

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

The status of current MTA bus orders: all 400 Neoplans under the 1997 contract have been accepted. Performance and reliability issues with these coaches are being worked on with the manufacturer. Detroit Diesel has converted 201 of the 333 ethanol/methanol buses to clean diesel. Only 10 of the alcohol-fuelled buses remain operational. The first of the 223 New Flyer high floor CNG buses have begun arriving and will shortly enter revenue service. An additional order of 223 New Flyer CNG buses (this time low floor) will begin arriving next summer. The 215 North American Bus Industry CNG low floor buses should start arriving late January/early Feb. of 2000.

MTA is testing a new farebox with various features (including printed transfer cards a la Foothill). Member Woody Rosner spotted it being tried out on Route 200 (Alvarado).

The West Valley Smart Shuttle has expanded its service area to serve Porter Ranch. Also the Metrolink stations at Chatsworth and Northridge will be served every 30 minutes. Semi-fixed routes serve Sherman Way, Victory, De Soto, Winnetka, Nordhoff and Parthenia. For more information: 818-678-0480.

Access Services, Inc. (the ADA coordinated paratransit provider for L.A. County) recently suffered a meltdown. While in the past ASI has used separate contractors in the various service areas, it decided this year to reconfigure service delivery with two contractors serving a single larger area: one to handle subscription standing requests and the other on-demand calls (hence the term steady and ready). The first test of this concept began July 1 in the Long Beach area. While the steady provider had no problems coming up to speed the ready provider, Independent Taxicab Operators Association, had severe employee turnover and operational/managerial problems. Heroic efforts by ASI staff and some of the ASI contractors from other areas helped reduce the impact on riders. The ASI Board has adopted performance improvement targets ITOA must meet to retain

the contract. And reportedly progress is being made in this regard.

Glendale has finally adopted its 5 year local service plan ("Glendale Speeds Up Sunday Service Testing", Glendale News-Press Sept. 30). In November route #5 will start on Pacific Avenue and routes #1 and #2 will test Sunday service. Next year in February Route #3 will restructure, adding the northern segment of rt. #4 and a portion of MTA #177 between the Galleria and JPL. Then in March for a one year trial period transfers to MTA buses will be offered for 50 cents and Beeline buses will accept MTA monthly passes. The revenue impact will determine if this change is permanent. During 2001-2003 new routes #7 (Glendale Community College-Northwest Glendale) and route #6 (Glendale High School-Pacific/Edison neighborhood via Colorado) will begin operating along with possible route #8 (Glendale Transportation Center-Glendale Community College).

Member Ray Mullins reports that the last eastbound Mountain Area Regional Transit Authority Big Bear local trip, which now currently terminates at Interlaken, will now continue to Erwin Lake and Sugarloaf. And MARTA has ordered 4 El Dorado/National 30' low floor buses, the same models as recently delivered to LADOT. These will be used for Off-The-Mountain trips. However, discussion of substantial changes to OTM service has been delayed until October.

Sept. 11 the Ventura Trolley ceased operations due to low ridership (approximately 800 a month). Its future is currently unclear.

Sept. 16 the new lowered train tracks in Solana Beach (used by the San Diegan and Coaster trains) opened. The open cut is 1.4 miles long and 30 feet below grade. ■

BULLETIN BOARD

The LAPD Transit Policing Unit cannot provide a speaker for our October meeting. Hopefully a speaker will be available in November or January. Also Bob Huddy of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) has tentatively committed to making a presentation on the smart shuttle concept at an upcoming meeting.

A change in format for our agendas will be tried at our Oct. 6 meeting: items in bold will be for informational purposes only. These either require no report or are best handled via updates in the newsletter. It is hoped this will help streamline our meetings. After the meeting we will have a planning session for the Torrance Transit campaign. And members who live in Los Angeles will prepare letters urging their city council representative provide oversight to the process of awarding a new bus shelter franchise.

Our vision meeting on Sept. 25 had a strong turnout and vigorous discussion. Short and long goals are outlined on a sheet being distributed to members with this month's newsletter. One key decision made was to begin planning an annual travel event. Also a questionnaire will soon be distributed to members seeking input and identifying skills which can be volunteered.

