

## **BULLETIN BOARD**

### **SO.CA.TA MEETING NOTES**

The November 11<sup>th</sup> meeting will include nominations for SO.CA.TA's Officers and Directors for 2007. We may also have a discussion and vote on a possible dues increase for 2007, to cover the postage increase. After the meeting will be a second discussion and vote on our Day After Thanksgiving study tour. As of press time, all we know for sure is that the tour falls on a Friday, Nov. 24<sup>th</sup> this year. For details, please contact us at busnrail@yahoo.com, or check the SO.CA.TA website, or better yet attend the November meeting.

To devote full attention to our booth at the Alternative Transportation Expo, our December meeting & banquet have been rescheduled for Saturday, Dec. 2nd. The expo will take place at the Barker Hangar in the Santa Monica airport, 3021 Airport Avenue, the weekend of Dec. 9-10.

We've learned Paul Lennon is leaving Metro to be the new General Manager for Transit Security for the Department of Homeland Security, and thus has had to cancel his plans to be a speaker next year. Our 1st speaker for 2007 has been secured, thanks to the efforts of Kymberleigh Richards. This will be Pete Serdienenis, Metro's Stops & Zones Manager, with a presentation and answering questions at our January 13 meeting.

### **IN OTHER NEWS**

While we have ended our sponsorship of the Light Rail Now website, we encourage members to consider making a donation to support this light rail advocacy website. Checks should be made out to Texas Association for Public Transportation (or TAPT) and sent to: Dave Dobbs, Executive Director

Texas Association for Public Transportation  
9702 Swansons Ranch Road  
Austin, Texas 78748

The 2007 Union Pacific Calendar is \$10 and can be ordered at <http://www.unionpacificstore.com> or (866) 888-0185.

To be added to the mailing list of Metro Quarterly, send request to colonellod@metro.net, or by mail to:  
MQ, Metro Public Relations  
Attn: Dan Colonello  
Mail Stop 99-P1-1  
One Gateway Plaza  
Los Angeles, ca 90012-2952

The Federal Interagency Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) is attempting to bring federal programs together to help people with disabilities, lower income families, and older adults get the transportation they need through coordinated human service transportation planning and vehicle sharing: <http://www.unitedweride.gov/>

Friday, November 10 the Westside Urban Forum presents a panel with the Chair of the Los Angeles City Council Transportation Committee Wendy Greuel, and Jaime de la Vega, Los Angeles Deputy Mayor for Transportation. Moderator will be Bill Parent, Director of the Policy Forum at the UCLA School of Public Affairs. This is at The Regency Club, 10900 Wilshire Blvd. Registration starts at 7:00 am, with the program 7:45 - 9:00 am. Cost for WUF Members: \$40 (\$20 for full-time students with ID), Guests: \$55 (\$30 for full-time students with ID). The last day to register online is Wednesday, November 8, 2006. After that date and at the door, registration is \$10.00 more: [https://www.urbaninsight.com/secure/westsideurbanforum/calendar/rsvpform.php?id=76&form\\_type=s](https://www.urbaninsight.com/secure/westsideurbanforum/calendar/rsvpform.php?id=76&form_type=s)

Monday, November 13, from 5-8 p.m., the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy is sponsoring Lessons Learned from Livable Cities: An Evening with Enrique Peñalosa at the MTA Board Room in downtown L.A. Cost is \$15 - 50 suggested donation per person, \$10 per student. Further information at (213) 622-5980 x23. Register online at:

<https://app.etapestry.com/hosted/ITDP-InstituteForTransport/OnlineRegistration.html>

Tuesday, November 14, 2006 from 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM the 14th Annual California Policy Issues Conference will be held at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. The topic this year is Elections 2006: Implications for Civic Engagement and Infrastructure Development in California. Registration is \$100 (postmarked by Nov. 6), \$125 thereafter. Sponsored by the Pat Brown Institute of Public Affairs, registration form: <http://img237.imageshack.us/img237/6733/registrationik6.png>, or send check made out to CSLAS/UAS - Pat Brown Institute to:

Pat Brown Institute  
attn: Conference Coordinator  
California State University, Los Angeles  
5151 State University Drive  
Los Angeles, CA 90032-8261

A new PAC has been set up to elect pro-rail public officials, Passenger Rail Today: <http://www.passengerrailtoday.com/>

The November Orange County Metrolink station of the month is The Depot at Santa Ana. Free rides from that station on Sunday, Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>.

