

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CA.TA NEWS

At the SO.CA.TA June 14th meeting, we will discuss which questions to put in a questionnaire on transportation issues to submit to Mark Ridley-Thomas and Bernard Parks to aid voters in the Second Los Angeles County Supervisorial district as the two vie in a November runoff for the seat being vacated by Yvonne Brathwaite-Burke.

Our booth at Fullerton Railroad Days was a great success. A big thanks to the members who helped out or dropped by to say hello: Armando Avalos, John Bouman, Edmund Buckley, Paul Castillo, Alexander Friedman, Dana Gabbard, Eric Griswold, Charles Hobbs, Lionel Jones, Ken Landfield, Andy Novak, Carlos Osuna, Bart Reed, Jane Reifer, Woody Rosner, Ken Ruben, Dave Snowden, Mark Strickert, Dave Wise and Chaffee Yiu.

We will have a booth at the city of South Pasadena 2nd Annual Clean-Air Car Show and Film Festival being held Sunday July 20th from 11:00-6:00. Let us know if you'd like to help out.

IN OTHER NEWS

Steve Hyman is taking over the *Los Angeles Times'* heretofore near-moribund *Bottleneck Blog*, which can be found at www.latimes.com/bottleneck

Karol Potter has formed the Coalition of Metrolink Riders to advocate that the Santa Ana terminal have shade for waiting riders. She can be reached at karol_potter@yahoo.com

To be added to the mailing list for Metro Quarterly send a request to: colonel-lod@metro.net


The Pacific Bus Museum is having an excursion in Santa Barbara, on Saturday June 21st. Tour meets at the Santa Barbara MTD, 550 Olive St. (MTD #20 and Crosstown Shuttle nearby) at 10:00 AM. Costs and other details at <http://groups.google.com/group/norcalbusfans/browse/thread/thread/83ac30af2e29ba4d>

Western Transit is celebrating its 45th anniversary with a trip to San Diego Saturday August 16th. Details at <http://www.western-transit.com/2008trip.html>

The Pasadena Museum of Art (470 W. Walnut St.) is featuring an exhibit on "Mount Lowe: Souvenirs from the Incline Railway" through July 27th. Further details at (626) 577-1660 ext.10 or at <http://pasadenahistory.org/index.html>

The Grand Opening of the San Bernardino History & Railroad Museum / Celebration for the 90th Anniversary of the San Bernardino Depot will be held Saturday July 11th from 10:00-2:00 at the Depot, 1170 W. 3rd Street in San Bernardino. Details at http://www.ci.san-bernardino.ca.us/about/history/historical_n_pioneer_society.asp

Save the dates: the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) will hold its annual meeting at the San Diego Convention Center Oct. 5-8. The San Diego APTA meeting will also include the vendor and product Expo, held only once every three years, on Oct. 6-8. Registration is free for the Expo, at www.apta.com/expo2008

Banning Residence Museum (<http://www.banningmuseum.org/>) at 401 E. M St. is undertaking formal fundraising for an exhibit on transportation and its role in the development of our region. Further details: 310-548-7777 

TRANSIT UPDATES

ANTELOPE VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Public hearing at June 23rd meeting, 9:00 AM at AVTA, 42210 6th Street West, Lancaster, for proposed changes to take effect on August 16th, 2008. No details available as of press time...we were told: "Staff is recommending changes to the route and schedule information for our local, fixed route transit service. Most of the schedule changes are being made to ensure that our buses can adhere to published time schedules. The most significant changes to the routes involve Route 1. It is the intent to extend Route 1 in Lancaster to service the new Mental Health facility located at Jackman Street and Sierra Hwy." <http://www.avta.com/>

CITY OF BUENA PARK

The city has begun a free remote parking shuttle, between Buena Park Metrolink station and Fullerton Park 'n Ride during weekday commute hours

CITY OF IRVINE

Two more "i-shuttle" routes began service June 9th. Routes A and B connect the Irvine Business Complex with Tustin Metrolink station, all day including weekends. Fares will be free until September 1st

FOOTHILL TRANSIT

Sign up online (at <http://www.foothilltransit.org/survey/TakeSurvey.asp?PageNumber=1&SurveyID=IM04m3MH86I4I>) for a free day of Foothill riding on "Dump the Pump Day" Thursday, June 19th.

LAGUNA BEACH TRANSIT

The "Ritz" route (downtown to Niguel Rd.) will be suspended when the summer parking shuttle season kicks on later in June.

When the route returns after Labor Day, it will only operate weekdays, before and after school hours.

