

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CA.TA MEETING NOTES

At the June 10th SO.CA.TA meeting, we will provide details on our June 17 tour of the Pacific Railroad Society Museum in San Dimas. This is being coordinated by Director Ken Ruben with assistance from Vice President Lionel Jones. In addition Ruben is at work finalizing arrangements to have Jeffrey Boberg of MTA be the speaker at our July 8 meeting. Mr. Boberg's topic will be customer surveying by the agency.

Some reminders:

- * to be added to our e-mail notice list contact the Executive Director at dgabard@hotmail.com
- * the front page of our website has informative notices and weblinks that are regularly updated
- * upon request we'll supply any member with the current version of our bylaws
- * let us know whenever you have a change of address

OTHER MEETINGS

The June meeting of the Metro Westside/Central Service Sector Governance Council will include a "Metro Connections" workshop. This will be Wednesday, June 14, 5 PM, at La Cienega Tennis Center, Sunset Room; 325 S. La Cienega Blvd.; Beverly Hills.




Our thanks to the members who helped staff our booth at Fullerton Railroad Days or dropped by to say hello: Armando Avalos, Craig Barnes, Ed Buckley, Dana Gabbard, James and Marilyn Gusky, Lionel Jones, Russ Jones, Kent Landfield, Andy Novak, Charles Powell, Kymberleigh Richards, Woody Ros-


ner, Ken Ruben, J.K. Russell, Dave Snowden, T.J. Stiller, Mark Strickert, and John Ulloth. We sold several Transit Guides, shared information and materials on a wide range of issues and interacted with interested attendees. Overall it was a great event and we look forward to returning for the 2007 edition!

ON TRACK is a quarterly publication of the Culver City Community Development Dept. to inform residents about the status of the Exposition Light Rail project. To get on the mailing list call (310) 253-5777 or view online at <http://www.culvercity.org>

Californians for High Speed Rail is a new organization devoted to advocating for the implementation of the proposed statewide bullet train system. For further information contact Daniel Krause, Executive Director at 105 San Jose Ave., San Francisco CA 94110, or (415) 826-1219.

Upcoming Community Design Workshops for the proposed San Gabriel Valley extension of the Metro Gold Line:

-  Wednesday, June 14, 6:30 - 8:30 PM., Monrovia Community Center, 119 W. Palm Ave.
-  Monday, June 19, 6:30 - 8:30 PM., Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden, Ayres Hall, 301 N. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia
-  Tuesday, June 27, 6:30 - 8:30 PM., Irwindale City Hall, Outer Council Chamber, 5050 N. Irwindale Ave.

Please check the meeting calendar (page 11). Send any corrections and additions to busnrail @ yahoo . com . 

TRANSIT UPDATES

CARSON CURCUIT

Per Margaret Hudson: Carson North/South shuttle will be extended to Artesia Transit Center, effective 6/19/06

FOOTHILL TRANSIT

Proposals for service changes, to take place in or by March, 2007:

- ☐ Line 189 – discontinue
- ☐ Lines 190 and 191 – reconfigure into one route, Line 197
- ☐ Lines 193 and 195 – reconfigure into one route, Line 196
- ☐ Line 283 – discontinue
- ☐ Line 480 – re-route as a local counterpart to proposed new “Silver Streak”
- ☐ Line 481 – discontinue
- ☐ Lines 482, 486, 488, 492 and 494 – changes related to “Silver Streak”
- ☐ Line 851 – changes to cover portions of cancelled Line 283
- ☐ Silver Streak – proposed new limited-stop route. At present, only announced stops are downtown Los Angeles (Grand/Olympic?), El Monte Bus Station, The Plaza at West Covina, Pomona TransCenter, and Montclair TransCenter.

