

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

MTA Lines 108, 110, 126, 161, 164 and 434 have had some minor schedule adjustments, effective Feb 22 (with the notable exception of the 161, which took effect Saturday, Feb 20)

- Some AM peak eastbound trips on #108 from 6:20 AM to 8:00 AM have been adjusted slightly to add two new trips.
- The weekday eastbound and westbound Line #110 schedules has been adjusted during the rush-hours to add an extra trip in each direction.
- The first two eastbound morning trips on #126 will depart Manhattan Beach and Highland at 6:20 and 7:20 AM, instead of 6:14 and 7:15, respectively, and are due to arrive at Hawthorne Plaza at 7:04 and 8:05 AM, respectively.

The first two westbound morning trips that depart Hawthorne Plaza at 5:37 and 6:38 AM will stay the same except for a change in the arrival time at Manhattan Beach and Highland. The two trips will now arrive at the westbound terminal at 6:17 and 7:18 AM, instead of 6:12 and 7:13 AM, respectively.

- This new #161 schedule is for Saturdays only. There will be no change in weekday or Sunday service. One extra bus now provides 4 new trips to alleviate overcrowding. Additional westbound trips now depart Ventura Bl. and Topanga Cyn. at *6:45, *8:45, *2:30, *4:30

Eastbound trips depart Westlake and Townsgate at 7:45 and 9:45 AM and 3:30 and 5:30 PM. In addition, the new eastbound trip that leaves Westlake/Townsgate at 5:30 PM becomes a #424 and heads eastbound to Downtown LA, arriving at Hill and Venice (Terminal 28) at 7:40 PM.

One extra eastbound trip has been added to #164 leaving Valley Circle and Gilmore at 4:27 PM, and arrives at Burbank Metrolink at 5:53 PM.

Additional weekday service (westbound to Malibu in the morning, eastbound to LA in the afternoon) has also been added to #434.

The equipment report in the February issue of

Western Transit notes that MTA recently purchased at auction fourteen GMC RTS 03 buses which OCTA was disposing of. All are excellent shape due to a major overhaul (new engines, transmissions, etc.) done about 5 years ago. The buses are currently at the Regional Rebuild Center being outfitted as MTA buses. Member Kymberleigh Richards at a MTA board meeting some months ago noted these RTS buses (which ran in the L.A. area on loan from OCTA when MTA's CNG buses were sidelined about 18 months ago) seemed to be in great shape and since they came from OCTA's spare fleet would eventually be sold. Richards proposed when they became available that MTA acquire some to aid in complying with the consent decree. Obviously someone was listening.

Omnitrans' new 110,000 square foot \$14 million maintenance and operations facility opened in December. Designed to meet projected future growth, it can handle a fleet of up to 475 buses (Omnitrans presently has 153). Among the features of the facility is a Compressed Natural Gas fueling station (Omnitrans operates a number of CNG vehicles and previously could only fuel them at its Montclair yard).

The Riverside Transit Agency will have many substantial schedule changes on or around April 18. Although the

- #1 (Magnolia Bl) and #2 (Corona) will be combined as #1

• Rerouted #16 (Moreno Valley), providing more direct service to Moreno Valley Mall. The express version, #26, will be deleted as RTA feels that the new #16 will be almost as fast.

• New fixed-route connections between Temecula/Murrietta and Lake Elsinore, Perris and Hemet.

• Route restructurings in the Hemet, Rubidoux/Pedley and Moreno Valley areas.

BULLETIN BOARD

The Executive Committee at its Feb. 27 meeting adopted two proposals, which will be discussed at our March 13 general membership meeting:

- 1) as of Jan. 1999 annual dues be set as \$8/low income, \$18/regular and \$50/institutional
- 2) amend the by-laws to add Parliamentarian/Sergeant-at-Arms as an officer to aid the orderly conduct of our meetings.

Member J.K. Drummond has requested the agenda of our March meeting include consideration of a motion that SO.CA.TA advocate on behalf of emergency phones being installed at all bus stations on the Harbor Transitway, El Monte Busway, and at all Freeway bus platforms.

We anticipate next month's meeting will include a presentation on the proposed statewide High Speed Rail project that may be on the ballot next year. Please check the April newsletter for confirmation.

Members in the news: Member Chris Ledermuller's "Bus Line Eases Crowding" on Long Beach Transit's new Zap express appeared in the Feb. 23 Cal State Univ. Long Beach Daily 49er. And in the past month Director Armando Avalos twice contributed to improving the public discourse on transit issues. First his March 1 Daily Bruin letter correctly noted an article in the Feb. 19 Daily Bruin ("Sunset Line Draws Criticisms") "was too vague to be informative" and goes on to puncture its BRU inspired rhetoric. Then the March 5 L.A. Weekly carried his letter lauding Howard Blume's Feb. 5 piece "Blue Line Blues" for noting the positive impact the line would have.

Orders are now being taken for our T-Shirts. They will be light blue (teal) high quality shirts with our logo. The cost is \$20 (checks made out to SO.CA.TA). Please indicate the size you want. Orders must be received no later than our March 13 meeting to be part of the first batch. We are sorry for the tight deadline but it is necessary to have the shirts ready in time for our booth at the Red Line opening.

