

BULLETIN BOARD

The May 9th meeting was probably the most attended SO.CA.TA meeting in recent history, with about 20 members and guests in attendance!

At this month's, a special guest will come and speak about the possible extension of the Harbor Transitway at 2 p.m. Please be prompt.

In July we will be conducting a mid-year member assessment. Our treasury has been drained by substantial outreach costs. And looking forward we anticipate significant expenses to publicize the 2nd edition of the Transit Guide. Your donation of \$5, \$10, \$20 or more will ensure our continued participation in the dialogue on the future of transportation in our region.

At our May 9th meeting several SO.CA.TA members committed to write letters to MTA or other local agencies on issues of significance that they had chosen. We commend their commitment.

Three members have undertaken their own initiatives to improve public transit:

J.K. Drummond recently wrote MTA regarding the route 550 schedules not identifying the communities along its routes. Tom Horne of MTA Customer Relations in response stated that this will be rectified with the new schedules issued for the shake up this month.

Kymerleigh Richards has been solicited to expand a letter to the editor on the issue of transit zones in the San Fernando Valley to an op-ed piece, tentatively scheduled for the June 14th San Fernando Valley edition of the Los Angeles Times.

Michael Higby is heading a new committee on joint development of MTA station sites. Recent cutbacks have forced MTA to eliminate its joint development department, so we are sure they will find our input most welcomed.

Ron Kilcoyne of Santa Clarita Transit in a May 11 letter responded to recommendations that grew out of our excursion last year. He indicates initiating Castaic Lake service has a low priority at present. Upgrading bus signs will occur incrementally. A new transit center at the Valencia Town Center is slated to open in one year, as is a new Metrolink station in Newhall. This will necessitate a restructuring of local service. Among its components will be a single route serving Magic Mountain with improved headways and routed directly to the park's front gate.

President Gabbard was quoted in the May 31 issue of the Westside Weekly supplement to the Los Angeles Times. "Smoothing the Way" by Tamara Hunt dealt with the Westside bus service restructuring underway. In his comments the President noted some of the factors that may complicate implementing the consultants' recommendations.

We welcome input on our year-end banquet (date and place), plus donations for transit-related door prizes. We already have on hand a selection of goodies to give away superior to last years'!. for transit-related door prizes. (*cont'd on pg. 3*)

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

MTA routes 444/445/446/447 now continue on the Harbor Freeway Transitway to its terminus at Adams, bypassing the USC area, before continuing on to downtown. A new station on the Transitway is available in near USC.

LADOT has received its first batch of low floor propane fueled vehicles (manufactured by Eldorado/National) for the downtown DASH system at a cost of \$236,000 each. The entire fleet of 67 buses is due to be replaced in 1-2 years.

A few Long Beach Transit changes, effective June 14:

- The "Runabout" local shuttle system has been renamed the "Passport", and there have been some major restructurings (routes #A and #D are trunked along Ocean Bl, with #A going only as far as Belmont Shore, while #D continues on to CSULB. #B and #C are similarly restructured,

with #C continuing on to the new Long Beach Aquarium)

- Lines #172 and #173 have been extended to the Norwalk Green Line Station (locally via Studebaker Rd.)
- Line #122 no longer provides weekend service

The West Valley Smart Shuttle has expanded its coverage area (to almost the entire Valley west of Balboa Blvd, including connections with the East Valley Smart Shuttle at the Van Nuys Government Center). 1-888-804-8333 for more details.

A Dec.29, 1997 article in the Ventura County edition of the LA Times reports that the Ventura Trolley ceased operations Labor Day last year. Advertising revenue to defray costs never materialized and farebox recovery was about 4%. Ventura hopes to revive the service this summer. ■

(from page 2) Personal Rapid Transit is a technology developed by Raytheon being considered for the link between the controversial proposed El Toro airport near Irvine and John Wayne Airport. For more information call 800-778-7433.

Ed Simburger's new guide to all rail services in Southern California, *Railroad-Freeway*, is due shortly. Members might want to check whether their local bookstore have it on order.