As usual, the summer shuttles will be free, operating daily from 9:30 AM to 11:30 PM, serving Laguna Canyon Rd./Broadway from the Act V Parking Lot, North Coast Hwy. from Viejo St. to Cliff Dr., and South Coast Hwy. from Aliso Creek Inn and 3rd Ave., plus marked intermediate stops to the Laguna beach Bus Station on Broadway

LOS ANGELES CO. DEPT OF PUBLIC WORKS

"Beach Bus" service to Santa Monica Beach this summer, from June 20th to Sept. 1st:
Altadena - Tuesday, Friday, Saturday, and Labor Day
Charter Oak/Duarte - Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Labor Day
East Los Angeles - Fridays and Labor Day
La Crescenta/La Cañada Flintridge - Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Labor Day
Lancaster/Palmdale - Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Labor Day
Santa Clarita - Wednesday, Saturday, and Labor Day
Warner Center/Topanga Canyon - Monday thru Saturday

Times and fares vary depending on route... check individual schedules at <http://www.LAGoBus.info> or http://ladpw.org/PDD/Beach_Bus/index.cfm

MEGABUS

All West Coast services will cease by June 22nd, with operations moving to the north-east US

METROLINK

There may soon be a modification of Metrolink's participation in the "EZ pass"

Cont'd on page 4


TRANSIT UPDATES cont'd from page 3

program, perhaps in the form of a fare increase for Metrolink riders who also use Los Angeles County transit systems that accept the Metrolink tickets and passes. Later this year, those agencies will be increasing Metrolink's fee for taking part in "EZ Pass." Stay tuned....

Metrolink and OCTA will have another free round-trip promotion, this time for trips

originating at Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo station on Saturday, June 21st.

ORANGE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (OCTA)

The OC Fair Flyers will return, during Orange County Fair weekends July 12th-August 3rd. In addition to the four which ran last year, OCTA has added Route 671 from Anaheim Canyon Metrolink station and the Tustin/Lincoln Park 'n Ride lot. 

MEMBERS IN ACTION

Charles Hobbs attended the Coalition for Sustainable Transportation (COAST) and Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE) event, "Future of the Central Coast Regional Transportation System," March 1st in Santa Barbara, headlined by Michael Dukakis

Steve Crosmer attended the annual National Association of Railroad Passengers Region V meeting, held in Tampa on March 1st. At the meeting he joined the newly formed Sunset Marketing and Revitalization Team (SMART), a group calling for restoration of a transcontinental Amtrak Sunset Limited and improved marketing for the train

The second (and concluding) part of Andrew Novak's history of Beach Cities Transit appeared in the Feb.-March 2008 issue of *The Paddle*, newsletter of the Pacific Bus Museum


Andy Novak and Ken Ruben attended Winterail 2008, held in Stockton on March

8th

Harold Katz had a commentary in the April issue of *Business Monthly*, publication of the Greater West Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce [http://www.westlchamber.org/page_graphics/newspaper/BusMonthly.pdf]

South Bay Sector Governance meetings were attended by J.K. Drummond and Lionel Jones on Feb. 8th and March 14th. Drummond alone attended the April 11th meeting

Mark Strickert offered his views on the remaining light rail route alternatives at the MTA's Eastside Corridor Extension public meeting in Montebello ("Whittier Blvd. great; Beverly Blvd. OK; Washington Blvd. not practical; 60 Freeway are you serious?")

Ken Ruben attended the Exposition Construction Authority meeting on April 29th, MTA San Gabriel Valley sector meeting on May 12th, and MTA Westside/Central sector meeting on May 14th. 

SO.CA.TA AT NATIONAL TRAIN DAY *John Ulloth*

May 10th, 2008, the 139th anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad, Amtrak held its first National Train Day. Special events were held at stations in Chicago, New York, Washington, and at Los Angeles Union Station, and thousands more than usual weekend passengers visited to see, ride, and learn about passenger trains and rail-convenient destinations. SO.CA.TA was there, represented by Ken Ruben and I, at the southwest arcade near the former Harvey House restaurant.

Though the few display tables available were gone before we could request one, through a prior agreement with Rail Passenger Association of California (RailPAC) SO.CA.TA was able to share a piece of their table at Nation Train Day, just as RailPAC had shared SO.CA.TA's table at Fullerton Railroad Days the previous weekend. Surprisingly, RailPAC President Paul Dyson had also agreed to share the same table with 2 additional groups - Consensus Planning

(representing California High Speed Rail), and a LOSSAN Corridor/Coast Route group organizing activists by e-mail lists for improved services and alerts.

