

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

Several new MTA and LADOT bus lines should be implemented by January. These include

Also, MTA proposes to cut owl service on several bus lines. On some lines (#10,18,26,38 and 84) all owl service will be cancelled. On certain other lines (#20,30,40,51,53,55 and 252) only portions of routes (which generally run near other services) will be eliminated. Certain routes (#60, 83) will be modified (during owl service periods only) to cover areas abandoned by other routes. Interestingly, #40 will be restructured to operate to LAX via Century Blvd during owl-service hours; this would be the first owl bus service to LAX in recent history.

As of Sunday December 14th MTA will no longer have information service on Sundays. Hours of service for 800-COMMUTE Monday thru Saturday are unchanged.

MTA bus and rail service will be free on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve beginning at 9 p.m.

Coach USA was awarded a three year contract with LADOT to operate Commuter Express

service in mid-September. (Fares and schedules remain the same for now. . .)

The West Valley Smart Shuttle now has expanded hours (until 10 p.m. weekdays) as well as weekend service-888-804-8333.

Torrance Transit now offers a smart farecard known as the Cyber Card, very similar to the one available in Ventura County. Further information is available by calling (310) 618-6266.

Sierra Madre's Round-A-Bout is a free fixed route service that has operated the past few years that until now somehow evaded our attention. It is a single direction circulator that operates two trips in mid-morning and two in mid-afternoon Monday thru Friday. For further information call (626) 355-7135.

MARTA (Mountain Area Regional Transit Authority) Off the Mountain and local community shuttles resumed recently after a 6 week interruption in service. We are investigating why this happened. . .

(Bulletin Board, from pg. 3)

This past year as an experiment we radically increased the distribution of the newsletter, targeting key politicians (local, state and national) plus reporters and transit agency staff. President Gabbard would appreciate feedback from members about whether they support continuing this attempt to increase our influence.

The third printing of the Transit Guide is nearly sold out. Anyone who wishes to participate in the planning of the expanded second edition is welcome to attend the special projects committee meeting to be held in January (place and time to be determined).

The December issue of *Trains* has an excellent overview of the Alameda Corridor project.

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

BULLETIN BOARD

Saturday December 13th we will hold elections for officers and directors for 1998. Our thanks to the volunteers on the election committee - Hank Fung (chair), Woody Rosner and Armando Avalos.

Nominees are:

- President - Dana Gabbard, Charles Powell, Charles Hobbs
- Vice-President - Charles Powell
- Treasurer - Juanita Dellomes
- Secretary - Chris Sharp
- Directors-at-Large (3) - Charles Powell, Pat Moser, Chris Ledermuller, Charles Hobbs, Michael Higby

The special meeting will begin at 2:30 p.m. at the regular meeting location. Afterward we will caravan to Long Beach for our first annual holiday buffet beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the Colonial Buffet (355 E. 1st Street, one block north of the 1st Street Blue Line station). Spaces are still available - cost is \$12 per person and the food is great. Please contact us in advance if you are planning to attend - (213) 388-2364. This is a chance to meet others with an interest in transit issues in an informal setting. And there will be door prizes!

At our November meeting the members conferred these awards:

- route of the year: MTA line 439
- transit advocate of the year: Santa Monica Mayor Pam O'Connor

An addenda to last month's bulletin board: "Ticket to Ride", the newsletter of the Southern California office of the Surface Transportation Policy Project is now available on-line:

<http://www.transact.org/socal.htm>

MTA Customer Relations now has an e-mail address: CustomerRelations@mta.net

Antelope Valley Transit Authority's web site is now up and running: <http://www.avta.com>

As a follow-up to our Santa Clarita excursion Director Chris Ledermuller drafted a letter with suggestions based on our observations during the trip that Santa Clarita Transit might wish to consider implementing.

The San Diego trip had a strong turn out and overall was enjoyed by the participants. A trip report will be in an upcoming issue of the newsletter. A preliminary observation worth sharing is members were impressed at the level of amenities available in the transit centers we went thru compared to similar facilities in Los Angeles County.

