

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

Metrolink service on the Orange, Ventura and Santa Clarita Lines is back to normal as of March (it had been affected by flooding in February). However, continued service on the Ventura County Line west of Moorpark is an issue of contention between Metrolink and Union Pacific (who wants Metrolink to pay more for using this section of track).

Sources inside MTA now say May 1999 is the likely opening for the Hollywood Red Line extension, due to flood damage.

MTA Sunday information service resumed operation March 8th.

MTA has exercised an option for an additional 50 Neoplan CNG buses from the current order.

Additional MTA "Consent Decree" routes are now in service (and offering free rides until March 15):

- #218, between Studio City and West Hollywood/Fairfax via Laurel Canyon Blvd.
- #603, between the Glendale Galleria
- #605, local shuttle in East Los Angeles

Also, LADOT is operating two new routes under this program (also free until March 15):

- Pico Union Echo Park DASH
- Commuter Express #422, running reverse commute service from Los Angeles to Warner Center, Agoura Hills, Westlake Village and Thousand Oaks.

Modifications to Foothill Transit routes effective in March:

- Weekday service on #272 (Duarte-West Covina) now operates every 30 minutes (not 15). This was done so that some of its buses could be reallocated to #187 and #276. The schedules of #187 and #276 have been adjusted to reflect the additional vehicles (no frequency change, but

longer running times in the interest of schedule adherence).

- Also, #276 serves North Glendora (the Lorraine-Sierra Madre-Valley Center loop) during weekday school hours only; otherwise #276 is routed via Alostia, Lorraine, Foothill and Lone Hill. (#274 and #488 will continue to serve the Sierra Madre loop during all hours of service)

- There are minor changes on #178, 184, 185, 193, 274, 280, 291, 292, 480/481, 482, 486, 488, and 492.

Several changes to Riverside Transit Agency routes, effective February:

- #17 now runs between Moreno Valley Mall and the new Riverside Regional Medical Center, in Moreno Valley. Service west of Moreno Valley Mall is now provided by new Route #20.

- #19 has been rerouted to the Medical Center, and has added service (including new Sunday service)

- New #20 operates between Riverside Plaza via Alessandro to Moreno Valley, the Medical Center, then continues through to the Moreno Valley Community Hospital, in eastern Moreno Valley.

- Both routes #35 (Moreno Valley-Beaumont) and #36 (Beaumont-Calimesa-Yucaipa) now operate Monday through Saturday (up from Monday, Wednesday and Friday only).

Western Transit reports since last June passengers boarding the LAX shuttle serving Aviation Green Line station must show proof of fare from MTA or some other public transit operator. This is because many air travelers had begun to use the free parking at the station to avoid parking fees at the lots surrounding LAX.

BULLETIN BOARD

The Pacific Bus Museum is having an excursion exploring Culver City Municipal Bus Lines on Saturday March 28th. A G.M. new look bus is promised to provide transportation as the party rides throughout the CCMBL service area. Departure is Noon from the Culver City garage, 9815 West Jefferson Blvd. (west of Duquesne). Cost is \$20 for PBM members, \$23 for non-members in advance and \$28 for individuals paying the day of the excursion. Send check or money order payable to the Pacific Bus Museum (by March 21) to the museum's address: P.O. Box 91 San Anselmo CA 94979. For further information - (415) 661-4408. Several of our members are participating and anticipate a day of fun similar to last year's Montebello excursion.

While some of the consent decree pilot project services have been slow to gain ridership the two DASH routes (El Sereno/City Terrace and Echo Park/Pico Union) and the Commuter Express 422 (USC/downtown Los Angeles/Encino/Thousand Oaks) have proven very successful. The difference may be that these routes grew out of restructuring study recommendations responding to well identified needs.

Arrangements have been made for SO.CA.TA to have an ad (one-third page) in the Union Station chapter of the upcoming new edition of Ed Simburger's Metrolink tour guide (expanded to also include Metrorail). This action may raise our profile a bit, as the book is sold in bookstores and held by numerous libraries throughout the region!

President Gabbard wrote David Kelsey of the County Counsel office regarding any advice Kelsey may have given Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan on the legality of Riordan appointing two L.A. city councilmembers to the MTA Board. In a letter dated Feb. 20 Mr. Kelsey responded that any such advice would be confidential.

