

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

Metrolink is now providing trial weekend service on the Santa Clarita Line between Princessa Station and Los Angeles Union Station (In March, the service will be extended to serve Lancaster and Vincent stations as well.)

The MTA Board of Directors this week approved the extension of the current promotional fare for MTA passengers using Harbor Transitway express services through August 1, 1997. (Express fares for these buses will be discounted one express zone, or \$.50, making the one way regular fare \$1.85)

Express lines offering the special discounted fare that operate along the Harbor Freeway are:

- Line 444 (Los Angeles Union Station/West Torrance/Rolling Hills/Rancho Palos Verdes);

- Line 445 (Los Angeles/Alpine Village San Pedro Park-Ride);

- Line 446 (Los Angeles Union Station/Carson/Wilmington/San Pedro via Pacific Avenue); and

- Line 447 (Los Angeles Union Station/Carson/Wilmington/San Pedro via 7th Street).

In addition, LADOT Express Line 448 serves the Transitway Station from the Palos Verdes peninsula to downtown Los Angeles.

MTA and Culver City Bus routes serving the Fox Hills Mall now do so at a new transfer center, on Fox Hills Mall property near Sepulveda and Slauson. It is a two-minute walk via a well marked, covered (by the 90 freeway) pathway to the nearest store entrance.

METROLINK SANTA CLARITA LINE SATURDAY SERVICE

Read down

640a	843a			421p	Lancaster (Mar 1)	1042a			618p	812p
655a	858a			436p	Vincent (Mar 1)	1023a			558p	753p
726a	929a	1159a	324p	507p	Princessa	951a	1141a	307p	526p	721p
732a	935a	1205p	331p	513p	Santa Clarita	946a	1135a	301p	521p	716p
750a	955a	1223p	349p	533p	Sylmar	928a	1117a	243p	459p	658p
801a	1009a	1234p	400p	544p	Burbank	917a	1106a	232p	448p	647p
807a	1015a	1240p	406p	550p	Glendale	911a	1100a	226p	442p	641p
821a	1029a	1254p	420p	605p	Los Angeles	900a	1049a	215p	431p	630p

Read up



BULLETIN BOARD

The Southern California Association of Governments is in the midst of updating their Regional Transportation Plan. This is in conformance with its role as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura and Imperial counties. To participate in upcoming public workshops regarding the draft Plan contact SCAG at (213) 630-1444 or e-mail info@scag.ca.gov or write 818 West 7th St., 12th Floor, Los Angeles CA 90017-3435.

The Antelope Valley and Santa Clarita transit systems are reported to have hired consultant to do a restructuring study, with the goal of implementing it by the end of the year. Also it is reported the interagency team coordinating the westside restructuring hope to have their draft plan ready for a second round of public meetings in 3-4 months. No word as to the status of the in-progress mid-city restructuring.

The final three MTA sector maps are now available: Glendale/ Burbank/Pasadena, San Gabriel Valley and South-East County. The system map will not be ready until late this year. MTA Marketing also is in the midst of preparing enhanced informational materials such as bus books for various regions of the county.

We may have a presentation at our March meeting by Ed Simburger, author of the recently published Guide to Metrolink. We would publicize this event and hope the attendees prove to be potential recruits to our ranks.

Conservatism and Mass Transit: Is It Time for a New Look? is a study by Paul Weyrich and William Lind that contains interesting perspectives on how to broaden the debate on public transportation to include a segment of the political spectrum which traditionally has not paid attention to it. Contact: Free Congress Foundation, 717 Second St., N.W., Washington DC 20002 (or at www.apta.com/pubs/conserv.htm).

With Metrolink about to begin service to Santa Clarita on Saturdays (with Lancaster service to follow shortly) on a pilot basis this seems a good opportunity for excursions to those areas in the coming months.

We are taking suggestions for making a new expanded 2nd edition of the Transit Guide. Some things that were discussed were adding San Diego County information with maps of the Coaster and Trolley, Amtrak and Greyhound information, and an appendix stating all routes that serve Downtown L.A. If you have any comments or suggestions, please mail them to So.Ca.TA. Also, if you have any artwork that could be used for the cover...present it!