Yerba Seca Publications has just released three travel videos promoting leisure travel on Metrolink. These have been broadcast on several public access cable channels in the region. It has also announced plans to release in Spring 1998 an updated and expanded version of its very successful Guide to Metrolink (over 3,000 copies sold!), titled "Railroad-Freeway". Besides Metrolink this will also cover Metrorail and Amtrak service. For further information write: Yerba Seca Publications, P.O. Box 975 Agoura CA 91376. (*cont'd on page 2*)

TUNNEL TOUR Dana Gabbard

The afternoon of Saturday September 27 ten SO.CA.TA members had the opportunity to tour the MTA subway tunnels in North Hollywood at the future Universal City station. The group included President Gabbard, Vice President Powell, Newsletter editor Charles Hobbs, Director Pat Moser plus members Woody Rosner, Kymberleigh Richards, J.K.Drummond, Henryka Masnowski, Scott Zimmerman and James Umbach (who came all the way from Sacramento just to be a part of it!)

After putting on heavy duty boots and safety vests we received a briefing on safety while in the tunnels plus an overview of the project. Lastly there was a demonstration of how to use an air breathing device in case of fire. Now we were ready for... THE PIT.

To access the tunnels we had to climb down some 80 feet of stairs on the edge of the pit that will be the future station. At the bottom we made our way southward into the tunnels. While it was not too dark, there was mud and dampness. You had to be aware of where you were stepping because the surface was uneven with construction track,

puddles and other obstructions.

After about 200 feet the guides had us turn around, commenting the tunnels would continue looking the same until we came to the boring machine 12,000 feet further on. You could look up and see the ribs that provide the temporary support structure until cement is poured. It was eerie and noisy. Once we had to move aside for a load of dirt from the tunnel head to go by on a train.

This gave us an opportunity to appreciate just what is involved in the construction of our rapid transit system. The pristine environs of the MTA board room seemed far away, and not just in physical distance (evidently Zev Yaroslavsky is the sole MTA board member that has visited this site, and in fact has done so several times).

After we got back everyone expressed appreciation for the opportunity to see this awe inspiring project. Our thanks to Beverly Voran of MTA for coordinating our participation. And we hope to soon schedule a tour of the Hollywood tunnels, slated to open in December of next year.

I had the chance to tour the Red Line tunnel construction in North Hollywood, CA. It was a rather "boring" tour. (Oh, never mind.) Actually, it was a joy to have a firsthand look at the tunnel, and to see exactly what a subway tunnel looks like before trains go rumbling through. The particular part of the tunnel I was in was in Universal City, across from the Universal CityWalk shopping area. I never knew how much work it took to dig a tunnel! I always thought it was a simple procedure: dig the tunnel, then lay the tracks. Boy, was I wrong! They need to drain water, seal holes, line the tunnel with spray-on concrete, blast through different kinds of rock, hard and soft, vent gases, and all kinds of other such tasks. Wow! What an eye-opener! I will no longer complain when subway work gets behind schedule, since I now understand exactly what it involves.

--James Umbach



← Suiting up

What have
we got
ourselves
into?!? →



←
Into the
tunnel ..

Make
way for
the loco!
→



↓ Subway explorers, starting from left: Pat Moser, Woody Rosner, Joe Drummond, Scott Zimmerman, James Umbach, Charles Powell, Henryka Masnowski, Kym Richards, Dana Gabbard, and Charles Hobbs (who took *almost* all of the photos on this page...)



PLAC REPORT *Dana Gabbard (dgabbard@hotmail.com)*

Revelations about costs overruns on the Hollywood subway project of at least \$62 million dollars are contained in the Dec. 5 Daily News. Reporter David Bloom states the final figure could be more than \$100 million. The article also reveals of the 5 scenarios Interim CEO Julian Burke had ready as of November 25th all declared DOA the Mid-City and San Fernando Valley extensions of the Red Line. Two scenarios would continue, with lengthened construction schedules and dubious financial assumptions, the Pasadena Blue Line and eastern extension of the Red Line. With the latest financial revelations all bets may be off!