Kris Sharp at the February meeting proposed our club shirt have a more professional image than the initially considered t-shirt. The dress shirt option he presented could include a pocket large enough to hold transit schedules. We invite feedback on this idea and hope to soon settle on a shirt and design.

Train Riders Association of California (TRAC) has issued an appeal for high speed rail supporters to write or e-mail the leading gubernatorial candidates to urge their support of the project. For further details: <http://www.trainweb.com/calrailnews/AAPage.htm>

Want to be on the mailing list for progress reports and meeting notices relating to the study of whether the Harbor and El Monte Transitways should be connected? Send your name, address and daytime / evening telephone number to: Harbor Freeway Transitway Extension Study, 8436 West Third Street, Suite 700, Los Angeles CA 90048. The Preliminary Alternatives Report is underway with the Project Study Report due this summer.

The federal Bureau of Transportation Statistics is making available complimentary subscriptions to the first volume of its new publication Journal of Transportation and Statistics. Request can be sent by: mail [BTS, 400 7th Street, Room 3430 Washington DC 20590], phone [(202) 366-DATA], fax [(202) 366-3640] or e-mail [order@bts.gov]. (continued on Page 7)

"Bus reductions that are not part of an overall bus service improvement plan and that disproportionately adversely affect transit dependent riders appear to be inconsistent with the overriding purpose of the consent decree". Special Master Donald Bliss has by this ruling forced the MTA Board to drop its lip service about mitigating the effect of the night and owl cuts and loosen the purse strings for taxi vouchers, vans, shuttles, demand services, etc. Otherwise the cuts must be rescinded. This probably will also impact planned weekend service cuts and an increase in rail fares. Which leaves the MTA budget in a state of total disarray.

In my view MTA has three open-ended financial disasters in the making:

- 1) the consent decree - because the overcrowding relief is a fixed percentage of capacity if adding more buses makes transit use more appealing and increases ridership that will trigger the need for still more buses to be placed into service to relieve the overcrowding induced by the overcrowding relief!
- 2) the federal Full Funding Agreement - which compels construction of the Red Line extensions while congressional appropriations to help pay for them are at the whim of the political winds. Plus the growing number of metropolitan areas across the country joining the fight for the relatively fixed amount of new start funds means MTA just won't be getting the large slices of the pie it did 4-5 years ago.
- 3) the new LAPD/Sheriff policing agreement has no cap (the inherent conflict of interest of having city and county officials on the MTA board is illustrated by the fact that they balked at having a cap and used their positions to stop any proposals along those lines). Undoubtedly the cost of these

contracts will escalate.

The General Accounting Office has released a study that describes challenges to several big ticket surface transportation projects across the county that are receiving federal funds, including the Red Line and Alameda Corridor. Entitled "Surface Infrastructure: Costs, Financing and Schedules for Large-Dollar Transportation Projects" it raises concerns about MTA's ability to get the rail project back on schedule and financing difficulties that may be ahead for the Alameda project. You can examine the report on GAO's web site (<http://www.gao.gov>) or request a free copy via a form on the web site or writing: General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 37050, Washington DC 20013 [include series number with request - RCED-98-64].

MTA's action to program funds for the Red Line North Hollywood extension to ensure it opens in 2001 as the feds demanded has sparked a sagebrush rebellion like reaction from San Pedro to Palmdale - everyone seems to be talking about withdrawing from MTA. Boardmember Jenny Oropeza of Long Beach, who co-sponsored the request to study splitting up MTA into zones, interestingly in the Feb. 15th Daily News makes comments that indicate a growing awareness that the issue has spiralled out of control and is more about petty politics (and a grab for \$\$\$) than transportation needs. AB 1759 (Runner) would let 50% of state transportation funds for L.A. county flow on a per capita basis to the 88 cities and the county who would directly program it. What regional priorities would get trampled in this stampede? More responsible is SB 1847 (Schiff), which would set up an independent Authority to construct the Pasadena Blue Line at what hopefully is a lower cost than if MTA continued with the project. Meanwhile LADOT is studying zones in the San Fernando valley and finding the issue rather more complicated than

proponents claimed. I rebutted L.A. council-member Richard Alarcon's comments that a priority for any Valley transit zone would be that it is seamless by pointing out in a letter the Daily News published on Feb. 22 that if Foothill was unable to do that why does Alarcon believe he will be able to? A timeline for the LADOT study and its initial report to the city council is at <http://www.ci.la.ca.us/dept/LADOT/index/htm> (click "What's new at LADOT").

