

BULLETIN BOARD

Nominations for officers and director candidates for 1999 will be taken at our November 14 meeting. Some incumbent directors have indicated they do not plan to run for reelection, which open leadership opportunities for those who are interested.

At our September 12 meeting the membership enjoyed a presentation by Edward Simburger, author of *Railroad Freeway*. Several attendees availed themselves of the opportunity to purchase the guide to rail service in Southern California and have it autographed by the author. An added attraction at the meeting was a screening of a video Simburger has produced promoting the use of Metrolink for leisure travel. Our thanks to Mr. Simburger for an informative presentation.

The videos are currently being shown on various local cable system's public access channels. Even if you don't subscribe to your local system you still can submit material for play on its access channel. Mr. Simburger is willing to supply us videos for the cost of materials (the tape), which is about \$10. Members who wish to help promote use of rail can contact SO.CA.TA as we hope to coordinate a pool to purchase tapes and make them available for play around the region. Contact your local cable system and find out what format access channel submissions must conform to (half inch or what have you).

Plans continue apace for our December 12 annual banquet. The locale will once again be the Colonial Buffet in Long Beach, which was very popular with attendees last year. Next month's newsletter should include details on price, etc.

At our November 14 meeting we will have a presentation by George Eslinger on his proposal to bring back the Pacific Electric "Red Cars". As usual we plan to publicize the event, and this topic may actually attract a fair amount of public interest.

At our October meeting we will finalize our destination for this year's day after Thanksgiving excursion. If you like any of the suggestions made so far (Santa Barbara, return to Ventura County, exploration of RTA) or have one of your own don't be shy - speak out!

MTA now offers tours of its Red Line North Hollywood construction site for groups or individuals. They are scheduled for Saturdays between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. with tours lasting approximately one

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

The expanded Metrolink service, to be implemented on Oct 26, was less than expected. The Orange County Line got additional peak hour service, including two reverse direction round-trips (from LA to Irvine in the morning, and back in the evening). There will also be an additional morning reverse commute trip, between LA and Riverside (via Fullerton). But improvements to the other lines were minimal at best.

Track improvements between Oxnard and Moorpark have caused various Metrolink and Amtrak trains to run off schedule: contact

Amtrak (800-USA-RAIL) or Metrolink (808-LINK) for current status.

MTA #434 service to Point Dume will only operate during peak hours; at other times the bus will stay on Pacific Coast Highway.

A letter from the Victor Valley Transit Agency states that their proposed service between Victorville and San Bernardino will start "in the year 2000"; Sunline Transit of Palm Springs indicates that service between that city and Riverside will start "when the necessary funds are released".

hour. Prior to the tour you receive a brief safety session and must wear safety equipment (provided) while in the construction zone. As it is a somewhat strenuous physical undertaking, those with health concerns may need to carefully consider their participation. Reservations can be arranged by calling Beverly Voran of MTA at (213) 922-6118.

September 19 President Gabbard and newsletter Editor Charles Hobbs attended a meeting of the Commuter Ambassadors of Santa Clarita Transit. These are monthly meetings held with a group of commuters who are regular users of Santa Clarita Transits' three commuter lines. The group was formed two years ago in response to persistent complaints regarding service. Staff from the contractor (at this time ATC/Vancom) attend to discuss issues and seek feedback. Often representatives from the city of Santa Clarita also attend, and at least once even a city councilperson attended. The group became aware of our existence when one of its members, John Panico, heard Charles Hobbs' comments at the unmet needs meeting for Santa Clarita earlier this year. Mr. Panico contacted SO.CA. TA when he became convinced we could aid the Ambassadors in their ongoing educational process.

While formed to deal with a specific demand - improve the quality of service provided the commuters - over time the Ambassadors had had to deal with complex political and social issues. Bus stop location, traffic signal timing, dispatching and school kid behavior all turned out to be complicated issues. Hobbs and Gabbard briefly outlined the goals of SO. CA. TA, handed out literature on our group plus materials relating to our Santa Clarita excursion last year. The President focused on the relation between local issues and the big picture (TEA21, TDA distribution) and lauded this effort to work cooperatively with the agency, which may be a model for the region.

Gabbard and Hobbs stayed to witness the balance of the meeting, which included discussion of a wide range of issues relating to service. Our thanks to John Panico for acting as liaison and arranging our appearance. It is our hope to work with the commuters as appropriate on issues of mutual interest in the future. And we applaud their commitment to better transit service.

<http://www.policy.com> is a web site devoted to accessing information on political and policy issues, including transportation.

