

# BULLETIN BOARD

Our next excursion is scheduled for Saturday April 25th to explore the Antelope Valley Transit system. We will ride Metrolink to Lancaster and rendezvous in Union Station at 8:45 a.m. (probably near the Metrolink Information counter). We will be back in L.A. by 6 p.m. Don't forget to bring lots of change and be prepared for a fun day of bus riding!

Photos from the Holiday banquet are now available on our website. (<http://socata.lerctr.org/banquet.html>) Check them out!

A reader (who wishes to remain anonymous) responds to the February 1998 article on the BDOF bus operators by stating that Line 305, the South Central-West Hollywood route due to start on April 19, is not a new service at all, "...but was operated in 1995 for about five months. The service was operated under contract to the MTA by ATE Management. [...] The service was well received, generated about 600 riders per day when it was discontinued. It was discontinued because the MTA's unions brought an arbitration against the service and won. The MTA decided to discontinue the service rather than allow the service to be operated by union personnel. This is one of several arbitrations over contracted service, some of which the MTA won (City Nightline 646)".

The reader goes on to say "I do find it amusing that the MTA thinks that they can operate BDOF service at the cost of contracted service. This is an issue of control, not economics. The MTA is currently paying approximately \$38/hour for service from Laidlaw/Charterways and \$43/hour from Ryder/ATE. If you want to double the wages of the current drivers from \$8 to \$16 and add in 33% for fringes, you increase the cost per hour by \$10.64 per revenue hour. Even if you add this back into the contractor's hourly rate, you still are way below MTA's cost of \$90+ per revenue hour."

At our June 13th meeting there will be a presentation by the consultants studying the feasibility of the Harbor Freeway transitway extension described in last month's issue. Its your chance to provide input.

Our President wrote President Clinton to urge rejection of the 710 highway extension project, in line with our opposition. Letters from our leader were published in the L.A. Times (on March 25 regarding transit zones) and the Press Telegram (praising MTA boardmember Jenny Oropeza's advocacy on behalf of resumption of Sunday service for 800-COMMUTE).

Member J.K. Drummond of San Pedro has been diligently publicizing MTA's new line 550, placing schedules in various locations that would reach possible riders of the service (hospitals, senior centers, libraries, pass sale outlets, etc.) Unfortunately he has had difficulty obtaining a supply of schedules due to MTA's customer relations bureaucracy. Hopefully this logjam can soon be surmounted.

The Riverside County Transportation Commission has published "Free Guide to Transportation Freedom", listing various dial a ride services in the county (including whether the general public can use them). Copies can be requested from the commission at: 3560 University Ave., Suite 100, Riverside CA 92501 or call (909) 787-7141.

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

The Ventura County Transportation Commission and Union Pacific have reached an agreement allowing Metrolink trains on the Ventura line to continue serving Oxnard.

Beginning July 13 a peak hour service, the Conejo Connection, will provide express service between Oxnard and Warner Center with stops at Esplanade Shopping Center, Las Posas park and ride, the Oaks regional mall, Westlake Blvd. at Hampshire Rd and the Kanan Road park and ride. A two year demonstration project, it is funded by a \$400,000 federal grant matched by \$100,000 from the city of Los Angeles. A one way trip is expected to cost \$2.50, with monthly passes

costing about \$78. The Ventura County Transportation Commission estimates some 8,000 persons work in Warner Center who live along the route of the new line and could be potential passengers.

According to the March 25 Glendale News-Press, yearly ridership on the Glendale Beeline system topped 2 million in 1997, a 12% increase over 1996. Glendale is running larger buses on its busy route 4 versus the DASH style shuttles that had predominated.

Western Transit reports that Norwalk Transit has purchased nine 35 foot RTS style buses from Nova Bus for its heaviest used lines.

**(Bulletin Board, continued)**

*Transfer* is a weekly update on transportation issues issued by the Surface Transportation Policy Project via e-mail. To be added to the mailing list send a note to [wpeters@transact.org](mailto:wpeters@transact.org) with your mailing address, group affiliation, phone and fax numbers.

Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion is working to develop options regarding LAX expansion. For more information contact them at (310) 568-9791 or (310) 827-3516 or write 7373 W. 83rd Street Los Angeles CA 90045 or e-mail [bpinz@aol.com](mailto:bpinz@aol.com).

