

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TRANSIT ADVOCATES REFORM PROPOSAL

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Introduction

The purpose of this proposal is to evaluate the potential to restructure SOCATA from a transit club atmosphere, to more of a transit alliance and advocacy group to Metro and other southern California transit agencies.

Objective

To create a non-bias alliance and advocacy organization with Metro and other transit agencies similar to the Kern Transportation Foundation, Transit Alliance for a Better North County, Odyssey, Rescue Muni, VTA Riders Union, Friends of AC Transit, CC Riders and ACE PAC. Also look at Bay Rail Alliance, TRAC, Rail PAC and NARP as model advocacy organizations.

Draft Recommendations

Shrink Board of Directors to 5 – President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and At Large Member. Present board is too large for an organization the size of SOCATA

Board should only set policy and not get involved with day to day operations of the organization.

Eliminate conflict of interests. Statements should be filled out to ensure those who work for public agencies that the group is advocating for does not have any decisions that can influence the group direction in anyway.

Eliminate Executive Committee.

Create ad-hoc committees to support the Board – Special Events & Marketing Committee and Operations & Planning Committee. These committees will handle special projects such as Metro Service Changes, Transit Guides, Special Events, Membership Outreach, Transit Fairs and Study Trips

Ensure that all trips made are in conjunction with transit agency staff – Submit an actual study report to Agency General Manager or CEO and follow up.

Adopt Annual Budget and Work Plan each fiscal year starting July 1 and ending June 30.

Designate a part time Executive Director to guide the day to day operations organization. This person will establish goals and objectives for the organization, edits and prints the newsletter, manages website, pursues grants and funding, manages membership program, coordinates any staff or volunteers, the official spokesperson for the organization, monitors and develops budget, performs community outreach and is liaison with public transit agencies.

Build alliance with Metro, Metrolink and other southern California transit operators. Meet with transit general managers and CEOs quarterly.

Seek funding from transit operators, transit organizations, private funds, state and federal grants to support the advocacy organization.

Recruit more members – transit riders, professional people, transit managers and staff, business community, local elected officials and anyone that wants to support improved transit in southern California

Expand public outreach and ensure that all events are coordinated with local public transit agencies. 

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CA.TA Notes

Our thanks to Andre Darmanin of the Southern California Association of Governments for his informative presentation on the draft Regional Transportation Plan at our February meeting.

At our March 8th meeting, Roger Moliere of Metro real estate will talk to us about development at stations, and about the gating proposal.

Also at the March meeting, discussions will be held on a proposal to restructure our organization, and on this year's proposed study tours. We will likely have a final vote on the proposal to increase SO.CA.TA dues to \$30 (\$12 limited income), to be effective Jan. 1st, 2009.

Upcoming events where we plan to have booths:

-  Fullerton Railroad Days, Fullerton Transportation Center, May 3-4 - <http://www.scrmf.org/rrdays/>
-  3rd Annual South Bay Energy Fair, May 10th - <http://www.southbayenergyfair.com/>
-  Alternative Car and Transportation Expo, Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, Sept. 26-27 - <http://www.altcarexpo.com/>

Other events

The Southern California Association of Governments' Regional Transit Summit will be Thursday March 20th at the Wilshire Grand Hotel, 930 Wilshire Blvd. in downtown Los Angeles. Cost is \$75.00 and the deadline to register is March 14th. Online reservations and where to send payment can be found via the SCAG website: <http://www.scag.ca.gov/cgi/registration/transitsummit/index.cfm>. For more information, contact Andre Darmanin at 213-236-1851, or by email at darmanin@scag.ca.gov.

The website for the Irvine Great Park-Spectrum Guideway Demonstration Project can be accessed at <https://ww3.projectsolve2.com/eRoom/PBQDNorthWestDistrict3/IGP-SGDP> -- to gain entry to must provide your e-mail address and a password; your initial password will be "projectsolve" (all lowercase).

