

TRANSIT UPDATES

A new transit plaza is to be built at the Grand Avenue Blue Line station, across the street from Trade Tech College. This facility, which will accommodate several bus routes, is funded by Federal funds (secured by Congressman Xavier Bercerra) as well as local funds.

The new Palmdale Transportation Center will open April 25. This center will serve all Antelope Valley Line Metrolink trains as well as AVTA local and commuter buses. (In the future, the statewide High Speed Rail project may also stop here)

Other Metrolink changes on April 25 include the cancellation of the early morning commuter services between San Bernardino and Montclair (trains #350,351,352 and 353).

New Long Beach Transit fares, effective July 1:

Regular (90-cents) and senior/disabled fares (45-cents) will remain the same. Local transfers will be eliminated and replaced with a day pass (\$2.50/\$1.50). Interagency transfers will cost 50-cents for all riders.

Student cash fares will be eliminated (e.g. same as regular fares). Regular, student, and senior/disabled passes will cost \$50, \$31 and \$19, respectively.

Aquabus water taxi fares will stay at \$1, but fares for the Aqualink boat will rise from \$2 to \$3.

The gas line bringing CNG fuel to Ventura County has been fixed, so SCAT buses are running normally, and all the borrowed OCTA, Foothill, and Santa Barbara buses have been sent home.

A number of changes to MTA bus routes

are proposed for June. The Central/Westside, San Fernando Valley, and South Bay sectors have already held several public meetings on their proposed changes.

- Route #14 (Beverly Bl) will have its frequency reduced somewhat, as a new peak-hour only Rapid Bus (#714) will be implemented over the route.
- #58 (Alameda Bl) would be cancelled due to low ridership
- #115 (Manchester-Firestone) will be straightlined away from the Loyola Marymount campus (except for a few school trippers)
- #154 (Tampa) will be rerouted out of Porter Ranch and into Ventura/Reseda Bl. Tampa Bl will be served by a rerouted #243.
- #156 will be shortened to run between Santa Monica/Highland and Van Nuys/Burbank, to reduce service duplication.
- #161 (Canoga Park-1000 Oaks) would be shortened slightly on the east end (ending at the new Warner Center Transit Center rather than at Vanowen/Owensmouth)
- #168 (Lassen) would run peak hours only, between Chatsworth Metrolink and Laurel Cyn (not Arleta)
- #202 (Willowbrook-Compton-Wilmington), #211 (Prarie Ave) and #215 (Inglewood Ave) will run peak hours only
- #207 (Western) will terminate at Imperial Highway. On the north end, certain trips will interline with #204 (Vermont)
- Palos Verdes based lines #225 and #226 will be operated by the local Palos Verdes Peninsula Transit Authority. (Six ex-Foothill buses have been obtained for these routes)
- #243 would become a two-way loop route serving Winnetka and Tampa, but without service to Northridge Metrolink
- #245 would also become a two-way loop serving Topanga Cyn and Desoto.

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BULLETIN BOARD

At our April 9th meeting beginning at 2:15 p.m. we will hold a forum on Public Transportation and the Race for Los Angeles Mayor. Both candidates have been invited to speak and answer questions although due to schedule conflicts surrogates may attend in their place. Our members may wish at the meeting to endorse one of the candidates.

We will also discuss our booth at Fullerton Railroad Days [May 7-8], adjacent to the Fullerton Railroad Station. Admission is free. Further details: <http://www.scrmf.org/rrdays/> or 714-278-0648.

We hope at the April meeting to revisit the proposal to revise the bylaws by deleting section 3.3 (a redundant description of the membership of the Executive Committee) and revise section 3.4.5 to add "plus the Newsletter Editor and Emeritus President as ex-officios" to the description of the Executive Committee.

At our May 14 meeting Ms. Nancy Michali of MTA will provide a status report on Metro Connections.

The spring study tour will be on Saturday May 21 and consist of an exploration of

MTA contracted service. Lionel Jones has volunteered to be the trip planner. Rendezvous place and time will be announced in the May newsletter.

Reminder-the National Association of Railroad Passengers Region XII Annual Report is being held Saturday April 9, 2005 from 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at The Rail Restaurant, 110 East Commonwealth Ave. (near the Fullerton Amtrak Station). Cost at the door is \$30, lunch included. Further information: (951) 787-8350.

The 3rd Annual Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative Community Forum will be held Saturday, May 21, from 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at the USC Davidson Conference Center located at the corner of S. Figueroa and Jefferson. Attendance is free; register at <http://www.lani.org> or call (213) 627-1822 ext.20. Topics include fundraising and community oriented development.

Save the date: the Foothill Transit annual meeting will be held Wednesday May 4.

