

Metrolink will have new schedules starting Sept. 8. Major changes are taking place on the Riverside Line, including an additional morning train leaving Riverside at 8:28 a.m. and the re-routing of both reverse-commute trains from the Riverside Line to a new route via Fullerton and Corona. Train #400 is replaced with #700, leaving LA at 6:47 am, arriving Riverside at 8:21. Train #411 is replaced by #701, leaving Riverside at 5:36 and arriving LA at 7:14. Also, the Montebello station will open on the Riverside Line on Sept 8. Montebello Bus #70 will provide connections to this station.

You can now e-mail Metrolink customer relations with your comments and suggestions: hidalgop@scria.net [or call (800) 371-LINK].

MTA augmented morning and evening rush service on some ATE-operated lines August 31st: Routes #125, 130, 205, 225, 226, 232, 266 and 270.

On September 6th MTA began a 75 cent fare during night hours (9 p.m. to 5 a.m.) as part of the consent decree. This is in addition to the discount mid-day weekday fare on lines 40 and 42.

MTA line #620 (Boyle Heights Shuttle) now serves the Pico-Aliso housing development.

As of August 4th DASH Sherman Oaks operates with 20 minute headways Monday-Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Evening and Sunday service was cancelled (evidently, it was not productive.)

Santa Monica Municipal Bus Lines plans the following changes Sunday September 14th:

- Line #7, Pico Blvd - increased night service

frequencies weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 30 to 20 minute headways

- Line #8, Ocean Park - improved Sunday service from hourly to 30 minute headways

- Line #9, Palisades - new Sunday service hourly from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

- Line #14, Bundy Ave. - Route extension to the J. Paul Getty Museum (which opens December 16th) where it will connect with MTA line 561.

Future improvements are planned for early Spring of 1998, which will be discussed at a meeting on Saturday Oct. 18th, 3 p.m.-4:30 p.m. at 1527 4th St. in Santa Monica (Room 100 AB). For more information contact Stephanie Griffin of SMMBL at (310) 458-1975, ext. 246.

We should also note Santa Monica's information line, (310)451-5444, now is only answered 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday thru Friday.

The Riverside County Transportation Commission at its August 13th meeting received a report on the possibility of having route #496 resume service between Los Angeles and Riverside. This had been cut back to Montclair in 1994 when MTA stopped funding the Los Angeles portion of this line, citing Metrolink service as an adequate substitute. Tentative discussions with Foothill about its operating the service (and evidently funding the portion in their Zone) have been encouraging. This is on a fast track in hopes of it being perhaps ready to begin by November 1st! You can see the staff report (item 6a) at <http://www.rctc.org>.

BULLETIN BOARD

Upcoming events where we have booths: EcoFest at Barnsdale Park in Hollywood on Sunday September 28th and the Angelus Plaza Senior Fair in Downtown Los Angeles on Tuesday October 14th. Let us know if you can help staff either booth (both occur during mid-day hours). Also, we are investigating the possibility of having a booth at the opening of the Mission Valley extension of the San Diego Trolley on November 20th.

Our first ever holiday party will be on Saturday December 13th beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the Colonial Buffet, 355 E. First Street in Long Beach (1/2 block east of the Transit Mall in downtown Long Beach where the Blue Line turns off Long Beach Blvd) We will set the price for the event at our September meeting. SO.CA.TA Members and their families and guests plus members of any other transit related organizations or just interested persons are welcome to attend. We hope to include door prizes or a raffle to add fun. Suggestions are welcome.

Vice-President Charles Powell has been entrusted with chairing a new committee promoting key transit routes. On Saturday August 30th President Gabbard joined him on a trip through the upper San Gabriel Valley distributing several hundred MTA line #497 schedules to area libraries and Transit Centers. This inaugural effort was undertaken to publicize new stops the route makes that are being tested thru the end of the year. Chairperson Powell hopes to next focus on Santa Monica route #10 (Los Angeles-Santa Monica express). Suggestions and participation are encouraged.

As always members who can promote our group and the Transit Guide by placing flyers in local libraries, community centers or other locations can contact us for a supply of these. This is vital to our ongoing efforts to increase membership and raise funds. (We are currently developing a new flyer for this purpose).

