

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

A.R. de la Cruz of MTA at the April 23rd Citizen Advisory Council meeting discussed the Blue Line. It was phasing of lights along Washington Blvd. not actual pre-emption that sped up the cars through the intersections. It is eventually anticipated that 3 car trains will run on the line to increase capacity. Other measures to improve travel speeds are also being explored such as automated interactive spacing.

Again this year, park/ride shuttle service will be provided to the Hollywood Bowl. This includes new services from Chatsworth Metrolink (replacing Canoga Park), Downtown Culver City and the Norwalk Green Line station.

Have complaints about the contracted MTA bus lines? Call Richard Anderson - (213) 922-4819 or Scott Greene - (213) 922-2802. The agency is aware this effort has been a bit rocky initially and they are committed to improvements.

LADOT has modified Route #549 (Encino-Pasadena Express) to serve the East Glendale Park/Ride, near the Glendale Fwy/Broadway (This lot is also served by LADOT#409).

Cerritos on Wheels (COW) recently cancelled the 183rd Street shuttle according to *Western Transit*. Subsequently a shuttle was begun for customers of the auto square to visit the mall while their cars are being serviced.

Omnitrans will be operating shuttle service to the Renaissance Faire in Devore on May 10 and May 17. The shuttle will leave Downtown San Bernardino (Court/E) at 10:30 a.m, San Bernardino Metrolink at 10:45 (connecting with Metrolink #390, leaving L.A. at 9:10 a.m) and arrive at the Faire at 11:25. Return service is provided at 5:15 pm, arriving at Metrolink at 5:45 (for Metrolink's 6:05 departure) and Downtown at 5:55 p.m.)

Also, Metrolink has changed routes and/or schedules of the following routes:
3, 4, 5, 14, 22, 32, 63 and 64.

Inland Empire Connection line 149 between Riverside and Orange counties is being cut back from Disneyland to the Mall of Orange. Tight finances at RTA plus the OCTA financial bind (they stopped funding the line last July) has made this necessary. It is felt that connections at Mall of Orange make this an acceptable substitute terminus. Some of the funds saved will be used to operate an additional roundtrip in the afternoon weekdays. The change will occur June 1st.

IEC 496 has received another reprieve as RTA approved continued weekend service through June 30th. Ridership has declined during the period of uncertainty. The agency continues to seek a permanent replacement for direct service between Riverside and Montclair on weekends.

California Corridors reports that Angels Flight during its first year of resumed service had over 600,000 passengers!

Construction of the flyover ramp to connect the San Bernardino Freeway Transitway with the Gateway Plaza next to Union Station will start this summer. Meanwhile the infamous information screens at the stops in the Gateway may not be operational until the end of this year according to comments made on the radio by MTA spokespersons and heard by member/founder Pat Moser.

The MTA has authorized preparation of environmental documents for the Santa Monica Blvd. project in West Los Angeles. Work on them is anticipated to commence by this summer.

BULLETIN BOARD

Bill Mabie from the office of state Senator Richard Polanco will attend the first half hour of our May 10th meeting to discuss transportation related developments in the legislature. It should be an educational experience.

Our trip to Santa Clarita is slated for Saturday May 31st. We'll set out from Union Station at 9 a.m. on Metrolink for a full day of bus riding (with a one hour lunch break). Call our hotline or the sheet enclosed with this issue for further details.

On April 28th Director Phil Capo and President Dana Gabbard met with Jim McLaughlin, who oversees the Bus Improvement effort at MTA. It was a wide-ranging and frank sharing of views, touching on the status of the mobility allowance, Improvement Councils, restructuring and a lot more! We are thankful for the opportunity to open a dialogue with the agency.

On May 13th, Pat Moser and possibly some other members will visit the Southeast Community Development Corporation, which is operating a shuttle system in the mid-county. If you'd like to be a part of this let us know.

Ed Simburger, who gave us an excellent presentation on Metrolink a few months ago, has undertaken the production of a video about using the transit system. Its market would be public access and public TV stations. The prototype program would get someone from the central core to Santa Clarita via Metro Rail (Green, Blue and Red Lines), Metrolink and local transit (Santa Clarita Transit). Ed's chief need now is to raise funds to purchase insurance. While the crew is voluntary and access to facilities is donated the insurance is a must have item. He has sought our aid to have donations pass through us to make use of our status as a non-profit to help loosen wallets. We'll discuss this at our May 10th meeting.

Michael Ludwig is reviewing the responses to his survey regarding HOV lanes and plans to use what he learns in drafting a position paper for further review. Another initiative is the proposal for day passes being offered by MTA. Pat Moser, Woody Rosner and President Gabbard reviewed progress to date and have outlined further research to help support the idea of such one-day passes (Omnitrans has reportedly had a good response to their day passes).

Woody Rosner and John Ulloth continue to seek input in the design of our club tee-shirt. A final proposal will be circulated shortly along with the draft by-laws.

