


## **BULLETIN BOARD**

Our thanks to Roger Molière, Chief of Real Property Management & Development for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), for an informative presentation at our April 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. At the same meeting, Damian Carroll from Assemblyman Michael Feuer's office shared information on the Assemblyman's package of bills on local funding options, which we voted to support (with appropriate letters and other activities).

Cathi Coles of Pasadena ARTS will be the speaker at our May 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. In addition, on that day we'll have a booth at the South Bay Energy Fair, and we will be sharing space with RailPAC at the Union Station National Transit Day event.

The April 19<sup>th</sup> SO.CA.TA archives work session went very smoothly; assisting in the weeding and organizing of the papers accumulated over the years were Samuel James, Lionel Jones, Robert Meinert, Kymberleigh Richards, and Woody Rosner.

The Federal Railroad Administration has created a website to house investigation reports of major train accidents and other incidents: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/us/content/1696>

Metro's Citizens' Advisory Council has begun a site at Blogger to announce CAC meeting topics/guests and conduct ongoing polls of public opinion on matters coming before the Metro Board of Directors: <http://metrocac.blogspot.com/> 

## **TRANSIT UPDATES**

### **ANTELOPE VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

Due to the Memorial Day holiday, the monthly AVTA board meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 27<sup>th</sup>.

**FOOTHILL TRANSIT** has a new Bus Book, effective 4/20/08. Among the changes:

Line 289 - this line will be re-routed from Castleton onto Colima, between Albatross and Stoner Creek in the City of Hacienda Heights

Line 481 - the downtown Los Angeles portion of this route will be returning to its pre-Silver Streak route. The east end, however, remain El Monte bus station

Line 488 - long-term detour around Metro-link crossing at Ramona Ave. has ended

**MTA** ("Metro") is finishing up the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of Westside Extension Transit Corridor Study public meetings:

Monday, May 12<sup>th</sup>: Plummer Park, 6-8 PM, 7377 Santa Monica Blvd. (at Plummer Pl.), West Hollywood

**OMNITRANS'** new Bus Book now in effect, as of 5/6/08. Changes include:

Route 82 - removed from Etiwanda, instead continuing west on Jurupa to Haven, and entering Ontario Mills Mall via Inland Empire Dr.

Route 83 - rerouted via Mountain-Edison-Oaks-College Park, when road work completion allows

Route 215 - San Bernardino 4<sup>th</sup> Street Transit Mall start/end stop moves to 4<sup>th</sup> & F Sts.



## MTA 577X FOLLOW-UP RIDE

Dana Gabbard

About a year ago we did an informal trip on the two Metro "X" routes, lines 450X and 577X. While we found the 450X had healthy ridership (albeit mostly cannibalized from the other Harbor Busway routes), the 577X (a contract line operated by Southland Transit) was underwhelming. But this was before the line had operated even a year and we rode it in the early evenings hours. Then in June 2007 the route was extended from the original terminus at VA Medical Center to the Long Beach Transit Mall with new stops at the Transit Mall, 7th St/Cherry and 7th St/Ximeno; at the same time headway adjustments were implemented during peak and non-peak hours. It was decided now that nearly a year had elapsed since these adjustments intended to improve ridership had been made and any impact on ridership would have had time to occur we should try the route again, this time during evening peak to let us find how it performs during the hours of maximum demand.

The afternoon of Friday April 25th was the date we selected for the trip with the starting point to be El Monte Transit Center. Providing some flexibility (and so we could evaluate multiple trips) members were asked to take either the 4:05 p.m. trip arriving at Long Beach Transit Mall at 5:26 p.m. or the 4:39 p.m. trip arriving at 6 p.m. In Long Beach we would meet up at Taco Beach, 211 Pine Ave, a short walk from the Long Beach Transit Mall and share stories of what we experienced over a dinner of Mexican food.

Kymerleigh Richards arrived at El Monte around 3:35 p.m. via the Red Line and Metro 484 and observed the arrival of a

northbound 577x at 3:47 p.m. (7 minutes early) and departed southbound on 577x at 3:55 p.m. (10 minutes early) on a NABI low floor #7061; 6 boarded with her. It arrived at Norwalk Green Line station at 4:28 p.m. (11 minutes early) with 1 getting on and 2 deboarding. At CSULB one got off. At VA Medical Center (arriving at 4:45 p.m.) none got off. One got off at 7th St./Ximeno and 3 got off at the Transit Mall (arriving at 5:02 p.m.).

At 5:24 p.m. Nate Zablen arrived at the Transit Mall after riding from El Monte on the 577X and reported similar ridership to what Kymerleigh had experienced.

