and San Fernando Road (#394). These new changes should go into effect this fall.

MTA also plans to start four "Smart Shuttle" routes. These are flexible routes that combine some of the features of fixed route and demand-response service. The first four service areas are: Canoga Park, Pacoima, Westlake and South Central Los Angeles.

LADOT DASH Fairfax has been modified to provide bidirectional service along its Melrose-Fairfax-Third St.-Robertson-La Cienega route.

Although a new **Foothill Transit** schedule is in effect, the only apparent change is some additional Line #480 trips that will go into effect September 30.

PLAC REPORT #7 *Dana Gabbard, chair*

Our two campaigns on Transit Improvement Councils and reforming the Long Range Plan drafting process are in full swing. We gave out over 200 flyers during the two days of the opening of the Red Line extension. If you live in L.A. county and can help distribute these (leaving them at local libraries or other public places) just let us know. Or pick up a supply at our next meeting.

As the legislative session winds down two bills making their way toward the governor's desk bear watching. AB 2495 makes cosmetic changes in the make-up of the MTA board. SB 1755 freezes the formula used by MTA to distribute funds to the eligible municipal operators.

Despite my misgivings last month, the Westside restructuring effort is on track. The first meeting to coordinate among the various players took place in July. Public meetings are

still slated to be held in October.

Also last month I mis-stated the cost of service for ASI - it actually is \$24 per trip with plans to bring it down to \$15.

In May I mentioned writing Omnitrans about the omission of MARTA from the map of the San Bernardino Transit Mall. We received a respectful response and I'm happy to announce the latest bus book for Omnitrans shows MARTA. We can make a difference!

Another example of making a difference - we wrote on June 25th to the Office of County Counsel about some incidents involving MTA and the Brown Act (state law requiring public access to meetings of government organizations). In the response dated July 15th Mary Rayna of the County Counsel Office agreed with our contentions and promised to take steps to address them.

BULLETIN BOARD

Our booth at the opening of the Red Line extension on July 13th and 14th was a smashing success. Over 20 Transit Guides were sold, 5 new members joined, hundreds of flyers on various topics were distributed and we met the public. Our thanks to the members who helped make this all possible: Phil Capo, Charles Hobbs, Dana Gabbard, Henrika Masnowski, Pat Moser, Charles Powell, Woody Rosner and Kirk Schneider.

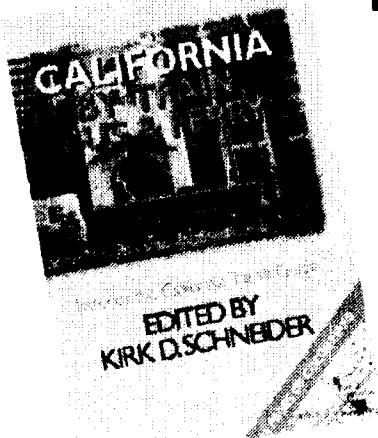
The Coalition for Rapid Transit is attempting to pressure MTA to return the mid-city extension of the Red Line to a Wilshire alignment. Members wishing to learn more can write: P.O. Box 157, Pacific Palisades CA 90272.

In the next few months we anticipate hosting presentations at our meetings on the restructuring plans for the central Los Angeles area and the Santa Monica bus system. A group like ours can provide invaluable feedback. Watch upcoming newsletters for announcements of when these will take place.

By the start of 1997, we plan to develop a format for the 2nd edition of the Transit Guide. Anyone who wants to join the Special Projects Committee and participate in this process is welcomed.

The July 12th edition of the Long Beach Press Telegram included a notice about the Transit Guide. This resulted in the sale of over 25 copies! Flyers about the Guide left in libraries have resulted in more sales.

As always, *The Transit Advocate* needs articles, letters, photographs and research (newspaper clippings, etc.) from all members and interested non-members. All materials should be sent to 3010 Wilshire #362, Los Angeles, CA 90010 (or emailed to ab415@lafn.org).



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(Editor's note: Although the author of this article is a planner with the City of Los Angeles Planning Department, the views expressed here are his own and are not an official statement of the City of Los Angeles or its Planning Department. Neither should this article be considered an official policy statement of the Southern California Transit Advocates).

I have followed with interest the debate over the Metro subway and light rail system. Your February 28, 1996 editorial "Improved Bus Service Should Top the List" was one of the more factual pieces I have read on the editorial page. I was a transit-dependent bus rider for five years and still occasionally ride the bus, light rail, subway, and Metrolink systems to work and for personal errands. I am very concerned at the lack of hard facts in this debate and wish to contribute some.

The Southern California area has its share of mass transit haters and rail transit haters who will always be critical of the Metro system. However, the recent controversy has been fueled mostly by the continued federal withdrawal of public transportation subsidies, which in the past helped subsidize bus transit and keep fares lower, and the furor over the sinkhole on Hollywood Boulevard, which resulted from poor MTA oversight of a tunneling contractor (We are told that this has now been corrected).

While it is true that much about the MTA bus system could be improved and fare increases hurt transit dependent riders who must live at the lower end of the wage scale, it is not true that the subway is a system being built to serve rich white people at the expense of lower income and non-white commuters. Clearly, the subway and light rail routes will serve an area of the city which is predominantly non-white, low and very low income, and non-solo commuter. The area they will serve is the highest density area of the City, with the densest concentration of jobs and retail activity, and the most transit riders. If anything, the strong opposition to the Metro from Westside, West Valley, and Hillside residents and politicians is due to the fact that the Metro is unlikely to serve affluent white neighborhoods anytime soon (due to recent MTA budget cuts) and some people see public transportation and the people who ride it as a threat to their property values. Far from taking away from transit riders, the Metro will improve transit service to the growing population of transit riders who live along its corridors.

