

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CA.TA Meeting Notes

At our Dec. 10 meeting the following were elected as officers and directors for 2006:

- Directors-at-Large: Armando Avalos, Hank Fung, and Ken Ruben
- Treasurer: Craig Barnes
- Recording Secretary: Edmund Buckley
- Executive Secretary: Dana Gabbard
- Vice President: Lionel Jones
- President: Mark Strickert

At the December SO.CA.TA meeting, we had an open forum on what our group should be working on in the coming year. Topics brought up:

- Fight Renewal of Consent Decree
- Overcome BRU
- Extensions of Green Line to LAX, Norwalk Metrolink
- Metrolink to LAX
- MTA Long Range Plan
- Work on the new Mayor
- Advocate for all transit riders
- Sierra Club Transportation Committee [1st Thursdays...see below]
- Fee on freight containers at ports
- Electrification of freight rail lines
- Grants for SO.CA.TA projects

The annual holiday banquet was held at the Original Pantry Cafe and was a great success. Our thanks to Dana Gabbard and Woody Rosner for coordinating, John Ulloth for transporting the delicious Phoenix Bakery strawberry cake, Lionel Jones for assisting with the door prize drawings, Samuel James for his annual \$2 trivia challenge and Craig Barnes for the sensational slide show of bus and train photos. Trinkets and door prizes were donated by Culver CityBus, Omnitrans, Torrance Transit, Norwalk Transit, MTA, Ven-

tura County Transportation Commission, Carson Circuit, RTA, Golden Empire Transit (GET), Caltrans and Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus plus Dana Gabbard, Lionel Jones, Frank Roldan, Steve Crosmer, Dennis Ladd and Jerome Weymouth.

To celebrate the launch of the South Whittier Shuttle, a free Community Transit Fair is being held on Saturday, January 21, beginning at 9:00 AM at the Community Resource Center, 10750 Laurel Avenue. SO.CA.TA will be in attendance, to help spread the word of public transit to the greater South Whittier metropolitan area. There will be fun and activities for all ages. Residents are also encouraged to participate in the County's survey on South Whittier community transportation issues, coming in spring 2006. This location is near Florence and Carmenita, and is served by the full-route MTA Line 111s running on Telegraph to Whittwood Mall.

The shuttle will run two new, propane-powered buses, and will serve 72 stops, from Whittwood in the east to Sorensen Park to the west. The two-way shuttle service will connect to various transit lines run by the MTA, the cities of Montebello, Norwalk, and Santa Fe Springs, and the county-operated Los Nietos Shuttle. It will operate weekdays from 8 AM to 6 PM, and on Saturdays from 9 AM to 5 PM. Riders can try it free from January 21st to 28th, after which fares will be 25¢, with seniors (60 and older), disabled, and children under 5 free. The service will also accept all valid EZ and MTA passes, including monthly, bi-monthly, weekly and day passes. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

The Southern California Association of Governments has issued a booklet *Your Guide to SCAG*. To request a printed copy call SCAG at (213) 236-1861 or DOVE@scag.ca.gov *Moving Southern California* is the new

monthly newsletter of the Transit Coalition, providing an overview of current news regarding rail and MTA bus service. Subscriptions are included in Coalition memberships -- \$75 (\$20 fixed income) payable to SEE/ The Transit Coalition, P.O. Box 567 San Fernando CA 91341-0567; <http://thetransitcoalition.us/index.htm>


The Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension offers group tours of the portion of the Metro Gold Line currently in operation (from East Pasadena to Union Station in downtown Los Angeles). Tours are offered the first Thursday and Saturday of each month, two hours in length and include overviews of light-rail transit, public art and transit-oriented development projects. Reservations are required at least 48 hours in advance. To sign up, call (626) 471-9050.