Oct. 30 we will undertake an exploration/study tour of the restructured Riverside Transit Agency system. If you wish to participate call our voice mail [(213) 388-2364 ext.2] and we'll let you know our gathering place and time. At our Sept. 11 meeting we discussed various options for our annual day after Thanksgiving exploration. Among the possibilities: Ventura County (SCAT/Ojai Trolley), Palm Springs (Sunline), Bakersfield (GET), Victor Valley (VVTA), Laguna Beach Transit and San Luis Obispo. A final decision will be reached at our Oct. 9 meeting.

The annual holiday party will be held Dec. 11 at the Colonial Buffet in Long Beach. Cost will be \$13 per person. An order form will be included with the November newsletter.

Members in the news: Jane Reifer of Fullerton is profiled in the Sept. 6 Orange County Register article "Baby, you can Have my Car" (<http://www.ocregister.com/community/features/1998/growth/transportation/nocar006w.shtml>) on life without owning a car. SO.CA.TA ally Jay Leassig of Auto-Free Orange County is also profiled in the piece. Members Roger Christensen and Van Ajemian had letters supporting rapid bus on Ventura Blvd. in the Sept. 30 Our Times-Sherman Oaks. Member Joe Dunn had a letter in the Sept. 6 Ventura County Star. Member Chris Ledermuller had an op-ed piece "A Little Coordination Goes a Long Way" in the Sept. 12 Ventura County Star (<http://www.staronline.com/editoria/218816.htm>) on the need for Ventura County transit systems to improve coordination.

Member Perias Pillay and Director Anthony Loui are attending the Oct. 6 Striking Gold Through Smart Growth symposium sponsored by the California Futures Network. Their impressions will help guide our decision whether to become a CFN affiliate.

Nov. 13 at 10 a.m. MTA will have a public hearing in its Headquarters building on proposed service changes to coincide with the opening of the Red Line extension to North Hollywood. Since this is the 2nd Saturday of the month it conflicts with our meeting day. Members will discuss at the Oct. 9 meeting whether we should shift to Nov. 6 or 20.

Friday Oct. 15 from 10 a.m. to Noon the SCAG Long Range Transportation Finance Task Force is sponsoring a presentation by Joel Szabot, Transportation Policy Consultant to Assembly Republicans, on the status of key transportation legislation. This will be held at 818 W. 7th Street in downtown Los Angeles. Further information: (213) 236-1841 or (213) 236-1827.

Carolyn Chase of the Earth Times wants to contact those who wish to be on an alert list for the upcoming San Diego county Regional Transportation Plan Update public input process. Contact her at: cdchase@sdearthtimes.com (cont'd on pg. 7)

Sept. 23 Judge Hatter released his ruling on overcrowding relief. A lot of spin has been spun as to who won and lost. In my mind this is premature. With the load factor reductions of 2000 and 2002 still to be reckoned with and the 5 year service plan an additional bone of contention this whole process has barely begun. Given various unpleasant alternatives the MTA board bit the bullet and directed staff to identify funds to purchase the 297 buses as directed by Hatter. But they also directed an appeal be made to the Ninth Circuit as to the extent the court can compel compliance with the consent decree. The limits of this process are finally about to be explored.

Also we will soon learn if the BRU theory that flooding the streets with buses is sustainable (I have heard horror stories of what the "golden age" of 1982-1985 was like for riders).

Amusing incident of the month: Robert Garcia (robert.garcia@alumni.stanford.org), a lawyer for the Environmental Defense Fund and part of the legal team for the BRU, at Railvolution in Dallas in late September gave a speech at the luncheon that concluded the conference. Garcia unleashed a torrent of BRU allegations of transit racism. Plus declared similar actions are to be filed in cities like Atlanta and Washington, D.C. But would such suits get as friendly of a jurist as Terry Hatter? And would MARTA or WMATA sign a consent decree? Does he believe this? Or was he just being perverse and enjoyed giving a scare to rail supporters? (a nod to member Roger Christensen who witnessed Garcia's rant).