Realization of impending disaster seems to have motivated a inexplicable motion by Los Angeles Councilman (and MTA Board powerhouse) Richard Alatorre at the November 13th special Board meeting that asked MTA staff to report on the possibility of splitting up MTA and parceling its bus service responsibilities to the various municipal operators. Evidently this is being floated as a way to save enough funds to keep favored rail projects alive.

To meet its obligations under the consent decree the MTA board went forward with its purchase of 223 high floor buses from New Flyer despite pleas from the disabled community to instead seek new bids to enable a purchase of low floor buses instead. The board promised its next bus order will be low floor as will all thereafter.

According to the MTA's Operations Business Plan for 1998-2002 by next July all divisions will have Passenger Advisory Committees. It also mentions that a design flaw in the initial order of light rail vehicles allows water to collect on their roofs creating a problem with corrosion which will be quite expensive to correct.

Various factions scuttled renewal this year of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). A six month stop gap bill was

passed to keep transportation funds flowing. The outlook is clouded by the continued regional divisions and differing views of fiscal priorities that caused problems before. Look for fresh battles to break out when attempts to pass a bill resume in January or February.

Amtrak dodged the bullet. Congress approved the capital funds it needs to stay afloat in return for certain labor provision changes and a liability cap. But be prepared for future battles - Amtrak is not out of the woods yet!

SB45 was a little noted bill authored by Senator Quentin Kopp and signed earlier this year by Governor Wilson. But its reform of state transportation funding could have a major effect on local spending. Regional bodies like MTA will now program 75% of funds that flow thru Sacramento. This will diminish the power of state bodies like Caltrans and the California Transportation Commission. Yet with this new flexibility comes the responsibility to make hard choices whereas before MTA simply developed wish lists and let the CTC decide what should make the cut.

By the time this newsletter appears the Southern California Association of Governments should have released its new draft Regional Transportation Plan. This will be available on their web site (<http://www.scag.ca.gov>) along with a schedule of workshops and presentations. Or call (213) 630-1444. Public hearings begin in February.

An interesting sidelight is that Mark Pisano, Executive Director of SCAG, in prepared remarks made before a Nov. 19th hearing the Assembly Transportation Committee held in Los Angeles (topic: MTA) noted that Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky had appealed to keep the 4th segment of the Red Line in the RTP. SCAG is only doing so contingent on MTA's recovery plan being approved by the Federal Transit Agency. (*cont'd on Pg. 14*)

FIVE YEARS OF THE TRANSIT ADVOCATE

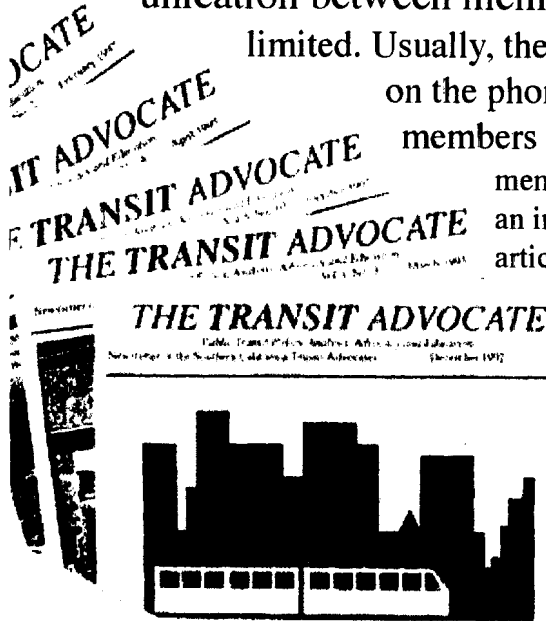
During SO.CA.TA's earlier years, starting in 1989 when this organization was known as the Los Angeles Transit League, communication between members, outside of the meetings, was very limited. Usually, then-President Pat Moser would call members on the phone, a few days before the meeting, to remind members to attend. (There were fewer than fifteen members then). Occasionally, if a member discovered an interesting newspaper article, several copies of the article would be made and distributed at meetings.

However, these materials were almost never made available to members who did not attend the meeting where they were distributed.