Lest we forget the consequences of the parochialism and cost fixation that are the essence of zonemania, contemplate upon the demise of line 496 whose absence impacts the same area that zone proponents love to talk about having benefited from the creation of Foothill. Bob Buster, Chair of the Riverside County Transportation Commission, lamented in the Jan. 31 Press-Enterprise the parochialism in which L.A. has become like a modern-day Roman Empire and "Rome takes care of itself first and the provinces last ... it's kind of the end of an era for bus lines". Does Buster's comment touch on an essentially selfish attitude implicit in zoneism, fair share, etc?

I was puzzled why so little fuss occurred over MTA's plans to place clean diesel engines in broken down ethanol buses. The BRU had put out a flier making a big stink, had small contingent of members present at the board meeting (plus attorney Connie Rice) but hardly raised an objection. Ditto environmentalists. Perhaps the 50 extra CNG buses ordered during the same meeting was a quid pro quo?

Co-founder Steve Crosmer urges members oppose AB 542 (Perata), a bill to compel Amtrak

to shift from having dedicated thruway service to using scheduled Greyhound service instead. When this approach was tried on the San Joaquins ridership dropped 33% - Caltrans indicates the cost of the subsidy for dedicated service is more than made up by monies that the increased ridership generates. If enacted this bill would create chaos since scheduled buses won't wait for late trains!

Barely anyone likes SCAG's draft Regional Transportation Plan. It is predicated on fantasy mode-shifts to mag-lev to provide air quality conformity, smart shuttles to produce cost savings to fund relief for overcrowded urban core bus routes and a scary road building agenda cloaked as "goods movement" (elevated structures to separate mixed flow from truck traffic). Missing the April deadline for approval would impact the flow of federal funds. Even anti-regional government types blink when they hear that. Besides in 3 years it comes up for renewal and by that time the more fanciful aspects may be laid to rest (remember the D.O.A. Vehicle Mile Travelled tax proposal?)

I have recently run across the rail advocates' response to the Reason Foundation reports by Rubin and Moore. It appeared in the Sept. 1997 issue of Railway Age ("Rail Transit: the People's Choice"). Certainly these issues deserve a broader and more in-depth discussion to ensure the choices our region make are not derived from biased information, however august the source.

Take a look at <http://www.istea.org> for the latest on federal transportation funding renewal. Anything I write will be out of date by the time you receive this! ■

Last month's Transit Trivia question was: Which LADOT Commuter Express route charges a local fare for freeway travel?

The answer: #438

This month's question: What was the original PTD Line #422 service?

SAN DIEGO EXCURSION #2 *Dana Gabbard*

For our third annual day after Thanksgiving excursion the membership decided to go to San Diego and ride transit there. And so it was that President Gabbard rendezvous with members Armando Avalos, John Ulloth, Woody Rosner and Michael Ludwig (down from the Bay Area expressly for the event) at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles to catch the first San Diegan Amtrak train departing at 6:10 a.m. 35 minutes later at the Fullerton station we had Vice President Charles Powell, Newsletter editor Charles Hobbs, along with members Jim Gusky and Hank Fung plus Western Transit editor Edmund Buckley join the party. Although the train left downtown Los Angeles with a light load a large number of people boarded in Fullerton. After an uneventful trip we arrived at the Oceanside Transit Center where we met up with member Chris Flescher (who lives in San Diego). At the same time we bid farewell to Jim Gusky who was riding solo on to San Diego to ride the new Mission Valley extension of the San Diego Trolley.