Public Meetings

Wednesday, June 14th, 6:30 PM - Foothill Transit Administrative Offices, 100 N. Barranca Ave., Suite 100, West Covina
Wednesday, July 12th, 6:30 PM - San Dimas City Hall, Council Chambers, 245 E. Bonita Ave., San Dimas
Wednesday, July 26th, 6:30 PM - Pomona Library Conference Room, 625 S. Garey Ave., Pomona
Wednesday, August 9th, 6:30 PM - El Monte Station, Metro San Gabriel Valley Service Sector, 3369 Santa Anita Avenue, El Monte

Wednesday, August 16th, 6:30 PM - Joslyn Senior Center, 660 N. Mountain Ave., Claremont

Public Hearings

Saturday, July 15th, 10:00 PM - Foothill Transit Administrative Offices, 100 N. Barranca Ave., Suite 100, West Covina
Wednesday, August 23rd, 6:30 PM - San Dimas City Hall, Council Chambers, 245 E. Bonita Ave., San Dimas

Some maps and a few details are on the Foothill website, at <http://www.foothilltransit.org/EAlert/NewsDisplay.aspx?ID=248&type=news>

MTA

Effective June 25th:

- ☐ The two early morning Line 26 trips on Franklin are to be cancelled June 25, due to low ridership
- ☐ Rapids 717 and 780 will be combined, operating as Line 780 all the way from Pasadena to West LA Transit Center

NCTD – Philip Provencio

Following the Public Hearing on May 18, 2006, the Board directed staff to identify possible revisions to the proposed Service Plan for routes 315, 316 and 419. Staff has identified the following responses:

- ☐ Route 315 – do not proceed at this time with the switch of the last trip from Route 315 to Route 303
- ☐ Route 316 – propose 4 weekday and Saturday trips at 6:30 AM, 11:00 AM, 3:00 PM and 6:00 PM
- ☐ Route 419 – maintain proposal. To facilitate a connection between Route 309 and Route 344, move back Route 344's departure time from Carlsbad Village by 25 minutes from 5:45 AM to 5:20 AM

cont'd pg. 4 ☛

FULLERTON SENIOR CENTER EVENT

— JK Drummond

One Transit Guide sold, 33 signed in visitors, 1 prospective member, 2 women who told me they were "afraid to ride buses" -- that was my first SOCATA outreach.

It came about at the Fullerton Senior Center, which scheduled two "fairs" for senior citizens. The first was last Friday. It was a health fair. The second will be June 10th. It is to be a resource fair. I will be out of town but can someone volunteer to staff a table if we are still invited? It is from 9 until 2 and about 3 blocks from the Fullerton Transportation Center.

Last week the state insurance bureau and SOCATA were the least health related. But transportation is the number one health issue. Not diabetes, heart attack, asthma, sleep apnea, knee replacement, or something else. If seniors cannot get to their medical appointments, their health deteriorates.

We got a table, tablecloth, a chair and a sign. Since we and the insurance guy were sideways to a passage between two rooms I requested and got another sign. She gave me a sign-in sheet. Was it to assess our popularity? I dunno, but encourage folks to sign in.

Our Corresponding Secretary had mailed

me materials to give out or sell. Fortunately our president and I met on a train the day before as I was coming back from Orange (four days in Orange Co. last week for me) and promised some OCTA bus books. He did deliver them, but could only stay for a short while.

On Wednesday I had met an OCTA outreach woman who promised me bus books and maps. That meeting at UCI Medical's yearly senior outreach was the last I heard of her.

Anyhow even if much goes wrong we came out all right.

Lets try more outreach!!

Mark Strickert

Mr. Drummond was not kidding about the "afraid to ride the bus" people...I could only stay there 20 minutes, but both stopped at the table in that time. Was doubly fortuitous that I had crossed paths with Mr. Drummond at Norwalk the day before, as I had happened to remember I still had the bundle of OCTA bus books I'd forgotten to bring to the March SO.CA.TA meeting. Better that they wound up in the hands of riders and potential riders anyway.