Although it may have been discussed earlier, I recall bringing up the issue of producing a newsletter a few months after I joined the organization in 1991. Initially, there was little enthusiasm. Of course, everyone thought it would be nice to have a group newsletter, but there were concerns about production costs (printing, mailing, etc.) as well as responsibility for writing articles. Fortunately, Secretary Kris Sharp was very supportive of the newsletter concept, and, after the group incorporated as the Southern California Transit Advocates (SO.CA.TA) in 1992,

both of us worked long hours to bring a newsletter to reality. (It helped that we both had the same computer--Amiga, although newsletter production eventually switched to a Macintosh due to better software and printer quality).

We presented various "experimental" newsletters in 1992. I often downloaded articles from the Internet (these were the days when Internet access was very hard to get for most people), printed them in newsletter-format using desktop publishing software, and distributed them at the SO.CA.TA meetings (these still weren't mailed out). In August 1992, a "promotional" newsletter, consisting of a few "opinion pieces" by members was produced. The intent was to distribute this promotional newsletter at public events such as rail line openings, etc. But commitment to a monthly newsletter was still lackluster (a quarterly newsletter, consisting of a single page was being considered). I was still convinced that a better job needed to be done in informing both SO.CA.TA members and the general public about transit issues, so on November 28, 1992, I produced and mailed (cont'd on Pg. 8)



by
Charles P. Hobbs
Newsletter Editor

Highlights through the years...

- L.A. riots disrupt transit service in Downtown, South Central LA . .
- Los Angeles Transit League incorporates as Southern California Transit Advocates
- Metrolink starts operations
- First *Transit Advocate* issue released

- Metro Red Line opens
- RTD, LAGTC merge into MTA
- First SO.CA.TA construction site tour (Green Line/I-105 Freeway)
- Metrolink service to County Fairs
- Transit Advocate made available at UCLA, MTA libraries

- * Northridge earthquake damages freeways, necessitates near- instant Metrolink and bus service expansion.
- MTA runs big deficit, proposes fare hike and massive cuts in service
- Metrocard fare instrument introduced
- MTA unions go on strike for nine days, shutting down most service.

- Republicans take control of Congress
- Metro Green Line starts service. SO.CA.TA has booth at opening ceremony (a first)
- First official SO.CA.TA excursions to San Diego and Ventura County
- MTA HQ building and Gateway Plaza open

- SO.CA.TA produces first edition of its Transit Guide
- Amtrak's Night Train to Los Angeles
- Red Line opens to Los Angeles Western
- SO.CA.TA implements web page
- MTA, community groups enter into consent decree for more bus service

(from pg. 7) what would be the final "experiment": the very first issue of the *Transit Advocate*, in much the same form as it is today.

(Originally, the newsletter was to be printed on one 11" x 17" sheet, folded. But there were occasional difficulties in obtaining that particular paper size, while I considered 8.5" x 11", folded or not, too restrictive. The folded 8.5" x 14" format currently in use is well liked by the members, and is very easy to fold and mail).

The second issue (January 93) inaugurated two new features: a calendar of local transit meetings and events, and a "transit updates" section, containing reports on new, modified or cancelled transit services, fare increases, and related issues. As is the case now, the goal of these early newsletters was to present a lot of transit news and information in a relatively limited amount of space. Although I wrote the majority of local news items, occasionally a high-quality Usenet post (always taken with permission, and I've never been refused so far . . .) would be printed in the newsletter.

Contributions from other members were considerably less frequent. However, press releases from the American Public Transit Association (APTA), graphics from MTA, Metrolink and other operators, and a few rail safety tips from Operation Lifesaver always kept the *Transit Advocate* from being too skimpy.

Until mid-1993, when I obtained a computer scanner, graphics were generally limited to photographs, computer-generated line drawings, and portions of other materials (MTA and Metrolink rail maps, etc). Other than the cover picture, however, graphics were almost never used to excess, as space was limited and could be better used for text in most cases. Really elaborate graphics were (and still are) a problem to print and copy, although improvements in this area have been made. I was personally responsible for all newsletter functions until early 1994, when other members started to help with copying and mailing. (From late 1994 on, this function was handled by Production Manager—and President—Dana Gabbard). Around this time, more members started to gain enough confidence to write articles for the newsletter. A couple of new features were added in 1994.