"Bus Incident Stirs Driver Age Issue" (Daily News Sept. 24) quotes me regarding a ticklish issue: a 76 year old MTA bus operator who hit an elderly woman raised the question whether bus operators should take routine skill tests after a certain age. While not enthused about the issue I tried to craft usable statements instead of being wishy-washy, indicating it is a physical fact at a certain point impairment must be guarded against. This is what it is like when you are called by the press for comment. Something I am still learning how to do.

Anti-rail/pro-sprawl USC Professor Peter Gordon has a website:
<http://rcf.usc.edu/~pgordon/index.html>

Leonard Shapiro in his Gadfly column (L.A. Watts-Times Sept. 9) mentioned our interest in his crusade regarding bus shelters in Los Angeles. I think this is one of the issues we can work on in the coming year and make a difference. If you live in the city of Los Angeles let your council representative know more shelters must be a priority!

I was glad to see The Finger column in the Sept. 9 New Times Los Angeles rip former Assemblymember Richard Katz for spearheading the supposed drive to improve public transit with a San Fernando valley zone. And I was thrilled when my letter blasting Katz for foisting upon us the dysfunctional MTA Board when writing the bill creating the agency appeared in the Sept. 23 New Times. Does anyone dispute my closing thought?: "How much credibility does Katz have at this point? In my eyes, zero. His kind of help our transit system doesn't need".

Perhaps the single most cleareyed commentary on the zone battle appeared in the Sept. 26 San Fernando Valley edition of the Los Angeles Times. Its author? Assemblymember Robert Hertzberg. If as rumored Hertzberg becomes the next Assembly Speaker it doesn't bode well for the zone zealots.

When merging the MTA police into the LAPD and Sheriff's Dept. was being considered by the MTA Board, I learned from an insider that officers going to the Sheriff's Dept. were going to be treated as new hires and instead of making use of their specialized training would be sent to guard duty at the county jail. My concern that this wasn't what the merger was supposed to result in was dismissed out of hand by blase boardmembers when I revealed this information at a board meeting. Now 199 former MTA police officers who are with the Sheriff's Dept. are suing over exactly this issue ("Judge Certifies Class-Action Suit by 119 Ex-MTA Officers") L.A. Times Sept. 10, 1999). Do you think

next time they might listen to me? Yeah, right.

To get on the mailing list for notices of upcoming LAX expansion meetings write: Los Angeles World Airports, P.O. Box 92216 Los Angeles CA 90009-2216 or via <http://www.LAX2015.org> (click on public input).

Kudos to South Coast Area Transit for donating to the Association of Retarded Citizens-Ventura County the MTA, Santa Monica and Santa Barbara bus tokens that ended up in SCAT's fareboxes. ARC will distribute them to clients in the appropriate areas. I also note SCAT has improved its website (<http://www.scata.org>) - now the system map can be clicked on to enlarge and link to the route schedules. If only MTA could get route maps on its website!

Persistent question: when will Mayor Riordan appoint someone to the MTA board member seat vacated by unmissed Richard Alatorre?

I hope the rumor that Amtrak doesn't plan to staff the newly renovated Glendale Transportation Center turns out to be false. One idea being floated is for Metrolink to share with Amtrak the cost of a station agent.

Why did Mayor Riordan, while MTA Board chair, appoint himself to the Metrolink board? He has never bothered to attend a single Metrolink board meeting. And why is Francine Oschin, L.A. councilmember Hal Bernson's transportation deputy, currently a Metrolink board alternate? Can one hope new MTA board chair Yvonne Burke will soon address these peculiarities?

I attended the Sept. 22 Pasadena Blue Line authority meeting at Ramona Hall because I wanted with my own eyes and ears to witness members of Citizens Against the Blue Line at Grade state their case during the public comment portion of the meeting. As I suspected, they turned out to be zealots who have a myopia without regard to the reality that the Authority hasn't

\$40-\$100 million for the grade separation they demand. Even the Pasadena Star News on Sept. 15 editorialized against their quixotic obsession

("No Tunnels for Blue Line"). Founder Pat Moser was also present and succinctly stated the folly of their demands. I simply suggested they go to Sacramento, since that is the only place where funds to fulfill their demands will be forthcoming. Of course anything but agreement with their non-negotiable demands went unheard.