Yes, More Outreach! The challenge, of course, is to find events that are appropriate, affordable, and can be attended by one or more SO.CA.TA members. 🚌

TRANSIT UPDATES cont'd from pg. 3

RTA

Riverside Transit Agency is proposing a realignment of Route 17 within Moreno Valley, and discontinuing all service west of

Moreno Valley Mall. Public hearings are scheduled for Thursday, May 18th at City of Moreno Valley Council Chambers, 14177 Frederick Street, from 2:00 to 3:00 PM and from 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM.. 🚌

I am still reflecting on the Feb. 11 appearance of former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis before the largest gathering to ever attend one of our events--nearly 40 people! It was a surprisingly lively presentation he gave; his obvious passion on urban issues explains his teaching classes in public policy at UCLA while wintering in L.A. And I was glad to see shortly thereafter *CityBeat* did an interview with him that captured his passion and intelligence. Such a shame we have few of this caliber in public life these days.

The April 14 issue of *Garment & Citizen* had an article titled "Bus Riders Union Says Talk of Fare Increase Points to Need for Extension of Federal Consent Decree". This compelled me to write a letter published in the May 6 issue ("Bashing the BRU") which pointed out "Provisions of the federal consent decree [that governs aspects of the MTA's operations] relating to fares expired January 1, 2004. Extending the consent decree has zero to do with any potential MTA fare increase. The Bus Riders Union (BRU) knows this, but shows their true colors by being more interested in generating publicity with misleading sound bites than being honest. That isn't surprising, since it has been the BRU's modus operandi since day one."

In a similar vein the *Daily News* ("Union asking judge to extend MTA decree", May 25) quoted a BRU statement on their request for a five year extension of the consent decree that MTA's current budget woes "... sets up the conditions for MTA to claim the only way to balance the budget in the

future is to make bus riders pay with service cuts and fare increases". Interestingly the *Daily News* reports after Special master Donald Bliss resigned that Judge Hater declined to appoint a replacement. What this may mean regarding a possible extension is hard to conjecture. Hatter took senior status in April of 2005, and is now overseeing a dwindling docket of cases from his existing calendar.

Recently I undertook a pilgrimage to Sky-light Books, on Vermont just south of Franklin. Some years ago I read they stocked a history of the Los Feliz Improvement Association, one of the oldest neighborhood organizations in Los Angeles founded in 1916. This piqued my interest because Scott Bottles in his book *Los Angeles and the Automobile : The Making of the Modern City* quotes a letter the Association sent the city regarding traffic issues in the 1920s. Similarly William Fulton in his book *The Reluctant Metropolis: The Politics of Urban Growth in Los Angeles* notes how much our region has been shaped by groups like LFIA. The book (mostly compiled from records stored for decades in--I am not making this up--two barrels) gives a fascinating picture of L.A. growing and coping with its growth. Transportation and development issues reappear across the decades in its 50 some pages.

Michael Turner of MTA Government Relations made a splendid presentation at the May 24 MTA Citizens' Advisory Council meeting on the infrastructure bond that will be on the November ballot. I have made

Cont'd on pg. 8

copies of a sheet he distributed which we will share at our next meeting that outlines the various categories the transportation bond would fund. Turner also shared a U.S. Dept of Transportation graphic on growth in ports which makes clear that the L.A./Long Beach complex dwarfs anything else in the U.S. and faces daunting growth challenges in the next 14 years.

Keeping in mind community support has proven crucial to the funding of projects like Expo, I will note the latest grassroots light rail proposal is one for San Pedro promoted by a group calling itself "Citizens for a Harbor Line". It was noted on our member board they don't seem to have a lot of detail as to routes, etc. In any case you can look at their so far threadbare website at <http://harborline.blogspot.com/>

May 23 I attended a meeting on the Exposition light rail project at Los Angeles Trade Tech, along with Charles Hobbs and Kent Landfield. At one point a vocal activist pointedly stated the neighborhoods along the route were opposed to any property being taken. Later she inquired why more parking hadn't been provided at stations along the route. To which I thought "because otherwise they'd have to seize property, which you just told us you oppose". Talk about a contradiction!