One was "From the Editor" section, which eventually became the current "Bulletin Board". However, an attempt to provide the previous month's meeting minutes in the newsletter failed due to a lack of access to the information (this was tried again in 1996 and dropped due to a lack of member interest. But the meeting agenda is currently supplied to members, and has proven to be useful in keeping the meetings orderly and productive).

A new Calendar format was introduced in 1995 (It actually looked like a calendar, but used up too much space, so it was replaced with a more compact version a year later). 1995 also brought the immensely popular Route-Of-The-Month (also known as Transit Center of the Month for a while) and Michael Ludwig's Transit Trivia. Both of these features have enhanced member participation in the newsletter content, as they are relatively easy to write. And in November 1995, then-Vice-President Dana Gabbard submitted the first "Public and Legislative Affairs Committee (PLAC) report", a detailed look at the inside politics of transit.

1996 brought limited advertising for the first time into the pages of the Transit Advocate (although we had occasionally run "ads" for Metrolink as well as rail-safety oriented material). We ran ads for Kirk Schneider's *California by Train, Bus and Ferry* for about a year, but response to the ad was disappointing (we sold less than five copies!) On a more successful note, we started selling our own Transit Guide that year; as of December 1997 we have sold at least three hundred copies.

Like so many other organizations, SO.CA.TA went on line with a World Wide Web page (<http://socata.lerctr.org>) in late 1996. This service has recently been enhanced with several new features, including a private messaging board for members. Although an online version of the newsletter is provided for anyone to read, the printed newsletter will continue to be an important SO.CA.TA function. In fact, as of 1997, we've stepped up our newsletter exchange program; now many public officials at all levels of government receive our newsletter.

It is my hope that the newsletter will continue to grow and improve, and that all members will actively participate in that process!

Our readers speak...

"I have eagerly looked forward to getting the Transit Advocate each month. The best thing about it is that I can easily keep up with the transit changes happening all over the L.A. metropolitan area. I also like being able to find out about various things happening 'behind the scenes' at transit agencies, including plans for future expansion."

—Michael Ludwig, member since 1993

"The SO.CA.TA newsletter has been very helpful to me. It is timely, accurate, and informative. No one can read all newspapers, see all posted notices, listen to all radio announcements, read all Internet newsgroup posts, nor watch all TV programs to learn what is happening to transit in our area. The newsletter is the best single source of news and is small enough to save for reference."

—Joseph Drummond, member since 1994

"[The Transit Advocate] has evolved into the source where those who want to know about transit in Southern California can become 'in-the-know' with all the latest information in a clear and concise manner. I especially appreciate Dana Gabbard's PLAC report, as it has only gotten better in the past year."

—Hank Fung, member since 1996

GUEST IMPRESSION *Dave Simpson, Phoenix, AZ*

Editor's Note: The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the Southern California Transit Advocates.

I'd wanted a quick escape for the weekend, and had wanted to ride Metro since visiting the station underneath Union Station the last time I visited Union Station itself. I couldn't get out of Phoenix before 5:30 on Friday, so I had to drive in Saturday morning, but made decent time (5 hours flat for just under 400 miles -- which should be CRAWLING for REAL inter-city trains, AHEM!) and so after the customary visit to IN-N-Out Burger, at 1:00 PM I went below Union Station to begin my tour of the Metro Lines. I ended up almost all the time on those trains for the next 5 hours and 45 minutes.

I'd gotten a couple of tips before my trip this weekend (thanks again!), but you transit types will be glad to know that I ended up riding every part of all three Lines. It was great -- observed some entertaining characters and behavior, but also had fun riding the trains. (It's a lot cheaper than Disneyland!) I rode in the front car almost the whole time, and usually was leaning into the window facing forward to view things out ahead of the trains.

My tour went as follows.