This was a bad year in Sacramento for transportation issues. The Burton initiatives on renewing local sales tax (SCA 3) and an 8 billion dollar bond (SB 315), were caught up in partisan bickering over debt and taxes. Prospects for movement in the second half of the session are unclear.

Kudos to Senators Boxer and Feinstein for killing the so called equity provision in the federal transportation appropriation bill. It is amazing hardly a year since TEA21 was enacted that Senators already have tried to undo its carefully worked out compromises. Opportunism knows no bounds.

I found on the Environmental Defense Fund website a reference to a 1977 lawsuit by the Coalition for Economic Survival against RTD eerily similar to the BRU lawsuit. Does anyone know if the CES' claim of discrimination in funding of suburban versus inner city bus service was ever heard in court?

Opposition to the OCTA Centerline light rail proposal by Drivers for Highway Safety, the anti-transit/pro-highway organization, was the subject of a Sept. 21 article in the Orange County Register (<http://www.ocregister.com/community/features/1998/growth/transportation/rail02law.shtml>). One of their members has a website: <http://www.stop-the-train.org> or they can be contacted at (714) 544-3200.

Last month I pronounced <http://www.mtala.com> DOA. Well, it is back. Sorry for the premature eulogy. ■

MUNI OPERATOR EXCURSION *Dana Gabbard*

Our latest excursion/study tour had as its focus local municipal transportation systems. In many areas of Los Angeles county these are the main providers of service and we set out to explore the quality of service and connectivity. On the morning of Saturday July 31 members Anthony Loui, Mike Baron, Armando Avalos, Charles Powell and Dana Gabbard rendezvoused in downtown Los Angeles at First and Main. Per the itinerary planned by member Chris Ledermuller (who wasn't able to participate due to a schedule conflict) we were there to catch the Gardena Transit line #1 schedule to depart at 9:30 a.m. President Gabbard brought a dozen doughnuts and exhorted everyone to have two or three.

At 9:35 a.m. we boarded our first bus, a TMC RTS. Going through the east side of downtown L.A. the bus steadily boarded passengers, becoming almost full by the time it entered the Harbor Freeway for the express segment to Gardena. Anthony Loui pointed to a L.A. bound Gardena #1 we spotted while on the freeway and questioned why the Gardena buses use the Harbor Transitway northbound to Los Angeles but not southbound to Gardena. After exiting the freeway we went along a stretch of Vermont Blvd. with a nicely landscaped median that is an old Pacific Electric right-of-way. Boarding and alighting was quite active, especially between connecting Gardena routes. We deboarded in downtown Gardena at Gardena Blvd. & Vermont and made our way to Berendo and Gardena Blvd. to catch Gardena line #4. This location includes benches and trees for shade and could be thought of as a modest transit center (one could wish for signage and transit maps). It was pointed out by Charles Powell that Gardena schedules still refer to RTD and inexplicably the map doesn't label Main Street in Gardena.

Due to a misunderstanding we had been given interagency transfers but the Gardena line 4 driver accepted them when we boarded at 10:48 a.m. This was another RTS. We had been worried about whether we were in the right location to catch the bus due to the less than readable map in the Garden Transit schedule. Ridership was modest. The bus was running about 10 minutes late and we were concerned about making our connection with Torrance Transit line #5 at Manhattan Beach & Crenshaw. But we were able to deboard and dash across the intersection just as the Torrance bus

pulled up to the stop at 11:10 a.m.

The Torrance bus was a Gillig. About 8 passengers rode the short segment of the line we took. Our main object was connecting at Crenshaw and Torrance Blvd with the workhorse of the Torrance system: line #3. By the way, Torrance now has route maps at major bus stops (much like Santa Monica and Culver City).

At 11:25 we boarded Torrance line #3 (another Gillig) and rode it to the Long Beach Transit Mall where it terminates. This line has extremely healthy ridership. At Harbor/UCLA Medical Center there were 6 boardings. At PCH/Wilmington 12 boarded, and 7 boarded at PCH/Avalon. I counted 19 passengers when we were at Terminal Island.

