

BULLETIN BOARD

SO.CA.TA MEETING NOTES

Our thanks to Metro Board member (and former Board Chair) Pam O'Connor for her presentation at our August 9th meeting.

At the same meeting, we passed the by-laws revision proposal and the dues adjustment, which will implement an increase as of Jan. 1st, 2009 to \$30 per calendar year (\$12 Limited Income).

On Friday Sept. 12th, we are undertaking an informal exploration of Foothill Transit's Silver Streak and line 480. If you are able to get to Alameda busway stop around 4:00 PM, you may get a free pass from Kymberleigh Richards. After exploring service during rush hour we'll meet up between 6:30 and 8:00 PM at Joey's Barbecue, 117 W. 2nd St., off Garey across the tracks from the Pomona Transcenter.

The following day, at our Sept. 13th meeting, Foothill CEO Doran Barnes will be the guest speaker. We'll share with him what we saw during our rides.

We will once again have a booth at the Alt.Car Expo, this year being held Friday and Sat., September 26-27, from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Santa Monica Civic Center, 1885 Main St. Admission is free. Drop by and say hello. For more information: <http://www.altcarexpo.com>

IN OTHER NEWS

It is never too early to start planning to ride a train with Santa! Several venues in our area are already taking reservations:

* Pacific Southwestern Railway Museum [Campo] - <http://psrm.org/>

* Fillmore & Western Railway Co. [Ventura County] - <http://fwry.com/>

* Overland Trail [private railcar] - <http://www.overlandtrail.com/christmas-special.htm>

And how about attending a Christmas Parade in Solvang w/Big Blue Bus? <http://bigbluebus.com/home/MonthlyExcursion.asp#83>

San Pedro this year is hosting the annual meeting of the American Association of Private Railcar Owners Sept. 21-25: <http://www.aaprco.com/convention/2008/08index.html>

Per Ken Ruben, several local owners of private railcars now share a joint website: <http://larail.com/>

Transportation for America is a coalition of stakeholders promoting transit: <http://t4america.org/>

Metro's Westside/Central Service Sector now has a comment line: (213) 922-1252.

Recently the historic Tehachapi railroad depot was destroyed by fire. Online donations to aid rebuilding can be done with Paypal via the Friends of the Tehachapi Depot website [<http://www.tehachapidepot.com/>] or send a check, made out to "FOTD Back On Track" to: FOTD Back On Track, PO Box 2044, Tehachapi CA 93581-2044 🚂

I was quoted in the August 6th *L.A. Times* article "L.A. County sales tax hike for transit hits roadblock" regarding some of the grandstanding by the L.A. County Supervisors (and I meant every word): "Are they afraid someone across the fence will get more" than them? Gabbard said. "The parochialism in this just boggles the mind." <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-tax6-2008aug06,0,436918,full.story>

Which is worse? Supervisor Antonovich whining about the subway to the sea while promoting a bunch of projects whose chief attributes are that they would be in his district (light rail along the Ventura Freeway, anyone?) Or Supervisor Molina continuing to whine about the eastside project not being heavy rail. I bet the folks who fought to save the eastside project from limbo are unhappy she is treating it like a barely tolerated consolation price. And who'll be surprised if she gets booted at the opening next year? Maybe we should just declare a pox on both their houses!

Josh Stephens, ex-editor of Metro Investment Report, has written an excellent overview of prospects for funding the Subway to the Sea: http://intransitionmag.com/Summer_2008/LA_Subway.html

I was surprised Metro CEO Roger Snoble at the Sector Council annual Meet & Confer said out loud he thought the Metro Board was wrong in re canceling the service cuts and that it would come back to haunt them.

So I ran across the agenda for the Bus Rid-

ers Union August 16th meeting and was startled one of the items was a discussion on sexual harassment inside the group. "This is a very serious issue that must be addressed". Anyone hear what this is all about?