- Started at Union Station. The Red Line trains, and the other lines' trains as well, are not as nice as BART trains but they do the job fine.
- Rode the Red Line to its western terminus. It was fun looking ahead of the train down the subway. The interior of the tunnel is well lit, and so it was neat to see the insides and note the vertical as well as horizontal curves of the tunnels. I find subways fascinating, so this didn't disappoint me. I noticed the northward branch toward North Hollywood, which was gated off; this looked to me to be the perfect place to have some kind of movie. The stations here are okay -- I liked the BART stations and the underground

Seattle bus tunnel stations more, but that's just personal preference. One of the things noticed (besides the signals all over the place -- kids would have fun here) was the use of lots of crossovers, often it seemed, an "X" of dual crossovers built at each end of a station. This would allow trains to use either side of a station (or bypass a disabled train parked on one side of the platform). I also noticed the covered third rail -- not much of a cover, more like a canopy.

It seemed to me that at this time of day, a couple of the stations (Pershing Square and 7th/Metro if I remember right) were very crowded, and quickly filled all the seats and required a lot of people to stand. This was between 1:00 and 1:30 PM on a Saturday.

After having the train reverse course at Wilshire/Western, I got off at MacArthur Park station and visited the park. This made me think that maybe this station is a counterpart to BART's Montgomery St. Station. Here in LA, I rode the escalator up out of the station and saw nothing but bright blue sky (I had great weather for a second LA trip in a row), then I saw big palm trees, and even a flock of birds. Then at the street level, I found myself across from MacArthur Park. Damned nice place to have a concert. One police car was there, didn't seem crime-ridden; looked like a suburb of Mexico City if I had to make any kind of description. Back to the east (and northeast) was downtown.

I went back downstairs and continued my odyssey.

- Took the Blue Line from 7th/Metro down to Imperial/Wilmington. This (and the Green Line) had Nippon Sharyo trains on it. Power was drawn by a pantograph from an overhead cable instead of from a third rail. Some of these trains were named after cities (Paramount, for example, which was my train south on the Blue Line). (cont'd on Pg. 12)

(from Pg. 11)

This was pretty interesting -- a group of gorgeous señoritas got on board not soon after the train came up to street level (past Pico station but not much farther -- on the east-west segment). For once, I didn't just look out the front of the train or occasionally at the streets. I thought the speed of the train was okay, though it could have been better. Sometimes the ride was jerky because the operator would apply the brakes due to some kids getting on the tracks ahead of the train. Better safe than sorry, I guess. At Imperial/Wilmington I got off and went "upstairs" to catch the Green Line. This station was one of those that I visited before -- it's the one just south of the Watts city limits, with a police station of some kind next to it (lots of cops around).

- Took the Green Line to Norwalk, then all the way to its western terminus, then back to Imperial/Wilmington. This line is kind of a turkey if you ask me. First of all, freeway median stations are LOUD. Tire noise is a killer. Worse, trains take FOREVER to arrive. It was not a pleasant thing. I rode it end to end and returned to Imperial/Wilmington; I thought again about how this is DUMB not to have this train go to LAX itself; and I thought the elevated line at the end by all those amusing old aerospace buildings (and the TRW building where secrets were sold to foreign spies while the blender that was supposed to be used to shred secret documents was used instead to make daiquiris). The station at the end has this elevator with blue plastic walls that's just WEIRD to be in. Not much entertainment on this line. I returned to Imperial/Wilmington and...

- Took the Blue Line to Long Beach, through downtown Long Beach, and then returned on the Blue Line to 7th/Metro in Los Angeles. First part of the run was with widely spaced stations, so the train could maintain decent speed. I noticed a couple of things here. First of all, the speed was limited to 55 mph, 45 in places. Dumb! The trains ought to go as fast as they can before having to slow down again at stations. It's

goofy to think that a new line was built with system performance intentionally degraded. Second, the line here has road crossing at graded (protected by gates). This is substandard compared to having a line fully separated from any cross traffic (or pedestrian crossings at grade). If there's ever money for it, the crossings need to be closed and replaced with underpasses or overpasses. The last thing I saw that I thought was bad, was that in part of Long Beach (and this may be true at the other end in Los Angeles), the train is controlled by street traffic signals! The trains have to stop at stoplights! (sigh) This is toylike. Hopefully this can be improved upon later.

