

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

MTA has leased an articulated coach from New Flyer to try it out on city streets. There are rumors it may even be tested in revenue service (perhaps along Route #40 thru South Central Los Angeles).

An article in the Dec. 3 South Bay Weekly indicates the South Bay and Gateway Bus Transit Restructuring Study is nearly ready for its last round of public meetings before being presented to the MTA Board in early 1999 for approval. SO.CA.TA hopes Councilmember Rudy Svornich will convene a L.A. City Council Transportation Committee hearing in San Pedro for outreach in that community, which should enhance the opportunity for community involvement.

The study also recommended the following, according to Palos Verdes Transit staff:

- MTA drop route #226 and have this service operated by PV Transit
- MTA discontinue school tripper service on route #225 and have this service be operated by PV Transit.

There was no recommendation that PV Transit take over the entire Route 225, only the four school trippers operated on the Peninsula. PV Transit staff is currently analyzing the impact of these recommendations. Again, the Study only made the above recommendation, no action has been taken other than to analyze the impact of PV Transit operating this service.

Meanwhile the Westside Transit Restructuring is tied to the June 1999 extension of the Red Line to Hollywood and is being held in abeyance until then.

Effective Dec 27, the following MTA bus routes will change:

Lines #1, 2, 4, 10, 28, 33, 38, 45, 55, 60, 68, 70, 78, 90, 207, 233, 243, 251, 260, and 420 all get extra buses during peak hours,

Line 16 will revert back to the old routing, via 3rd and Alameda.

Line 18 and 318 will operate along an alternating pattern (similar to 94/394 or 16/316) with one

schedule, all day long. After 8 p.m., buses operate all local to Whittier/Brea (instead of 9 a.m.), as well as before 8 a.m. on weekends. "Most" 318 trips end at a new terminal at Wilshire/Vermont station (not at 6th/Wilton like current 18s, or in City West like current 318s). Some 318s will only operate to Passons instead of all the way to Whittier/Brea, "on pull-out and pull-in trips" and as shortlines in rush hour. The 471 still operates apparently, as Foothill has no intention of taking it before they get new buses.

#45's shortline was extended to Harbor Green Line station.

#92-93 will operate every 15 min. between Brand and Glenoaks and downtown Burbank on Saturday. (i.e. trips that end and start at Brand and Mountain run via the Brand/Mountain route, not terminate at Brand/Mountain).

Lines #120 and 121 will be interlined together. On Saturdays, the shortline terminates at Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center (from Imperial/Atlantic), and Sunday service operates every half hour to Imperial/Atlantic.

Line #163 has an odd 25 minute schedule Saturdays and Sundays

Line 164 changes in Warner Center to provide "two-way service on Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Oxnard Street, and Owensmouth Avenue". (Eastbound trips -only)

Line 180 and 181 have added buses. They now operate every 22 minutes instead of 24 on Saturday, and every 26 min. instead of 30 on Sunday.

In direct contrast to MTA's limited line policies, the 354 will now shortline at 94th St. or 106th St., instead of operating all the way to Vermont Green Line/120th St. (Usually, limited buses operate the entire route, locals shortline.) So, when catching a bus at Vermont Green Line, take the 204 and transfer to the 354 at the appropriate place to get there faster.

Lines 230 and 239 will "equalize the frequency" between buses in the evening. (*cont'd on page 7*)

BULLETIN BOARD

The election of officers and directors for 1999 will be held Saturday December 12 at 2:30 p.m. in Room 422 of Angelus Plaza in downtown Los Angeles (255 S. Hill Street). The nominees are:

- Director (3 slots): Pat Moser, Charles Hobbs, Armando Avalos, Joe Dunn, Kymberleigh Richards, Anthony Loui, Hank Fung
- Treasurer: Juanita Dellomes
- Recording Secretary: Pat Moser
- Vice President: Charles Powell, Kymberleigh Richards, Hank Fung and Charles Hobbs
- President: Dana Gabbard, Pat Moser

Afterwards we will caravan via the Red Line and Blue Line to the Colonial Buffet in Long Beach (355 East 1st Street, one block east of the Blue Line's 1st Street stop in the Long Beach transit mall) for our annual holiday banquet, which will begin at 5 p.m. Cost is \$12 - if you haven't sent your check in by now you can pay the day of the event. Response to our request to area transit agencies for trinkets has been overwhelming, plus we will have many valuable door prizes to give away. All this and the excellent bill of fare offered by the Colonial Buffet should guarantee a fun time for all!