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 e-mailed to transit@lerami.lerctr.org).

REGIOSPRINTER *Charles P. Hobbs/Hank Fung*

The RegioSprinter is a German-made, self propelled passenger railcar. Introduced in Europe in 1995, it provides regular service in three German cities. Now, US transit agencies are showing an interest in the vehicle (as evidenced by the "Alternate Rail Transit" proposals some time ago here in Los Angeles.

The RegioSprinter is currently touring a number of US and Canadian cities. In January, it was demonstrated in Fontana/Rialto (Metrolink line) and between San Dimas/Arcadia (Santa Fe Pasadena Subdivision)

I was on one of those "demonstration" trips on the RegioSprinter between Fontana and Rialto. Tickets were available for \$1 each.

Everyone boarded in Rialto, then the train made a round trip to Fontana, and back to Rialto where everyone got off. (No one boarded or alighted in Fontana). Each round trip took about 15 minutes, and trips were made between 12 and 2 pm, approximately.

The cars seemed to be a roomier version of the Metro Blue Line light rail vehicles, with transit-style (hard plastic, fabric covered) seats. TV monitors mounted in the cars played Siemens commercials. A ticket dispensing machine (marked Out of Service) was in the car, across from one of the doors.

The ride seemed smooth enough, a little bumpier than Metrolink's bilevels, but smoother than Metro Blue Line equipment.

-Charles P. Hobbs

Well, my trip on the RegioSprinter wasn't too bad. I took a look at it at the San Dimas Depot, operated by the Pacific Railroad Society. Of course, I couldn't get on the train for any recognizable distance, but it was OK.

Some have described the seats as city bus seats, but they seemed to me more like suburban bus

seats (like on the #497.)

There was about 150 people at the depot, though about 50 of them seemed to be passengers on the train, with another 30 getting on. Also, 40 people seemed to be from either Claremont (Judy Wright brought a few along on the newest Foothill bus (the 1068), and an MTA CNG bus signed line #600 came from Duarte with Fasana's group.) Among the visitors there was Bill Forsythe (creator of Foothill), John Fasana, Larry Zarian, Judy Wright, etc. The people I asked that got off the train said it was "quieter than Metrolink", which was also stated by Wright on KNX. Also, the local paper, the Daily Bulletin, was there, as well as the [Los Angeles] Times and Channel 4 News.

Larry Zarian said, "do you want to wait 30 years or wait 3 or 4 for this now?" (Surprisingly, a few people actually said "wait 30 years." This was the highlight, I guess.) He only claimed to be "considering this", however.

I also got a chance to speak with John Fasana, but only for a few moments. He said "this may be the answer" to transit needs and it was a "nice ride."

-Hank Fung



Regio Sprinter at Arcadia. D. Gabbard photo

PLAC REPORT *Dana Gabbard*

A statement was presented to the Senate Transportation Committee at its January 28th hearing on MTA's continuing travails. It clearly was labeled my own opinion, not that of SO.CA.TA, and essentially expressed concern about the continued financial viability of the agency. Comments made by Chairman Quentin Kopp about the financial impact of the consent decree reflected similar doubts about the ability of MTA to continue its rail construction schedule while fulfilling its court supervised Bus Service Improvement Plan. A Board workshop in February (date and time not set yet) is to address implementation of the decree.

Overall the tone of the comments made by the legislators present reflected weariness. Interest in Board reform is spreading to more than the political fringes. In this light I am curious to see what is said at the Feb. 6th

meeting MTA is hosting for Kevin Murray of Culver City, new Chair of the Assembly Transportation Committee.

In response to our request the MTA Citizen Advisory Council had at its January 22nd meeting a presentation on why the display screens in Patsaouras Transit Plaza have been inoperative for some time. Brent Cardwell explained design flaws by the original firm necessitated re-engineering. It is hoped they will be working again by this April.

The final recommendations from Coopers & Lybrand to reform MTA include changing the Board to being composed of appointees. These recommendations which most certainly will be ignored, but not forgotten: they will probably be useful ammunition in the forthcoming battle in Sacramento.