Here are three items gleaned from reading Metro staff reports for Board and Committee meetings:

The recent Bus Division Capacity Assessment Report states even if Metro ASAP builds the two new bus yards it currently has in the pipeline (near LAX and Union Station) they only meet capacity needs to FY 2011. And how likely can the site for another bus yard site be found and ready to open just 3 years from now? You know the answer to that is slim and none. P.S. - the LAX land is on a 50 year lease, because L.A. World Airports wouldn't sell it. (agenda item #42, Metro Board Operations Committee meeting June 19, 2008)

In 2007 nearly \$3 million was awarded to build a connection between the El Monte Busway and Patsaouras Transit Plaza, the so-called Ramirez Flyover. "Since that time there has not been consensus as to the necessary improvements. As a result, work was suspended". Now Metro is spending \$325,000 to explore design options. My, the wheels of bureaucracy grind slowly. (agenda item #6, Metro Board meeting July 24, 2008)

Plumbing the depths of the annual Formula Allocation Procedure funding report (agenda item #50, Metro Board meeting June 26,

2008) here are some tidbits

* Nearly \$7 million more funding to LADOT as a result of the adjustment due to the technical amendment adopted last year (attachment E)

* The sub-regional grant to the Avalon Ferry is now a half million per year (attachment L)

* No analysis in the report on how the amended FAP effected the allocation to the included/eligible operators. It must have had an impact given all the backroom dealing that went into its creation, but nary a word. I guess we know who continue to be top dogs when it comes to transit dollars!

When I finally had a chance to ride the Sprinter recently between Escondido and Oceanside I was frankly disappointed, especially given its final price tag of \$366 million. Charles Powell agreed with me it was extremely slow (maybe because the line is mostly single track and is scheduled to have meets at stations?) and noisy. Another rider complained of a diesel smell. And why build an elevated spur that swings near but not to CSU San Marcos' campus? Plus for all they spent the ROW is mostly unlandscaped--weeds and dirt don't make for interesting scenery...

I was glad to see Jane Reifer recently quoted near the end of a piece in the L.A. Times on urbanist ideals colliding w/

realities in Fullerton:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-downtown19-2008aug19%2C0%2C1885626.story>

Jon Hillmer has moved from his position as San Gabriel Valley sector service development manager to being transportation manager at Division 9. Scott Page replaces him at the sector, moving from a planner position at the Metro headquarters building.

I found it refreshing the anti-bullet train website <http://www.derailhsr.com> admits "we are indeed NIMBY" (evidently they are residents of a rich enclave along the Caltrain ROW). They also without any evidence to support its claim some pro bullet train websites are fronts funded by the California High Speed Rail Authority. That sort of reckless accusation diminishes my interest in anything they have to say.

I'll conclude with a fond farewell to Andre Darmanin, until recently Regional Transit Planner at the Southern California Association of Governments. He is taking a transit planning job with Mississauga Transit in the Greater Toronto Area. In his brief time here he put on an excellent Regional Transit Summit and constantly asked questions about the status quo. He'll be missed.



OC FLYER STUDY TOUR — Dana Gabbard

Our hopes last year for a study tour of OCTA's weekend OC Flyer express routes serving the Orange County Fair were stymied when the fair coincided with a strike by OCTA's operators, and the agency announced even if the strike was settled the OC Flyer wouldn't be operated in 2007. Taking them at their word, we planned an alternate trip. Then when the strike was settled after the Fair's first weekend, OCTA reversed itself and announced it was going to operate the OC Flyer after all for the remaining weekends of the Fair. Our decision was to go forward with the alternative study tour and defer riding the OC Flyer to this year, although several members did their own "unofficial" OC Flyer tour in 2007.

Our study tour took place on Saturday, August 2nd. At 8:10 a.m. Dana Gabbard, Kymberleigh Richards, and Woody Rosner boarded a southbound Metro route 460 bus, #7469 NABI low floor, on Figueroa at 7th Street in downtown Los Angeles. Ken Ruben was already aboard the bus, which departed with 11 passengers (all ride counts exclude trip participants). Along the Harbor Freeway transitway 1 person boarded at Slauson and 1 deboarded at Manchester. At Norwalk Green Line station 7 boarded. Along Pioneer 1 got on at Jersey and at Pioneer 1 got off while one got on. At Rosecrans/Pioneer we passed a Taco Bell with the notice that its drive thru was open 24 hours painted over. At this location 3 got off while 2 got on, one of them with a bike that went on the rack. A family of 5 got on at Rosecrans/Horst. The rider getting off at Shoemaker told the driver thank you while

walking on the sidewalk away from the bus. One then got on at Dinard, followed by one off at Molette near a freeway. We passed the Mike Thompson Super RV sales lot along with the Santa Fe Springs swap meet in a former drive in. The bike rider got off at Beach and Artesia along with two others. At the Knott's Berry Farm stop nine got off. Down La Palma at a Farmer's Market/Swap Meet one person got off, followed by another at the nearby Buena Park Mall.