The Red Car presentation at our November 14 meeting was a great success. 40 persons (about half SO.CA.TA members and half interested citizens) heard George Eslinger give a presentation on his proposal. A reporter from Channel 4 even showed up and interviewed Eslinger for the 5 o'clock news! We are glad to have played a role in giving this idea wider exposure. Mr. Eslinger welcomes inquiries about the status of the project [or donations to help pay for its feasibility study] and can be reached at 1405 S. Oakland Ave., Pasadena CA 91106 or (626) 403-9670 or gesling@earthlink.net We certainly will keep in contact with him as he goes forward with the project. [Subsequent to our event Patt Morrison wrote about the concept in the Nov. 29 LA Times and undoubtedly gave the Red Car revival even more visibility].

Many members were active in November as advocates for public transit improvement:

- Anthony Loui attended as our delegate the Regional Transportation Plan Technical Advisory Committee convened by the Southern California Association of Governments to guide an update to the RTP to be readied by next December. Anthony has already joined the voices of area transit agency staff who question some of SCAG's assumptions.
- Kymberleigh Richards provided input to the Nov. 18 San Fernando Valley Transportation Zone Policy Advisory Council meeting held in Glendale City Hall. This is the ad hoc group of officials from Los Angeles and the edge cities (Glendale, Burbank, San Fernando, etc.) that is attempting to reach an agreement under which the other cities would join the Los Angeles application to MTA for the creation of a Zone. Her well informed comments impressed the assembled politicians. And San Fernando Mayor Pro-Tem Hernandez readily invited her to attend the Technical Advisory Committee meeting. This is where staff from the various involved cities haggle over the fine details of a possible Zone joint powers agreement. Way to go, Kym!
- Roger Christensen was present at the Pasadena Blue Line Authority preliminary meeting State Senator Adam Schiff held Nov. 18 at the South Pasadena Public Library. The Authority won't become active until January 1 but Schiff, who authored the legislation creating it, wanted to get a jump on lining up grassroots support. Roger reports the meeting was well attended and marked by visible enthusiasm for the long delayed project. Contact Paul Hubler from Schiff's staff if you wish to be informed of future meetings: (626) 683-0282.
- President Gabbard, Vice President Powell, Director Hobbs and members Joe Dunn and Anthony Loui were among those who attended a meeting held by Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus on (*cont'd on Pg. 7*)

The biggest news at MTA is a labor organizing drive for non-represented management personnel has being undertaken by the American Federal of State, County and Municipal Employees, affiliated with the AFL-CIO. Their website has further details:

<http://home1.gte.net/dmlanz/index.htm>

In a seeming attempt to steal AFSCME's thunder, the Amalgamated Transit Union, which represents the MTA's mechanics, has requested the agency voluntarily recognize their representation of equipment maintenance supervisors. These moves speak volumes about the atmosphere of fear and distrust that pervade MTA.

Ever hear of the Public Transportation Service Corporation? It is a subsidiary of MTA, set up as a public benefit non-profit but whose by-laws give it powers mirroring its parent MTA. The intention was to resolve certain issues lingering from the merger of LACTC and RTD that created MTA. Few are aware that many of those who work at the MTA headquarters are on paper actually PTSC employees. This shadowy entity is feeding into the paranoia that grips the agency. And there are rumors that the MTA financial geniuses behind PTSC have subsequent to its incorporation made some blunders that seriously undermine the very purpose it was set up to achieve. Is this another MTA fiasco waiting to explode?

The recent street fight the MTA boardmembers fought over the alternatives plan the agency submitted to the California Transportation Commission was just another meaningless spectacle that does little to improve service. Most shameless moment: Mayor Riordan's scolding letter in the Nov. 19 LA Times. Riordan, who until recently claimed to be Bus Advocate #1 while continuing to allow the Red Line extension to proceed, has the gall to claim it was the "subway vision" of some board members undermining his

valiant efforts to improve bus service that led to MTA's current woeful condition. This is hypocrisy of the rankest kind. With leadership like this, is it any wonder MTA governance is screwed up?

Over the holidays I hope to read the voluminous plan. And Tom Rubins' analysis prepared for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (legal counsel for the BRU in the lawsuit that resulted in the consent decree) as their paid consultant. Rubin is former treasurer/controller of RTD and a vocal rail critic. But often on the money when it comes to catching MTA engaged in fiscal sleight of hand.

At least the alternatives analysis attempted to identify need, by using census data and various measures to identify those areas most likely to have transit dependent residents. At a MTA Citizen Advisory Council meeting one member engaged in one of his patented tongue lashing of a staff member, in this case over how unconscionable this was and that it would never fly with the MTA board. Of course he was not merely accepting allocating funds according to political strength but acting as if it was holy writ (understandable since his area benefits from such insider games). But I have long felt this sort of data should at least be considered as one factor among several when long range plans are being prepared.

And I have now heard MTA may soon finally re-start the process of drafting a Long Range Plan.