The new by-laws approved at the July meeting are being prepared for distribution shortly. Thanks to all the members who provided invaluable input.

An upcoming event that may interest members is Rail-Volution '97 October 26-29th at the Hyatt Regency/Union Station in St. Louis. The main focus is building support for rail with an emphasis on the relationship between land use and urban transit. Guests include Congressman Richard Gephardt and FTA administrator Gordon Linton. Registration is \$295 (\$345 after Sept. 26th). For further details: Rail-Volution '97, Hudson Cross Roads, Selbyville DE 19975 - (302) 436- 1911 (fax). A tip of the hat to member Roger Christensen who brought this to our attention and will be attending.

The RTS (Rapid Transit Society) will have their monthly excursion this month on September 20, in San Bernardino, riding Omnitrans (and taking advantage of their day pass). This will be the group's first all-day excursion. The trip will start from Union Station, riding out the 9:10am train leaving Los Angeles to Montclair.

As always, *The Transit Advocate* needs articles, letters, Transit Tips, 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). Material for publication should be received two weeks before the scheduled SO.CA.TA meeting date. ■

We received responses to our advocacy of a 1/2 cent Intercity Rail Trust Fund for Amtrak from the office of Senator Barbara Boxer and the Federal Railroad Administration. Both aren't quite willing to support this particular source of dedicated funding but did indicate Amtrak deserves better financial underpinnings to assure its continued existence.

Curitiba Brazil's busway system is the new buzzword in Los Angeles transportation circles. A few months ago a charitable foundation paid for a number of local and state leaders to see this system first hand. As a result there is now talk by some of placing similar busways on several right of ways owned by MTA including Exposition Blvd. and the Burbank/Chandler alignment. This is chiefly in reaction to the realization that rail projects for the San Fernando Valley and South Central are not in the cards for the next 15-20 years. Busways are seen as a consolation prize.

In reading an article by Michael Major in the May/June issue of Mass Transit ("Brazil Busways: a 'subway' that runs above the ground") I was struck by the complicated factors involved in making the Curitiba system work. It isn't simply a process of laying pavement. And such an integrated approach to land use and transportation issues is alien to Los Angeles. There is talk that the Canadian Rapid-Bus concept may be more applicable to this region.

Meanwhile Los Angeles Councilman Hal

Bernson (who also sits on the board of SCRRA) is championing running Metrolink service in the San Fernando Valley, probably on the Burbank/ Chandler alignment. He is trying to broker discussions among SCRRA, LADOT and MTA. At the moment the powers that be in the valley are more interested in the busway option.

At a Central City Association Forum on the future of MTA I attended this past month, when Bill Mabie of Senator Polanco's office announced yet another change in Polanco's MTA Board reform bill (SB 567), laughter erupted among the audience of downtown movers and shakers. The latest version returns to a concept first touted by Mayor Riordan - three appointees each for the Los Angeles Mayor, County Supervisors and other cities. As Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky noted, Polanco has gone from the most accountable board (directly elected) to least accountable (all appointees). [And by the way all for nought - faced with continued opposition from the County Supervisors Polanco has now pulled the bill for reconsideration next year during the second half of the legislative session].

At the same forum Congressman Julian Dixon, key point person in Washington, DC for MTA funding efforts, stated firmly that having the Red Line successfully reach North Hollywood is essential for the agency to restore its tarnished image. If that is not achieved all other Red Line successfully reach North Hollywood is essential for the agency to restore its tarnished image. If that

is not achieved all other planned rail lines are unlikely to receive federal funds. He even called his beloved mid-city extension of the Red Line on the table for re-examination and stated while the first segment of the eastern extension may be possible the remaining portion to Whittier/Atlantic is probably unlikely to be built.