We arrived at Fullerton Park n Ride Lot at 9:30 a.m. where we met up with Edmund Buckley. While waiting there we made use of the bathrooms and examined the many other amenities the location offers - water fountains, a dedicated transit information line, bike rack and benches with shade. At 10 a.m. we boarded OC Flyer route 633, a New Flyer C40LF low floor #5318 with 13 passengers and a heavenly air conditioning unit. It also had a broken farebox but after conferring with the on site OCTA supervisor the driver waved us aboard for free, merely reminding us to pay for our return trip. And then off we expressed via the freeway (in this case I-5) to the Fair. Mr. Buckley informed us the 1st year the Flyer was operated it had consisted of 3 routes over 4 weekends and carried 1,600 boardings. Last year it had 4 routes that over 3 weekends (due to the strike) carried 2,000 passengers. This year it expanded to 5 routes that during the first three weekends had ballooned to carrying 4,500 passengers and was being hailed by OCTA management as a great success even before the final weekend. As we continued along we passed the

Main Place Mall in Santa Ana and saw off in the distance OCTA's two building headquarters complex. Then via the 55 freeway we arrived at the fairgrounds, passing Costa Mesa's TeWinkle Park that includes a lake with waterfall and an area set aside for canines that a sign dubbed "The Bark Park". We came up to a side entrance that had a large sign proclaiming "Horse Boarding Opportunities". We followed a vehicle ahead of us into a narrow lane that passed horse paddocks and an area for the animals to exercise. At 10:32 a.m. we arrived at the OC Flyer waiting area in the Fair's parking lot - a small open air tent with two rows of metal benches to sit on - and deboarded.

Speaking to the agency staff supervising the drop off/departure location, we learned the amount of space dedicated by Fair staff to the buses is very inadequate and drivers often have to do the best they can to park somewhere near the tent (also at times other groups using school buses, etc block the way as they drop off passengers at the fair entrance before parking at their designated location in the lot). At 10:45 a.m. we boarded route 662, a New Flyer low floor #5311 with zero passengers. As we went along the 55 freeway a semi was spotted parked alongside the freeway with a large ad on its side proclaiming "Newport Beach Police - A Career with a Purpose". We continued on via I-5 and by 11:05 a.m. arrived at the Santa Ana Transportation Center which is now surrounded by apartment and condo complexes--new urbanism in the heart of Orange County! After a long turnaround that involved going up a driveway past the far back of the station and then turning back to return passing bus stops for the StationLink services, we were dropped off streetside at the regular bus stop on E.

Santa Ana Blvd., albeit festooned with a banner proclaiming it was also being served by OC Flyer service. The stop also had one of those new light and signals on the pole that have become almost omnipresent behind the Orange Curtain. Ken Ruben ducked into the station for a snack while the rest of us rested.

At that same stop we caught OCTA route 8: (formerly the 205) -- NABI low floor #2231 -- running late at 10:37 a.m. and carrying a seated load. Via the 5 we made good time and arrived early at the Laguna Hills Transportation Center at 11:56 a.m. This is another excellent facility with restrooms, water fountains, shade and benches. At 12:07 p.m. we departed on route 91 on another New Flyer #5408 with 12 passengers (plus one bike). This route operates through upscale suburbia, gated communities and many cul de sacs. We also passed Saddleback College--all the time having relatively minor passenger activity getting on and off. At 12:48 p.m. we arrived at Junipero Serra Park n Ride, a desolate location adjacent to a freeway. Edmund explained that park & ride lots tend to have limited amenities due to the way they are used: riders in the morning time their arrival such that they park and walk to the stop just as bus comes if it is running on schedule. At night they alight, get in their car and leave. Except for a scrawny tree we had no shade from the afternoon sun and while the bus we were to ride had arrived from the Fair the driver closed the door after the passengers got off and spent her layover in the bus while we plus two other people waited outside.

Just before the scheduled departure we were finally allowed to board OC Flyer route 691, another New Flyer #5594 with the

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forementioned two passengers getting on with us (at least it had excellent air conditioning which made up somewhat for our wait in the hot sun). After briefly zipping along I-5 we got on the 73 tollway to begin our long trip on that toll road (we passed a sign that said "Costa Mesa 14 miles"). Edmund informed us this is the only bus OCTA operates on the 73--at this time it is served by no express buses. We had a quick trip through your basic suburban sprawl (tract houses spread on both sides of the highway) then were on the 55 again and by 1:45 p.m. were back arriving at the Fair. This time our driver activated the side gate to enter past the horse boarding area. It was clear having this separate entry made available to OCTA is a key to the service staying on schedule as it allows the OC Flyer buses to avoid the monstrous back-up of automobiles at the entrance (exiting isn't a problem).