Professional Pride is MTA Interim Operations Executive Officer James Reichert's new program to improve service. Goals, which the various unions have agreed to help pursue, include:

- 90% on time performance,
- no buses running ahead of schedule
- 10,000 average miles between mechanical failures.

This is a vital service oriented initiative that is

long overdue and should have our enthusiastic support. Especially because Reichert pledges dead weight employees who get too many write ups for failing to perform will be fired! It is about time the dead wood was weeded out of MTA Operations. The next target should be management. How about getting rid of the board cronies infesting the Taj Mahal?

MTA in a press release dated Nov. 9 announced a cost effectiveness analysis comparing them to comparable operators around the U.S. showed the agency as being very competitive. Too often people compare MTA to small fleet operators, often to serve various agendas. These results should come as no surprise. And of course since it was good news this got absolutely no play in the local press.

According to the MTA rumors page the BDOF arbitration continues, with MTA still in denial about the likelihood that it will lose badly.

Why doesn't MTA issue a brochure to inform Blue Line riders enduring crush loads in peak hours of its plans to length 19 platforms to handle 3 car trains over the next two years? It would be the sort of fundamental public outreach MTA nearly always neglects.

Little noticed was a management audit of the County Counsel office (that mostly dealt with its Children's Unit) that included a small mention of MTA and Metrolink. The report (the subject of a Nov. 13 article in the Los Angeles Times) stated "risk exposure" exists for the county because County Counsel has no formal agreements for its role as counsel to MTA and Metrolink. Doesn't that mean those agencies have similar exposure? Does anyone at MTA or Metrolink know about this issue or plan to do something about it?

The BRU is mostly engaged in public games in their current campaign against the Pasadena Blue Line Authority as stealing money needed for the

consent decree. They even hint perhaps Judge Hatter, who oversees the decree, may rule to stop the transfer of funds from MTA to the Authority. While Hatter could do so, I think no one really expects this will happen. Likely Eric Mann knows this too and is simply trying to keep up the appearance of fighting the good fight by creating another villain to (forgive me) rail against.

I have long been concerned about the proposal to create a Transit Zone for the San Fernando Valley. The concept has the taint of being a political morsel for insiders and having hardly anything to do with actually improving service. First I sent a letter stating concerns to the ad hoc committee of cities that Los Angeles hopes to recruit. Then I sent a short letter to the Glendale News-Press, which appeared in its Nov. 21-22 edition. But Warren Swil, opinion editor of the News-Press, felt I was onto something in my complaint that the emphasis was who would dominate the governing board, not how to improve service. At Mr. Swil's invitation I expanded my thoughts into a 400 word op-ed piece published in the Dec. 3 News-Press and with small changes in the Dec. 5 Burbank Leader. My thanks to Kymberleigh Richards, who was a sounding board as I worked up the final draft, and to Mr. Swil for the opportunity to ask questions and be a voice for the transit users. This is just the sort of advocacy that SO.CA.TA was created to pursue!

The brilliant beancounters at the Southern California Association of Governments at the Nov. 5 SCAG Transportation and Communication Committee meeting boldly requested support for a bill to recognize SCAG's responsibility under federal law for High Speed Rail in Southern California and that the High Speed Rail Authority have its budget adjusted accordingly. Does this mean they want to claim partial jurisdiction over the statewide system to be on the ballot in 2000? SCAG's entire proposal (privately funded mag-lev *(to pg 6)*)

(from pg. 5) down the middle of freeways) seems ill advised. Will reality ever set in?

In a more encouraging regional rail move, Amtrak in its recently adopted Strategic Business Plan states aggressive promotion will occur of the San Diegan, their second busiest train. Along with new equipment to be put in service during the next few years this should reverse the recent slight dip in ridership experienced. For details on the plan see <http://www.amtrak.com/news/pr/atk98184.html> [information for this comes from the November issue of the Delaware Valley Rail Passenger, which can be viewed at <http://www.dvarp.org>].

Mayor Riordan as MTA Chair has placed himself on the Metrolink board, in place of Santa Clarita Mayor Jan Heidt (as a consolation prize she is now on the ASI Board). Judy Wright, ex Claremont City Councilmember and longtime mover and shaker, also is out as is Los Angeles Councilmember Mike Hernandez. New alternates include San Fernando Valley mover and shaker Nate Brogin (who I like to call the most powerful unelected public figure in Los Angeles county for the numerous commissions he sits on), Palmdale Mayor James Ledford and Monrovia Mayor Robert Bartlett, who is also on Foothill's board.