BANNING EXCURSION *Dana Gabbard (John Ulloth, illus.)*

For our second annual day after Thanksgiving trip we had decided to ride out to Banning to explore its transit system, along with trying out RTA's two lines that run three days a week (routes 35 and 36). Charles Powell and I planned the excursion and found for connections the best way was via the single reverse trip on the Riverside Metrolink line in the morning. Early in the morning, As in leaving Union Station at 5:54 a.m.! I made sure to get up with plenty of time to get to the MacArthur Park Red Line station and thence to Union Station. There I met up with my fellow SO.CA.TA members who would be a part of this jolly jaunt. Our interepid band included myself, John Ulloth, Charles Powell and Woody Rosner.

The reverse trip on the Riverside Line is an express - it skips all intervening stations and only allows deboarding at the Riverside terminus. Which raised suspicions that it is actually a deadhead run to return the train to Riverside to pick up more L.A. bound commuters that just allows passengers. Certainly the platform for the train wasn't busy.

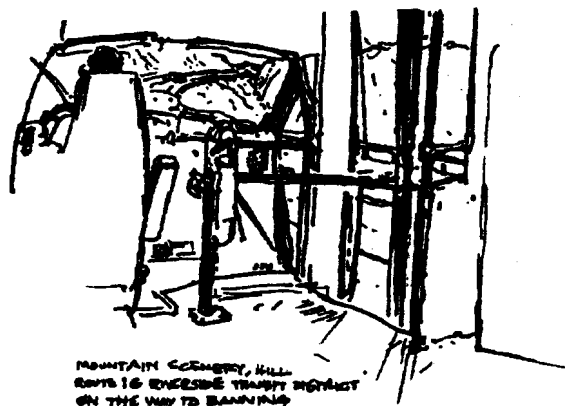
Near Pomona we pulled over to allow a Los Angeles bound Metrolink train to get past us, ditto near Ontario. Near Ontario Airport we had a freight go in the reverse direction (this was double tracked). The Riverside Metrolink is much more scenic than the San Bernardino line which I have ridden several times previously. It just seems more rural, as we go through orchards and modestly low-density areas. San Bernardino seems one long sprawl in comparison.

Woody and John were nodding a bit due to the early hour yet roused themselves to hear

my tea-leaf like prognostications about the future of the MTA Board. John at one point noted the station in Ontario and asked if arrangements have been made to take people from the station to the nearby Airport. What he heard elicited a shaking head and comment, "connections between transportation modes is vital and must be taken into account".

We arrived at Riverside on time at 7:30 a.m. There was a crowd waiting to get on the train, confirming what its chief purpose was. I don't think there were 10 people riding with us. A Metrolink ambassador said the number riding it veried but hardly topped a dozen. The ambassador helped us find the notices about the Metrolink holiday trains, which is how we were able to promote them in the Dec. newsletter.

While buses have been arranged to drop people off catching Metrolink trains to Los Angeles no such situation pertains for anyone on a reverse trip Metrolink. We walked from the station to University and made our way downtown. That part of Riverside is closed in the early morning. Until we were about a block from the downtown terminal we saw nary an open shop. At the Transit Terminal we met up with Charles Hobbs,

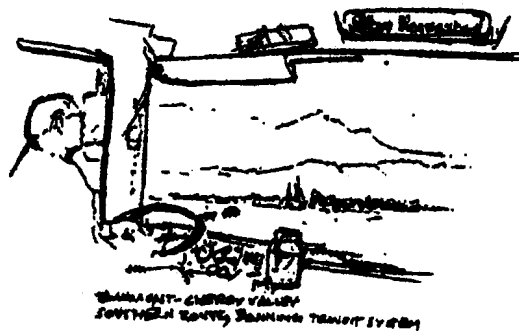


MOUNTAIN SCENERY, HILL
CAPS IS EXCESSIVE TRAFFIC INTRUSION
ON THE WAY TO BANNING

the last member of our hardy band.

Banning near the Hospital and it always had at least a few riders.