Our members have decided to become sponsors of the Light Rail Now website [<http://www.lightrailnow.org/>] in hopes of raising our visibility. This entails an annual cost of \$120, which may be raised via sale of transit nick-nacks at meetings. ■

MTA management earlier this year informed the service sectors each would have to make cuts in local service to free up service hours to be reallocated to operate the new Orange Line. Quite simply MTA has to sacrifice some service to free up monies to operate the new busway. The Gateway sector responded by informing MTA management that they could not see why their patrons should lose service for the benefit of people elsewhere. This standoff should make the April 14 Gateway Service Sector Governance Council meeting interesting. I have been told MTA Deputy CEO John Catoe plans to attend and inform the Council in person that they must make the cuts.

My thanks to the members who filled out the Metro Connections evaluation sheet I distributed at the March 12 SO.CA.TA meeting. Derek Chernow, Executive Director of Odyssey which is coordinating the outreach effort left a voice mail message expressing appreciation for our response.

Also at the March 12 meeting Bart Reed shared with us chatter about the troubles the Chicago Transit Agency is having with the new articulated buses they are getting from NABI. A March 13 Chicago Tribune story ("Extra-long Buses Come with Big Flaws, CTA says") details the travails and also notes NABI's claim that the lessons learned from this debacle "...will benefit commuters in Los Angeles, which is buying an improved version of the NABI bus." That's right, this is a reference to the much ballyhooed Metro Liner articulated buses MTA is about to start taking delivery of. Should I say hold your breath and hope for the best?

Another object of interest at the March meeting was a current copy of the Bus Riders Union new service plan that Director Armando Avalos brought. Turns out it is the same impractical freeway based multi-billion dollar plan they trotted out years ago to fanfare and quick oblivion. Have they no new ideas?

Here he goes again! Congressman Henry Waxman talks out of all sides of his mouth in the March 4 L.A. Weekly ("Red Line to Somewhere") [<http://www.laweekly.com/ink/05/15/news-pelisek.php>]. He keeps asserting that any subway extension is a local issue while dodging any responsibility for meddling in local affairs by passing federal legislation that blocks the extension. What chutzpah!

Why does the Mayor of L.A. matter? Former mayoral candidate Michael Woo in an interview in the March 3 L.A.CityBeat [<http://www.lacitybeat.com/article.php?id=1754&IssueNum=91>] I think explained part of the significance: "*How do we go about addressing the resistance to mass transit?*"

The actual power of a Los Angeles mayor is really the bully pulpit. Although the recent charter reform did give the mayor of L.A. some additional power, it's not like Mayor Daley in Chicago or Mayor Bloomberg in New York, in terms of the actual power to make things happen. But in Los Angeles, there's real potential for the mayor of L.A. to be a media star, and to use the media as a way of putting support together for issues."

CityBeat also ran a great article by Chip Jacobs in its March 10 issue ("Money Train")

[<http://www.lacitybeat.com/article.php?id=1776&IssueNum=92>] on the fundraising Congressman Ishtook of Oklahoma did in L.A. when he was a key player in whether the Gold Line eastern extension could get federal funds. The one irony missed by the piece is even after the usual local suspects filled his coffers Ishtook came close to giving thumbs down to the project. Thankfully Ishtook has now been shunted aside by the congressional leadership after he overplayed his hand with recent attempts to punish fellow Republicans for signing a letter supporting Amtrak. Couldn't have happened to a nicer fella.

The April 3 Daily Breeze article "Torrance May Limit Subsidies for Senior Citizens" discusses how Carson and Torrance are struggling with the spiraling cost of paratransit. With an aging population this is an issue that is only going to get bigger and more difficult to resolve, mark my words...

On April 15 Mayors from the Long Beach/SE County sector will vote at a 9 a.m. meeting at Bellflower City Hall, 16600 Civic Center Drive, selecting a successor to Beatrice Proo on the MTA Board. Should be interesting to see how this interaction of local and regional politics plays out.

Roger Christensen tells me regarding the March 24 MTA Board meeting "I also noticed that sprinkled throughout the meeting were a growing chorus of complaints from the public about Rapid Bus service and how it is degrading local service - par-

ticularly on Fairfax." Which isn't surprising as MTA is more and more having to downscale Rapid Bus due to tight finances.

Rumor of the month: the Southern California Association of Governments may disband its Maglev Task Force, handing the issue off to the Plans & Programs Technical Advisory Committee that I am a member of. Guess the gravy train and days of delusion are drawing to a close.