Once in a while, while reading some dreary document I'll suddenly strike gold. This happened recently while slogging through the Metrolink proposed 2006-2007 budget. Buried in it was a line item to repair vandalized ticket machines. It seems in May 2005 a series of machines were robbed by thieves using a hydraulic jack to pop the door open. Six machines had damage so

extensive they had to be scrapped. One solution being implemented is to harden the doors. I know a recent break-in was caught on camera, but I don't recall these earlier thefts getting any media play. Did these glide under the radar screen? And did they ever catch the perpetrators?

The latest MARTA shenanigan posted by Charles Hobbs on our member board is the General Manager reporting to the agency Board: "Transmark vehicle was damaged when operator fueled with gasoline instead of diesel. Repairs are underway and disciplinary action of driver pending." P.S. —the board wants the General Manager who is quitting to stick around 3 more months while they search for a replacement.

I was fascinated in the May issue of Eye on Infrastructure to read Richard Little, Director of the Keston Institute for Infrastructure at the University of Southern California, in an interview state "A lot of what we need to do in the future is managing expectations as well as resources. People can't expect that everything is going to be free – that is not realistic. There are many people in California and most are concentrated in our urban areas. This makes finding solutions difficult but if everyone is willing to give up a little then collectively we can all gain a lot. We can't have a zero sum game where when I get something you lose." Amen!

How jaded have I become? Recently I sat in a room full of big shots and discovered I was the only one to ask the guest speaker, a member of our Congressional delegation, a meaningful transportation related question. Is it any wonder my ennui extends to having little interest in the impending release of the "updated" MTA Long Range Plan? This is my third or fourth Plan cycle (depending how you count the stillborn Plan

of the late 1990s) and I have come to see them as compilations of previous Board actions done merely to fulfill legal mandates. So much of transportation policy consists of meaningless dog & pony shows whose chief purpose is to provide the ribbon cutting/photo ops politicians (and even some bureaucrats) crave. Which is probably why I so enjoy my participation in the monthly meetings of the Plans and Programs Technical Advisory Committee of the Southern California Association of Governments. Yes, the presentations can often be deadly boring. Yet it is nice to sit amidst folks similarly steeped in transportation policy. And it is nice to be among true adults once in a while. So we take the good where we can find it and endure the rest.

I guess the fun is over--the San Gabriel Valley Transportation Authority website no longer works. Which isn't surprising as the L.A. Times recently reported that agency founder Yosuf Maiwandi had been arrested on suspicion of perjury for allegedly signing a document in which he misrepresented his position. A search of his home and auto shop

turned up firearms, transit authority police badges and a white, unmarked Ford Crown Victoria complete with radio equipment, computer mobile digital terminal, official government license plate, flashing front and rear lights and siren. Is this the last chapter of this strange saga? Time will tell...

On May 17, 2006, Subcommittee #5 of the Assembly Budget Committee rejected the Governor's proposal to permanently shift Public Transportation Account (PTA) spillover revenues to reduce General Fund debt costs. I think this bespeaks transportation interests in the past year or so becoming organized and sending a clear signal to our friends in Sacramento that robbing trust funds to balance the state budget whenever the economy has a blip is no longer a viable option.

I'll conclude by noting how odd it is the city of L.A. is now helping reactive the Southern California Regional Airport Authority, since it was lack of involvement by L.A. a few years ago that led to the Authority going dormant. Oh, well--I guess that was then, and this is now... 🚌



"We're Not Here To Tease-Ya..."

Eastbound MTA 130, using Orion bus # 11061, coming in for a landing at Artesia Transit Center

(see "X-Trip" article, starting on the next page!)

— Mark Strickert photo

I've been curious to try MTA's new Express X services, which so far consist of routes 450X along the Harbor Transitway and the 577X linking Long Beach and El Monte with a stop at Norwalk Green Line station. Their characteristics include operating mostly on freeways and having only one intermediate stop. I realized this would be an unusual study trip as it would have to be on a weekday since both routes only operate Monday-Friday. Interested members were polled which Friday would be most suitable to explore these lines and Friday May 26 was the consensus choice.