At 8:15 a.m. we took the RTA #16 from the terminal - ridership was fair (10-15 people). At the Moreno Valley Mall we had a brief period between buses that allowed a hurried breakfast. We would have gotten off near the mall and eaten at one of the nearby fast food places, but the bus we wanted only stops and starts at the mall. That bus is #35, which was run with a van-bus with seating for maybe a dozen. The driver (as with RTA's smaller lines) worked for a contractor - Laidlaw. This line expresses to Banning. In about 40 minutes it connects two points that via local RTA routes otherwise would entail hours to travel between (and a great distance out of your way). My suspicion is this thrice a week bus is to facilitate Banning's population easy shopping access. It certainly is worthless for anyone with a job. We were the only passengers (and there were no stops after the mall until Banning).



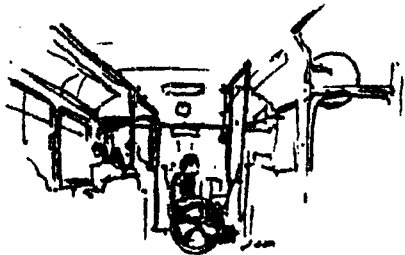
San Geronio Memorial Hospital is the transit center for transferring from RTA to the Banning system. Almost the first thing we saw was a Beaumont/Cherry Valley Dial-a-Ride vehicle. Banning and Beaumont allow movement between their systems and accept each other's transfers. The Beaumont bus looked like it seated at least 30 - unusual for a DAR vehicle. We sighted it several times while in

Banning uses Bluebird buses, which seat about 30 (midway between a DASH and MTA size vehicle). 10:21 a.m. we caught the Southern route. Ridership was low - 5 or so. We got off near City Hall since the rest of the route duplicated what we would see on the Northern route. Due to the hard to understand Banning Bus schedule the Northern bus arrived earlier than expected. Ridership was more robust - about 14 people, although many began getting off in the next few stops after we boarded. We learned the buses were operating Saturday schedule for that Friday (which meant ending an hour earlier) and also that, starting January 1st, credits for paying the fare with a dollar would discontinue. Essentially since the fare was 50 cents, those who paid a dollar were given a slip good for another trip (to get their full dollar's worth). One fellow got on and plead poverty. The driver shot back he had about \$15 in accumulated unpaid fares. The guy solemnly pledged to soon make good. After this fellow exited I asked the driver if this was unusual. He said the economy of the area was depressed and quite a few begged free rides. In some cases people even eventually paid off their accumulated tabs!

By Noon we were back at the Hospital and ready to ride the express bus to Cabazon. This has been running for about a year and was something I was especially interested in seeing. I was concerned with our tight connection with the RTA #36 we planned to take on to Yucaipa. I hoped there would be no delays. It turns out the attractor for Cabazon is one of those huge Factory Outlet Malls. And it was the busiest shopping day of the year. And the bus weaves its way through the Mall parking lot. It was gridlock of biblical proportions! (cont'd on Page 8)

(from Page 7) And my hope of making the connection with the #36 died.

Ridership on the Cabazon Route was fairly low - about 7 (including a wheelchair passenger who exited while still in Banning). There may have been no boardings in Cabezon.



CHAIR USER EXITS AT BANNING HOSPITAL.
RIVERSIDE ROUTE, BANNING TRANSIT SYSTEM

We jumped off the bus one stop before the Hospital to eat at a Carl's Jr. The schedule seemed to indicate when the bus would be in the area. We didn't realize it laid over at the Hospital. We were acting as if it passed our stop just in time to make its stop at the hospital...

By the time we realized the snafu, the bus was long gone. We rode a Banning bus to the Hospital and settled in for the next 36 minutes. I studied the historical pictures along the hallway while John and Woody brainstormed the T-shirt idea Woody got from taking a look at the Hospital Gift Shop.