So do the math: 4 groups with 5 things to sign, 3 membership forms (including National Association of Rail Passengers), stacks of newsletters and other literature, and cardboard trains and engineer hats from Amtrak, all on one 8-foot table! It was mighty cozy until Amtrak let the LOSSAN/Coast Route group expand onto their table.

Amtrak VP for Marketing and Product Management Emmett Fremaux Jr. stopped at our table and asked me how things were going. "Great," I replied, but "can you tell me who thought up National Train Day?" He wouldn't give me a name, but said their team did, and that Marketing and Product Management were much more productive when they're together. 🚂

STREETCAR WORKSHOP *John Ulloth and Ken Ruben*

"Street Smart: Streetcars and Cities in the 21st Century" was attended by 250 people Thursday, May 22 at the Orpheum Theatre, 9th and Broadway in downtown Los Angeles. The program ran from 8:00 AM until 4:00 PM. Five panel discussions were held followed by a reception at the Golden Gopher Lounge on West Eighth Street.

Panel discussions included Streetcars 101, Streetcars 202, Comparisons of Historic Trolleys and Modern Streetcars, and Local Case Studies. Notable speakers and guests

included LA City Council members Jose Huizar and Jan Perry, Michael Powell, owner of Powell's books in Portland, Steve Brye, Project Manager for METRO, and Carol Schatz, President and CEO of the Central City Association.

Workshop organizer, Gloria Ohland of Reconnecting America said she doesn't care about transportation; streetcars are about improving the urban quality of life. Michael

Cont'd on page 6 📄

STREETCAR *cont'd from page 5*

Powell told a story about convincing wholesale auto parts stores to pay for a Business Improvement District (local tax) for the streetcar, telling them trolley construction would take two weeks, and their property would be worth 50% more. Construction did take two weeks and their property was worth 300% more afterward.

The entire program was videotaped and the authors each asked a question on stage. One of the panelists, former Portland Transportation Commissioner Charles Hales, invoked Mr. Ruben's knowledge of what streetcars operated on Broadway. Bob Henry of the Port of Los Angeles Harbor Commission (i.e., Waterfront Red Car Line) talked about all of the skeptics who disap-

peared after saying the PE car wouldn't work, yet some 10,000 people showed up on opening day in July 2003. He talked about building an historic lower floor vehicle and extensions of the current network.

Jolene Hayes, Supervising Transportation Analyst for the City of Irvine, made a presentation about a modern trolley for the Great Park (former El Toro Marine Naval Air Station), and a "multi-modal" reuse, including paving for cars, and a modern trolley for the Santa Ana to Garden Grove portion of the abandoned Pacific Electric right-of-way.

SOCATA members in attendance were Roger Christensen, Erik Griswold, Kent Landfield, Nick Matonak, Bart Reed, and the authors. 🚌

PUBLIC AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS *Dana Gabbard*

In a mind-numbingly stupid move, Alan Mittelstaedt (editor and columnist) has been let go by *L.A. CityBeat*. What are they thinking? His pungent writings on transportation were the buzz of the town.

A *North County Times* article posted by Philip Provencio on the SO.CA.TA member board brought to our attention that North County Transit District Executive Director Karen King announced she was resigning to become Chief Executive Officer of Golden Empire Transit District in Bakersfield. This as NCTD goes through turmoil, including proposed service cuts and staff reductions. And meanwhile to this day

why Chester Moland, former GET CEO, resigned in August 2007 after a very public suspension is a total mystery. Quite unsettling.

Recently Metro San Fernando Valley Service Sector Governance Council Chair Coby King took a new job as senior vice president and general manager of the Los Angeles office of MWW Group, a lobbying firm. Now the MTA Ethic Office has ruled this creates a conflict of interest since the firm lobbies Metro, prompting King to announce his resignation effective immediately. Which is a shame since King has on several occasions adroitly guided the Council through some tricky conflicts, in-

ternal and external.

Kymerleigh Richards informs me at the May 22 Metro Board meeting it was announced CEO Roger Snoble's contract has been renewed for a year, despite the whispers I had been hearing in some quarters that his days were numbered. And by the way, this didn't even rate a mention in the local media or blogosphere.

Richards also informs me at a Mobility 21 event held in Warner Center May 21st, L.A. County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky mentioned in his remarks that he is commuting once or twice a week by bus from his home in the Beverly/Fairfax area to the County Administration building in downtown. Bravo, Supervisor Yaroslavsky!

Assemblyman Feuer's AB 2321 to pay for big ticket transportation projects in Los Angeles County with a Countywide sales tax increase of ½% that may be on the November ballot has passed the Assembly and gone on to the Senate. While Republican support is being firmed up the urgency clause (which is necessary to have the bill take effect immediately instead of Jan. 1 and requires a 2/3 vote) has been stripped, with the expectation that it eventually will be restored. Keep your fingers crossed.