It's that time of year...we are gathering information on transit agency holiday service changes and cancellations, plus holiday shopper shuttles. For Example, the RTA special services noted in the October *Transit Advocate*. And, reservations will be required on Pacific Surfliner trains during the Thanksgiving holiday period, Tuesday Nov. 21 through Monday Nov. 27. These will be listed on the SO.CA.TA website as people send them in. 🚆

## MEMBERS IN ACTION

Carlos Osuna attended the Metro bus roadeo on Sept 23rd.

Andy Novak was quoted in the Oct. 22 San Bernardino County Sun article "Refurbished Omnitrans bus gives ride into past" regarding the Pacific Bus Museum excursion on Omnitrans classic "Old Blue" 1958 vintage GMC transit coach.

Attending the 5th Annual Transportation Summit for Los Angeles County presented by Mobility 21 on Oct. 30 were Dana Gabbard, Kymberleigh Richards, Erik Griswold, Ray McKeever and Anthony Loui.

Ray McKeever has been appointed to the Access Services Community Advisory Committee. He is already on Metro's Accessibility Advisory Committee, as is member Mark Panitz.

Ken Ruben attended 4 of the 5 Sector Governance Council meetings in October, missing only the San Fernando Valley. Also at the Gateway Cities Sector was Jerome Weymouth.

Ken Ruben and Kymberleigh Richards observed the Federal court hearing on the MTA Consent Decree.

Mark Strickert participated in the Western Stops and Transit Amenities Conference, in San Jose Oct. 24-26. 🚆

Well, the consent decree has ended (although Judge Hatter will retain jurisdiction over Metro Rapid implementation as part of the New Service Plan MTA committed to through Nov. 2010). As I commented on the blog *L.A. Observed*, this could serve as the start point of a dialogue about the future of our region.

Two final points: any appeal will be on BRU's own dime (MTA's obligation to pick up the court costs of both parties ended with the decree's expiration); and Hatter's ruling that the decree was a "a less than perfect document. As a result, it is impossible to achieve absolute compliance" could be cited as precedent against any such future similar lawsuit (or even to seek dismissal of the pending suit by some advocates against MTC in the Bay Area).

Meanwhile, those wishing to keep tabs on the Bus Riders Union's doing can now sign-up for their e-mail list: <http://busridersunion.org/engli/WhoWeAre/howtocontactus.htm>

The transportation bond (Prop 1B) looks to be a cliffhanger. At least TV ads have finally started running to shore up the weak polling trends. My fingers are crossed! And is it any surprise the BRU is now railing against 1B, even complaining that the bond doesn't cut fares, despite the consensus that operations are not appropriate to be funded with monies intended for long-term investment and that will be paid back over decades? Talk about empty rhetoric!

My recent letter published in the *Burbank Leader* questioned why a study needs to be made for transit linkages of the N. Holly-

wood Red Line station and the Burbank/ Glendale district when all that is needed is for LADOT to implement plans to have Commuter Express 549 loop off the freeway to serve the station. But I fear my comments fell on deaf ears. At least the good news is the Chatsworth Depot project is moving forward, with the promise of a new San Fernando valley customer center.

Do we automatically oppose fare increases on principle? With MTA hinting at a possible increase next year we need to start considering what our stance will be. Just a thought.

Surprise of the month: Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District staff recently had to remove an unauthorized tree house erected on their Calle Real property.

It is no surprise to hear from Citizens United to save South Pasadena that their analysis finds the 710 tunnel feasibility assessment report to be fatally flawed. How much longer are tunnel proponents going to continue pretending this turkey makes any sense?

It pays to read the power point presentations MTA staff present, not just the staff report. Case in point: item #7 at the Sept. 20 Planning and programming Committee meeting on revising the Metrolink cost-sharing formula. Only in the power point is it noted "Metrolink generates ~\$33 million annually in federal 5307 and 5309 funds which are used by Metro and municipal operators." YOW!