We first explored the splendid Oceanside Transit Center. It is a model for multi-modalism, served by inter-state and commuter trains (Amtrak, Metrolink and the Coaster) along with local and regional buses (Greyhound and NCTD). There is a snack shop and even a mini Burger King. After a quick bite and look around we boarded the NCTD route 320 at 8:32 a.m. It was a New Flyer low floor bus and it took on a full load at the station. This line had steady movement of passengers on and off. This line served Transit Centers in Vista, at Palomar College and in Escondido. They varied from simple shelter/pull in combinations to more line served Transit Centers in Vista, at Palomar College and in Escondido. They varied from simple shelter/pull in combinations to more elaborate facilities with Greyhound service, public phones, bathrooms and park/ride lots. We marvelled at these and wondered why more such facilities don't exist in

the L.A. area.

The next bus we took was San Diego Transit line 20 at 9:57 a.m. Ridership was moderate. In Fashion Valley at 11:30 a.m. we caught the San Diego Transit line 81, which took on a half-load. This passed the San Diego State University transit center (which was a bare-bones pull in). After a hurried lunch at Grossmont Trolley Station we caught CTS line 854 with two bikes in the bike rack at the front of the bus. The driver was talkative, telling of how she had earlier in the week seen a plane crash beside the road while driving this same route.

In Santee we caught the Trolley's Orange Line at 1:30 p.m. The area is basically in the middle of a field, although it is hoped that it will eventually be developed (possibly influenced by the proximity of the rail station). We had a full load (and it got much more full as we went toward downtown San Diego). A farewell was said to Chris Flescher at the La Mesa station, as he was feeling under the weather and decided to go home and rest.

We separated for a period of time, as some sought area transit schedules and others took a break from the frantic pace. At 4 p.m. we regrouped and caught a Chula Vista 706 bus at H Street Trolley Station and rode the loop. Ridership was rather light.

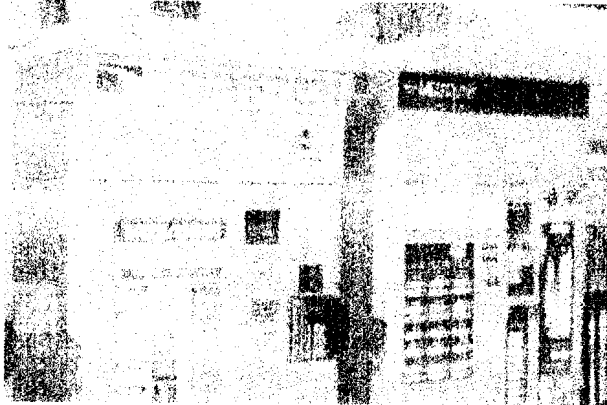
Our last bus was at 5:20 p.m. at Iris Avenue Station. It was MTS line 901, going to downtown via Coronado. The trip over the bridge at night was spectacular. While ridership was light initially it filled up during the trip. A last period of free time allowed people to snack and rest before leaving on another Amtrak train for the journey home.

The trip was instructive for its illustration of the value of transit centers. Recent coverage of the

improvements at the Chatsworth Metrolink Station bear out that these are a valuable community asset that deserve more attention. Further a valuable lesson in logistics was learned as we gradually evolve improved means of organizing excursions.

Hopefully lessons learned will apply to future excursions.

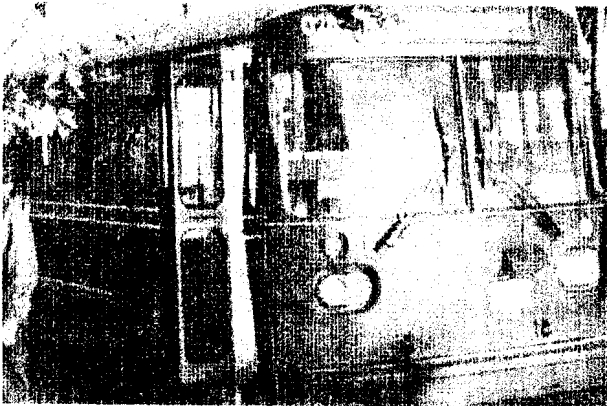
So where do we go this year? ■



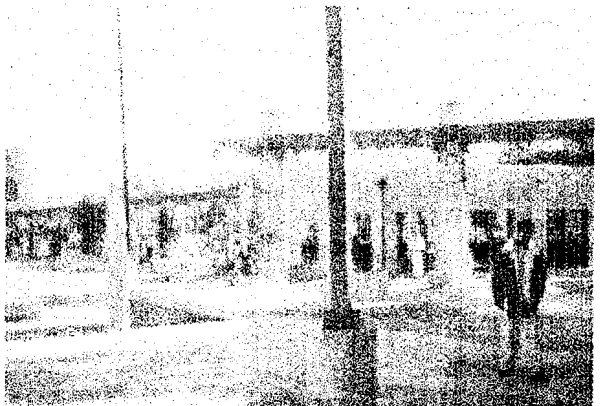
Coaster and Metrolink ticket machines at Oceanside