Member Hank Fung was mentioned in the recent newsletter "Footnotes" published by Foothill in connection with their upcoming fare increase (too bad they mis-spelled his name and quoted him out of context).

15 shuttles this year will operate between Park and Ride facilities throughout the region and the Hollywood Bowl. These are operated by MTA and various municipal operators. A sidelight illustrating the inherent conflict of interest in having officials from other governments being on the MTA Board is the County Supervisors using their positions to stop MTA from a proposed phase out of its subsidizing this service. Understandably the Supervisors didn't want this handed off to the County.

The renewal of the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act (known as ISTEA) is becoming a hot point of contention in Congress. To learn more about the status of the renewal call the recorded information line of the American Public Transit Association: (202) 898-4014 or its website: <http://www.apta.com>. Another source of information is the Department of Transportation site: <http://www.dot.gov>. (cont'd on Page 4)

PLAC REPORT *Dana Gabbard*

It is amazing what tidbits you can glean by carefully reading the staff reports included in the packet for the MTA Board meetings. Two recent nuggets: the Inspector General has begun an investigation whether the Bus Improvement Plan will fulfill the consent decree. That is slated for release in October. And a line item in the Board Secretary Office budget had \$23,000 to provide lunch for Board members during board meetings!

Want to understand why MTA is in such a mess? Mayor Riordan has talked about the need for better management. But at the special meeting on the consent decree he showed up with a three page form that he thought the staff should fill out comparing various numbers over the past 2 years. Is this the essence of micro-management or what? While one Board member even said (in public) "Well, I don't know anything about bus operations..." they still attempt to oversee an activity none of them have knowledge about. Board members are treated like royalty, in defiance of the current shambles they have caused.

The consent decree is being used to press initiatives out of the restructuring studies that otherwise might have spent years languishing. Shuttles in the Westlake and Pico-Union area are

examples. Also articulated buses are being considered for purchase. Finally due to cost and noise concerns for fueling after the current CNG bus order is received MTA may shift for two years to clean diesel. And won't that cause an uproar!

The extension of the Red Line (or rail) into the mid-San Fernando Valley continues. The final recommendation is due later this year. Will they ever reach a conclusion just as to mode and route? Stay tuned.

The legislature is in the midst of coming up with a single proposal for MTA. If for no other reason than to respond to MTA's ongoing problems. But it is not reform that will address the core dysfunction. Which isn't surprising since messing with local politics is a tricky thing for legislators.

Barring a last minute change of heart the new MTA CEO will be Theodore Weigle who has formerly been in management at the transit systems in Washington, DC and Chicago. His tenure at Bechtel has been less stellar than earlier efforts, but he is well regarded. Gadfly John Walsh hints he may have an independent streak. I'd like to focus on how this change in leadership can be an opportunity at our next meeting.

(Bulletin Board, from P. 2)

"Federal Transportation Policy and the Role of Metropolitan Planning Organizations in California" is a report of the Public Policy Institute of California. It touches on how ISTEA renewal could impact California if certain proposals regarding the role MPO (such as the Southern California Association of Governments-SCAG) play are enacted. To get a free copy write: PPIC, 500 Washington St., Suite 800, San Francisco CA 94111. Also you can call (415-291-4400) or e-mail (order@ppic.org).

LAX is in the midst of a master plan to cope with expected future growth. A key element is expanded connections for transit, especially the Green Line. To get on their mailing list call (888) LAX-2015.

SO.CA.TA supports the creation of an Intercity Rail Trust Fund for Amtrak. Friends of Amtrak is spearheading this effort: <http://www.connix.com/~crocon/amtrak.html>. The toll free number to call Congress is (800) 962-3524. Free "Support Amtrak bumper" stickers are available for a business sized stamped envelope to: Jim Norton, 153 Rebecca Pines, Madison AL 35758.

MONTEBELLO EXCURSION *Chris Ledermuller/Dana Gabbard*

A number of our members participated in a recent excursion of the Pacific Bus Museum. This non-profit group has as its purpose stimulating interest in buses. They at present have no museum facility and store their collection of 20 buses in temporary storage. Membership includes a bi-monthly newsletter, "The Paddle" and discounts for excursions and other activities. There are plans to have L.A. area members meet monthly and engage in transit riding. We are hoping to coordinate our excursions. One year membership is \$25. For more information write: PBM, P.O. Box 91, San Anselmo CA 94979-0091 or <http://www.sanfrantours.com>.

On Saturday, April 26, the Pacific Bus Museum held one of its excursions in Southern California. This was a gathering for several members of the PBM, with most members coming from the Bay Area. Montebello Municipal Bus Lines was the transit agency chartered to carry around all the members of the PBM. So.Ca.TA members Dana Gabbard, Charles Powell, Chris Ledermuller, and Mark Panitz went on the excursion.