The Sierra Club Angeles Chapter (for L.A. and Orange Counties) Transportation Committee has moved its meeting date to the first Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. This is held at the chapter's offices, 3435 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 320 in Los Angeles (one block east of Wilshire/Normandie Red Line station). (213) 387-4287, [\[tion@angeles.sierraclub.org\]\(mailto:tion@angeles.sierraclub.org\).](mailto:transporta-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Friday, February 17th the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) is hosting a one-day workshop *Mobility for All, Mobility for Life*, focused on expanding transportation services for transportation disadvantaged populations. This will be at the Pasadena Hilton (168 S. Los Robles Ave.) from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Registration is free. For more information and to register: <http://www.ctaa.org/ntrc/mobilityforall.asp> or (800) 891-0590 x729

The RailPAC informal monthly meetings will be held at 1:00 PM on the 1st Saturday. March 4th will be in the L.A. Union Station waiting room, and April 1st at Fullerton Amtrak station.

The Faster Freight - Cleaner Air 2006 conference is being held Jan. 30 - Feb. 1 at Long Beach Convention Center. Further details at <http://www.ffca2006.com>.

Retired Greyhound driver Grady Hall Morgan has self-published his memoirs -- details at (209) 745-7175 or <http://www.greyhounddriver.com> 



2006 is already a busy year for us transit activists!

2006 ACTION PLANS

At the December '05 SO.CA.TA meeting, we had an open forum on what our group should be working on in the coming year. The topics brought up:

- **Fight Renewal of Consent Decree** – we need to point out that the Bus Riders Union (BRU) legal actions against MTA are actually hurting public transit in Los Angeles County, as their effect on overcrowding have been negligible on core routes, yet they are hurting the very riders they claim to help by causing removal of service from workers and from employment areas outside central Los Angeles, and by deliberately limiting growth of efficient alternatives to buses
- **Overcome BRU** – after moving here from a less Balkanized, slightly more organized transit place in 1999, it did not take me long to get the impression that the BRU knows little about public transit, and cares very little more. Rather than take them on directly, we need to show other advocacy groups, including the Sierra Club and KPDK radio, that SO.CA.TA has experienced transit people, who really want to help improve what we have in Southern California
- **Advocate for all transit riders** – fits in with the previous topic. For instance, built and managed wisely, rail transit is faster, has a higher passenger capacity, and can be cheaper to operate than even “bus rapid transit” (BRT). BRT has its place, but we didn’t need all the standing-load MTA 720’s to show the Wilshire Corridor desperately needs an extended Red Line. For people who prefer a single-occupancy vehicle,

we can encourage improvement of bicycle facilities

- **Active Involvement in the Sierra Club Transportation Committee** – They meet on the 1st Thursday of each month, at Sierra Club Angeles Chapter office in Los Angeles. People already involved think it will help SO.CA.TA to take a more active role in this Sierra Club committee
- **Grants for SO.CA.TA projects** – we need to expand our outreach and lobbying efforts, but we can’t do it on just dues. It looks like we have a volunteer to help with proposals, but this will have to be a group effort to secure grants, and to work on the projects they would fund
- **Work on the new Mayor** – early indications show he could support alternatives to more pavement
- **Extensions of Green Line to LAX, Norwalk Metrolink** – fill in the missing links!
- **Metrolink to LAX**
- **Input for MTA’s Long Range Plan**
- **Fee on freight containers at ports**
- **Electrification of freight rail lines**

We also need to build up our various committees. For one thing, the monthly general membership meetings need to be more productive. Hagglng over details and working on plans is best done in specialized committees, then presented in the newsletter and at the general meeting. I will have sign-up sheets prepared for the next couple meetings. You can also sign-up by sending your name, contact information (mailing address, e-mail, and phone), and committees/areas of interest to: Mark Strickert, 9050 Carron Drive # 273, Pico Rivera CA

90660, or busnrail @ yahoo.com.