MTA doesn't want to release full details of its deal with the operators until a final agreement is reached with the mechanics. At the August 27th CAC meeting agency staff did provide some information:

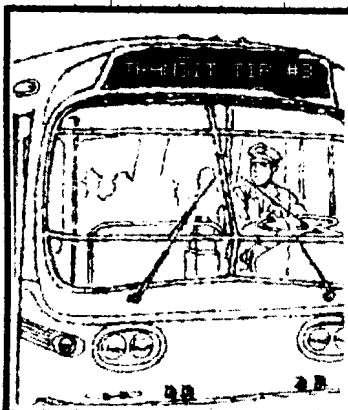
- the percentage of part-time operators can go up 1% per year during the three years of the contract (it is now 15%)
- BDOF drivers (whose wages are \$10 per hour and have benefits equal to part-timers) can be used for lines whose subsidy equal 135% of system average. They hope to implement this beginning February 1998 (with full implementation expected to take two years).

I don't need to tell anyone MTA's Long Range Plan is in disarray. They now hope by

October to have a Bus System Improvement Plan ready. This is an interim measure to try and move forward while continuing to grapple with financial and institutional issues

One issue is the new Interim CEO Julian Burke. He is a turn-around specialist his mandate is to get MTA back on its feet and able to recruit a top-flight new CEO (Ascher of New York ducked out after a taste of the intense scrutiny an MTA CEO must endure).

Burke's first exposure to reality MTA style was in assisting an audit team from the city of Los Angeles in reviewing the budgetary condition of MTA on behalf of Mayor Riordan. No surprise, MTA got an "F". While the Mayor tried to make a big deal about these findings, we long-time observers who have watched every MTA budget unravel and read critical comments in the state audit and Coopers & Lybrand report were unimpressed. But at least it resulted in Mr. Burke now being familiar with the smoke and mirrors and doubletalk that is routine at MTA. He has our best wishes in his efforts to clean up the mess. ■



Hate paying full fare? Investigate these discounted fare media:

- tokens from Glendale, MTA, Montebello and Santa Monica
- tickets from RTA and SCAT
- 10 ride pass for Banning
- Metrocard (discounted for Foothill Transit fares only)

Contact the respective agencies for details on where to obtain these.

OWL SERVICE EXCURSION *Dana Gabbard*

On July 25th members of SO.CA.TA participated in an exploration of MTA owl service. Our original purpose was a combination of recreation and education. But while the trip was being planned, MTA's new budget was released. Among the proposed spending cuts was one to reduce owl service annual operating costs one million dollars beginning in December. Now we were also riding to see for ourselves what effect such cuts could have. We would meet the people who ride owl service, and, in speaking on the proposals, have the credibility of direct experience.

We gathered at the aquarium in the East Portal building below the Gateway Transit Plaza. Ironically we had to wait for stragglers delayed by late buses. Our group included President Gabbard, Vice-President Powell, Directors Moser and Capo plus members John Ulloth and Woody Rosner. Powell was chief planner and had been working out a tentative schedule. As a fact finding mission we wanted to focus on night attractions - areas with nightlife, businesses open late or 24 hours. A proposed trip to the Valley was turned down as too dull. Some further consultations resulted in a plan of action and we were off!

Our first transit vehicle was a Red Line car we boarded at about 8:30 p.m. which took us to Civic Center station. We made our way to the bus stop on 1st Street east of Hill where at 8:50 p.m. the group caught a northbound line 483. Ridership was fairly good as the bus was about 2/3 full as we traveled via the San Bernardino freeway busway to Pasadena, getting off at Fair Oaks and Colorado Blvd.

Old Town Pasadena on a Friday night was vibrant, sidewalks so crowded with pedestrians it was hard to walk to our stop along Colorado. This was just the sort of nightlife we hoped to witness! At 10:10 p.m. we caught a westbound line 181. Besides the 17 passengers already on board it picked up many more as it made its way to Hollywood. The level of activity at this hour was surprising given only 3 years ago a proposal was made to discontinue owl service on this line. We stayed on until Highland and Hollywood Blvd.

There was some life along Hollywood Blvd. but the contrast with the lively area we had just left was glaring. At 11:25 p.m. we boarded a westbound line 217 which had about 11 riders. Ridership was light on this line. We transferred at Fairfax and Wilshire to a westbound line 20 at 11:45 p.m. It also had a relatively light load of about 14 passengers. Just after midnight we got off at Westwood Blvd. and Wilshire.