While waiting for the next bus Kimberleigh noticed the side headsign on one of the route 671 buses said its destination was the "Mertolink station". Opps! We now learned Edmund was taking his leave of us and going to take that self same bus to where he had parked his car--we gave him a fond farewell before the rest of us climbed aboard OC Flyer route 670, another New Flyer #5363 with no passengers. We made our way via freeways 55, 73 and 405. Once on surface streets we were caught up in some sort of traffic jam but by 2:19 p.m. arrived at Golden West Transportation Center in Huntington Beach. It had all the goodies we had enjoyed at other OCTA Transit Centers (shelters, benches, restrooms, drinking fountains and pay phones) plus a convenience store right across the street that Ken Ruben availed himself of during the layover.

At 2:31 p.m. we boarded OCTA route 70, another New Flyer #5544 with 23 passengers and blessed excellent air conditioning. Almost immediately we passed Orange County's PBS station KOCE and then entered a commercial corridor with adjacent gated communities. By the time we reached Mile Square Regional Park we had a seated load and by the time we passed Centennial Regional park we had standees. For a goodly part of this route it was very active with people boarding and alighting almost at every major stop (and some minor ones). At one point we even spotted a bike trail crossing. We also unfortunately had a rather rude gentleman board who seemed to think every thought that popped in his head had to be said aloud immediately, coupled with irritating and boorish antics that evidently he thought clever. When he finally got off I think most of the bus heaved a sigh of relief. By now the bus was emptying out. Our group was growing concerned because the map in the OCTA Bus Book was a bit vague how close the 70 comes to the Tustin Metrolink Station, our destination (the map merely said it served "Tustin Metrolink Station Area"). Kimberleigh went up to ask the driver to let us know when we had reached it and was told the enunciator would announce the stop at the station. And it turns out in fact the bus pulls into the station and drops off adjacent to the platform. We arrived at 3:21 p.m.

After purchasing tickets the very good signage at the station directed us to go through a short tunnel under the tracks and up a long gentle ramp to reach the correct platform for our train. And like clockwork we boarded car 135 at 3:47 p.m. to find a nearly seated load already filling the train,

unsurprisingly it was people who after spending a Saturday at the beaches of South Orange County were now headed back to the Inland Empire. After an uneventful trip (only marred by the lack of weekend IEOC timetables in the train's racks) we arrived at Anaheim Canyon station at 4:05 p.m. Making our way to the nearby station parking lot we found our bus already doing its layover and this driver was kind enough to let us board and get out of the hot sun.

At 4:30 p.m. OC Flyer route 671, another New Flyer #5338 with one passenger, departed. As we buzzed along the 55 and enjoyed the air conditioning our group filled out the postcard sized questionnaires OCTA had placed on the OC Flyer buses seeking customer comments. By 5:02 p.m. we had made our final arrival to the Fair. And 13 minutes later we boarded our last bus - OC Flyer route 633, New Flyer #5321 taking us back to the Fullerton Park n Ride lot. After an uneventful trip along the 55 and 5 (including a stretch on an elevated HOV lane) we arrived in Fullerton at 5:43 p.m. and from there went our separate ways.

Besides the impression mentioned last month, we should note the excellent signage OCTA had for this service. Every stop had banners and other markers to signify where to catch it. At some point a question was raised what the number of the routes signify. Evidently they borrow the last two digits from local lines that serve their departure point--for example route 91 serves Junipero Serra Park n Ride and the OC Flyer for that location is route 691. Overall it was an impressive service and we are gratified more and more residents of Or-

ange County are realizing it makes more sense to take the bus to the Orange County Fair. Kudos to OCTA for a superlative experience. Also thanks to Edmund Buckley for submitting corrections to improve this narrative. Plus Mr. Buckley informs me the total ridership of the OC Flyer routes this year was 6,161!