In explaining why he didn't seek reappointment to the MTA San Fernando Valley Service Sector Governance Council David Fleming in the March 25 Daily News ("Fleming off Valley MTA advisers") is described as disappointed the governance council had no control over the budget, preventing members from making broader changes to bus operations. Excuse me, what broad changes does Fleming have in mind? Far as I know he has never made a specific proposal. Which I think proves that Fleming and the other Valley bigwigs were doing a power play this past decade when whining about inadequate transportation. Once the discussion had become something as mundane as improving bus service the bigshots quickly became AWOL. What a surprise.

I'll conclude by noting the recent retirement of Robert Henry, who oversaw the Port of L.A.'s Red Car revival, and wish him the best. ■

FOOTHILL EXPLORATION EXCURSION Dana Gabbard

For our fall study tour we had decided to do an exploration of the Foothill Transit system, as a follow-up to our summer late-night trip which had explored late-night connectivity between Foothill routes 187 and 480. Saturday Oct. 16, 2004 was the date settled on for the trip. At 10 a.m. at Wilshire/Flower I boarded the designated Foothill route 480 eastbound trip, operated with bus #F1167 a low floor with 8 passengers (all ride counts exclude trip participants). As we proceeded thru downtown Los Angeles the bus began filling up. Soon Paul Castillo and Carlos Osuna joined the trip, followed shortly thereafter by Armando Avalos and Lionel Jones.

At El Monte station we caught eastbound Foothill route 482, an Orion high floor #1331 with 12 passengers. The first part of the trip was freeway running on the I-10 and I-605 (the latter of which was gridlocked). We passed Nationwide Auction whose offerings included a propane truck, fire engines and an ambulance. As we continued on surface streets we passed a strip mall, an industrial park, than a yard sale (which seem all the rage these days in suburbia) and a residential section marked by upscale walled communities before we arrived at the Puente Hills mall.

At the mall we caught Foothill rt.289, which operates on a two hour headway on weekends. It was #900, a Gillig Phantom model with Daniel G., Master Driver, as the operator (per the nameplate above the front windshield). We passed Pete Schabaram Park, named for the politician who helped foster the creation of the Foothill zone. This was followed by yet more malls

and a horse trail. We started with zero passengers and slowly built to 7 riders by the time we arrived at Temple Ave./S. Campus Drive in Pomona. Here we caught MTA rt.484 to Cal Poly Pomona. The bus was on detour, going along La Puente Road passing Walnut High School.

Cal Poly Pomona is surrounded by lots of open space, some of which is used for its agricultural programs. We hopped off at the current interchange for buses serving the campus area, which turned out to be adjacent to a pumpkin patch which was full of parents and their offspring picking pumpkins to purchase for Halloween. There was also, across the street in a parking lot, a carnival to add to the festive air of the event. We stood on a strip of dirt along the street next to a cement-lined flood control channel which had a thin stream of water choked with mossy growth. Not a nice place to wait for a bus.

After an interminable wait we boarded Foothill route 193 eastbound, an Orion #1336 with zero passengers. We went along with nobody boarding thru suburbia, past a trailer court and carniceria (Latino market) and then a business district before arriving at Pomona TransCenter.

At the Transcenter we caught westbound Foothill rt.195, a Gillig Advantage #1100. The 195 has the same start/end points as the 193 (Valley Bl/Humane Way and the TransCenter) but while the 193 runs along 9th Street and Mission the 195 runs along Reservoir, Rio Rancho and Village Loop. And evidently that makes all the difference as to ridership because while the 193 we

rode ran empty for the entire route the 195 started with 5 passengers and then had 4 boarding at Holt/Garey. The bus ran through an area that seemed humble but proud, filling up as it made its way to the local Wal-Mart. We passed thru the DeVry industrial park at the end of the route, then continued interlined as Foothill rt.190 (passing one of those blown up bouncing rooms in a front yard that you often see parents rent for kid birthday parties). We swung thru the Fairplex Park & Ride (but no one boarded there) but 6 boarded at Arrow/Towne (evidently transferring from connecting Foothill rt.292). And before we knew it we were at the Claremont TransCenter.

Our last bus of the study tour was a west-bound Foothill rt.492, an Orion #1308 with 4 passengers. More passengers boarded as we ran thru the Montclair Plaza area. We then passed the Omnitrans yard. And yet more passengers boarded as we ran along

Bonita then Arrow Highway. Some of us began talking about food as we looked at the upscale neighborhood we were going thru. At one point a gentleman dressed as a nutcracker boarded (maybe going to a costume party?). We continued thru a business district (although at one point a mobile home park was spotted). At Arrow and Azusa Ave. we had 7 board and 8 deboard (evidently because this is where the route connects with Foothill rt.280). Continuing on we passed the Irwindale Speedway and finally arrived at the El Monte station and the end of our tour.