The printed version of the adopted Regional Transportation Plan of the Southern California Association of Government is due to hit the streets later this month.

Transit advocacy groups in the Bay Area and New York have had some success publicizing issues by issuing report cards evaluating service. Is this a strategy we should consider? Maybe we should grade the performance of individual MTA Board members?

Like to send e-mail to Federal Transit Administration head Gordon Linton ? lintong@toa.dot.gov

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. ■

The inexorable political imperative for MTA is completion of the North Hollywood Red Line extension. The recent hand waving regarding the stillborn eastside subway has wilted in the face of this political reality. Gordon Linton of the FTA recently expressed the opinion that the eastside politicians should begin to seriously investigate a busway because the local match to build a subway into their area will not be available for some years.

Here is an interesting idea first broached to me by an MTA official recently: while all other transportation planning must be fiscally constrained under ISTEA the FTA is issuing Full Funding Grant Agreements for rail new starts (section 9) without regard to the outlook for appropriations and the number of outstanding FFGA's competing for those funds. FTA essentially oversees a political free for all. Isn't it time to reconsider this entire process?

As expected the city of Los Angeles has filed a notice of intent to establish a transit zone in the San Fernando Valley. The application is due to be presented to the MTA Board this fall. I had a hearty laugh reading the Transit Zone Citizen Advisory Committee report to the City Council Transportation Committee. Especially laugh inducing were the claims of broad public involvement and that committee members arrived at their determination to support a zone with no preconceptions. Key questions regarding a zone:

- will adjacent jurisdictions join a joint-powers dominated by Big Bad L.A.?
- will L.A. City Council members from outside the S.F. Valley allow the application to go forward?
- can the United Transportation Union (which represents MTA bus operators and vehemently opposes zones) kill it? "The Finger" column in the May 28 New Times

LA nailed MTA Board Chairman Richard Riordan for squelching public dissent at the board meetings. He often limits public comment to 60 seconds per person, claiming this is necessitated by the overwhelming number of requests to speak. By my count at one such meeting he called six names. I guess its circle up the wagons and shut up the critics time.

Given the previous paragraph, it should not be surprising that the thorny question of MTA Board reform is re-emerging in Sacramento. Assembly Speaker Villaragosa recently spoke out on the issue and his long dormant bill dealing with it (AB 1141) is due for a hearing on June 30. I think board reform is not a question of if but when. I see our role as ensuring it doesn't end up as a meaningless shuffling of the deck chairs. board reform is not a question of if but when. I see our role as ensuring it doesn't end up as a meaningless shuffling of the deck chairs.

Has the Bus Rider's Union finally bitten off more than it can chew? At the May MTA Board meeting for the first time they publicly opposed MTA funds going to the Alameda Corridor project. This billion dollar behemoth has political backing from a lot of formidable (and multi-racial) players. Is this one group that won't roll over and play dead in response to the usual BRU protests and sound bites?

The latest mis-step by the Burke regime at MTA is their plan to close the agency's Library June 30th. This received coverage in the May 25 Downtown News and May 28 LA Times. Even the FTA Office of Research Management has expressed concerns. Despite claims the closure would save money in fact most of its budget is overhead that would probably be generated by anything occupying that space. And expensive consultants would have to do the research presently done by library staff. I suspect Burke is getting advice from many in top management whose recommendations are fueled by a desire to

hold onto their salaries. They have no remorse over sacrificing core services (Sunday information service, owl service, the Library) to fix the fiscal mess they helped to create. At the June 18th 9:30 a.m. public hearing on the budget at the Gateway Building hopefully the Board will realize this is a part of the agency too important to sacrifice.

Ellen Levine's departure June 27 from heading MTA Operations is widely rumored to have been involuntary. Even her April 27 memo to employees announcing her decision makes clear Burke's regime wanted their person in charge of Operations.

Zev Yaroslavsky has had to reverse his long-standing opposition to light rail on the Exposition ROW. He now admits it is the cost effective alternative to the Red Line extension to West L.A. But Zev, does that mean if your initiative passes you will actively oppose the parochial mid-segment NIMBY's and push for the project? And how about the Chandler alignment?