With Measure A, the Yaroslavsky initiative, a burning election issue we are adding material to our website to give interested voters an opportunity to explore various perspectives on the merits of this measure. <http://socata.lerctr.org> If members see materials (op-ed pieces, letters, etc.) that merit inclusion please bring it to our attention.

Santa Monica on September 19 held a public workshop on its designs for a downtown transit mall. Reports are that the turnout was excellent and the proposal well received. Upcoming meetings to be held by Big Blue Bus will provide an additional opportunity for feedback on the proposals.

President Gabbard on Sept. 28 submitted a scathing letter regarding the proposed extension of the Harbor Freeway Transitway. While carefully labeled as solely his opinion and not an official SO. CA. TA opinion most members would probably agree with the President's assessment that the project seems of less value than other competing needs. Jim McDermott of Marathon Communication, the contractor for public outreach on the initial evaluation of the proposal, has confirmed receipt and that the letter will be included in the final report on the initial proposal.

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. ■

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

The Bus Riders Union hasn't taken a position on the Yaroslavsky initiative. While initially they had stated they were opposed to it because it did not outright ban rail construction, they have since re-evaluated their position and started leaning toward support. They may well end up staying neutral.

Maybe the BRU's excessive demands are backfiring a bit. While supportive of the need to improve bus service neither the Los Angeles Times nor the Daily News supported the BRU's demands to stop funding of the North Hollywood Red Line project and that 1,600 buses be obtained within two years by MTA. Julian Burke is slowly forcing the MTA board to finally take actions to fulfill its obligations under the consent decree. While the board is now visibly having buyers regret about the decree at this point they have no options except making large bus purchases. And whatever my feelings about aspects of the consent decree and the BRU's tactics (and ideology) we should acknowledge that they have brought to the fore the neglect of the bus system.

Slowly there is awareness that Metrorail is on the brink of a startling reversal of fortunes when Hollywood and North Hollywood extensions open in the next two years. California Corridors in its September 25 edition has an extensive article on the Red Line extension. What will be the political impact of the Red Line having 100,000+ boardings a day? Will the BRU rhetoric be drowned out? And how long after that before talk of reversing the subway prohibition occurs?

MTA recently received an overall clean bill of health for its rail safety program by the California Public Utilities Commission. http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/news/090398_lacmta_safety.htm. My question is why didn't the agency raise the roof telling everyone this good news? Another lost opportunity to lift its image...

Media coverage of MTA's problems continue to adhere to the BRU line. Examples include the Sept. 9 KNX cover story reported by Luis Torres and article "No-Seat, No-Fare Campaign Move:

L.A. Buses Into Gear" in the Sept. 14 Christian Science Monitor.

Meanwhile the recommendations of the 1997-98 Los Angeles Grand Jury in its Final Report regarding MTA has received no press coverage. A key issue they deal with is board composition. They recommend the Los Angeles mayor only have a single seat, with the other three he presently controls being transferred to the other cities in Los Angeles county (joining the four they already hold). To arrange for a copy of the recommendations call the Grand Jury at (213) 974-3993. (Giving credit where it is due, I first learned about this in Leonard Shapiro's L.A. Watts Times' column)

I may have news next month regarding the fate of the MTA Library.

The General Accounting Office did not place its report on the MTA Restructuring Plan on the Internet. To obtain B-280462 you have to contact the agency: U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 37050 Washington DC 20013. While giving the Plan a green light the report identifies several problematic aspects of MTA's funding assumptions. Similar views are held by the Dept. of Transportation Inspector General Office: <http://www.dot.gov/oig/audits/trl998176.html> And given the recent Special Master ruling, I think any predictions of MTA's future finances are speculative.

Item 28 at the Sept. 16 MTA Operations Committee meeting involved the continuing problems with the contracted service. SO.CA.TA member Hank Fung attended and reports that a key issue was cleanliness, with 58% of ATE's buses failing basic cleanliness standards. Some attempts are being made to hold the contractors' feet to the fire.

Another crackdown of a sort occurred when LAPD did an intensive undercover crackdown on misbehavior on buses. The 70 arrests made during the three day operation reinforces my long held view that policing has been deficient on the bus system. Maybe this is a sign LAPD is

becoming aware of what needs to be done.

The Regional Transit Alternatives Analysis was the subject of a presentation at the Sept. 23 MTA Citizen Advisory Council meeting. This is part of the effort to find projects in the corridors of the suspended rail projects that can use the state funds that had been allocated for east side and mid-City. Consultations are going on among the big players, officials, etc. No one knows who are on the community focus groups that are supposed to be giving input. And why does regional need not count? Those corridors are more signifiers of political influence than transit need.

With the passage of S.B. 1847, we can anticipate January 1 the Pasadena line Joint-Powers to quickly undertake getting the project revived. And given BRU complaints, the JPA may spend the \$\$\$ it confiscates from MTA PDQ before Judge Hatter can say "stop".