Why were we in Westwood? Phil Capo had stated a special desire to ride the last line 2 that goes from there to downtown via the Sunset strip. In traversing an area well known for late night activity would a bus be especially active? So we took a break and snacked at the local Subway (which is about the only place open overnight in Westwood besides a nearby Thrifty).

At 1:24 a.m. we boarded an eastbound line 2 at LeConte and Westwood. To our disappointment ridership was light along Sunset, despite obvious signs of many lively night spots (clubs, cafes, etc.). *(continued on next page)*

MORE BUSES IN LOS ANGELES? *Noel T. Braymer, RailPAC*

Editor's Note: This guest editorial represents the opinion of the author, and does not necessarily represent the opinion of the Southern California Transit Advocates.

One need only look at buses running in the middle of the day in downtown Los Angeles to see that they are overcrowded. To relieve this overcrowding, more buses seem the obvious solution. But this won't help in many cases. The problem is that buses run too slowly to operate efficiently. This is largely because of near gridlock traffic, to which adding more buses would make worse.

Anyone who has ever ridden a bus knows that they are slow. Ten miles an hour or less is a typical average speed for a transit bus in an urban area, when it is on time. Modest improvements in the running times of buses mean that buses could make more runs in the day. The effect would be the same as having

more buses at no extra cost. Naturally most of the obstacles are political, not monetary.

There are four factors in the average speed of a bus: acceleration, loading, traffic lights and traffic. Larger buses seem an ideal solution to overcrowding. Doubledeck buses would almost double capacity but take up no more street space than a normal bus. But the MTA has gotten rid of most of its' doubledeck and articulated buses in its fleet.

Despite other cities' success, the MTA found the acceleration and loading very slow on larger buses so that they had trouble staying on schedule. I think large buses have a role in Los Angeles. But there have to be changes made in operation to take advantage of their greater capacity on crowded bus lines.

People getting on and off buses is very time consuming. The current pay as you enter, one at a time system is very inefficient on crowded lines. *(continued on page 8)*

(from pg. 6) In downtown Los Angeles at 2:45 a.m. we caught a westbound line 4 at 7th and Broadway after having encountered nothing worse than a panhandler asking us for change while we waited there. It was an extremely busy bus, with many getting on and off as it made its way to Santa Monica. The line 33 eastbound we caught in Santa Monica at Santa Monica Blvd. and Ocean at 3:50 a.m. didn't have as much ridership as the line 4 but did fairly well. We had boarding with us a few persons who had also been on route 4 to the end of the line and who evidently ride the buses late at night mostly to stay off the street. It makes sense people doing so would target lengthy lines (such as 4 or 33) to minimize how often they must get on and off.

By now we were quite tired out (Woody had already dropped out) and as a final trip we caught at 5:15 a.m. an eastbound 70 at 7th and Spring, which had moderate ridership. I could barely keep my eyes open. At El Monte station Pat Moser caught a line 483 to take him home and Charles Powell decided to drive home in the car he had parked there. The tattered remnants (Gabbard, Capo and Ulloth) gratefully boarded an express 484 at 6:15 a.m. and were whisked back to downtown Los Angeles to go our separate ways, gladden by the knowledge that we had survived the endurance challenge - we had ridden buses ALL NIGHT LONG! ■

NEW BUS ROUTES *Kym Richards*

Here are the descriptions of the 18 new or improved bus lines proposed for the first phase of the Bus Riders' Union consent decree fulfillment: [Note that many of the new routes, as well as expanded #104 and #426, are proposed to operate all day, until 10 p.m. as well as on weekends-Ed.]

New Express Routes:

Line 422 - Proposed to provide reverse-direction service on the exact same route and dayparts as LADOT Line 423 (outbound from downtown to the Valley in morning rush hour, inbound from the Valley to downtown in afternoon rush hour). I still suspect that this was put in to make LADOT uncomfortable on their lack of conformance to the San Fernando Valley restructuring plan, which calls for seven-days-a-week, all-day bi-directional service on Line 423; especially since the proposed fare is LADOT's \$1.10 base plus 40 cents per express zone, rather than MTA's \$1.35/50 cents.