Clearly, the bus system needs to be improved. Proposed traffic signal preemption by buses and bus-only transit lanes along major transit streets would be a positive step in that direction but, the most need improvement to the service of transit dependent riders would be to find ways to reduce fares to half of their current level. A lot of the problem with the transit system is

that the routes currently in place do not respond well to the travel needs of residents. Clearly, one area of the City contains most of its transit riders suggesting that: (1) This is where transit-dependent people chose to live because the system can get them to work, etc. and (2) The MTA's grid system of bus routes fails to attract ridership in the Valley, on the Westside, and in the South Bay area. With most solo commutes exceeding 20 miles a bus system traveling on a grid pattern is poorly suited for more suburban areas of the City where travel distances are even greater.

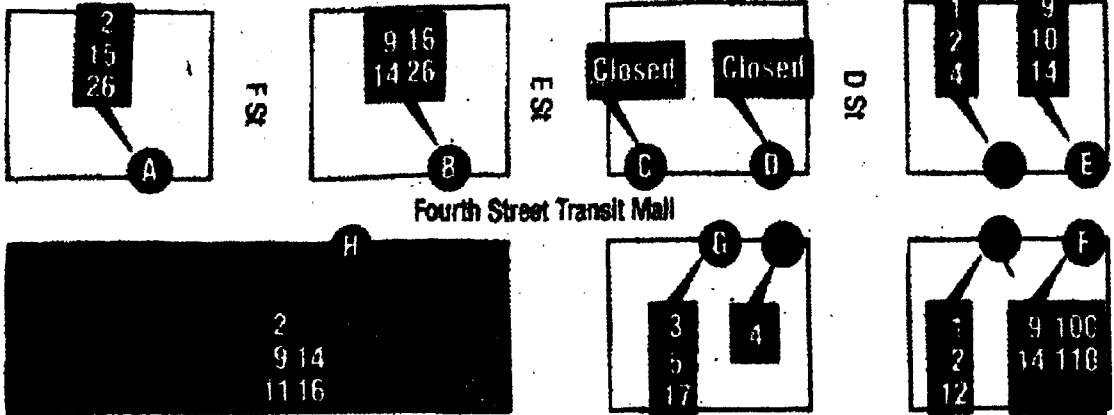
In contrast to this, the Los Angeles Department Of Transportation (LADOT), Foothill Transit, and Santa Monica Bus Lines (among others) have managed to have more popular bus services in areas where MTA ridership was poor. The secret to these lines is their ability to connect the communities where people live to the employment centers where they work. By combining this approach with local community shuttle systems like the LADOT DASH system and the Glendale Beeline, MTA could redesign its Valley, Westside, and South Bay services to provide better service with fewer bus lines at a lower fare. Both the Santa Monica Bus Line and Foothill Transit have lower fares than MTA.

Another less popular way to cut fares would be to do away with discount fares and have everybody pay the same low fare.

Since the public transit debate has already established that the most impacted commuters are those who are transit dependent and lower income, why do we subsidize the fares of students, the handicapped, and the elderly out of the fares of the poor? Shouldn't all the low income people who are transit dependent pay the same lower fare? Since these riders are the vast majority of bus riders this could be done by simply lowering the fare. This would increase the number of people who ride the bus and reduce the operating costs necessary to administer the fare system.

Even if the MTA were to improve its bus service that wouldn't solve our areas travel problems. Because of changing work behavior most travel is now non-work related and Saturday is the busiest commute day of the week. Clearly, the only way to address this problem is to plan our communities so that residents have access to basic shopping and service needs in their own neighborhoods and don't have to commute across town to run their weekly errands. Ideally, people should be able to walk from their home to do many of these things, ride a bicycle, or catch a neighborhood shuttle bus. This sort of development pattern will require a commitment on the part of local politicians, bureaucrats, business people, and residents to work together to encourage land use regulations, development, and business activity which will make this possible.

TRANSIT CENTER OF THE MONTH



LOCATION: 4th St (between G St and Arrowhead), Downtown San Bernardino

Omnitrans Routes:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| #1 - 46th St/Colton | #9 - Fontana/Hosp. Lane | #15 - Shandin Hills |
| #2 - 46th St/Coolley Ranch | #10 - Del Rosa #14 | #16 - Shandin/Colton |
| #3 - Cal State SB/Muscoy | #11 - Patton | #17 - Redlands |
| #4 - West SBDO/County Hosp | #12 - Sterling | #26 - Rialto |
| #5 - Cal State SB/Nrthpk | #14 - Yucaipa/Fontana | |

Inland Empire Connection routes: #100 - Riverside and #110 - Montclair via Ontario Airport

Mountain Area Regional Transit Authority (Lake Arrowhead/Big Bear): stops at 4th/D, south side of 4th (where Omni #1, 2 and 12 stops)

For more information: (800) 966-6428 (Omnitrans/IEC) , (909) 866-1541 (MARTA)

TRANSIT TRIVIA *Charles Hobbs/Chris Ledermuller*

Last month's Transit Trivia question was:

How many different bus operators serve Century City?

The answer:

(Ans: Five: MTA, LADOT, Santa Monica, AVTA, RUSH)

This month's Transit Trivia question:

*What is the only local non-limited, non-express MTA line which operates only during Rush Hour?

(The answer will be in next month's Transit Advocate, and announced at the August SO.CA.TA meeting!)