Among the committees for 2006 are:

- * **Detours**
- * **Outreach**
- * **Public and Legislative Affairs**
- * **Transit Guide**
- * **MTA Service Sectors**
- * **Metro Connections**
- * **Service Changes**

The latter three could conceivably be under one committee, since the MTA "Metro Connections" is being used as an excuse by the sectors to hack away at MTA service, and many of the MTA change proposals are presented at the sector level. We need to get on this right away, as we already know the MTA's Westside/Central sector is hell-bent on going ahead with many of the route cancellations and amputations we had fought so hard to stop last summer, such as removing Lines 4 and 20 from the City of Santa Monica, and eliminating the 21 and 220. Worse, they may try to avoid public hearings, claiming that they already took place last year. Speak up!

METRO DISCONNECT

Oh yes, despite rumors to the contrary, the "Metro Connections" beast is still alive! A recent posting in a quiet corner of the MTA website has this timetable, discovered by Hank Fung:

January - February 2006

- Consultant kick off meeting with the Sectors on developing the composite plan.
- Sectors develop initial proposals for local service plans (February).

• Meet with LADOT on Downtown service.
March - April 2006

- Workshops with the sectors to develop composite network plan.

April - May 2006

- Stakeholder review of draft network plan May-September 2007
- Metro Board adopts Network Master Plan
- Work on Resource Master Plan begins
- Develop a Metro Connections Pilot Program for implementation in December 2006. October-January 2007
- Finalize resource plan - schedules, equipment needs etc.

Other Key Elements and Milestones:

- November 2006 - Capital/Facilities
- December 2006 - Implement Pilot Program
- 2006-07 - Marketing/Communications
- April 2007 - Implementation Plan
- June 2007 to 2009 - Full Implementation

A 3-HOUR DETOUR

In other committee news, Edmund Buckley plans to bring copies of the "examples of available detour information" we have gathered, to give out to anyone who wishes to join the Detour Committee. He will also ask those individuals to prepare a list of "their issues" to discuss in February.

PICTURE IF YOU WILL

Another action item, per Dana Gabbard: We are concerned to learn the L.A. Dept. of Transportation includes among their rules of conduct for transit users:

#11 - Videotaping or taking photographs on any LADOT vehicle is prohibited without the prior consent of LADOT.

We urge e-mailing messages protesting this rule to L.A. Councilmember Wendy Greuel, Chair of the Council Transportation Committee: councilmember.greuel@lacity.org

UNTIL NEXT TIME

In the future, I intend to use this space to highlight committee work, and bring up topics needing letters and phone calls. Please also check the front page of the SO.CA.TA website (<http://www.socata.net>). 🚗

We now have parallel transportation funding proposals being floated in Sacramento-- the Perata bond, S.B. 1024 (refined over the past year) and the Governor's super plan. While the Governor has project lists and grandiose rhetoric Perata's bond doesn't specify projects, using instead established processes (STIP/etc.) to jumpstart stalled projects. Plus Perata has been vetting it with local officials and key stakeholders. If he is smart Schwarzenegger will hit the ground running by adopting Perata's handiwork as Phase I of his plan.

I finally got copies of the Booz Allen Hamilton proposals from last summer regarding L.A. County transportation funding. Guess what one of their proposed strategies was? MTA dumping ("restructuring") 8 to 35 of its routes onto the munis. Unsurprisingly this evidently turned out to be a non-starter....

As someone who has endured many a bumpy ride on the stretch of Wilshire through Hancock Park I am happy to note Los Angeles has allocated \$10 million to repave Wilshire's curb lanes between Western and La Brea or Fairfax within the next 24 months. Hooray!

The Southern California Leadership Council is a group of key business and community leaders and the four former California Governors dedicated to providing a single public policy voice for regional solutions recently formed with the aid of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC). Maybe this is just the kind of group of heavy hitters we need to get things moving!

Get a load of the map on the back page of the MTA 2006 Long Range Plan perform-

ance measure report presented to several Board Committees in November ("Other Projects for Possible Consideration") -- the numerous possible rail lines make it look like a plate of spaghetti. Or the map in the infamous 1992 plan.