The starting point was Figueroa and 7th Street in downtown Los Angeles. Since the 450X only operates during rush hour we needed to ride it first. At 5:08 p.m., right on schedule, a NABI low floor #5522 pulled up to the stop in the metallic blue color scheme used for the X services. Members boarding were Armando Avalos, Dana Gabbard, Lionel Jones, Kent Landfield, Ken Ruben, and Mark Strickert. Several riders boarded at this location, and at Figueroa/5th. After looping to continue southward on Flower 10-12 boarded at 5th and 8 at 7th. Total ride count (excluding SO.CA.TA members) was 26. Soon we were running alongside the Blue Line tracks between its portal and Washington Blvd. Once on the Harbor Freeway we entered the Transitway and accelerated to freeway speed. Despite our fears the Transitway wasn't crowded and we were able to run full out. One of the passengers named Sheri confided to us that this was actually a light day for ridership (because of the impending holiday weekend), and that gener-

ally the bus operates with a full load and often 2-3 standees. No wonder they added an extra trip during the last shakeup.

At the 450's sole stop on the Transitway (Green Line station) 6 deboarded while 1 boarded. We continued south and arrived at Artesia Transit Center on schedule at 5:35 p.m. Ken Ruben announced elapsed trip time had been 19 minutes, 45 seconds. Amidst a sea of mostly empty parking lots the Transit Center is an eerie and forlorn place to catch a bus. There are no facilities or amenities for passengers save some benches. And a clock that evidently hasn't told the right time since the center was opened. Compared to transit hubs in adjacent regions this hardly seems worthy of the designation transit center.

Now we needed to get to the VA Medical facility in Long Beach to ride the 577X. After reviewing options and some extended banter it was decided to catch the MTA rt.130 which connects with Long Beach Transit rt.92 which would take us where we needed to go. The 130 is a contracted line so it should be no surprise that it showed up about 10 minutes late, at 6:04 p.m. It was #11061, with the tinted blue interior lights. 1 boarded with us, and 3 were already on the vehicle. We made our way along Victoria Street through a business park (one building was marked "Jeff's Exotic Fish".) and clusters of tract houses. As we continued past CSU-Dominguez Hills we picked up passengers until the bus was about 1/3 full.

As we pulled into Artesia Blue Line station the driver loudly announced anyone getting

off should make sure to check the vicinity for their belongings, not to leave anything on the bus, etc. (just as they often do on trains). 7 people got off while 21 with a clamor came aboard--now we had a seated load including 5 standees. Moments later we were passing the Crystal Park Casino before turning onto Artesia Blvd. Near Compton Community College we sighted a giant sign with the Major League Baseball logo heralding the recently opened Urban Youth Academy the league sponsors. Also spotted was a Long Beach Transit rt.51 bus whose headsign proclaimed "Sorry Not in Service". As we passed the convergence of the 91 and 710 Kent Landfield noted a small two story building with a sign proclaiming Long Beach Bible Institute wedged into the narrow space between the freeways and the Los Angeles River. Continuing along the stark urban commercial thoroughfare Artesia Blvd. becomes in Bellflower, at Atlantic 2 got off and 5 got on. At Orange 3 got off and 1 got on. Then the bus started to empty out (6 got off at Clark). At Lakewood Blvd., we passed a building that contained Emilio's Beverage Warehouse. Finally at 6:50 p.m. we reached Woodruff -- thankfully the driver was kind enough to drop us off nearside and point to where we could catch our connecting Long Beach Transit bus.

Adjacent to the stop is a Burger King, but our connection was too tight to allow a snack break. We were sorry to note the bus stop sign offers information on all the 90s (91/92/93/94) although only the 92 serves the stop we were at. Also since November 2005, the sign inserts no longer have the schedules, just times of operation and general headways. One could easily imagine this causing confusion for riders. It could be

hoped that riders are aware enough not to wait at a stop on Woodruff on Saturday, expecting the 7-day 91 or 94 in place of the weekday-only 92! But is it reasonable to expect that of users?