National City Transit at Trolley Side Dell (D.Gabbarc



Chula Vista Transit (C. P. Hobbs)



Escondido Transit Center (D.Gabbarb)

(Bulletin Board, from pg. 3)

President Gabbard welcomes member input for stakeholder meetings he will attend in the near future on the draft SCAG Regional Transportation Plan and the proposed Westside restructuring study.

Members are promoting various of the new consent decree pilot project lines by placing schedules in public locations along the routes (senior centers, hospitals, libraries). Anyone who wants to join the effort can call us and pitch in!

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. ■

MID-CITIES ROUTE RESTRUCTURING *Charles P. Hobbs*

Over the past month or so, MTA and LADOT have been holding public "Open Houses" relating to proposed bus service changes in the "Mid-Cities Area" (defined as the area bounded by I-10, La Cienega Bl, Alameda Bl, and I-105, and also including Westchester and Marina Del Rey. Brochures distributed on buses mentioned only a few of the proposed changes. A more complete list of the changes was posted by LADOT at <http://www.loop.com/~dot/recommend.jpg>, although it is still somewhat sketchy.

Some of the proposed changes are as follows:

- Increased frequencies on the following routes: #38, 45, 48, 110, 117, 204, 206, 207, 209, 210, 212, 625, and the DASH Watts and Watts North shuttles.
 - Adding peak-hour limited stop service to routes #37, 40, 51, 53, 55, 81, 105 and 108
 - Extending owl service on #37 (Adams Bl.) to West LA Transit Center, while removing owl service from #38 (Jefferson Bl)
 - Reroute #42 from King Bl. to Exposition, replacing #102. (Routing west of Crenshaw currently unknown—ed)
 - Reroute #56 away from the Blue Line corridor and onto Vernon, Pacific, Nadeau and Fir to Firestone Station; delete service south of Firestone.
 - Delete #107; portions are served by DASH Southeast, DASH Slauson/Leimert (rerouted from Slauson to 54th), and a proposed new route in Inglewood. (It's also relatively close to #108 on Slauson),
- Routes #108 and #110 (Gage) to terminate at the Fox Hills Mall (Culver City); service west of the Mall to be provided by a new shuttle in Marina Del Rey (#608A)
- Routes #115/315 (Manchester) would have two branches, alternately serving Playa Del Rey or the LAX Transit Center.

- Much of #119 (108th St) would be replaced by extensions of #209, #213 and DASH Watts, as well as a new line #609.
- Extend #207 (Western) owl route to Wilmington Station; extend #117 (Century) owl route to LAX
- Replace #211 (Prairie) and #215 (Inglewood) routes north of the Green Line with a rerouted #213. Extend #212 (La Brea) to Hawthorne Station on the Green Line.
- Delete #220 (Culver Bl) south of Marina Del Rey (this portion to be replaced with new #625)
- #254 (120th) to be deleted, as this route is already covered largely by #256 and DASH Watts North.
- #439 (LA-LAX Express) would be rerouted off La Cienega and onto Jefferson between West LA Transit Center and Fox Hills Mall. #561 from Westwood and Van Nuys would terminate at Fox Hills Mall (passengers to LAX would use #439, or Culver City #6)
- #442 (Inglewood-LA Express) would be deleted (passengers would ride #115 and transfer to the Harbor Freeway Transitway services). #576 (South LA-Pacific Palisades) would be rerouted via Crenshaw rather than via Western)

Several DASH lines (Southeast, Watts and Watts North) would be modified to serve portions of residential streets vacated by #107 and #119.