A new feature of our website is a page "How I Got Started In Transit Advocacy..." (<http://socata.lerctr.org/statements.html>) which combines memoirs of personal history in re using transit and narratives about becoming involved with SO.CA.TA Members who wish to contribute can e-mail their contribution to transit@lerami.lerctr.org

Director Hank Fung has begun on a weekly basis posting on our member board a round up of articles on transportation issues in the on-line editions of local newspapers and other resources. This is a great aid to keeping up with the latest happenings. (Non-members can access the weekly list of articles at <http://www.cyberspace.org/~fungster/naotw/>)

Members with web access are reminded they can obtain a password to access the member only board by e-mailing our webmaster Charles Hobbs at transit@lerami.lerctr.org

We need volunteers for our booth at the celebration of Fullerton's railroad heritage May 1-2. Its a chance to meet the public and spread the good word about SO.CA.TA!

Monday March 1 President Gabbard, Directory Anthony Loui and member Roger Christensen attended a presentation by Dr. Peter Newman on "An International Agenda for Smart Growth" sponsored by the Surface Transportation Policy Project, L.A. Eco-Village and the L.A. County Bicycle Coalition. The talk was based on Newman's recently published book (co-authored by Jeffrey Kenworthy) "Sustainability and Cities: Overcoming Automobile Dependency". Succinctly Newman's argument is that instead of bus vs. rail we should see the paradigm as bus and rail vs. automobiles. He laid out a persuasive vision of livable communities based on real world examples. The book is published by Island Press (800-828-1302 for ordering information). (*cont'd on Page 7*)

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

At our Feb. 13 meeting we took a position against S.B. 63 (Solis) which would reduce from 3 to 2 the minimum number of persons a carpool must contain to use the El Monte busway. Letters expressing our opposition were sent to the author, chairs of the California Assembly and Senate Transportation Committees, LACMTA, the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments and SCAG. Foothill Transit and SANBAG evidently also have taken positions opposing the bill. It is our hope that this emerging regional consensus will quickly scuttle this misguided proposal.

Currently we are drafting a response to the Torrance Transit restructuring. Besides communicating with key opinion leaders we hope via letters to the editor and flyers to reach users and make them aware of the situation.

An ad-hoc committee has been formed to evaluate and comment on MTA's draft revised Transportation Zone guidelines. This is going to be a highly politicized process with all sorts of conflicting agendas involved. I see our role as making sure the perspective of users is represented. Any member who would like to contribute to this efforts should contact me via our voice mail - (213) 388-2364 ext.2 The target date to finalize our comments is March 31.

Again we are having a wave of Curitiba mania. Interestingly Tom Rubin in a Feb. 17 Daily News op-ed ("Valley Busway No Silver Bullet") dismisses the idea of Curitiba style service in L.A. as impractical. Dr. Peter Newman at his recent talk on sustainability described the stalinist tactics forcing growth along the corridors that made them succeed. Is that what the BRU is supporting when they espouse this as an alternative to rail? It is fascinating to read in the Feb. Metro Investment Report (<http://www.ablinc.net/mir>) Martha Welborne and Zev Yaroslavsky enthuse about their recent heavily publicized trip to Curitiba

with Mayor Riordan and other heavy hitter types. It is almost comical the mental gymnastics they go to in trying to claim Curitiba points the way for our region. It isn't surprising Zev's support of light rail (a key element of the campaign for his Prop A) seems to have been discarded as he jumps on the busway bandwagon. But once he tries to actually place a busway on Burbank/Chandler and faces a backlash I predict he'll be AWOL on this issue, too. As for Welborne, she is sincere (if misguided). In describing her drive to promote Curitiba-style busways (including the preparation of a proposal with the Environmental Defense Fund) she declares "I'm finding that you can discover all sorts of new energy when you are motivated by a cause". Which confirms my impression from hearing her last year at the panel we were both on: another true believer is among us!

Did you ever expect to see an article in the Daily News whose prescription to relieve gridlock is "get people out of their cars"? And on the front page, no less? ("Gridlock Gurus Use L.A. as Laboratory", Feb. 15). The article even states road building your way out of congestion isn't a viable option. Sadly the Daily News continues its 101/405 interchange expansion obsession.

Another thing I never expected (at least not at this time): harsh criticisms of the BRU appearing in the press. Columnist Marc Hafele actually ridiculed the anti-racist rhetoric aimed at the Pasadena Blue Line in a Feb. 5 LA Weekly column. Add letters in the Daily Bruin (March 3), LA Times (Feb. 6) and LA Independent (Feb. 10) and it is clear some are tiring of the overheated claims of Eric Mann et al. It will be awhile before Mann finally shifts focus elsewhere. Yet I do glean light at the end of the tunnel.

But let's not fool ourself. The BRU (and other extreme elements) still widely influence perceptions. "A clean air setback for the basin" is

how the Feb. Metro Investment Report describes the recent Bureau of State Audit report (<http://www.bsa.ca.gov/bsa/pdfs/98120.pdf>) that MTA's conversion of the methanol/ethanol buses to clean diesel was the most cost effective option.