Quote of the month: "The Sierra Club is an organization that has rules, policies and guidelines galore. Nobody teaches you that. You make a mistake, then you get a call, then you go, oh, where do I find that?" (activist Susana Reyes on the complicated internal politics of the Sierra Club in the Dec. issue of the *Southern Sierran*, newsletter of the Angeles Chapter).

On December 8 L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa made some bold comments, especially before an audience in the San Fernando Valley: "We need to have smart growth, but we also have to change our way of thinking. A lot of us grew up with the idea of a three-bedroom house with large backyards and front lots. We have to recognize that is not going to be possible. We have to look at other cities - New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Boston. We need to have more mixed-use development along transit corridors. We are going to start this in downtown, but we want to work with you to bring it throughout the city. I think North Hollywood can become a model for the city, for the nation, on smart growth.

Had a chance at the local Sierra Club Transportation Committee meeting to hear Mayor Villaraigosa's point person on LAX Jim Bickhart discuss the recent settlement that allows the so called "green light" projects to go forward. This evoked memories of a conversation I had a few days before with member Perias Pillay in which he related his

experiences riding the new people mover at Dallas-Ft. Worth airport, dubbed Skylink [<http://www.dfwairport.com/cdp/skylink/>]. DFW states "Skylink's average wait time is 2 minutes and average passenger ride time is 5 minutes." Maybe this technology could link whatever LAX station the Green Line eventually serves with the terminals (so we avoid the awkwardness of the BART SFO connection)?

Why is the Advanced Transit Vehicle Consortium paying Dr. Arieli \$230 per hour (for a maximum of \$200,000 a year?) Credibility, if I read the report praising how he has been able to elicit responses from the industry to MTA solicitations (ATVC Nov. 21 meeting, agenda item #4).

Salarywatch: Metrolink CEO David Solow \$204,970 retroactive to July 1, 2005; San Bernardino Associated Government Executive Director \$175,000 for new Director Mark Anthony Grasso.

Burbank Transportation Commissioner thinks extending the Orange Line to Bob Hope Airport is a great idea. I had a letter in the Dec. 27 *Daily News* ("Just Shelve It") pointing out problems with the concept, including whether 60 foot buses could negotiate the constrained street grid surrounding the airport. In retrospect I see a glimmer of a useable idea--a "flyaway" like dedicated express service (bi-directional every 30 minutes?) for folks in the western Valley to be transported via the Orange Line to the airport. That makes sense versus operating 60 foot vehicles 18 hours a day, 7 days a week on a frequent headway from Warner Center to the airport.

In the interest of fostering discussion we have posted on the front page of our website the letter Tom Rubin submitted to *Sierra Magazine* in response to the interview

with Jaime Lerner (the father of the Curitiba BRT system) in its Jan./Feb. issue. By no means adversarial, Rubin points out aspects of the Curitiba success story that often are glossed over.

In the January *Wheel Clicks*, newsletter of the Pacific Railroad Society, longtime advocate Tom Nelson ponders whether the OCTA proposed enhanced Orange County Metrolink service makes sense, in terms of demand or operationally (given capacity constraints). He also expresses doubts about the proposed commuter train linking Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. I appreciate that Nelson, while pro-rail, is willing to question whether a particular proposal makes sense.

Question of the month: why is the chief credential for MTA to hire consultant firm Gayland Moffat for upcoming labor negotiations their involvement in the 2000 negotiations? Those resulted in a standoff that only the intervention of Jesse Jackson averted from lasting indefinitely. For expertise like this we want to hire them for a half-million dollars?

Speaking of MTA labor relations, the three representatives of Amalgamated Transit Union local 1277 (representing MTA mechanics and service attendants plus all employees at RTA and Sunline) who spoke at the Dec. 14 MTA Citizens' Advisory Council made clear their displeasure at how they are treated by MTA management. Not reassuring with contract talks to commence in the next few months...