Proposed new lines include:

- #607 North Inglewood: Shuttle serving Downtown Inglewood (Market Street), and possibly Inglewood portion of former #107.
- #608A Marina Del Rey: Replaces the portions of both #108 and #110 west of Fox Hills Mall
- #609 Green Line Shuttle: This service would replace portions of #119 and #209 and connect various Green Line stations. ■

"ALTERNATIVE" BUSES, PT. 1 *Charles P. Hobbs*

From time to time, but especially recently, there has been talk of various parts of Los Angeles County forming their own bus system, separate from the MTA. This has already happened in the San Gabriel Valley with Foothill Transit; similar systems have been (or are being) discussed for the San Fernando Valley, the South Bay area, and the Southeast County area.

Because creating a new transit agency is an involved task (and transferring routes from one agency to another is especially fraught with a variety of institutional barriers), we should ask "If a transit zone is created, will things get better or worse"?

We can look at Foothill Transit (the only transit zone currently operating), the various municipal operators (Santa Monica, Long Beach, Torrance, etc.), or even the various MTA lines that are contracted out to private operators, or operated by MTA's BDOF (a sort of "internal" contract situation within the MTA) as examples of "alternative" bus service currently operated.

A "transit zone" can be formed under specific conditions defined in the legislation that formed MTA. If it can be determined that MTA is "unable or unwilling" to provide a certain level of transit service in a particular area, the local cities in that area can form a transit zone, taking over responsibility for the transit service in that area. Although MTA could continue to provide service in the area under contract to the new agency, another transit operator (either another municipal operator, or a private company) can also be chosen (as is the case with Foothill).

(Note that, in the case of the Foothill Zone, three lines—#484, #490 and #497—are still operated by

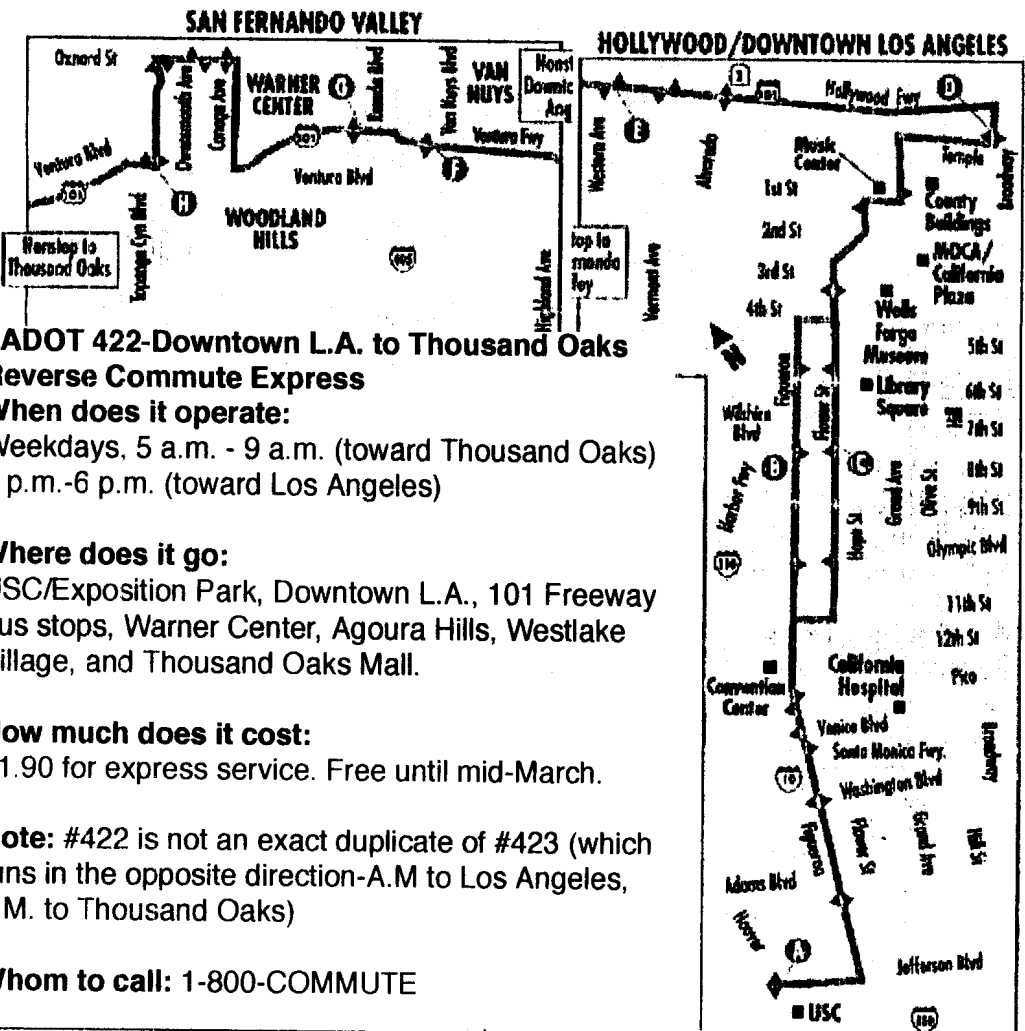
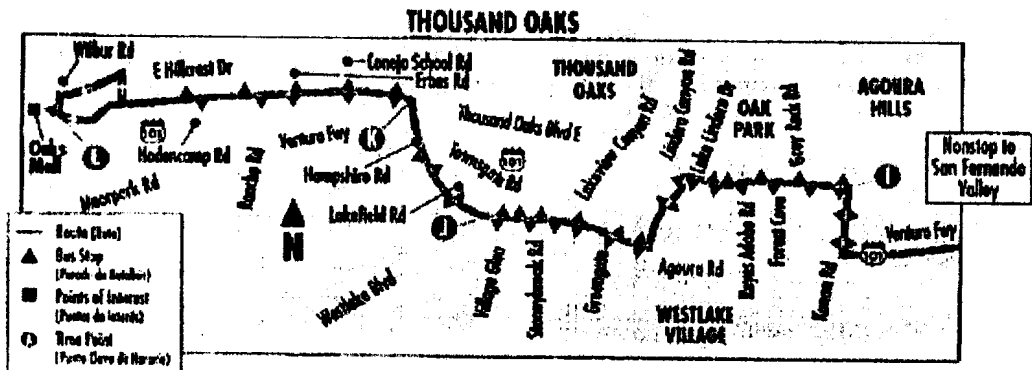
MTA. This is because these lines didn't qualify for inclusion in the zone; they were "regional" lines that passed through the zone's area).