I can say that as the train proceeded south, it got more and more packed. It didn't force a lot of people to stand, but the seats were generally all taken. Here is where it got entertaining, as far as some of the characters who got on the train. I'll be nice and spare a lot of commentary, but just will say that a few bad apples do tend to spoil the barrel and it's easy to understand the train. I'll be nice and spare a lot of commentary, but just will say that a few bad apples do tend to spoil the barrel and it's easy to understand the "loser" stigma with transit. I am glad I didn't ride the train much later that (Saturday) night. The ride south (and later, the ride north) earlier in the afternoon and evening was entertaining enough, I can say confidently.

As we got closer to downtown the scenery was "interesting" out the windows. Some of us saw a guy with no legs fall face-down out of his wheelchair onto the sidewalk; and some people were making remarks about a guy who was walking by and not doing anything about it; about this time we reached another station so ol' Dave the doofus ran out and back down the street and did what he could. The guy standing next to the victim hadn't done much because the guy without legs was drunk and hostile. This guy (the stander) and I picked the other guy up and plopped him back in his chair, told him to lean back, not forward; I looked for a belt or strap but there wasn't one. We turned his chair

so it faced a wall (so the guy wouldn't land on the sidewalk again) but the guy turned it around and said he was fine, and that we should leave him alone, so we did. I went back to the station (the wait for the train was interesting, with "Renee" at the station...never mind, I said I wouldn't comment much) and I caught the next train. End of side episode.

The ride back north was interesting, too. This time I went all the way on the train past Imperial/Wilmington to 7th/Metro (Red Line access). In town (Long Beach) having the train stop at stoplights was stupid, I thought. Once we got to the stations farther north, the train made decent speed. This train was like the Red Line train earlier, in that it was getting filled. In this case, before long there were standees (I gave my seat up to a lady, being the doofus that I am, and later when I got one back, I gave it up later for a guy who had his daughter with him). I didn't mind standing: I could see more cute girls or look out the front of the train as well as out the windows (before it got really dark). This train constantly filled up with more and more people, some of them carrying stuff from shopping. A few nasty-looking types, too; it would not surprise me if there could be trouble on trains or at stations in the wee hours. (Could be this could doom owl service on many city transit systems.) I rode the train all the way to 7th/Metro and...

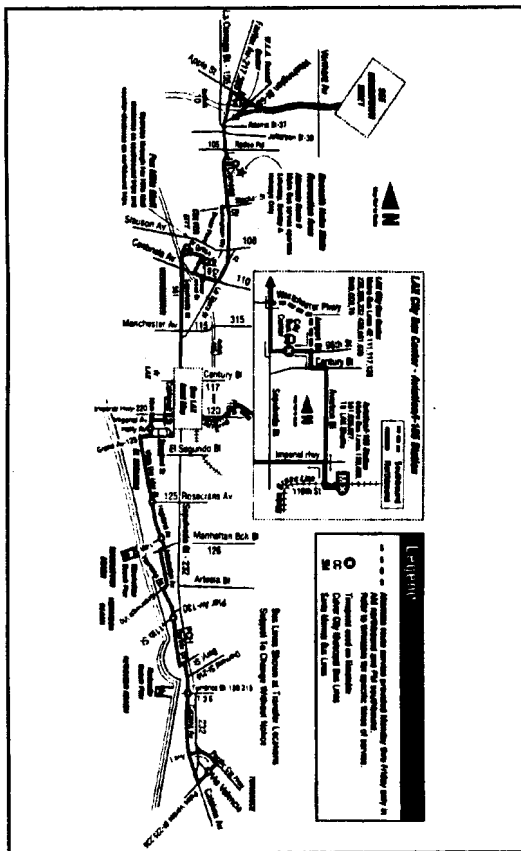
• Rode the Red Line to its western terminus, and back, for good measure, before going back to Union Station and ending the trip. This time (about 4:30 to 5:45 PM) the Red Line wasn't as busy. I remember seeing the Blue Line trains disgorging hordes of people but there wasn't a lot of use on the Red Line at this time, at least not comparatively so. (Maybe when the Hollywood extension opens up, if it goes by entertainment, this might change.) I rode the subway line again as it was my favorite part of the system, before I left. I noticed that the Red Line is authorized for speeds up to 52 mph, which is pretty good. (As always, I'd like more,