L.A. Councilman Rosendahl is pressing for the removal of the Wilshire bus-only lanes

in West L.A. [Council File 03-2337-S1]. Even though MTA is in the midst of making a deal with the County for an eastward extension of the lanes to Veteran. Which Rosendale used to claim would address his worries about other jurisdictions agreeing to implement the project. So disheartening!

In awarding a contract extension to Gayland Moffat to provide labor relations consulting services the staff report for agenda item #17 at the Sept. 28 MTA Board meeting had two interesting tidbits: Metro Deputy Chief Executive Officer John Catoe is the Chief Negotiator with Teamsters whose contract expires September 30, and Moffat's scope of work includes "Interim management of the labor relations function until new head of Labor Relations is hired." New head? I hadn't heard about a change in that department. We plan to investigate further.

I've learned Jerry Dayis, former GM of MARTA (Big Bear/Lake Arrowhead) is now Executive Director for Easy Lift, the paratransit provider in Santa Barbara.

At the Oct. 7 RailPAC meeting in Fullerton Mayor Art Brown of Buena Park [currently Chair of LOSSAN, the SCCRA (Metrolink) and the Orange County Transportation Authority] stated several of the County agencies dealing with Rail in Southern California are exploring the creation of a Joint Powers Agency (JPA) to coordinate Commuter and Amtrak Surfliner services. This would be similar to the JPA that oversees the Capitol Corridor and has gotten high marks for service improvements. To think, not so many years ago after lengthy study of the matter the So. Cal. counties blinked at taking over the Surfliner and let Caltrans keep running it. Just proof again there is always something new.

Life continues to be challenging for our friend at Antelope Valley Transit Authority. At the Oct. 23 board meeting item #4 was a request from the prior operating contractor, MV Transportation, that the Board direct AVTA's Executive Director to pay MV for services rendered. And the minutes of the Sept. 25 meeting show after a presentation by Justine Augustine, Regional Vice President of their current contractor Veolia, Chairman Bishop Henry Hearn asked the Executive Director if he thought Mr. Augustine was being truthful about progress Veolia was making. Obviously again AVTA has been having troubles with their contractor (of which this is the 3rd in a span of a few years). As I have always said, contracting is no magic bullet.

I'll conclude this month by noting Metro Board Chair (and County Supervisor) Gloria Molina is a puzzling character. At a recent Women's Transportation Coalition meeting (as reported in the Oct. *Metro Investment Report*) her remarks ranged from the insightful to the contradictory. One moment she laments parochialism. The next she admits to holding a grudge that the eastside rail project, originally a subway extension, is now instead light rail and that "some of our board members who put the measure together to prevent L.A. County from having a subway system ... now that [a subway extension is proposed for] the Westside, they've changed their minds." Keep in mind the subway extension would have been half as long as the light rail line under constriction. And that the projected ridership really calls more for light rail than heavy rail. But what does that matter, when you hold a grudge even when you are winning? Talk about thin skinned! 🚆

It has been nearly 10 years since we undertook an exploration of transit service in Santa Clarita. In that time they have extensively redesigned their system and it seemed like a return visit was long overdue. Saturday Sept. 16th was the date set for the study tour and Kymberleigh Richards kindly volunteered to be tour planner. Shortly before the trip Metrolink revised its schedules but thankfully this did not have an adverse impact on our plans. Dana Gabbard, Armando Avalos, Lionel Jones and John Andoh took Metrolink train 261 on the Antelope Valley Line departing Union Station at 9 a.m. (car #118). After an uneventful trip they deboarded at Sylmar Station at 9:33 a.m., where they met up with Kymberleigh Richards, who had arrived previously on Metro Line 230.

Consternation ensued when Armando pulled out a new Santa Clarita Transit schedule he had just acquired. Amid furrowed brows and mumbled threats this was evaluated for its impact on the schedule. At least initially it didn't appear to be adverse, although it did require doing one pair of routes (3/7) in reverse order because their schedules had been completely rewritten, and there was concern if buses ran late adjustments might be called for.