I'll conclude by noting Mr. Ken Saks of Santa Barbara recently lodged a complaint with the Federal Transit Administration Office of Civil Rights asserting he had been denied access to public transportation by

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TRANSIT UPDATES

PICO/RIMPAU TRANSIT CENTER MOVE

Effective Wednesday, January 11th, the Pico/Rimpau Terminal is moving one block west, to San Vicente Blvd. just south of Pico Blvd. This affects MTA lines 30, 31, 330, and 550, as well as Big Blue Bus lines 5, 7, Super 7, 12, and 13.

CULVER CITYBUS - A condensed version of a notice Ken Ruben passed along regarding their 1/9/06 changes:

Effective January 9th, 2006, Culver CityBus will modify lines 2 & 4 to improve on-time performance, and to offer passengers direct and more convenient access to the Fox Hills Mall Transit Center.

Line 2: Service will run directly to/from Fox Hills Mall Transit Center along Slauson Ave. from Jefferson Blvd. The loop around Fox Hills Mall and the service along Playa St. and Hannum Ave. will be discontinued.

Westbound service from Fox Hills Mall will commence 6 minutes later. New schedule maximizes connection between Line 2 and Line 3 for easy access to Corporate Pointe.

Line 4: Service will run along Playa St., Hannum Ave., and Slauson Ave. between Sepulveda Blvd. and the Fox Hills Mall Transit Center. The loop around Fox Hills Mall will be discontinued. Westbound service from West LA Transit Center will commence 5 minutes later. Eastbound service from Fox Hills Mall Transit Center will commence 4 minutes later.

All other changes originally proposed for January 9th, 2006 have been put on hold and are being considered for May, 2006.

MANHATTAN BEACH - from a report by JK Drummond:

By next summer Manhattan Beach may try one of three proposed new "trolley" or

bus routes with \$230,000 left in their proposition A funds. Most Prop A funds goes to dial-a-ride and MTA 439 replacement. Start-up cost estimated is \$160,000, mostly for two new vehicles, unless it is contracted out. Beach Cities Transit is interested. The yearly operating cost based on weekend and summer service would be \$100,000 to \$200,000 depending on which proposal is adopted. Free service is proposed. Additional funds could come from charging fares and/or general fund subsidies.

One route would be a figure eight with Manhattan Beach Blvd. at the center. Another would be between 2nd St. and Rosecrans [perhaps on PCH]. A third and most expensive would be a three-path, east - west route, which would require 3 buses.

The mayor wants community meetings with the staff and council going out to meet the public with a high level of outreach.

SOUTH WHITTIER SHUTTLE

See the "Bulletin Board" on page 2.

COMMUTER RAIL - Ken Ruben

Operation of Coaster commuter rail will be transferred to TransitAmerica on June 30, 2006, pending North County Transit District board approval of a five-year contract. TransitAmerica, a subsidiary of Herzog Transit Services, presented the low bid, ahead of Amtrak and Connex. Amtrak has operated the San Diego-to-Oceanside trains since Coaster service began in 1995.

Metrolink Orange County line commuter rail service will significantly expand by 2009, allowing for 30-minute weekday headways from 5 AM to midnight between Fullerton and Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo. Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) will increase funding as part of a countywide transportation package ap-

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TRANSIT UPDATES cont'd from pg. 8

proved by the board on November 28. As part of the service expansion, Metrolink will receive seven new locomotives and 59 rail cars, and stations along the line will also see improved parking and transit service. OCTA has essentially declared Metrolink the backbone of mass transit in the county, after the abandonment of the politically difficult CenterLine light rail project.

Other OCTA

Express Route 701 will begin serving Harbor Transitway stops from Rosecrans to 37th

St., and Route 721 will use all stops from Manchester north, effective with the March 2006 service changes. All other changes and additions to the OCTA express routes are on hold until at least June 2006.