Mike Zdon, the San Diego County Association of Governments staff member who was handling administrative duties of the Southern California Intercity Rail Group, has taken the job of Administrator of Napa County's Transportation Commission. SCIRG, a joint powers among 10 counties, has decided for now not to pursue taking over the San Diegan. But they will oversee implementation of cost savings in San Diegan operations' their consultants identified, working with Amtrak and Caltrans, as well as monitoring the track record of the joint powers in the Bay Area that has taken over the operation of the Capitols service. Metrolink is now handling administration of SCIRG.

Metrolink's recent survey of Saturday Riders (http://www.metrolinktrains.com/news/1198_satservice.htm) includes an interesting statistic. One of the most requested locales for an extension of Metrolink service was Santa Monica/Venice (43%). I brought this to the recent Big Blue Bus meeting I attended and was gratified to learn Santa Monica plans in the near future to start having their line #10 serve the Gateway Plaza, which will improve ease of use between it and Metrolink.

The Nov. 9 public meeting on the Glendale Blvd. corridor was interesting for the obvious community interest in an old plan that has long gathered dust to shift traffic out of this corridor (afflicted with a freeway stub pouring traffic into it) to a surface connector between the 5 freeway and downtown along the Los Angeles river to Union Station. Extra funds from the new federal transportation act TEA21 may help fund a study of this idea.

A follow-up to an item in my October column: ASI has persuaded Long Beach Transit to set up its own eligibility process for paratransit applicants.

Does anyone doubt if local HOV lanes are converted to mixed use (as advocated by Assemblymember Tom McClintock) they will quickly fill up? Catering to single occupant auto use makes no sense. Unless you want to showboat on TV.

A recent BRU flyer has a Latina in superhero garb holding back evil rail vehicles. She is called Super Pasajera (Super Passenger). And strangely she resembles a certain local politician. Which leaves us with the question: is Gloria Molina moonlighting for the BRU?

(from pg. 2) the implementation of their bus improvement plan held Nov. 21 (founder Pat Moser attended one the meetings held several days earlier). Overall the comments by the attendees were favorable. Especially gratifying were Santa Monica's plans to improve frequency and service hours for its line 10, the downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica express.

- President Gabbard and member Armando Avalos attended a Dec. 3 workshop/meeting on the Figueroa Corridor Transit Improvement Project. Funded by MTA Call for Projects monies, it involves upgrading the length of Figueroa between USC and downtown to being more friendly to transit operations and pedestrians. This includes new bus shelters, enhanced street lighting and bricked cross-walks (much like those recently added to the Wilshire Center corridor). A key element is the the creation of a northbound bus only lane during morning peak (7 a.m. to 9 a.m.) from Adams to 4th Street. For more information contact Kang Hu, (213) 847-6066, or John Kulpa, (213) 473-5559.

- Director Chris Ledermuller scored 2 for 2 by having reach the printed page both letters he sent to local papers on the passage on Proposition A. They appeared in the Nov. 8 Daily News and Nov. 10 Los Angeles Times.

Director Chris Ledermuller informs us that East L.A. College is again in conjunction with MTA teaching a Transportation Planning class at the MTA's headquarters. Classes are Tuesday and Thursday from January to May. Cost is \$36. Member Roger Christensen attended the 1998 version and gave it high marks. Further information: (213) 265-8839.

The City of Los Angeles under court order has re-opened the Transportation Improvement and Mitigation Program for the General Plan Framework Element to public comment. This is issued as part of the Final Environmental Impact Report the city has issued for the Plan. Comments can be submitted through Jan. 21, 1999 to: R.A. Siracusa, Citywide Division, Dept. of City Planning, 221 S. Figueroa St., Suite 210, Los Angeles CA 90012. To request a copy of the TIMP call (213) 473-3786.

An interesting website to learn more about the Alameda Corridor project can be viewed at <http://www.scbbs.com/alameda/alameda.htm>

The California Transit Association has its new website up and running: <http://www.transitassociation.org>. Among the features are articles from Transit California Magazine on AVTA and Montebello Bus Lines.

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. ■

(Transit Reports, from pg. 2) Line 446/447 had its service cut in the evening, "to minimize service duplication". MTA has expanded the 483 shortline shuttle to provide a consistent 30 min. service.

Due to the loss of park-and-ride space at Eastland Center, the following changes have been made to Foothill #498/499, effective Dec 14:

- #498 operates along its current route, but service has been reduced to every 15 minutes.

- #499 now provides express service to San Dimas Park and Ride, with one additional stop at Via Verde

Park/Ride (also served by MTA #497). It too operates every 15 minutes. Service along Arrow Hwy has been deleted.

A new #699 operates every 12-14 minutes between Downtown LA and Fairplex Park and Ride (also served by MTA #497). Enhanced security will be provided by Pomona Police Department.

The Downtown LA routings of both #499 and #699 are the same as that for #498.