Line 530 - Local service starting at the current Line 420 terminal at the Panorama Mall, via Van Nuys Blvd. and Sherman Way, then express to East Los Angeles via the 170, 134, and 5 freeways, then local service via Marengo St., Soto St., and Cesar Chavez Ave., ending at East Los Angeles City (Community) College.

Line 550 - Local service starting at Division 7 yard, via Santa Monica Blvd., San Vicente Blvd., Venice Blvd., Western Ave., and Exposition Blvd., then express service via the 110 transitway to the Green Line, continuing on the 110 to Torrance Blvd., then local service via Vermont Ave., Normandie Ave., and Gaffey St. to San Pedro Peninsula Hospital. Also passes Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and the Kaiser facility on Pacific Coast Hwy.

Line 577 - From El Monte Metrolink Station to El Monte Busway Station, then express via the 605 and 91 freeways to Cerritos Towne Center, with one mid-route stop at the I-605/I-105 Green Line Station.

New Local Routes:

Line 58 - As expected, this is the same route that was almost implemented back in 1995,

connecting Gateway Transit Center with the Washington Blvd. Blue Line Station via Alameda St. There is one twist: A second phase is proposed, extending the line via Alameda St. and Carson St. to Harbor-UCLA Medical Center at some future point in time (probably once the Alameda Corridor work is completed).

Line 214 - Bi-directional loop route operating to/from Artesia/Harbor Transitway Station via 182nd St., Albertoni St., Broadway, Rosecrans Blvd. and Main St. ("Broadway/Main St. Employment Corridor").

New Limited Stop Route:

Line 305 - New? This is the same 305 that was tried a couple or three years back, with one new twist ... a loop via Pico Blvd. to Pico-Rimpau Transit Center.

New Community Circulator Routes:

Line 218 - From current Line 230 layover in Studio City, over the hill via Laurel Canyon Blvd. to Sunset Blvd., then to Fairfax Ave. and to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center via 3rd St.

Line 601 - A very convoluted DASH-style line between Echo Park and Terminal 28 (underneath I-10 in the vicinity of Olive St.)

Line 602 - An equally confused DASH-style line connecting El Sereno and City Terrace.

Line 603 - The Glendale Galleria to the Grand Ave. Blue Line Station (!) operating DASH-style, primarily along Colorado Blvd., Rampart Blvd., Hoover St., and 23rd St. Has a strange jog over to the Wilshire/Vermont Red Line Station.

Line 604 - As suspected, this is the "checkpoint deviation" route based around Line 204 between Slauson Ave. and the Green Line. Flexible destination service extending anywhere between Broadway on the east to Normandie Ave. on the west (approximately).

Line 605 - Shuttle from County-USC Medical Center through Boyle Heights to Washington Blvd., via Soto St., 4th St., Grande Vista Ave., and Lorena St. primarily. (to next page)

(More Buses, from Page 7)

A great deal can be learned by riding the Blue line in Los Angeles. A Blue Line train stops and all doors open. In less time than it takes some buses to complete a stop, a whole bus load of people can be loaded on a Blue Line train. People buy their tickets before going on board. Ticket inspectors randomly check to insure people are buying tickets. The same ticketing system used on the Blue Line can be used on buses. This alone would greatly speed up service on busy bus lines.

Another lesson from the Blue Line would be the use of stations and platforms. Going up and down stairs is time consuming. Low floor buses solve most of these problems. The question is how long will it take the MTA to replace its entire fleet with new low floor buses? An interim solution would be to build mini "bus stations" with raised platforms at busy stops. A trap door could be placed over the steps so passengers could walk from the platform right to the bus. In areas with lighter traffic the trap doors could be raised so a regular bus stop can be made.

Traffic lights slow all traffic, but buses even more so. The technology exists to give buses a break so that they don't have to wait long at traffic lights. The MTA is planning to buy a system which will give buses a break at traffic lights. The hang up is often with the traffic engineers, whose first concern is auto and truck traffic. The Blue Line is a good example of this. The Blue Line runs for three miles in Los Angeles on Washington Blvd.

Modified Existing Routes:

Line 104 - Extends route on Washington Blvd. to Broadway and then up to 5th St.; also extends route to Fullerton Park-Ride.

Line 108 - Adds jog via Eastern Ave. to the Citadel Shopping Center. No apparent change in headway/operating hours.