Also in March, Route 30 (Orangethorpe/South St.) Sunday service will increase to match Saturday service, Route 38 (La Palma/Del Amo) will have 30-minute headways 10AM-4PM Saturdays, and Route 211 will be extended one stop to Seal Beach Leisure World, to improve connections. 🚌



WE WILL LIGHT THE WAY

New solar-powered LED lights are going up on bus stop posts all over OCTA land. 300 solar lights were placed in September and October, mostly on the Night Owl routes and other busy, late-running routes such as the 29, 38, and 53. This one is on EB 17th/farside Main in Santa Ana. More on the way.

Mark Strickert photo

PUBLIC & LEGISLATIVE cont'd from pg. 7

MTD in violation of ADA. Turns out Sakstried to board at a stop (in use by MTD prior to 1990) that isn't accessible to wheelchairs due to physical constraints of the location. Saks was told by the MTD driver he could board at an accessible stop approximately


one block away. Mr. Saks responded by holding onto the bus to prevent its departure. Saks finally released his hold and left the scene following the arrival of another MTD bus at the stop. Unsurprisingly FTA ruled that MTD had acted properly and didn't violate the ADA. 🚌

MEMBERS IN ACTION

David Davenport attended a "Regional Rail Plan" meeting sponsored by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and California - High-Speed Rail Authority (HRSA), held Nov. 30th in San Jose. The meeting also served as the scoping meeting for the HSRA's Bay Area to Central Valley High-Speed Train Program EIR/EIS.

Dana Gabbard, Charles Powell, and Ken Ruben attended the Citizens Advi-

sory Council Meeting on December 15. The meeting dealt mainly with the upcoming labor negotiations, with three members of the ATU Negotiating Committee giving their opinions on various aspects.

Roger Christensen was quoted in the Jan. 1 L.A. Times article "Rail Riders Stay on Track Despite Drop in Gas Prices" regarding burgeoning ridership on Metrolink: "It's hard to find a seat now. The trains are full or full-ish. Sometimes you have to stand." 

SECTOR REPORTS

Westside/Central Sector meetings for December and January – based on reports from Ken Ruben

At the December meeting, there was a report on Transit Accessible Pass (TAP) program. Joseph Dunn had some recommendations on MTA route matters but frankly I don't remember what they were.

In January, new governance council member Glenn Rosten was introduced. He replaces Stephanie Negriff, head of Big Blue Bus, who left the Council in December and became Chair of the California Transit Association. Pending MTA Board approval later this month, Jerard Wright and Elde Martinez will become council members as well, replacing Presley Burroughs and Carlos Collard. Presley showed up at the beginning of the meeting and was thanked for his service.

Aside from the usual reports, Rod Goldman made a report update on Metro Connections. There was a minor discussion about who would be in line for the next chair or vice-chair, but no apparent decision was made.

Roy Guadara commented on possible changes for June, which include ALL of the

items deferred last fall, such as eliminating the 220, removing the 20 from Santa Monica, canceling of the 21, implementing the 704 in place of the 304, etc. Guadara claimed that public hearings have already been held for those service cuts. Final recommendations will be brought in at the February meeting and a final vote on the recommendations will be made in March. According to Dana Gabbard, a public hearing should be held for the changes, and we will need members in strength for both the February and March meetings.

I commented on MTA goofs I saw last month, including a 717 in red Rapid colors but labeled as 317, and the first 534 I saw said "537" (it changed the next day).

San Fernando Valley Sector December meeting – based on a report from Ken Ruben

Mike Baron spoke on the timeliness of MTA timetable distribution both off and on MTA vehicles and wound up with extended time to talk due to a timing problem. My 2 minutes were spent on the Orange Line and the 156. Channel 11 videotaped a good part of the meeting and I got my "3 seconds of fame" mentioning crazy drivers. 