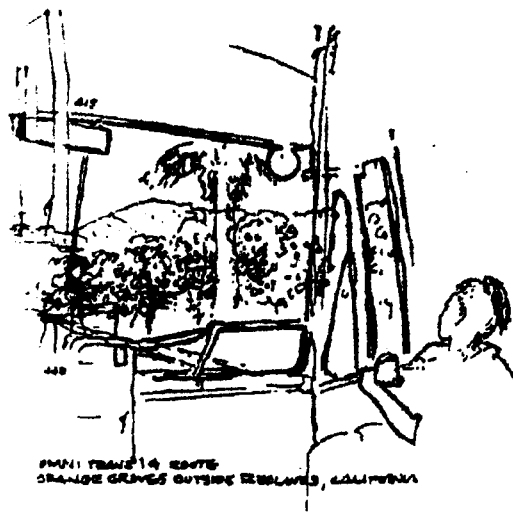
3:31 p.m.: We finally took RTA #36 - this was another minibus and had only one passenger other than ourselves. It most went via freeway to Yucaipa but diverted at one point to pull up in front of some housing development's recreation center. Happily we in only a few minutes caught the Omnitrans #14 after arriving in Yucaipa. Ridership for this was decent (8-10 at any one time). Charles Hobbs left when we got to the Loma Linda VA Hospital, where he

could take the RTA #25 back to Riverside.

After arriving at the San Bernardino Transit Plaza we had a brief wait before catching the Omnitrans #1 which dropped us at the Metrolink station. We were the sole ones to get off there. The Metrolink for Los Angeles left at 6:24. This spends half an hour on a siding letting peak service trains pass it. So we didn't arrive in Los Angeles until near 8:30. After hearty goodbyes we quickly dispersed our separate ways.

It was educational to explore a system in a relatively low population area and see first hand how service routing can have a great effect. While RTA #36 connects Yucaipa and Banning in about 40 minutes three days a week, to travel between them on local transit at other times would take long hours via San Bernardino, Riverside and Hemet! Even our mistakes were instructive, highlighting the need to carefully study schedules, layover zones when catching a bus at the start of its route, etc.

So, where should we go next year?



CHAIR USER ON RTA #36 ROUTE
ORANGE GROVES OUTSIDE RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA

IN MEMORIAM: LINE #496 *Chris Ledermuller/Charles Hobbs*

Died: January 5, 1997 8:15 pm

As of January 6th of this year, riders wishing to travel between Riverside and Montclair had to choose newer ways of travel, either slower or more expensive, or both. They could have taken a new through-routed Inland Empire Connection #100 and #110 combination costing \$2.45, or the local alternative proposed by both RTA and Omnitrans. Also, the remote possibility of taking an Inland Empire-Orange County Metrolink train. #496 was another route that bit the dust.

#496 was not a route that never worked in the first place. This route had worked for decades, and various factors ultimately led to its demise. And now, a history lesson...

The earliest form of the #496 was the old SCRTD #60. This was way back before the time the # 60 referred to the Long Beach to L.A. run and when the RTD really did cover Southern California. Branches of the #60 were labelled with different letters, with routes running from Downtown L.A. to San Bernardino, Riverside, Ontario, even Yucaipa.

The San Bernardino Municipal Bus Company, a predecessor of today's Omnitrans, took over the direct Montclair-San Bernardino service from RTD's #60 in 1973. This was the beginning of the service reduction in the Inland Empire.

In 1976, the route was renumbered #496. At that time, the line went between L.A. and Ontario Airport, then serving to Riverside before coming back up to San Bernardino. During this time, #496 was experiencing a lot

of ridership, corresponding with the growth in the Inland Empire.