Line 167 - Realigned to operate via previous alignment on Chase St., to restore connection with Line 420.

Line 205 - Minor route realignment to service

and Flower St. when the Blue Line opened in the summer of 1990 it was set up so that the lights on Washington and Flower would give the train priority. But the city traffic engineer wouldn't allow the Blue Line to use the system. Just last summer, after 6 years the traffic engineers finally allowed the traffic lights to be coordinated with the Blue Line to give transit users a break. The result was five minutes cut from the schedule.

Too often the poor MTA gets all the blame for poor bus service. Too often the politicians on the MTA board pass the buck for things they are responsible. Clearly the MTA has no control over local traffic engineering. But the mayor of Los Angeles does. There are many places where bus lanes would speed up bus traffic. One of the reasons the politicians built the Red Line, was that it was easier to get billions of Federal money for a subway, than close Broadway and 7th to transit only.

The Red Line is transferring bus traffic off downtown streets. But this is not enough to take all buses off downtown streets. Buses will still be running for some time. To improve bus service requires greater efficiency. Simple things can be done to speed up loading and ticketing. The hardest thing is to change traffic conditions to give buses a break. Sooner or later more bus lanes should be built and traffic lights timed around buses. After all one loaded bus carries the same number of people as a block of bumper to bumper auto traffic. ■

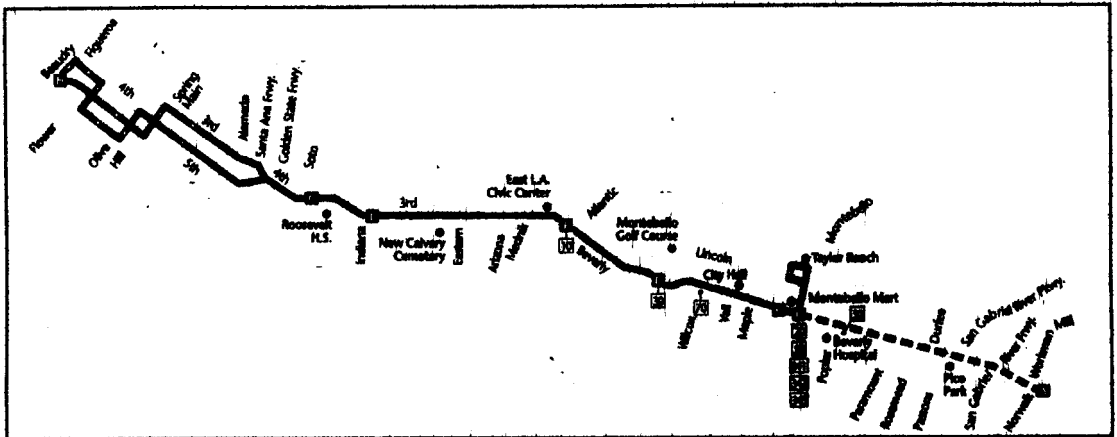
Artesia/Harbor Transitway Station via Figueroa St. and 192nd St. Also, increase in frequency.

Line 426 - Adds limited-stop segment from current south terminal at Wilshire/Western Red Line Station via Western Ave. and Exposition Blvd. to USC. Also, increase in frequency.

So there you have it. This is scheduled to come before the MTA Board at their October 23rd meeting, at which point they get to figure out how to pay for all of this.

More as I hear it. . . ■

ROUTE OF THE MONTH



Route of the month: Montebello Bus Lines 40

Where does it go: Downtown L.A., New Calvary Cemetery, East L.A. Civic Center, Montebello City Hall, Montebello Mart, and Beverly Hospital.

When does it run: 4:45am-10:30pm 7 days a week.

How much does it cost: 75 cents (35 cents seniors/disabled).

Notes: Montebello Municipal Bus Lines accepts the Metrocard. Discount tokens are available at the Montebello Mart.

TRANSIT TRIVIA *Chris Ledermuller*

Last month's Transit Trivia question was:

What MTA local routes use a freeway for a segment of their route?

The answer: MTA #68, #94, #96, #180, #181, #220

This month's Transit Trivia question:

Which Metrolink stations have no connecting bus service?

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