The printed version of the final report of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission can be requested for free by e-mailing your address to Donna.Hannah@dot.gov

The Santa Fe Railway Historical Society is holding its annual convention in Riverside, on July 8-13. For further information contact Chairman Gene Rutledge, 559-732-2560. [<http://www.atsfrr.com/convention/info-Riverside.htm>] 

As reported on the Secretary of State's website Proposition 91 lost with 41.9% in favor (2,715,390 votes) and 58.1% opposed (3,753,264 votes). Oddly the one County that it won was rural Butte County, where it passed with a 87% majority. The *San Francisco Chronicle* in its coverage of the failed measure quoted our spokesperson, Kymberleigh Richards: "This initiative still sent a message: We do not like what you are doing with transportation funds. We do not want them diverted. And we will keep voting for things that keep you from diverting them". After the election Kymberleigh noted on our member board "[Michael Cabanatuan [of the Chronicle, writer of the aforementioned article] is one of the few journalists in the state who tried to show both sides of 91. Too many of the media outlets took the voter guide statement by Jim Earp as the whole story." Which to me is yet another sign of the generally poor coverage transportation issues receive in the mass media.

Now that the mania of West Hollywood promoting the Santa Monica Blvd. alignment for a subway extension is faltering former West Hollywood city councilman Steve Martin engaged in spin in his article "No West Hollywood Subway" [<http://weho.news.com/z/wehonline/archive/page.php?articleID=2073>], scapegoating Metro for following federal law by studying all reasonable alternatives while distancing the civic boosters from responsibility for fostering a failed initiative under the guise of alleged "grassroots" enthusiasm. Martin does concede that given the criteria by which federal new starts funds are allocated the Wilshire alignment has the best chance to be judged a national priority

and thus well poised to succeed in the rough and tumble battle for such funding (something a few of us knew from the get-go). By the way, contrary to the Martin's assertion that the now legendary initial meeting at Plummer Park was "allegedly in response to calls by West Hollywood Council members", my spies confirm that indeed it was the city of West Hollywood that vehemently demanded the meeting be held, and went so far as to post signs publicizing it at bus stops in the city to ensure a large turnout. All in the hopes of fermenting hysteria that would overcome the hard fact that Wilshire is the logical alignment to go forward. It didn't work and now they are tapdancing as fast as they can amid the ruins of their failed ambitions.

Well, they did it. The Metro Board Feb. 28 approved a 10-year, \$46 million lease contract with Cubic Transportation Systems, Inc. to install barrier gates on the Metro Red Line, Metro Purple Line and selected light rail stations, despite the opposition of our group and many other transit activists plus the devastating analysis by former Metrolink CEO Richard Stanger that shot holes in all the justifications for doing it put forward by Metro staff. Mark my word, this is a debacle in the making. And the Board will have no ability to disavow responsibility--because we told them it was a bad idea and shouldn't be done. The fools!

As I anticipated last month the Southern California Regional Airport Authority is in the midst of disbanding. Art Marroquin's article "Regional airport panel disbands" in the Jan. 31 Daily Breeze quotes officials in Riverside and Orange county expressing the paranoia that doomed this body, yet then

Orange County Supervisor John Moorlach's chief of staff, Mario Mainero, states with a straight face "Supervisor Moorlach remains interested in working productively and cooperatively with others in the region, particularly with ground transportation issues. We continue to desire to work in good faith." Good faith? After engaging in a senseless boycott that destroyed SCRAA they have the stones to talk of good faith? Am I the only one to take this with a grain of salt?

I think Kymberleigh Richards, the other half of the Public and Legislative Affairs Committee, has a crystal ball. After a judge in Sacramento recently ruled substantially against the California Transit Association lawsuit over transit fund diversions by the state, Kymberleigh at our February meeting wondered aloud whether CTA would seek redress at the ballot box. And mere days later in a Jan. 12 editorial ("Time to consider a new way to pay for transit"), the Sacramento Bee noted "But the transit community is also considering bypassing the courts, the governor and the Legislature altogether and going directly to voters. Josh Shaw, the group's executive director, says his board is actively looking at the possibility of sponsoring an initiative that would ensure that the source of most of this money - a portion of the sales tax on gasoline - be used only for transit. Transit officials are discussing the possibility of going even further, perhaps forming an alliance with other state transportation interests to back an initiative that would put a gas tax or carbon fee on the ballot, with the funds earmarked for public transit." Great catch, Kymberleigh! As you can imagine, we'll be keeping an eye on this possible effort.