Everybody met up at the new Montebello Bus Lines facility. Before the group went on the bus trip, they were treated to a tour of the offices. The offices featured artwork by various artists who were commissioned to either paint or shape a piece of work after riding on a Montebello bus.

After the group took the tour, they were treated to free handouts of Montebello's bus fleet sheet, a description of the artwork, the history of Montebello Bus Lines, cardboard banks which look like a Montebello RTS bus, schedules, and system maps.

The trip finally began on bus 501 (the same bus as the cardboard bank!) and toured along the northernmost segment of Line 20. From there, a notable site was an oilfield which was supposed to be developed upon for housing, but was left undeveloped since a rare bird was found on the site and its environment had to be protected. From there, we made a trip along the 60 freeway towards Downtown L.A. along Beverly and east 4th St, the western segment of Line 40. Division

20 (Metro Red Line yard) was seen from the bus.

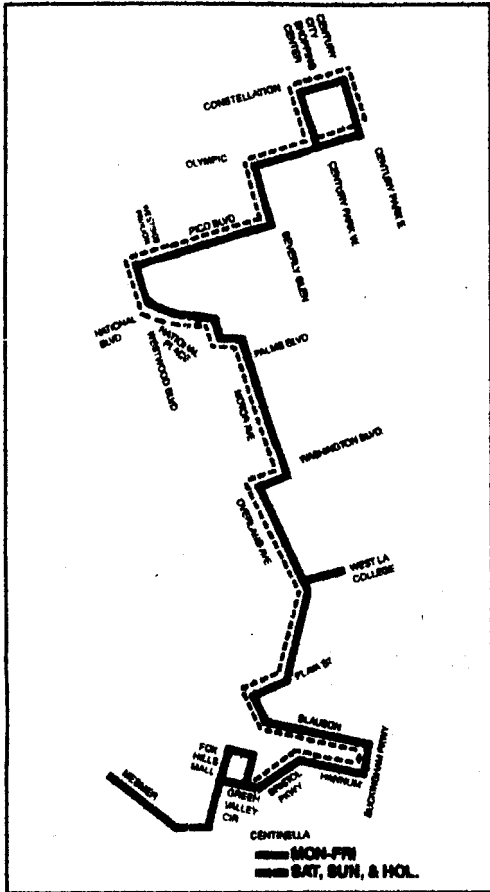
In Downtown, several photo stops were made. The first stop was at Angel's Flight, where several people plunked down 50 cents to ride up and back down "the Shortest Railway in the World". After about 10 minutes, it was off to Patsaouras Transit Plaza, where the bus actually pulled through the track and made another stop. A photo opportunity was made for the Montebello Bus to be taken in the Gateway area. Also, the group got a chance to go inside the MTA Tower (referred to by everybody on the trip as the Taj Mahal) and see the lobby and the mezzanine. From there, the bus got a chance to park at the jail to take more photos of buses, then a rare drive through the MTA's Regional Rebuild Facility. The group saw buses that were severely damaged in accidents, freshly repaired buses in its new paint, as well as converted buses like the MTA Police Bus and bus 8447, which was repainted, given new blue windows, and converted to a mobile office.

After Downtown, more parts of Montebello bus lines were done, and another photo opportunity took place down at the El Monte Bus Station. After many members got to take photos of the bus at another location untraveled by MMBL in revenue service, it was off to Monterey Park to yet another photo stop at nearby East L.A. College. Everybody, including the Montebello driver and accompanying service attendant, got out for the group photo.

At the last leg of the trip, a final stop was made at a shopping center to see Commerce's municipal bus system, which has full sized buses and does not charge fares to ride. Eventually, the trip concluded back at the yard. Everybody also had a chance to buy a raffle ticket to win bus related goodies. Everybody who participated won something.

This was a rewarding and highly interesting trip. Everybody learned a lot about Montebello, met up and exchanged stories or got to know each other for the first time. This was also great networking between So.Ca.TA and the Pacific Bus Museum. Dana and Charles P. became new members of the PBM at the excursion, and So.Ca.TA welcomes new members from the Pacific Bus Museum.

ROUTE OF THE MONTH



ROUTE:

Culver CityBus 3: Crosstown

WHERE DOES IT GO?:

Century City, Westside Pavilion, West L.A. College, and Fox Hills Mall Transit Center.

WHEN DOES IT RUN?:

7 days a week, 5:30am-11:30pm. 20 minute service weekdays, 30 minute service weekends and holidays.

FARE: 60 cents, 30 cents seniors/disabled (Culver CityBus is one of 4 agencies that accepts the Metrocard.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

(310)-253-6500 for comments,
(310)-253-6510 for
automatic schedule information.

TRANSIT TRIVIA *Chris Ledermuller*

Last month's Transit Trivia question was:

What MTA routes leave L.A. County?

The answer: #161 (Ventura), 130,460,490 (Orange),497 (San Bernardino)

This month's Transit Trivia question:

Question: What service besides the Runabouts provides free service in Downtown Long Beach?

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