Dana Gabbard and Woody Rosner boarded eastbound Foothill Transit route 481 at 3:18 p.m. It was vehicle #F1135, a Gillig Low Floor bus with 5 passengers plus Ken Ruben already aboard and Gladys (3042) as the operator. There were a few more boardings along Wilshire, then several after leaving the 101 freeway and 9 even got on at the two busway stops (County Hospital and Cal State-LA) although the 481 now only goes to El Monte (and the regular fare is \$2.50 with no senior/disabled discount). The trip was a tad slow as the busway was backed up (ironically along the 10 freeway a sign was spotted "Busway users save 20 minutes each day"). We arrived at El Monte at 4:15 p.m. and met up with Russ Jones who was just arriving on a 770 bus.

At 4:39 p.m. we caught 577X northbound, a NABI low floor #7114. As we started to pull out the operator stopped as Armando Avalos ran up (after just arriving on a Metro 484 bus) and hopped aboard after the door

re-opened. There were 5 passengers. Because the 10 was backed up we eschewed it in favor of surface streets (Ken noted mostly along Peck Road) through South El Monte to reach the 605. Soon after getting on the freeway we passed a bad accident with multiple emergency responders at the scene which backed up northbound traffic for miles; the operator called dispatch to warn of the traffic jam which undoubtedly would impact the El Monte bound 577X service for some time. And even the southbound lanes suffered rush hour congestion. We swung by the Norwalk Green Line station where two got on while 4 got off. This facility now is served by so many transit lines that during peak hours bus crowding makes it difficult to get in and out of the station. Its layout obviously didn't anticipate this level of demand.

A woman who got on at Norwalk complained the 577X isn't sufficiently promoted and that only recently had she discovered its existence. Her commute to the Santa Fe Springs L.A. County building from her home in Harbor City was greatly improved by the 577X. Dana provided her with a business card so he could put her in contact with an L.A. Times reporter who might find her perspective worthy of a story. She also lamented the lack of restrooms at rail stations and the inconvenience that causes for those undertaking lengthy commutes.

Now the 605 was free-flowing and we were zipping along using the carpool lanes. We passed the Hawaiian Gardens Casino and even briefly passed into Orange County before switching to the 22 freeway.

At CSULB 2 got off; also an electronic sign for the campus had the strange message "The Dirtbags v. Pacific" (turns out Dirtbags

is the name of the CSULB baseball team). We then passed an old PE Right-of-Way now known as the Long Beach Greenbelt. We and the sole remaining passenger arrived at the Long Beach Transit Mall at 5:50 p.m.

Our group now made its way to Taco Beach for an excellent meal served by a very efficient staff. Nick Matonak showed up and explained logistics had made him miss the 4:39 departure and he had caught the next southbound 577X. His experience mirrored what the rest of us found during our trips.

Frankly unless ridership sees a dramatic improvement, based on what we saw the 577X will be discontinued once the consent decree new service program expires in 2010. Prior reports of dismal ridership were verified and we wonder whether even more marketing will do much to improve its performance. It is a theory (the value of transit express freeway service) that seems to not be proving out in this instance. 🚌 🚌



*Andy Novak photo*

All politics is local, so the saying goes. Latest example is Ontario Councilman Alan Wapner. Chair of the Southern California Association of Governments' Transportation and Communications Committee (TCC), and an ardent proponent of the maglev (as I witnessed at a panel he sat on at the Mobility21 Summit last year). He was even in line to be SCAG's President in 2010-11. Except he lost his seat on the SCAG Board to a Chino Councilman (Inland Valley Daily Bulletin, "SCAG Faces Tough Road", April 6). Frankly, I'm not shedding any tears.

It pains me but I will now concede as some previously hinted that support of at least a portion of the Foothill extension of the Gold Line is necessary. The proposed L.A. County 1/2% sales tax for big ticket transportation projects that may be on the November ballot will need regional consensus (i.e. goodies for all corners of the county) and this seems to be what the politicians of the San Gabriel Valley ardently want most. S\*I\*G\*H So we'll hold our nose and go along with funding an initial expansion. But the billion or so in federal funding some claim it will snag still won't happen -- that is an utter pipedream...

Hooray for the OCTA Board of Directors! They said no to allowing the old Red Car right-of-way their agency owns be given gratis for use by the Orangeline maglev. Ha! Ha! The proponents are making a show of keeping a stiff upper lip and claiming this doesn't doom their project (which was DOA from the get-go anyway). Their antics at the recent SCAG TCC meeting are priceless: [www.scag.ca.gov/committees/pdf/tcc/2008/april/cc041108fullagn.pdf](http://www.scag.ca.gov/committees/pdf/tcc/2008/april/cc041108fullagn.pdf)

Phrase of the month: "homeowner aristocracy", coined by Robert Monterey as being "homeowners who seek to preserve their property values and obsolete concepts of the

urban landscape at the expense of everyone else" (<http://www.calitics.com/showDiary.do?diaryId=5534>). Sound familiar?