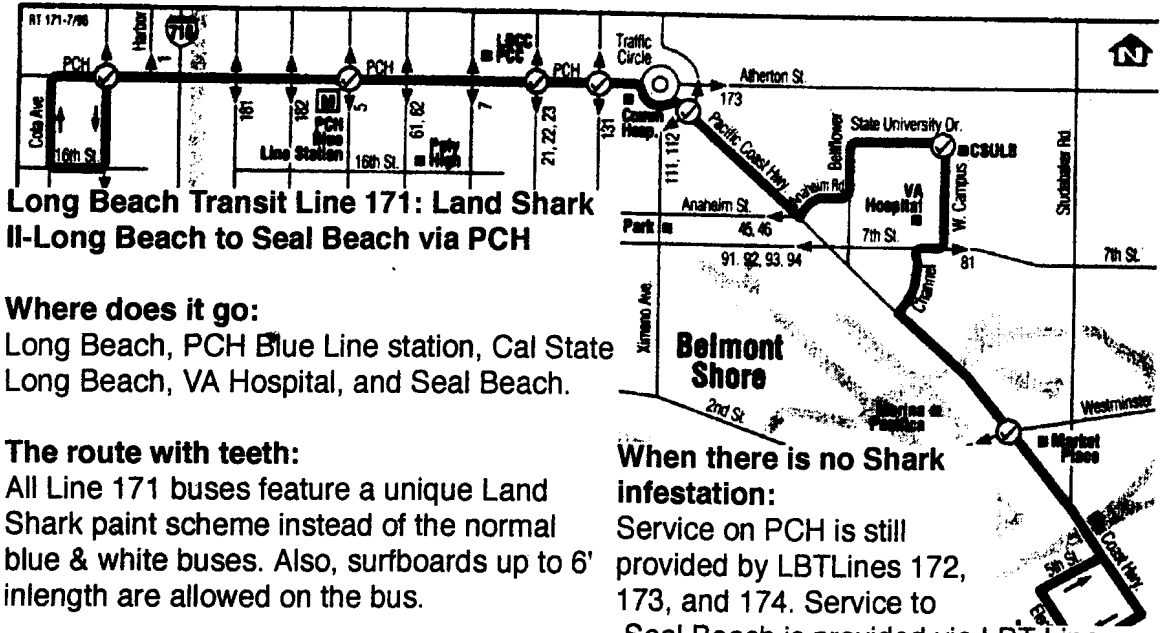
Fast forward to 1990. This was the year RTD turned the 496 over to a private contractor operating as a front for a joint-county transit system, called the Inland Empire Connection. At that time, a new Line #110 was created to provide direct service between Montclair and San Bernardino. Surprisingly, when the service was turned over, ridership took a small dip.

Three years later, the #496 service was reshaped. Service to Los Angeles County was cut in half, and a new Line #100 replaced #496's Riverside-San Bernardino segment.

The Metrolink system, which started serving San Bernardino and Riverside in mid-1993, was the nail in the coffin for route 496. Riders, willing to pay a little more to ride this service, loved the new alternative of a clean, comfortable train moving them much quicker than the bus ever could. Ridership on #496 fell at a breakneck speed. Then, in 1994, the MTA decided not to duplicate service with bus and Metrolink, and cut funding from L.A. County. This decision saved MTA \$500,000.

From 1994 until its end the beginning of this year, the #496 ran only between Montclair and Riverside, barely getting the ridership it once had. Though the # 496 has come and gone, was born and later died, there is no reason to still run this if the operation of the route drains the transit budget. Yet the 496 cannot be called a failure.

ROUTE OF THE MONTH *Chris Ledermuller*



Long Beach Transit Line 171: Land Shark II-Long Beach to Seal Beach via PCH

Where does it go:

Long Beach, PCH Blue Line station, Cal State Long Beach, VA Hospital, and Seal Beach.

The route with teeth:

All Line 171 buses feature a unique Land Shark paint scheme instead of the normal blue & white buses. Also, surfboards up to 6' in length are allowed on the bus.

When does it run:

Every 30 minutes from 5:00am-8:00pm, Monday through Friday only. No service operated weekends or holidays.

When there is no Shark infestation:

Service on PCH is still provided by LBT Lines 172, 173, and 174. Service to Seal Beach is provided via LBT Line 131.

For more information:

Call Long Beach Transit at (310)-591-2301.

TRANSIT TRIVIA *Chris Ledermuller*

Last month's Transit Trivia question:

What OCTA routes come into L.A. County?

The answer:

#1, 30, 38, 42, 46, 50, 60, 701, 721, 757

This month's Transit Trivia question:

What line was the *original* Long Beach Transit Land Shark?

(The answer will be presented in the next issue of the Transit Advocate, and presented at the February meeting)