At 9:47 a.m. (two minutes late) we departed Sylmar on Santa Clarita Transit (SCT) route 8, a Gillig Phantom #145 with two passengers (all ride counts exclude trip participants). To our delight this equipment features plush cushioned seats, and we settled in to enjoy this luxury. The bus passed through classic San Fernando Valley suburbia--yard sales, Thrift Shops (for a local

high school) and a recycling center were among the highlights of the landscape we passed through, along with an example of your classic neighborhood liquor store. At Glenoaks and Roxford one additional passenger boarded before the bus drove onto the 210 freeway and whisked northward. Reinforcing the rural feel we passed an equestrian ranch adjacent to the freeway. Soon we had taken an on-ramp onto the truck-bypass of I-5 through the Newhall Pass. At one point a 18 wheel big rig swerved in front of us with hardly any space separating us. Thankfully our expert bus operator knew how to safely deal with this situation and quickly put distance between us and Mr. Goods Movement (transporting Ready Pac salads!). Nearly as disorienting moments later was to pass a roadside sign proclaiming the "Michael D. Antonovich Open Space Preserve" was at the next exit. Another smaller sign carried the slogan of the click it or ticket seatbelt campaign. After exiting the freeway we arrived at College of the Canyons at 10:08 a.m. and deboarded at the intersection of Valencia Bl. and Rockwell Canyon. This location had benches and landscaping but also was quite windy.

After a short wait at 10:23 a.m. (5 minutes late) we boarded SCT route 4, #144 (another Gillig). There were 4 passengers (all ride counts exclude trip participants). The driver was an amiable sort, with a banana muffin in a sack beside his seat that was to be a snack during his layover. An envelope sticking out of a compartment above the driver was labeled "accident kit". Near a mall one person boarded. The bus continued through upscale suburbia, including a very active commercial district and we

passed a field with numerous morning soccer games being played by hordes of kids in Old Orchard Park with parents and siblings looking on. One local church was holding a carnival and barbeque. Nearby was a hamburger place named after Jimmy Dean (the sausage king), evidently part of a small chain. At some point the driver's muffin tumbled out of the sack it was in and fell down the stairwell. At the next stop the driver briefly cleaned up the mess and disposed of the debris.

The layover was on a side street since the Newhall Metrolink station lacks facilities for a bus to park off-street. One of the neighbors was holding a yard sale on an adjacent front lawn but none of us went over to check it out. At 10:35 a.m. the bus pulled out and continued its run, finishing the turnaround loop around the Metrolink station. The driver exercised great care at the station, asking people as they boarded where they were going. One young lady quickly realized she was boarding the wrong bus. Obviously the operator had learned since multiple buses serve the station that people are prone to board the wrong bus unless quizzed where they are going. Continuing we passed Pho, a Vietnamese restaurant symbolizing the cultural diversity Santa Clarita has undergone during the past decade. Yet like many suburbs (think Irvine) its arterials are exceptionally wide, almost like expressways.

At 11:07 a.m. we pulled in to McBean Transfer Center where we did an 8 minute layover. This was our first sight of what is now the hub of the Santa Clarita Transit system (during our last trip that role was held by the Santa Clarita Metrolink station). The Center has multiple bus pull-in locations, with bus stop signs that include route numbers (signs

at all regular bus stops just have the SCT logo). Other amenities include benches, canopies for shade (but minimal protection from rain), pay phones, water fountains and bathrooms. 4 passengers boarded at the Center. We continued, passing a mall and then entered a desolate landscape on the outskirts of a cluster of development, crossing on a bridge over a dry flood control channel. At one point a horse was spotted. Then we were back in a commercial district, drowning in consumerism (storefronts seeming to beg "shop here!"). In passing Saugus High School an extensive sports complex with baseball diamond was spotted. All 4 passengers deboarded at Bouquet Canyon/Urbandale. Our group continued on into another rural landscape of hillsides covered with tumbleweeds. We were without a doubt "out in the sticks".