Jim Seal of the MTA CAC is promoting graffiti elimination by banning the sale of aerosol spray paint cans. This is an approach that has been successful in Chicago. If MTA could stop graffiti that would free up over \$1 million a month for service improvement! Anyone who wishes to see the proposal should contact us for a copy.

September 16 I participated in a panel discussion titled "Mass Transit in Transition" sponsored by Cal State-LA and Grand Performances at California Plaza in downtown Los Angeles. Several SO.CA.TA member were in the audience, including Henryka Maslowski, Joseph Drummond, Joseph Dunn and founder Pat Moser. The moderator was Karen Kaplan, with panelists including Richard Stanger of Metrolink, Martha Welborne and Chairman of Forsythe & Associates William Forsythe. Forsythe, as expected, touted the benefits of contracting out. Which is his chief business, so of course he is a true believer (Forsythe administers the Foothill Transit zone). Welborne of the Surface Transit Project was big on a Curitiba type system (busways, larger vehicles). When I tried to point out some shortcomings to that approach she said "I could refute everything you said, but don't want to take up that much time".

Overall it was a useful experience, and gave me a chance to try out my public speaking skills. I give myself a "B". I need to hone points and keep our big picture approach in mind. Richard Stanger spoke to the regional growth crisis, when that is something I should have done. Well, live and learn. (We are attempting to obtain a copy of the tape of the panel that Cal State-LA made).

Imagine my surprise when just a few days after the panel it was revealed that Stanger had voluntarily left his job at Metrolink after a scathing audit revealed defects in the agency's governance. The Peer Review Audit Group report identifies problems that I think can be attributed to growing pains - Metrolink never built up internal infrastructure. Plus I think inter-county rivalry clouded the picture. I think Metrolink is gaining its own place outside the shadow of MTA. We salute Richard Stanger for his sterling achievement in launching a commuter rail system, and wish him our best in his future ventures.

<http://www.democracynet.org/metro/new/hsufeb.html> has an important article from the Feb. issue of Metro Investment Report on "The Looming Local Transportation Crisis" on the impacts of Propositions 62 & 218 have with their 2/3 requirement for the renewal of sunseting transportation sales taxes.

OCTA continues apace with its urban light rail project. The Sunday Sept. 13 Orange County edition of the Los Angeles Times carried a major article on the project, probably its first significant media exposure. The San Diego Trolley seems to be the model they are building their proposal upon, with some references to the success of the Long Beach Blue Line (and assurances that they aren't going to have any subway debacle).

Richard DeRock of Access Service, the L.A. County coordinated paratransit provider, stated at the agency's Aug. 24 meeting that Long Beach now has applicants to its local paratransit program use the ASI eligibility process to screen them. This is having an impact on ASI's already tight finances, and consultations are ongoing with Long Beach Transit. ■

GLENDALE BEELINE *Charles P. Hobbs*

Glendale Beeline operates three regular routes (#1,2 and #4) in and around Glendale, plus two special Metrolink shuttles (#11 and #12). The City of Glendale is currently holding meetings regarding restructuring some of these services:

- #1 and #2 would be "tightened up" at the north end (simply operating on Brand, Stocker, Central, dropping service to Mountain, Pacific and Arden).
- A new route #3 would replace MTA #177 (to JPL), the LCF Shuttle (currently operated by the City of La Canada-Flintridge), and part of current #4 north of Downtown.
- #4 would be slightly modified to connect with #1/2 at the south end
- New route #5 would run along Pacific Bl

between Colorado and Stocker St

- New route #6 would run along Colorado between Pacific and Verdugo
- New route #7 would operate north of the Ventura Fwy., primarily along Stocker, Grandview and Kenneth.
- A "transit mall" would be provided on Brand between Colorado and Broadway (Downtown Glendale)

These new routes would, if approved, go into service sometime next year (probably July 1999) for a six month trial period.