Another statewide issue we are monitoring

is the possible high speed rail line. So far the \$10 billion bond is still slated to be on the November ballot. The California Public Interest Research Group is launching a grassroots campaign of advocacy [<http://www.calpirg.org>]. And there are rumblings that the big stakeholders are in motion to undertake the kind of well funded campaign that would be needed to pass the measure. Should be interesting.

Damien Newton's blog *Street Heat* [<http://streetheatla.blogspot.com/>] quotes a letter written by two Dorsey middle school students "We and our friends aren't as dumb as some groups would like you to believe...that we can't look both ways before crossing a street nor could we not see flashing lights and gates which mean the trains are coming and to stop. These are things we've learned since Sesame Street." The NIMBY undertones of the anti-expo forces have become more and more obvious and hopefully their hollow arguments will not be the basis on multi-million dictates by the PUC.

Since I so often bash Supervisor Yaroslavsky, I must acknowledge that recently he has at times been a much needed voice of reason. This includes critical comments on the anti-expo activists in the article "Damien Goodmon and his plan to halt the Expo Line" in the Feb. 14 L.A. *CityBeat* and his sharp response to Mayor Villaraigosa's recent rash endorsement of the Gold Line extension to Ontario International Airport, which Zev rightly noted could threaten funding of the Subway to the Sea ("Subways for Breakfast", Feb. 21 L.A. *CityBeat*). Thank you, Zev!

cont'd on page 6 ☞☞

I'll conclude by noting I've learned my qualms about the co-mingling of the SCAG Regional Transportation Plan and Compass growth visioning proposal was prescient,

as major blowback from officials in Orange County and the inland empire has occurred during the comment period for the plan. Jeepers, maybe I sometimes know what I am talking about. Who'd have thunk it! 🚌

TRANSIT UPDATES

Los Angeles World Airports

"Palmdale Flyer" bus will begin twice-daily service from Van Nuys Flyaway and Via Princessa Metrolink station to Palmdale Regional airport, starting April 2nd. Fare will be \$5 each way, or initially free with a same-day boarding pass to or from Palmdale airport. Info www.lawa.org/pmd

OCTA -- Changes effective 3/9/08

463 - Depot at Santa Ana pick-up point moved to Dock #2

464 - Depot at Santa Ana pick-up point moved to Dock #3

686 - cancel first trip, both Saturday and

Sunday

Victor Valley Transit Authority (VVTA)

Per Edmund Buckley: Public meetings have moved back to Victorville City Hall, 14343 Civic Drive

Doggie Bus

A private shuttle bus for dogs and their humans operates Sundays, weather permitting, between Tustin and Huntington Beach. The artfully-wrapped van leaves Laurel Glen Park, Myford & Heritage, around 2:30 PM. The return trips leave Huntington Dog Beach at PCH/Goldenwest about 5:00 PM. More information, photos, and link to reservations are at <http://www.doggiebus.com/>. 🐕

MEMBERS IN ACTION

The February issue of *Western Rail Passenger Review* includes Chris Flescher's report on rail developments in Monterey County [<http://www.railpac.org/2008/01/17/monterey-county-rail-meeting-report/>].

The Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 issue of *The Pad-dle*, newsletter of the Pacific Bus Museum, includes part 1 of Andrew Novak's article on the history of Beach Cities Transit.

David Davenport's letter to the *East Bay Express* was published in its 2/27/08 issue, responding to a cover story on AC Transit's

Van Hool bus procurement. The letter is online at http://www.eastbayexpress.com/news/letters_for_february_27_march_4/Content?oid=651798 (see "Buy Hayward").

Ken Ruben attended three Sector Governance Council Meetings and/or hearings this month: San Fernando Valley, San Gabriel Valley, and Westside/Central. Mark Strickert spoke at the Gateway Cities hearing in Downey.

Ken Ruben attended the dedication of the restored Bellflower Station, on the old Pacific Electric Los Angeles to Santa Ana line, February 21st. 🚋