At the turnaround loop near the LARC Ranch was a shelter in the middle of an unpaved field. And 4 boarded there, including one in a wheelchair. On the trip back along Bouquet Canyon Rd. we noted an oddity of the route—a diversion to run along a short stretch of Alaminos that the route only does inbound. Since Alaminos is a rather unremarkable street running through a suburban neighborhood it was unclear why it does this diversion (and in one direction, no less). The timetable notes that for some of the last runs "Upon arrival at LARC Ranch, continue in service to drop off passengers via southbound routes to Alaminos and Benz".

(Robyn Dowd of Santa Clarita Transit in response to a subsequent inquiry explained that due to safety issues, route 4 diverts along the Alaminos Drive area. The blind curves along Bouquet Canyon Road do not

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allow for a safe stop in that area so the bus diverts southbound to provide stops. If Bouquet Canyon Road is straightened in the future, the bus will be re-routed to stay on Bouquet Canyon Road.)

As we continued two who had deboarded when we went north past the same intersection reboarded going south, evidently having taken advantage of the end loop of the route to duck into a mini mart for some snacks before getting back on. There was continual boarding and deboarding as we continued. Dana noted with discomfort steel bus benches at the stops of the sort that imprint a criss-cross pattern on your backside if you sit on them very long. At the stop nearest Valencia Town Center Lionel, Armando and John got off to get lunch when Dana and Kymberleigh returned to the Transfer Center (arriving at 12:18 p.m.) where they ate the lunch they had brought with them. While in the Transfer Center they witnessed a 35-foot bus come through, followed by a van used for paratransit carrying the ASI logo. Dana was puzzled that on the adjacent patch of greenery there was what mysteriously looked like a small pole with a flag, and some nearby paths through the grass.

As Richards and Gabbard ate, suddenly up walked member Sam James, who had missed the earlier part of the trip (but since arriving ridden route 6 end to end). Sam decided to walk to a nearby mini mart for snacks since some time remained before the trip resumed.

Everyone regrouped in time to board at 1:17 p.m. a SCT route 7, #176 a New Flyer low floor from 2005 with 7 passengers. Af-

ter about 10 minutes we arrived at the stop for Magic Mountain, where all the other passengers except us deboarded. This stop is some distance from the entrance of the park with a roller coaster looming over it. Coming back the way we came (as Route 3; most Santa Clarita lines are interlined and change route numbers at their terminals) we marveled at the wide roads we traveled along and the comfortable padded bus seats we sat on. Sam James pointed out that adjacent to McBean Transfer Center is a miniature golf course (thus explaining the flag Gabbard spotted earlier) and sports bar with a banner "Spaghetti and golf on Tuesday-\$5.95". We had two board and one deboard while passing through yet more suburban development. Spotted were overcrossings for pedestrians, similar to those that span some freeways in Los Angeles but these were to cross surface streets. Continuing toward Saugus we climbed a fairly steep hill and passed through wide empty spaces before abruptly cresting the hill and found spread before us a sea of tract houses. As we started toward McBean Transfer Center, Kymberleigh noted that we were running sufficiently late to jeopardize the next connection, so at 2:13 p.m. we deboarded at McBean and Newhall Canyon.

12 minutes later we boarded SCT route 1, a Gillig #150 whose headsign proclaimed the destination as Castaic and had 8 passengers. Initially we passed through an industrial park. And then... more industrial parks, with some riders boarding and deboarding along the way. Then we were on The Old Road (that is what the signs said) paralleling I-5 and passing a development called "Hillcrest Park". A sign at a roadside

shop proclaimed "We got plants!" This in contrast to the desolate hillsides we were running beside.

Much to our surprise at the far edges of the service area there were bus shelters at the stops. The layover was at a bus stop adjacent to some apartments. Also this was an area of abundant fast food outlets and marts due to the nearby interstate.

Originally, Kymberleigh had intended for us to get off on the return Route 1 trip in order to see the short loop to and from Val Verde Park, unique to the Route 2 branch, but the return trip was sufficiently late to prevent making that connection, so we remained on the Route 1 bus and started consulting the timetables to see how to modify the itinerary as a result of our now being somewhat ahead of schedule. Lionel Jones noted that the bus we were on would, on the way back from Whites Canyon, make a connection with Route 6 at Soledad Canyon/Sierra Highway, eliminating the requirement to travel all the way to Newhall Metrolink.