Hooray! You can now download some of the Reason Foundation's recent publications without spending \$15! <http://www.rppi.org/surtrans.html>

Another web resource of note is the widely publicized annual traffic congestion report of the Texas Transportation Institute: <http://mobility.tamu.edu> (P.S. LA has been #1 in congestion for most of this decade).

In a mind numbing development L.A. Councilman Mike Hernandez has imperilled the Pasadena Blue Line project for reasons that don't hold water. Hopefully by the time the L.A. City Council at its March 12 meeting considers Hernandez's motion reason will prevail. Check the city council website for information: <http://citycouncil.cityofla.org/cfi/qbe1.htm> (search file 98-2315). (search file 98-2315).

We are only 4 months from the doubling of our urban rapid transit system, the Red Line. Isn't it strange how this event seems totally absent from the public consciousness? Commentators like Hugh Hewitt on Life & Times continue to proclaim the Red Line a failure. The jump from 30,000 to 100,000 boardings a day when the extension opens should really start shaking up the perception that the Red Line is a white elephant.

It is strange but true: the chief lessons I have drawn from my 5 years as a transit advocate are distilled into a two paragraph letter published in the Feb. 24 LA Times letter warning of the twin evils of parochialism and a fixation of magic bullet solutions (what I call true-believerism) and the importance of involving all the key players (government, private sector, the public) in the process of creating long range

transportation plans. The letter was in response to an unusually apt Times editorial "The Transportation Key" (Feb. 16) that prescribed a regional approach. Which is something I heartily agree with. But don't hold your breath anytime soon.

Interesting fact of the month: recently elected Assemblymember Nell Soto of the 61st District (San Gabriel/Pomona Valleys) is a former RTD employee who handled public affairs for the agency. And now she is on the Transportation Committee! You've come a long way, Nell!

In other Sacramento developments State Senate President Pro Tem John Burton has introduced his package of transportation bills (SR 8, SCA 3 and SB 315). For now we are taking a wait and see attitude until the spending priorities for the bonds in SB 315 are clarified. Posturing has already started with a number of competing proposals. Stay tuned...

The three high speed rail proposals (statewide, SCAG regional and Anaheim-Las Vegas) have started receiving quite a bit of attention in the local press. A new GAO Report "High-Speed Rail Projects in the United States" (RCED-99-44) [<http://www.gao.gov> to download or order] deals with aspects of the statewide project. Already political alliances are being formed behind the various proposals. Plus typical pork barrel politics is coming into play: Dan Waters in a Feb. 9 column for the Sacramento Bee describes Senator David Kelley trying to add his district to the statewide line (which would increase the already enormous estimated cost of \$20 billion plus depress projected travel speeds). When asked about the SCAG project in the Jan. Metro Investment Report Mehdi Morshed (Executive Director of the High Speed Rail Authority) is very diplomatic in his comments. But still admits "It blows my mind that they decided on maglev. Why would you jump into a technology when no one really knows if it works?" Why, indeed. ■

ROUTE OF THE MONTH

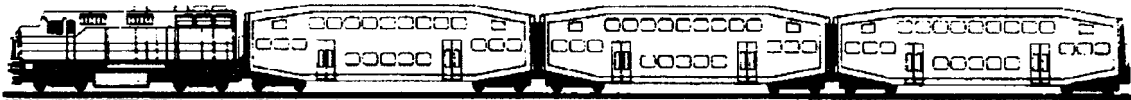
Long Beach Transit Zap-7th St. limited

Where does it go: Los Altos Center, CSULB, stops along 7th St. at high schools and major transfer points, and the Transit Mall.

When does it run: 6:30 to 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 to 6 p.m. weekdays only, every 13 minutes.

How much does it cost: 90 cents (75 cents for students and 45 cents for seniors). Follows same pricing and fare policies as LBT local lines.

Whom to call: (562)-591-2301



(*Bulletin Board*, from pg. 3) "Moving Costs: A Transportation Funding Guide for the San Francisco Bay Area" is a new publication of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. While written for the Bay Area it is equally applicable to Southern California. A free copy can be requested via e-mail at library@mtc.ca.gov or by fax at (510) 464-7852 or by voice at (510) 464-7836. In addition it is on the MTC website <http://www.mtc.ca.gov>

The Institute for Public Transportation Marketing is a newly formed organization that works on behalf of improving the marketing of transit services. Its organizer Van Ajemian can be reached at (213) 975-9828 ext. 100 or vana@nextpath.com

The Pacific Railroad Society on Saturday April 24 is sponsoring a chartered motorcoach tour of the famed Tehachapi Pass. This is a chance to view some of the most spectacular railroad sites in Southern California. Cost is \$24 (and an extra \$6 if you wish the optional sack lunch, or bring your own). You can board at San Dimas, L.A. Union Station or Glendale for the all day trip. For further information call (626) 570-8651 or (323) 283-0087.

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. ■