A reminder - Passenger Advisory Councils are being formed by MTA and should be active at all divisions by July. Members receive free monthly passes, attend meetings to provide input and have forms to make reports on conditions as they ride. If you wish to participate contact the regional manager for your area:

Jon Hillmer - (213) 922-6972 [San Fernando Valley, Burbank/Glendale/Eagle Rock/Pasadena, San Gabriel Valley]

Rick Hittinger - (213) 922-4424 [downtown Los Angeles, westside, south-central, south bay]

A tip for effective advocacy - prepare written comments to place in the record at public meetings. This allows more depth to develop arguments than the time generally allotted for public comment. Be sure to include your name, the date and a phone number you can be reached at. Bring enough copies for the hearing officer and any interested reporters, officials, etc. This will make a very favorable impression versus simply making off the cuff remarks.

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](mailto:transit@lerami.lerctr.org)). Material for publication should be received two weeks before the scheduled SO.CA.TA meeting.

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

For MTA the troubles just keep mounting. Besides the zone rebellion that is gathering steam in the San Fernando Valley and west San Gabriel Valley, County Supervisor (and MTA Boardmember) Zev Yaroslavsky is mounting an initiative for the Fall ballot that would forbid local tax funds be used for any subway construction beyond the current North Hollywood project.

As usual Zev has shown keen political instincts. My question if he speaks to us at our May meeting (as I am attempting to arrange) is which surface alternatives for light rail has he identified for the alignments that would be impacted? I suspect James Cragin of Gardena (and also a MTA Boardmember) was correct in his assessment quoted in the March 31 LA Times that the tide will turn eventually and these issues revisited.

Adding to the aura of incompetence dogging MTA was a new Inspector General report outlining ongoing internal control problems that were identified in previous reports and allowed to persist by management inaction. To his credit Julian Burke, while noting the problems came about before he came abroad, described the situation as unacceptable.

One small sign that Julian Burke is making headway in his attempt to bring MTA's dysfunction under control was an edict that presentations on various project options be stopped until the new financial evaluation determines whether they are doable.

I neglected to mention another looming financial blight on MTA's future in last month's column: the burgeoning cost of Access Services, Inc. (the countywide ADA-manadated paratransit provider).

In the latest issue of "Ticket to Ride" from the

local Surface Transportation Policy Project office one of the prescriptions offered to solve MTA's financial problems is "The MTA should divest itself of some or all of its bus and rail services to cities, private operators and new public/private ventures." I had an interesting exchange of e-mail with Gloria Ohland of STPP that reached a consensus that no simple answers exist and many options should be explored to aid improving the public transit system.

If the zone efforts succeed perhaps what should be explored is having the MTA board transformed into a regional oversight body much like San Diego and the Bay Area have. This would be a framework to combat balkanization impacting travel between zones.

What may derail the San Fernando Valley zone effort is L.A. cityhall politics. The very notion of one area of the city getting an advantage could motivate the members from outside the valley to kill the zone application. An interesting historical tidbit is the San Fernando restructuring study of a few years ago began as a zone study until then-Supervisor Ed Edelman (a staunch union supporter) put his foot down.

The *Los Angeles Business Journal* in its March 30th edition profiled one bus rider and her experiences on public transit ("Rosa's Rough Ride"). The article put a human face to the phrase "transit dependent" and made real their plight to readers who probably rarely grasp the sorts of issues transit users face on a daily basis. The *L.A. Weekly* recently had an informative roundtable on transportation issues (I especially enjoyed Rick Cole's skewering of the BRU for not being active on the 710 extension opposition). A few years ago a San Gabriel Valley newspaper asked the then-members of the MTA Board if they ever rode transit (the evasions and excuses offered were quite illuminating). All these are

# WESTSIDE BUS RESTRUCTURING *Charles Hobbs*

MTA and LADOT are currently conducting a series of public hearings regarding restructuring several bus routes in the West Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Culver City and Hollywood areas.

Proposed changes to area bus lines, most of which would probably take place sometime next year, include:

- High capacity (low-floor articulated) buses on several highly used routes, including #2, #4, #16, #18, #28 #30, #33, #66, #68, #204, #207, #210 and #424.