One question Kent had was would the Long Beach bus honor his Metrolink pass. Although the Metrolink pass has a EZ logo and the MTA website states "... valid Metrolink tickets or passes will be accepted for unlimited local travel by every participating carrier, except Santa Monica's Big Blue Bus", Kent has had trouble at times getting it accepted by non-MTA services.

At 6:55 p.m. our Long Beach rt.92 bus arrived, #9613. And after some discussion the operator waved off Kent's fare payment and accepted the Metrolink pass. Via Woodruff, Willow and Bellflower Blvd. we made our way south to CSULB. The bus actually goes on Campus Road through the school, and we passed groups of people in fine dress on the adjacent sidewalk going to a theatrical event on campus. In the distance I spotted the pyramid-shaped Carpenter Performing Center. At 7:20 p.m. we reached the VA Medical Complex.

It would be a half hour before the next 577X departed. Across the street was an combination gas station/mini mart where some of us purchased snacks and took a bathroom break. Others patronized nearby establishments (Ralphs and a Dairy Queen). Mike Milroy (who works in downtown Long Beach) at this point joined our group after riding there on route D of the Passport.

At 7:50 p.m. we boarded Rt.577X, another NABI in blue #7065. We were the only passengers. In minutes we were on the 22 freeway, then making our way amid gather

Cont'd on pg. 10

X-TRIP cont'd from pg. 9

ing gloom of nightfall northward on the 605. 1 person boarded at Norwalk Green Line station, and we spent a few minutes there since we were running hot. And even then we were still 12 minutes early when we arrived at El Monte station at 8:31 p.m.

The 577X started operating in Dec. 2005 and it was disappointing to observe after six months it is lightly patronized. Lionel opined if the 577X served the Long Beach Transit Mall instead of the VA Complex it probably would have more ridership. Mark Strickert shared his observation that when he previ-

ously rode it around 4 p.m. the bus had more ridership, especially between Norwalk and El Monte (circa 13 passengers). I wondered if that meant it should emulate the 450X and only operate during rush hour. Mark has noted perhaps only the Norwalk-El Monte segment merits all day service with selected trips in peak hours extended to Long Beach. Perhaps in six months or a year we should ride the 577X during rush hour to see if ridership has improved by then.

We took a moment to lament the newly added inconvenient lower bus bays at the El Monte facility before going our separate ways. 🚌

SIDE-BAR:

ARTESIA TRANSIT CENTER

My funky little side-trip to meet you guys involved OCTA 56-OCTA 57-walk-Amtrak-Norwalk 3-walk-Metro 130-Metro 550-Metro 381-Red Line-DASH D-walk.

I arrived at Artesia Transit Center the first time at about 3:15 PM. At that time, there was a private food cart near where we would be sitting or standing right after we got off the 450X. A bathroom would have

been handy at that point, but I managed to hang on until Union Station. The clock said 1:01, as it still did when we got back to the Transit Center.

The northbound 550 left with a full load, but let off people at most of the Transitway stops, so it only had 15 passengers when I got off at Exposition/Figueroa.

During the X-Trip layover at Artesia, the non-Transitway route we saw most often was the 214. — Mark Strickert

READER COMMENT

Quon Y. Kwan, Editor of *The Transit Times*, newsletter of the Montgomery County Action Committee for Transit, adds 2¢ regarding a recent issue:

"Just a note to say that in your February 2006 issue, the front page picture has a picture of MTA's GM Bus #5193 at South Whittier Community Transit Fair. The head sign on the bus which reads, "91 Hollywood-

land," is incorrect. The old Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority (not the current Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority) route 91 served Hollywood Boulevard but did not go to Hollywoodland. Hollywoodland was originally served by LAMTA route 89. I know because I used to live in Hollywood and rode route 91S or 91W to Hollywood High School (where I graduated in 1966) and route 91S to UCLA." 🚌