My jaw dropped at the idiotic public demand by soon to be ex-Assembly Speaker Nunez for the resignation of Metro CEO Roger Snoble for alleged failures to get an adequate piece of the Prop 1B pie. And what a disappointment for L.A. Mayor Villiaragosa to state "I take seriously Speaker Nuñez's claims ... and will ask the MTA board to review this matter with the urgency that these allegations require." But don't count Snoble out -- he is a crafty old fox, I bethinks. Plus once onetime Metro Deputy CEO John Catoe decamped to head WAMATA in the nation's capitol, I think any chance of an easy succession evaporated and my hunch is the Metro Board doesn't want to get bogged down in a long search and/or have to dangle millions for a comparable leader. Plus good old Mayor AV (my nickname for Antonio) isn't well liked by his fellow Metro Board members (something I witnessed first hand at the fare hearing last year). They may just snub him and keep Snoble.

My indignant letter published in the April 15th L.A. Times probably got me more accolades than anything I have written in some time:

*"As a community activist on transportation issues for more than 10 years, I am disappointed at Nuñez's misguided call for the resignation of MTA chief Snoble. For too many years, micro-management and political grandstanding dominated decision-making at the MTA. Snoble brought order to this chaos and reignited the MTA's stalled rail construction program. The attempt to scapegoat Snoble for the inability of our region to get its fair share of funding from the Proposition 1B bonds is unfair and is an unneeded distraction.*

*"Snoble built regional consensus and used his best judgment in creating this deal. I find him much more credible than Nuñez and see no*

*call for his resignation. I hope the MTA board ignores this attempt to revive the bad old days of meddling and grandstanding."*

[www.latimes.com/news/opinion/letters/la-le-tuesday15apr15,0,3635904,full.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/letters/la-le-tuesday15apr15,0,3635904,full.story)

So via smoke and mirrors the Metro Board avoided the draconian service cuts for at least 6 months. Which is ironic because their choices regarding the fare restructuring made the cuts inevitable. Unless/until the funding situation in Sacramento is fixed the current statewide trend of service cuts and fare hikes will persist.

It is official, the bullet train bond will be on the November ballot. When we know more, we'll share it...

Do you know Metrolink now awards service pins to its Board members? Maybe Metro should do the same for its Board & Governance Council members? May instill some esprit. And that would be a good thing!  
[www.metrolinktrains.com/documents/BoardAgenda/February\\_2008\\_Board\\_Agenda.PDF](http://www.metrolinktrains.com/documents/BoardAgenda/February_2008_Board_Agenda.PDF)

In Dec. 2005 with much fanfare L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa announced the naming of Andrew K. Antwih as his Chief Legislative Representative in Sacramento. And deservedly so, as Antwih has long experience in legislative matters including more than eight years as the Chief Consultant to the Assembly Transportation Committee. So imagine my surprise when Kymberleigh Richards informed me she had discovered via a cyber professional networking group she belongs to that Antwih now works for the lobbying firm of Shaw/Yoder. From Google I learned it happened this past February with nary a breathe of it in the local media. This is a great blow to the city and its prospects for getting things from Sacramento. YEOW!

Remember the Foothill/CHP situation I mentioned last month? My reading of the minutes of the Foothill Board's March 28th meeting is

for reasons that are unclear CHP is requiring 15-20 minutes coach inspections even for mid-route relief. That isn't the industry standard--is this a case of one CHP inspector being on a power trip, making Foothill jump through hoops? It seems odd.

But thanks to Foothill, we now know resources TAP contractor Cubic would have used to address problems with implementation of the new fareboxes "have been redirected for at least the next 18 to 24 months, based on current time estimates, to install Metro's gating project". (per TAP Farebox Report, agenda item #5 at the April 18 Foothill Transit Special Executive Board meeting). This impact was never hinted during the gating debate. Stay tuned--we wonder if this will blow things wide open.

So I was reading this report by consultants Wilbur Smith for OCTA on LOSSAN Corridor Quick.Improvements only to be dumbfounded by several astonishing factual mis-statements that along with some impractical recommendations it contains left me rather unsettled. It refers to Metrolink ticket holders riding Amtrak Thruway service for free when the Rail 2 Rail program applies only to Metrolink monthly pass holders (p.17), and it refers to Flyaway as a Metro sponsored service... TWICE (pp.15-16). The irony is a list of past studies of the corridor at the end of the report reveals the majority were done by Wilbur Smith. So they should be familiar with operational details along LOSSAN--what happened? [http://www.sandag.coq.ca.us/uploads/meetingid/meetingid\\_1929\\_8070.pdf](http://www.sandag.coq.ca.us/uploads/meetingid/meetingid_1929_8070.pdf)

I'll conclude with a correction to last month's column. Due to an editing mistake on my part the sentence about SCAGLEV made no sense. It should have read "Meanwhile Jacki Bacharach, insider par excellence, at the March Metro Citizen's Advisory Council meeting declared the SCAGLEV should be cancelled." 🚗