MEMBERS IN ACTION

Ken Alpern's latest column for *L.A. City-Watch* was "Want Traffic Relief? Gotta Pay For It" in the Aug. 22nd edition

Mark Panitz and Ken Ruben spoke at the August 13th Metro Westside/Central Service Sector public hearing on proposed changes to routes 33/333. Mr. Ruben commented against the proposals

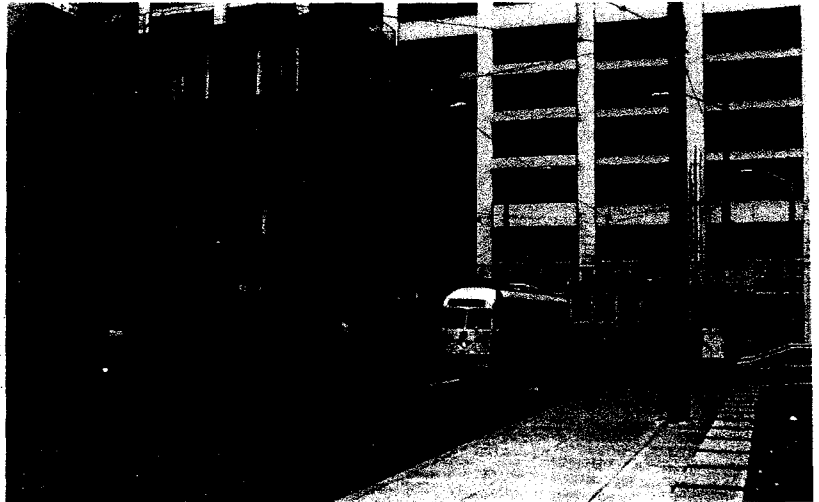
Kent Landfield and Ken Ruben participated in the Streetcar Workshop on August 14th. Mr. Ruben was pleased to lend his experiences as a longtime rider of MTA and its predecessors. Ken wondered if the San Francisco MUNI "F" streetcar is as heavily used as he'd heard [*yes indeed - ed.*]

Among those riding on the August 16th Western Transit trip to San Diego were Armando Avalos, Edmund Buckley, Kevin Devlin, Dana Gabbard, Lionel Jones, Andy Novak, Woody Rosner, Ken Ruben, and Bill Vallow

COMING (EVENTUALLY) TO A STREET NEAR YOU?

San Francisco MUNI's "F" line, using their collection of historic streetcars to shuttle tourists on Market Street, The Embarcadero, and the Fisherman's Wharf area

— Mark Strickert, inspired by the Streetcar Workshop report above, finds appropriate photo from July '08 trip



The Metro Service Sector Governance Council Annual Meet and Confer August 20th was attended by Dana Gabbard and Jerard Wright as SO.CA.TA members

Jerard Wright has been appointed to Metro's Citizens' Advisory Council

David Davenport has recently created a new forum for transit discussion in the Bay Area: <http://bayareatransit.freeforums.org>

Andy Novak's writeup of the June 21st Pacific Bus Museum Santa Barbara Excursion appeared in PBM's newsletter *The Paddle* for June-July.

"Let sales tax ease way for commuters" is an op-ed by Kymberleigh Richards that appeared in the August 21st *Daily News*.

The Salinas Californian recently printed a letter to the editor from Chris Flescher encouraging participation in the city of Salinas Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee: <http://www.thecalifornian.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080820/OPINION/808200317/1014>

"Transit Maps Of The World" by Mark Ovenden, Penguin Books 2007

I found this book, subtitled "The world's first collection of every urban train map on earth", last month at the San Francisco Railway Museum, guaranteeing myself a wonderful way to pass the time on the Amtrak San Joaquin and Thruway buses coming back south.

Mr. Ovenden grew up in London, and uses their iconic Underground route diagram as the standard by which to judge all others, as he samples and reviews how every light rail and subway system maps or diagrams

their routes and stations. He sites the Pacific Electric's 1926 "Balloon Route" as an early example of a stylized, non-map route diagram, and for comparison included a portion of the standard Red Car route map from the same era.

He likes the present-day MTA Metro Rail diagram, though points out how empty it is compared to that Pacific Electric map. Judging from what he says of the London Underground's schematic-type route map, with its straight lines and 45-degree angles in place of the messier geographic reality, he would no doubt love the new, July 2008 version of MTA's Metro System Map. 🚇 🚇



Bus stop signs and information cassettes abound at the Riverside Downtown Metrolink station

— Mark Strickert photo, with a tip of the Cubs' cap to Dana Gabbard for requesting the needed signage at the station