My question for MTA CEO Julian Burke is what happened to Chapter 8 of the Restructuring Plan? It was supposed to deal with institutional issues such as governance structure. Even the copy transmitted to the FTA has the chapter marked "to be prepared". Julian, was the topic too hot to commit to paper?

I will give kudos to Mr. Burke for including in the restructuring plan an outline of a needs assessment that MTA is undertaking. This is something I have long urged MTA's Long Range Plan include, and it is to Burke's credit that he wants needs not politics as the basis of our transportation system planning.

A local federal transportation officials tells me when MTA staff were asked why they were making no effort to publicize their successes to help rehabilitate their image the response was

that they felt it would be a wasted effort. I disagree. A widely distributed brochure outlining projects funded by Propositions A & C would be a great help to the agency shaking off its "can't do" image. At least it would be a good place to start.

By the time you read this ISTEA renewal will have likely been signed by the President. Details on earmarked local projects are in the May 23 LA Times or at <http://www.istea.org>

The LAX expansion controversy is jump-starting the long stalled Green Line extension into the airport. Mayor Riordan and his allies see this as a way to respond to opposition based on the impact expansion would have on LAX area congestion (which is already severe). This may mean the airport would fund the extension with special fees, etc. instead of the cash strapped MTA.

OCTA's Transportation Forum gave me my first chance to see up close the sprawl cartel. At a discussion of livable communities I heard it is not a proven means of improving air quality. Of course this a smoke screen, cloaking the opposition real estate interests have with it as the antithesis of sprawl. I also had a chance finally to see members of Drivers for Highway Safety in action. This is an Orange County based group that preaches massive highway construction to relieve congestion while denouncing HOV lanes and public transit as a waste of money. You can contact them at: 12592 Loretta Dr., Orange CA 92869, (714) 633-5935 or kingfin@aol.com

Richard Simon's May 11 LA Times article on the proposed statewide High Speed Rail project was only the second general press coverage of it I've seen. Many rail boosters are concerned that public outreach is behind schedule, especially if the intention is having a bond issue go before the voters in two years. ■

SOUTH BAY BUS RESTRUCTURING *Charles Hobbs*

MTA and LADOT have just concluded another series of bus restructuring public meetings; this time it dealt with the South Bay area (roughly, that portion of Los Angeles County south of the Green Line/I-105)

To a greater degree than the Westside or Valley, the South Bay area has a variety of different bus operators, each with their own fare structure. Most of these operate in a rather small area (Carson, Palos Verdes, Compton) but a few (Torrance, Gardena, LADOT, MAX) provide regional or commuter express services comparable to those provided by MTA. Also, the South Bay is where many of MTA's private contractor operated routes provide service.

Of particular concern is providing more service to Artesia Transit Center and the Harbor Gateway, facilities comparable to the El Monte Station and Busway, but much less used. More express service would be provided on the Transitway, while various local routes would be modified to connect with the Transitway stations.

Also, several routes would be modified to connect with the nearest Blue or Green Line station. A new San Pedro Transit Center may be established at the current Beacon St. Park/Ride Lot, while Aviation Station, rather than the current LAX Transit Center, may become the LAX bus hub.

Proposed route changes include:

- Extending MTA #45,51 and Gardena #4 to Artesia Transit Ctr
- Replacing #124 between the Blue Line and Compton, with a Compton Transit route extension
- Cancelling #126, replacing portion of #127 west of Compton with Gardena #3
- Rerouting #202 off Alameda, onto Wilmington, Lomita and PCH
- Extending MTA #205, 226,550, LADOT