Remember all the hooah between the CHP and Foothill Transit? Now at the April 18th Board meeting Foothill head honcho Doran Barnes reported that a Commander Kelly from the agency had dubbed Foothill's policy on bus inspections "legal and its business practices can continue unmodified". In the immortal words of Emily Litella: "never mind!" In other Foothill Transit news, Duarte Councilman John Fasana did

not seek re-election to the Executive Board citing time constraints and commitments, but says he will continue to serve on the Governing Board. This is in addition to his serving on the Metro Board and ongoing involvement with the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments.

Can you remember not so long ago smart growth was often the object of derision? Now instead it is featured on the front page of the *L.A. Daily News*! ("As gas prices climb, L.A. starts to change" by Sue Doyle, June 1st). It is a new day!

Can you say reauthorization? It is true, I am seeing more and more signs of the gearing up among stakeholders for the renewal of the federal transportation funding law now known as SAFETEA-LU. More as I hear about it.

I recently discovered that in its Report (v.1 p.191) the Columbia Accident Investigation Board criticized an overreliance on Power-Point "... instead of technical papers as an illustration of the problematic methods of technical communication at NASA." And it made me think of how many Metro Board items I saw handled chiefly through Power-Point presentations. Is this something to be concerned about?

I'll conclude this month by noting Odyssey, the non-profit advocate on behalf of public transit in California, has shut down. Since the departure of founder Kristina Egan the organization seemed to be on cruise control and finally has gasped its last. Very sad amidst all the comment in the media about how vital transit will be to our future. 🚏

Combined reports from Dana Gabbard, Andy Novak, and Mark Strickert

SO.CA.TA plans a Day after Thanksgiving trip every year, usually to ride weekday-only bus service. Most transit agencies run regular service that day, and most SO.CA.TA members have the day off. The group also tries to visit far out places that we would not normally visit. This year, the group voted for a return to Bakersfield and Golden Empire Transit (GET), the object of our 1999 DAT trip.

The Preliminaries

With the itinerary designed by Charles Powell, most of participants went up on Amtrak Thruway buses scheduled to arrive in Bakersfield at 10:00 AM. Mark Strickert went up on the earlier Amtrak Thruway bus, to get in some extra riding and to get some uninterrupted sleep on the way up.

Andy Novak's day began at 6:00 AM, when he was picked up by Charles Powell after which they made their way to Union Station and met up with Dana Gabbard, Woody Rosner, and Ken Ruben. Charles and Andy boarded Amtrak Thruway Van Hool #63185 (model C2045), which was out of the Long Beach Coach America yard. The others wound up on Van Hool #63188 while Armando Avalos wound up on one of the other Thruway buses. While departing a Megabus was spotted, along with one of LAX's Flyaway buses. Going north on the 101 freeway there was none of the usual gridlock and the bus made good time even after switching to I-5 and passing over the Grapevine, through flatlands dotted with farms (and an outlet of Yum Yum Doughnuts) and by 9:30 a.m. we were in Bakers-

field ahead of schedule. At this point Kymberleigh Richards joined the group. She had taken a lightly used Thruway Van Hool, boarding at Van Nuys Flyaway terminal. There were a few boardings at the next stop, Van Nuys Amtrak/Metrolink Station; at that location the one passenger who had come in from the Simi Valley-Chatsworth area had to get off and buy his ticket. While there were no boardings at Burbank Airport, two or three did get on at Newhall Metrolink Station, the last stop before Bakersfield for that route.

Now they made their way to Truxtun and Q Streets to wait for the GET Route 9 bus. While waiting Lionel Jones, who rode Greyhound up, met us at the bus stop.

Mark Strickert took a cab from home to Union Station. This gave him an opportunity to try out Fiesta Taxi's online reservation system. It took some effort to get the website to accept the requested departure time of 3:00 AM, but eventually it did, and the cab arrived right on time. The driver was unfamiliar with the area, which was to be a good thing, as experienced taxi drivers tend to want to take a longer Rosemead Blvd.-to-5 Freeway route. The cab had an extra screen, which displayed a Mapquest-type routing itinerary...with the shorter, quicker Washington-Telegraph-5 Freeway route.

Amtrak Thruway bus # 63180 (another Van Hool model C2045), left Los Angeles at 4:10 AM with 15 passengers. It stopped at Glendale Metrolink, Van Nuys Flyaway, and Newhall Metrolink, picking up no one at any. It got to Bakersfield Amtrak at 6:32 AM, 28 minutes ahead of schedule.