On the southward trip the bus began to fill up. Spotted at one stop was a bench ad for Metro Rapid 740. That one left us scratching our head (that route is some 20+ miles from that location). Sam James deboarded at McBean Transfer Center to start back home while more boarded at that location.

At several intersections we noted multiple cameras for detecting vehicles running red lights. And the need for such measures was apparent as we made our way through Newhall along San Fernando Road, a wide streets that all but encourages fast driving. Now the bus started to unload--at the Metrolink station 8 deboarded, while 12 got on. This on and off activity continued as we

made our way toward Canyon Country. One stalled motorist getting their battery boosted parked rather inappropriately in the street in front of a bus stop we tried to serve. We entered a hilly, desolate area followed by classic suburban development consisting of gated communities and commercial districts along major streets. The bus began to empty out yet still had some boardings even while approaching the far-end loop. And we passed fast food outlets and a school with an athletic field. Up a hill we climbed to behold a vista of wide open spaces disconcertingly with some of it obviously being graded for further development near a cluster of tract houses. During layover on a side street portion of the loop it was noticed the list of headsign codes was posted above the front window for easy consultation by the operator.

Kymberleigh noted that the service had been recently extended farther into Whites Canyon due to recent expansion of residential construction, but that additional time had not been added to the schedule to accommodate the route extension.

Now we continued as a SCT route 2, and soon the bus started refilling with passengers. Meanwhile over the radio we heard dispatch describe some sort of emergency that forced use of a bus bridge and might impact our next bus. It wasn't quite clear what was happening. At 4:20 p.m. we deboarded at Soledad Canyon Road and Sierra Highway (as had been hurriedly re-planned by Lionel and Kymberleigh earlier), where there were several eateries in the vicinity for those in need of a snack or a bathroom break. There was some concern that the traffic disruption we had heard de-

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scribed by the dispatcher might mean we'd have a lengthy wait. A young lady standing at the stop with us seemed sure such a delay would happen and set off down the street toward her destination.

Despite our worries SCT rt.6 #153 picked us up at 4:50 p.m. And soon after we passed the young lady who had decided to not wait for the bus. As we had boarded near the end of the line it made its way pass more walled in communities of up-scale suburbia before offloading the last passengers at the turnaround loop/layover adjacent to a flood control channel. Nearby the road we were on ended with a sign stating "Street to be Extended in the Future". Fortunately, a long layover period was scheduled, which allowed the bus to start the return trip on time, even though we had arrived there 12 minutes late( because of the aforementioned traffic problem?). Initially we had one passenger (who quickly deboarded). Then the bus started to fill up - 8 boarding at Sierra Highway/ Soledad Canyon Road, 3 at Crossglade and Soledad Canyon Rd., 10 more nearby. And this was as we entered yet another industrial park.

5:44 p.m. we pulled into the McBean Transfer Center. Lionel, Armando and John decided to bail at this point and were able to catch a tight connection with route 8. Kymberleigh and Dana continued amidst what was now a seated load. Dana pointed

out in some cases streets adjacent to gated communities lacked sidewalks. Kymberleigh then noted that the exception was intersections that had bus stops--sidewalks were provided just in the vicinity of those leading into the entrance of the development. The intention was to ride to Stevenson Ranch but a carnival blocked the street for a full-size bus. We could have hopped on a van for the rest of the route. Declining this, the 40 foot bus followed a turn-around via detour that included driving through the parking lot of the Stevenson Ranch Village shopping center. As it resumed its return trip the bus filled up. At 7:10 p.m. it arrived at McBean Transfer Center. After a short wait at 7:15 p.m. the last two of the group boarded SCT route 8, #145 for an uneventful trip back to Sylmar.

A comment; Santa Clarita's apparent commitment to "timed transfer" connections results in schedules that are impossible for its operators to adhere to. Despite a lack of traffic congestion, most of the buses we rode were late arriving at McBean Transfer Center (which almost caused Lionel, Armando and John to miss the connection in the 5:00 hour; if it hadn't been for the Route 6 operator alerting the already-departing Route 8 of the transferring passengers, they would have been watching it leave without them).

Thanks to Kymberleigh Richards for contributing to this report. 🚌