- The Wilshire and Santa Monica Blvd. services would be developed further into "Rapid Bus" (limited stop buses speeded up by signal preemption, all-door boarding, wide stop spacing and other features). Of course, local buses would also continue to

run on both streets. (The Rapid Bus would run from Santa Monica to LA, while MTA local buses would run from LA to Westwood only. Santa Monica Blue Buses would handle the local service between Westwood and Santa Monica)

- When the Metro Red Line Hollywood segment opens next year, various bus lines near the stations would be rerouted to connect with the subway. Line #1 would be deleted (it is mostly duplicated by #2 and #4 anyway). The Franklin Blvd. portion of #26 would be moved to Hollywood Blvd, and folded into #217. #3 and the San Vicente portion of #22 would be cancelled due to low usage. Note that service from the San Fernando Valley would not be truncated in Hollywood, but would be truncated at either Universal City or North Hollywood( p 6)

examples of in-depth journalism that goes beyond the day to day events and provide context. And glaringly the prominent media outlet for the region is absent in this area. Why do we get in-depth analysis of foreign conflicts but not the future of our public transportation system in the pages of the *LA Times*? And how does that contribute to the neglect of these issues?

I have concluded SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan is a collection of trial balloons. As such if mag lev, smart shuttles and transit centers don't work out, shrug and try some fresh balloons...

Given the new commitment to financial reality Julian Burke has made, one wonders who it was at MTA that decided to tell SCAG that a three billion dollar funding gap in MTA's portion of the regional plan would be solved by issuing addition bonds.

"After the Transportation Blueprint: Developing

and Funding an Efficient Transportation System" is a new report by the Legislative Analyst's

Office that suggests changes to give more flexibility in spending state transportation funds. Copies can be obtained by sending \$2 to 925 L Street, Suite 1000 Sacramento CA 95814 or [http://www.lao.ca.gov/030598\\_after\\_transportation\\_blueprint.html](http://www.lao.ca.gov/030598_after_transportation_blueprint.html).

Federal transportation funding renewal suddenly took on a life of its own in March. Once it was decided to boost the spending limits the floodgates were opened and enough goodies were promised to get nearly everybody behind passage. Shortly the conference committee agreement should be on President Clinton's desk. Maybe he'll even use his line item veto to carve out the worst of the pork. While all the attention

has been focussed on the monetary election year aspects, transportation advocates are gladdened that attempts to gut ISTEAs essential principles fell flat.

## **TRANSIT TRIVIA** *Chris Ledermuller/Dana Gabbard/Charles Hobbs*

**A special note:** In response to February's Transit Trivia question: about LADOT Commuter Express buses that charge only local fares for freeway travel, member Kym Richards states the following answers, in addition to #438:

- #409 does not charge for the express segment between Glendale and downtown L.A. or for the express segment between Sunland/Tujunga and Lake View Terrace.
- #423 does not charge for the express segment between Agoura Hills and Warner Center (on trips that bypass Calabasas).
- #549 does not charge for the express segment between North Hollywood and Burbank, the express segment between Burbank and Glendale, or between Glendale and Pasadena \*unless\* you are traveling between Pasadena and either Burbank or the Valley.
- #422 will not be charging for travel on express segments between points in the San Fernando Valley (Warner Center to Van Nuys Blvd.)

**Last month's Transit Trivia question was:** What was the original RTD Line #422 service?

**The answer:** There were actually two former routes designated #422, (although not at the same time!):

- The express route of the former RTD #93 between Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley (via the Cahuenga Pass) was redesignated #422 in the early 1980's and operated until mid-1986.
- The local service on Garvey Blvd. between Los Angeles and El Monte (which was originally Line #63) was designated #422 in the late 70's. This was renumbered to #70 around 1981, in accordance with the current bus numbering plan being implemented at that time.

**This month's question:** How many local bus routes (MTA or other operators) in the Southern California five-county area provide Intercounty service. Bonus question: how many of these lines receive financial support from only one county?

(Answer will be announced at the April SO.CA.TA meeting, and printed in the *May Transit Advocate!*)

(from pg 5) in 2000, when those stations open.

- New freeway stops would be put on the Santa Monica Freeway at Vermont, Western at Crenshaw (Ed. note-these stops actually existed until the late 70's)

- #16 would be extended to Century City, replacing #27

- #220 would be replaced by an extended Culver City #4 (to West Hollywood) and #110 extended to Playa Del Rey.

- MTA #175, and LADOT #203, #208 and Hollywood DASH would all be reworked into a new Hollywood DASH route, and a new Los Feliz DASH.

- Commuter Express #430 would be cancelled. #437 would be rerouted onto Culver Bl (like #438). #448 may be split into a Culver City-Playa Del Rey route and a Beach Cities route.

- An interagency pass, good on MTA, Culver City, and Santa Monica buses.