To my mind the trip proved the value of connectivity - connecting bus routes and TransCenters. And (no surprise) we found it is nicer to wait for a bus at a location with amenities (benches, shelters) than a bare strip of dirt. ■



Foothill Transit at Puente Hills Mall (left) and along Route 66 in Glendora. C. P. Hobbs photo

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Chris Flescher recently attended an international making cities livable conference in Carmel. Also he recent was appointed an associate director of Railpac and has been doing volunteer work for Monterey County Landwatch.

Ken Ruben attended the March 23 MTA Citizen Advisory Council meeting and March 24 MTA Board Meeting. He also testified before the March 23 meeting of the Transportation Committee of the LA Cit Council with councilmembers Antonio Villaragosa and Tom Labonge on present as he spoke on behalf of SO.CA.TA in favor of the Perry-Labonge motion in regards Amtrak funding; and on April 2 Ruben rode the APTA Special Metrolink train to San Pedro representing SO.CA.TA and Lets Talk Trains; in the latter capacity he provided an introduction to Art Brown, Metrolink Board Chair, to the Lets Talk Trains audience before Brown was interviewed by host Richard Hamilton.

Attending the March 10 MTA Gateway Service Sector Governance Council meeting were Mark Strickert, Hank Fung and Chaffee Yiu.

Thomas Rubin was quoted in the March 22 L.A. Times article "Pushing of Trains Gets New Scrutiny".

Bart Reed of the Transit Coalition month after month carries a heavy schedule of attending public meetings while also often arranging briefings of local elected officials and/or their staffs. For example in February besides presenting testimony at the March 2 MTA San Fernando Valley Service Sector Governance Council public hearing Mr. Reed also attended: the Feb. 11 and Feb. 25 Metrolink Board meetings, the Feb. 15 Venice High School/Mar Vista Neighborhood Council forum, the Feb. 16 SCAG Maglev task force meeting, and various MTA Board committee meetings Feb. 16-17. This along with attending the Rail User Network meeting in New York. ■

(Transit Updates, from pg. 2)

- The portion of #245 serving Mullholland and Valley Circle will be served by a new route #645, running weekdays only (originally, this portion of the route was to be left unserved)
- #305 (stair-step line between Rosa Parks Station and UCLA) will run every 30 minutes peak, 40-60 minutes off-peak, including weekends)
- #317 (Fairfax Ave Limited) would be replaced by a new Rapid Bus (#717). This Rapid Bus route would provide all-day service on Fairfax to Hollywood
- In December 2005, Rapid #711 (Florence) will be extended into LAX, and new Rapid #757 (Western Bl) implemented.

The following routes were unmodified due to public demand:

- #150 (Ventura Bl) - will keep operating via Topanga to Sherman Way.
- #183 route through Burbank and Glendale
- #205 (Wilmington-San Pedro)
- #234 along Sepulveda (proposed Rapid Bus #734 postponed at least a year)
- #236 route along Glenoaks into Sylmar Metrolink
- #230 Laurel Cyn Bl.
- #418 (Roscoe Limited), although it will be routed via Lankershim rather than Laurel Cyn. Will be renumbered #353
- #426 (Sherman Way Limited). Will be renumbered #363. In the future, may be straightlined via Sherman Way.
- #439 (LA-Culver City-LAX-El Segundo)
- #442 (LA-Inglewood-Hawthorne) ■

ORANGE LINE CONSTRUCTION Charles P. Hobbs



Van Nuys BI, looking northeast



At Van Nuys BI, looking east



* At Van Nuys BI, looking east



West San Fernando Valley (near Tampa?)

SBX LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE Edmund Buckley

Omnitrans recently held "The sbX Leadership Conference" to hear from policy makers, community leaders, agency staffs and transit riders about their ideas on the proposed sbX system (a Rapid Bus type system) and to discuss operational and design alternatives for the first corridor, E Street between Cal State San Bernardino, downtown San Bernardino and Loma Linda.

Following a panel discussion and an overview of the E Street Corridor Plan to date, attendees discussed and offered ideas on three topics in small groups.

The three topics included - The System Wide Corridor Plan, E Street Corridor Options and Stations and Transit Oriented Developments.

Following the conference, there was a bus tour of a portion of the proposed alignment, between San Bernardino and Loma Linda, aboard a yet-to-be-delivered 45 foot NABI Compo Bus (LACMTA 8058). NABI was one of the corporate sponsors of the conference.

The proposed sbX system will consist of seven corridors to be phased in -- E Street, Foothill East, Holt Blvd/4th, Central/Mountain/Euclid, San Bernardino Avenue, Foothill West and Grand/Edison.

Edmund Buckley attended the conference representing SOCATA.