#142,147 to San Pedro Transit Center

- Extending MTA #210 south through Torrance to PCH
- Terminating #211/#215 at Hawthorne (service north of Hawthorne to be operated by #213)
- Cancelling #226, replacing with Palos Verdes Transit route
- Split #439 at Aviation Station, with new route #440 to provide service to Beach Cities, then express to LA via I-105 and I-110. (#440 would replace both #439 and LADOT #438 in this area).
- Delete #442; reroute #444 via I-105 and Hawthorne (not Artesia).
- Extend #446 to San Pedro via I-110 (not Avalon). More frequent #447 service would also be provided.
- Carson Circuit #D and #G may be consolidated with Torrance #3, to make a new east-west line along Carson, to Del Amo Blue Line station. Also, extend Carson North-South Shuttle to Artesia and PCH Transitway stations (*may have already been done-ed*)
- Extend operating hours on Compton Transit (it currently stops running at 2 p.m. due to lack of funds). Also, extend Compton #1 and #3 to Wilmington Blue Line station
- Reroute Wilmington DASH to serve PCH Transitway station.
- Modify various Long Beach Transit routes (probably #22, 92 and 93) to serve Green Line stations. This has already been done with #172 and #173.
- Reroute Torrance #1 and #6 to serve Artesia Transit Center. (*This may have already been*

TRANSIT TRIVIA *Chris Ledermuller/Charles Hobbs*

Last month's question: What Foothill Transit route went from a peak hour commuter service to an express service that runs every day? In what year did this occur?

Answer: #492, in October 1994.

This month's question: There are several "suburb-to-suburb" express bus routes (that do not go to Downtown Los Angeles) operated by Los Angeles County based agencies. (see inset box)

Your mission, should you decide to accept it: Plan an all-day excursion, using as many of the above bus routes as possible. You may use other public transit bus or rail routes as needed, and you do not necessarily need to end your excursion at the same place that you started it. However, the entire excursion must not last longer than 24-hours. Also, each excursion will be "rated" as to how many express (freeway) portions of the above routes are used, with one "point" given for each express portion of these routes used. Local service portions of the routes, as well as any other routes used, will not rate any points. And while we don't expect you to have all of these schedules, you should be familiar enough with these routes so that you don't try to schedule, say, a reverse peak trip on a route that doesn't operate reverse commute service! Any route may be used as many times as necessary, but will only earn points once.

LADOT #549 (Encino-Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena)
MTA #550 (San Pedro-West Hollywood)
MTA #561 (San Fernando-Van Nuys-Westwood-Culver City-LAX)
LADOT #573 (Santa Clarita-Granada Hills-Encino-Westwood-Century City)
LADOT #574 (San Fernando-Granada Hills-Encino-El Segundo)
LADOT #575 (Simi Valley-Warner Center)
MTA #576 (South LA-Beverly Hills-Westwood-Pacific Palisades)
Foothill #690 (Montclair-C Claremont-Glendora-Pasadena)
MAX #3 Express (San Pedro-El Segundo)
AVTA #786 (Antelope Valley-Beverly Hills-Century City-Westwood)
AVTA #787 (Antelope Valley-Northridge-Chatsworth-Warner Center)
Santa Clarita #791/796 (Santa Clarita-Warner Center)
Santa Clarita #793/798 (Van Nuys-Warner Center)
Santa Clarita #795 (Santa Clarita-Antelope Valley)
(These are the ones I know of, if there are others, they'll count too)

As usual, the answers (there will be more than one) will appear in next month's newsletter. (Hint: You might want to work on this one *before* the meeting. . .) Answers can also be sent to SO.CA.TA by postal or e-mail. Good Luck! ■

done-ed). Also, add midday service on #6

- Cut back Torrance #2 to South Bay Center (no more downtown service on #2).

- Reroute Torrance #4 to replace parts of MTA #215.

- Reroute Torrance #3 to serve Carson Bl and Del Amo Blue Line; extend #7 to Long Beach over former route of #3. (There is also minor talk among Torrance city officials about getting out of regional transit

altogether and only running local services within Torrance. If this happens, other operators will need to be found to provide service along routes outside of Torrance.)

- Cancel MAX routes (the limited stop and express service between South Bay cities and El Segundo) due to low ridership. ■

NOTE: Route of the Month will return in next month's issue.