Mark planned several options for the pre-

SO.CA.TA portion of the transit tour. He was going to use the Bakersfield-Wasco ticket and ride one of the Kern Regional routes back to Bakersfield, but when arriving in Bakersfield so early, he was able to make use of the extra time by slipping one more Golden Empire Transit (GET) route than originally anticipated. He walked over to Truxton/Q, where the westbound GET 9 (bus # 9922, an Orion 5) arrived at 6:58 AM. Mark left a calling card for the main group, in the form of an expired Metrolink monthly pass. He and the 8 passengers arrived Downtown Transit Center at 7:05 AM.

Mark stopped at the information booth, already open for business that morning, and picked up a GET Bus Book. The system is pretty stable...the Fall 2006 edition was still good. Only some of the buses would have schedule books, and none were in any rack...when a bus had any books, they were usually on the floor stuck between the fare box and the front. The GET 14 (# 0212, an Orion 7) was already at the station, and was letting people on 10 minutes early. It left Downtown at 7:15 AM, with 28 passengers. No one else got on between downtown and WalMart, while more half got off at a couple industrial-yard stops along Rosedale Hwy., heading for work. Of the remaining 12 riders, six got off at WalMart 7:28 AM and joined Mark in transferring to the waiting GET 18. Two of them separately asked the 18 operator why he left early on Wednesday...the response, if any, was not heard.

The 18 (# 9711, an Orion 5) left at 7:35 AM with 8 passengers, on what amounts to a figure-8 route. Mark called Charles Powell to get a status report on the main group,

and it sounded like they would be getting to Bakersfield ahead of the scheduled 10:00 arrival time. Most Route 18 passengers stayed on until the first eastbound return stop, on State Route 58 at Allen, where all but Mark got off, and also the first new "ons" since WalMart. Only one other person got on after, and everyone got off at the WalMart at 8:08 AM.

Everyone who arrived on the next westbound 14 (# 9710, an Orion 5) at 8:12 AM got off at WalMart, and no one else got on in time to continue west by 8:20 AM. This route would have to be a LOT busier at this time on a school day, with all the large schools passed along the way and the terminus at Cal State Bakersfield. Two other people got on at intermediate stops, and all were off by Cal State. The campus was very quiet at 8:35 AM, with only one person wandering around who was not either getting on or off some bus.

Mark had a few minutes at the bus shelter to contemplate the quietness before the eastbound GET 11 (# 0255, an Orion 7) arrived and left at 8:55. The 11 never had more than 6 passengers at any one time from Cal State to Southwest Transit Center, but there was a fair amount of ons and offs along the way. It was a much slower trip than the 14 or 18, with more commercial zones, more turns, and more traffic.

The saga continues next month.



A gas tax holiday was recently proposed by a couple of presidential candidates, and it will not help our nation solve our transportation problems.

For starters, the Highway Trust Fund is running on fumes, and may not have enough coasting power to make it into the gas station in time for the next fiscal year. Summer time is the prime time when funding is collected for this account, which also funds transit.

Does this gas tax funding also include a holiday for diesel, which is a primary fuel source to power its buses, trains, and ferry boats? Rising diesel prices are taking a toll on transit companies as well. Despite ridership at a record pace, rising diesel costs are a primary culprit of transit companies facing increased costs of operating their systems. Nothing was said about a diesel tax holiday!

If the gas tax holiday is enacted, more than likely the government will have to turn to an alternative tax source to fund the rapidly declining Highway Trust Fund. Increasing the diesel tax will likely be the case. That will not only hurt the bus companies, but the railroads, trucking, maritime industries, and even public school districts. Increased diesel taxes mean fare increases on buses

and trains, higher costs of goods sold in the stores (including the gas trucked to gas stations!), and less money for school districts to educate children if their buses run on diesel.

The only other option is to cut routes and frequencies, lay off drivers and mechanics, and raise the fares. This does not make sense when just about every public transit agency across the nation is experiencing an increase in ridership.

Expert economists have said that the government needs to put more money into the transportation infrastructure, and at a rate of four times of what is now being spent. On the contrary, during the busy summer driving season, the gas tax should go up, not down, so that money is available to repair and upgrade our current transportation infrastructure, including money for road repairs.

If the oil companies can get away with adding a couple of dollars to a gallon of gas, adding a couple of pennies to a gallon of gas should not be that hard to handle. An increase in the gas tax would be a wonderful way to improve our transportation infrastructure, create lots of good, steady, long-term paying jobs, and unlock the gridlock on our nation's roads and highways. 