In Long Beach our itinerary had us take a lunch break at PCH/Ximeno via Long Beach line #172 and then continuing to Norwalk Green Line station. The party decided Pine Street near the Transit Mall was a more appealing location to dine at.

Armando worked out our alternative plans so we could still connect with Norwalk Transit as in the original itinerary. We caught Long Beach line 173 at 1:35 p.m. It quickly became apparent the bus was running extremely behind schedule. And heavy ridership while in the business district just made it slower. 14 passengers boarded at Pacific/8th and 15 got on at PCH/Long Beach Blvd. Needless to say the New Flyer low floor bus has a standing load during this part of the route. Ridership outside downtown was much lower. But the #173 has a convoluted route and the driver seemed to not be trying to recover down time. It was clear we were not going to make our connection with Norwalk Transit. At 3:03 p.m. we arrived at Norwalk Green Line station.

After a brief huddle it was decided to defer exploration of the Norwalk/Montbello/Santa Monica/Culver City systems for another trip. We boarded the Green Line and began to disperse.

It was educational to explore service operated by some of the smaller operators, whose role in our regional system will be only more critical in the coming years. My thanks to everyone who participated and to Chris Ledermuller for planning it.

Train Riders Association of California is having its annual meeting Saturday Nov. 6 at the Santa Ana Transportation Center (1000 Santa Ana Blvd) with presentations on various rail issues in California. Cost (including lunch) is \$50 for TRAC members and \$60 for non-members (after Oct. 22 these costs will increase \$10). Checks payable to "California Rail Foundation" can be sent to: 9216 J St. Suite 612, Sacramento CA 95814.

Mark your calendars: Fullerton Railroad Days is slated to occur the weekend of May 6-7, 2000. We plan to have a booth there again.

Californians for High Speed Passenger Rail (<http://www.speedtrain.org>) is a new organization promoting the development of a statewide system of very high speed rail. John Shields, former Executive Director of TRAC, is CEO and can be reached at 236 W. East Ave. PMB 310 Chico CA 95926-7281 or (530) 893-3961 or speedtrn@cmc.net

<http://www.monorails.org/tMspages/LA1963.html> provides information on the 1963 Alweg Monorail proposal for Los Angeles.

The highly regarded newsletter California Planning & Development Report now has a website including a few articles for viewing: <http://www.cp-dr.com>

The historical collection of books, schedules and magazines on trains and streetcars in the U.S. amassed by the late Edwin Klasky is being disposed in a mail auction. To obtain a catalog contact: Laura and Anthony Stratman, 8607 Larry Del Drive, St. Louis Missouri 63123-2229.

The Pacific Railroad Society is undertaking the restoration of the former Union Pacific Pullman Car National Embassy for display at its museum in San Dimas. Contributions to aid this effort are welcomed (and tax deductible): 777 E. Valley Blvd., #70, Alhambra CA 91801.

For a free bumper sticker "Drive Now, Talk Later" (part of the NPR Car Talk program campaign against using cell phones while driving) send a business sized self addressed stamped envelope to: Bumper Stick, Car Talk Plaza, Box 3500 Harvard Square, Cambridge MA 02238.

We apologize to member Anthony Curzi for mis-spelling his name in the last newsletter.

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. ■

GLENDALE STATION *Charles P. Hobbs*

On September 15, 1999, the long-awaited opening of the Glendale Station took place ... or did it?

Actually, construction began in late 1997 on new platforms, bus loading areas and parking at the Glendale Amtrak/MetroLink station. Most of these areas had been completed by last August at least.

The station building itself, which was built by the Southern Pacific in 1924 and bought by the City of Glendale in 1989, was also restored as part of this \$8.1 million dollar project.

Although part of the station is now in use by Greyhound as a ticket office, Amtrak has not returned its ticket office to the station. In fact, the station waiting room is currently not open to the public at all, except during special events.

It remains to be seen whether Amtrak will ever staff the station again, since MetroLink is considering new ticket machines that can sell both Amtrak and MetroLink tickets. ■