but 52 mph through downtown is not bad.) On the way back from Western/Wilshire I got off again at MacArthur Park station. (I observed my former train leaving and noticed that the acceleration appeared mighty good.) I went up to re-examine the MacArthur Park setting. Now there were huge bright lights lighting up the whole place. Again, this would be a good site for a concert. (There is a band shell there if I recall from looking at the map of the park by the station.) The police car was still there, and now (this was about 5:15 PM, after dark) there were about a dozen police officers right by the station. They might have thought it odd that I'd just kind of look around, including back toward downtown, then go back down into the station, but oh, well.

Once back down there I caught the next Red Line train to Union Station, and left the system. The clock tower at the Station itself, visible from where I was parked, said about five minutes to seven. I'd taken about ten minutes to walk out of the subway station and pick up free Amtrak materials on the way to my car, so I figured I'd spent 5:45 on the system. (It was just before 1:00 PM on the clock tower when I left my car.) I had parked all the way to the west, next to the station, beside some big green drums. I went to the nearby gate to leave. Parking charge was the maximum, \$5.50 if I remember. A very decent deal.

"Travel Smart...Take Metro" is the [English] slogan for L.A. Metro. It's perfect. Transit systems HAVE to have a happy, snappy, SAPPY slogan. When I read this, on the Red, Green, and Blue Line schedules and system maps, I thought, this is perfect to advertise using the spunky cheerleader-style young lady that was on the old Yugo commercial. Big grin, big expressiveness as she yells, "Travel smart -- take METRO!" (Actually, this could be done featuring different women and men on billboards if they wanted to.)

ROUTE OF THE YEAR



Route of the Year: MTA 439 (ROTM July 1997)

Where does it go: Just about everywhere. Patsaouras Transit Plaza, West L.A. Transit Center, Fedco, Kenneth Hahn Park (weekends and holidays only), Fox Hills Mall, LAX City Bus Center, Aviation Green Line Station, Manhattan Beach Pier, Redondo Beach Pier, and Torrance.

When does it run: 5:00am (5:50am weekends) to midnight everyday. Half hourly service during peak rush hours, hourly service all other times. Special turnout to Kenneth Hahn Park on weekends and holidays.

How much does it cost: \$1.35 between West L.A. Transit Center and Torrance, and \$1.85 between Downtown L.A. and Torrance.

When is the perfect time to ride: During the next few hot summer months, for great beach service.

Whom to call for more info: 1-800-COMMUTE

(from Pg. 6) A version of the draft RTP I have seen indicates SCAG is pressing for busways in many corridors originally slated to have rail service

(Exposition, Crenshaw, Burbank/Chandler, Van Nuys). They also champion jitneys and smart shuttles to replace low ridership bus lines.

With the help of Edmund Buckley of *Western Transit* I finally made contact with the Southern California Intercity Rail Group Interim Joint Powers Board. This is the eight-county ad-hoc group that may take over the San Diegan from Caltrans. One of the chief motivators for this is cost. As Amtrak is pressured to be self-sufficient by Congress it has shifted costs to the states that it operates intrastate services for

[known as the 403(b) program]. The state of California's subsidy of the three routes it has under this program (San Diegan, San Joaquin and the Capitals) have soared in the past few years. But a Joint Powers entity is under a different program and pays only direct costs (this is how Metrolink and the Coaster contract with Amtrak for operating services). This cost difference is driving the process to convert state services to regional joint-power oversight.

RCTC is now talking of subsidizing Greyhound service between LA and Riverside since its hopes of reviving line 496 fizzled (RTA and Foothill seem less than interested).