Glendale hints that fares may be raised (from 25 to 50 cents) to support the new services. ■

FOOTHILL TRANSIT *Hank Fung*

At the Sep. 25 Foothill Transit board meeting, the following changes were advocated:

- Extending the #184 via the route of the (MTA) #267 to Pasadena City College, Cal Tech, and the Pasadena Center, via Del Mar. Blvd. This is done because the layover at Rosemead/ Huntington is too long (45 minutes). Up to 13 riders are projected on each bus per trip in the segment, for up to a 141% increase in ridership.
- The #690 is undergoing long awaited restructuring. In October, one additional trip will be added. In January, the route is proposed to operate clockwise via Lake, Colorado, and Fair Oaks, saving 13 minutes. The bus will use the I-210 HOV on ramp at Fair Oaks to save time. Also, the 690 will serve Montclair first before Claremont (much like original routing). Claremont is opposed to this modification. When the 30 freeway opens, it will remain on the freeway and will save 10 minutes each way. The stop at the Azusa Park and Ride will be moved east, to eliminate the street running along Baseline. Also, #690 may even be extended as far as the Jet Propulsion Laboratory north of Pasadena.
- The 481 may be terminated at Gateway Center. Ridership has decreased by about 60% from

1993 to 1998, commensurate with the Red Line opening. To serve the main constituency of the 481, (workers at Pacific Bell Center on St. Paul at Wilshire) the bus could extend westbound to serve them only before deadheading for more passengers. The 481 is also proposed to be extended to Fairplex Park and Ride via I-10, to better serve overflow customers at Eastland (Eastland management is reluctant to add any more park-and-ride allotments to the lot).

With this change, extra buses will be added on the 480 to serve the El Monte Busway, which exceed crowding standards every morning and evening. Three buses could be added, providing 15 peak load trips between El Monte and Los Angeles. If this was not done, the new service would only arrive in 2001, when Foothill gets new expansion buses.

The options are to: Extend the bus eastward to Fairplex Park and Ride and terminate it at Gateway Center, extend to Fairplex Park and Ride and terminate at Pac Bell Center, or alternate between Eastland-Western and Fairplex-Gateway service. ■

ROUTES OF THE MONTH *Chris Ledermuller*

Cerritos on Wheels (1 and 2)

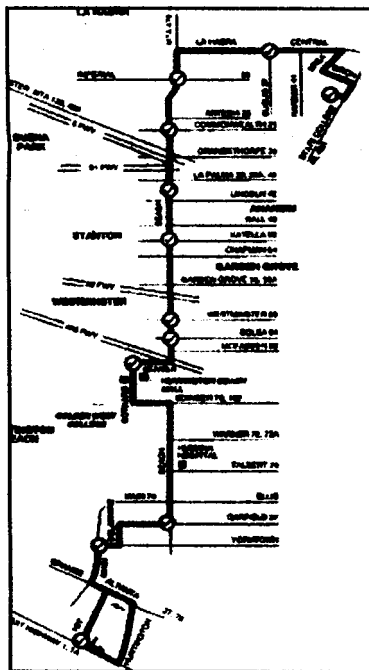
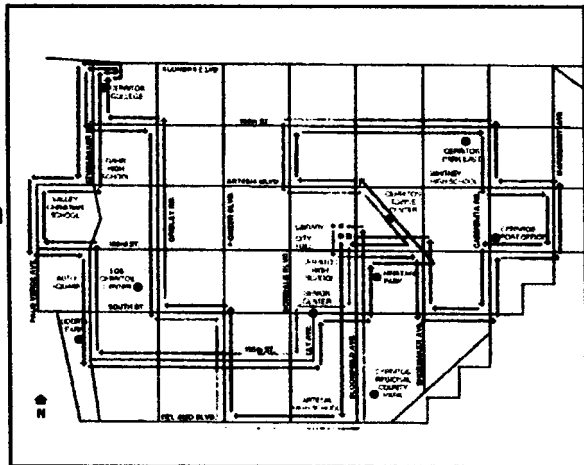
Where does it go: Cerritos College, Los Cerritos Center, Cerritos City Hall, Cerritos Towne Centre, and several parks and schools along the way.

When does it run: Every 30 minutes from 6:10 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. weekdays and every 90 minutes from 9:10 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. weekends.

How much is it: 25 cents.

Whom to call: (562) 928-4COW (4269).

Note: The two routes are loops of each other.



OCTA #29

Where does it go: Brea, Brea Mall, La Habra, Knotts Berry Farm, Buena Park, Stanton, Huntington Beach, Huntington Beach Mall, Goldenwest College

When does it run:

Weekdays: 5 a.m.-11 p.m. every 15-20 minutes*

Saturdays: 5 a.m.-9:53 p.m. every 30 minutes**

Sundays: 6:30 a.m.-9:25 p.m. every 30 minutes**

* Service operates less frequently south of Beach/Garfield and north of Beach/Commonwealth

** Service operates less frequently north of Beach/Commonwealth

How much is it: \$1 (Seniors/Disabled: \$.45 peak hours, \$.15 off peak)

Whom to call: (714) 636-RIDE

TRANSIT TRIVIA *Chris Ledermuller*

The answer to last month's question: "If paying with SMMBL tokens, how much (tokens+cash) do you have to pay to ride Line 10?"

is: 2 tokens + 25 cents.