Cities can also operate transit service within their own borders, or even outside of their borders under certain conditions (i.e. they should not duplicate existing service too closely). The older municipal systems (Santa Monica, Culver City, Torrance, Gardena and Montebello) run several lines outside of their "home" cities, and, in fact, provide regional service comparable to MTA. On the other hand, local tax return money (from Propositions A and C) have enabled just about every city in Los Angeles County to operate some sort of local transit service; these are mostly mini-bus systems designed to connect residential areas with shopping centers or major bus stops.

In recent years, MTA, in cost cutting moves, has also begun to purchase service from private operators. These services run on high-subsidy routes (primarily in the Southbay and Southeast county), and are less expensive to run than buses operated by MTA drivers. This is a continuing bone of contention with MTA's labor unions, so MTA has attempted to get them involved in reducing operations cost, resulting in the BDOF (Business Development Operations Facility)—bus operators who are union members, but have rates of pay and work rules only slightly better than those of the private operators.

In the next few months, I'll be discussing the history behind all of the bus operators in Southern California, and how that relates to some of the issues we're facing currently. ■

ROUTE OF THE MONTH *Chris Ledermuller*



LADOT 422-Downtown L.A. to Thousand Oaks Reverse Commute Express

When does it operate:
 Weekdays, 5 a.m. - 9 a.m. (toward Thousand Oaks)
 2 p.m.-6 p.m. (toward Los Angeles)

Where does it go:
 USC/Exposition Park, Downtown L.A., 101 Freeway bus stops, Warner Center, Agoura Hills, Westlake Village, and Thousand Oaks Mall.

How much does it cost:
 \$1.90 for express service. Free until mid-March.

Note: #422 is not an exact duplicate of #423 (which runs in the opposite direction-A.M to Los Angeles, P.M. to Thousand Oaks)

Whom to call: 1-800-COMMUTE