

TRANSIT UPDATES *Have anything to report? Call 213 388 2364*

Ridership on Metrolink is currently around 24,000 boardings per weekday, with occasional peaks of 25,000. . .

Passengers riding Saturday trains to Lancaster can take advantage of AVTA's shuttle service (free with Metrolink ticket) to and from the Lancaster Factory Outlet Stores. Shuttle trips are timed to meet trains.

Additionally, there are several special Metrolink excursions coming soon:

- Service to the California Poppy Festival, Apr 12 (regular Saturday service between Los Angeles and Lancaster, with shuttle service to the Poppy Reserve)

- Orange Blossom Festival, Apr 19 and 20 (special trains via the Riverside and Inland Empire routes--call 909-787-8403 for details)

- California Speedway, Fontana, June 21-22 (special trains offered on all lines--advance ticket purchase required--call 909-429-5000 for info).

- San Bernardino-San Clemente Beach Trains will operate most summer Saturdays and a few Sundays--contact Metrolink (371-LINK) for details.

MTA routes #152 and #154 now serve Burbank Metrolink on Saturdays (ostensibly, to connect with that successful Metrolink service). #239 was rerouted in Mission Hills to serve medical facilities at Sepulveda and S.F. Mission Bl.

The Southeast Community Development Corporation now operates a free shuttle service connecting several cities in Southeast Los Angeles County (Bell, Bell Gardens, Commerce, Cudahy, Huntington Park, Maywood, South Gate, Vernon and Walnut Park) with several Metro Blue and Green Line Stations, as well as Union Station and Commerce Metrolink. For more information, call 888-298-7246.

The Riverside County Transit Commission has extended funding for weekend service on IEC #496 until the end of April.

BULLETIN BOARD

First of all, we would like to thank Edward Simburger (author of The Complete Guide to the Los Angeles Metrolink Commuter Rail System) for his excellent presentation at last month's meeting.

We need someone who could type the consent decree between MTA and the Bus Rider's Union et al on a computer disc, so that we can have it placed on our home page. Any volunteers?

MTA's Northern Region (Burbank, Glendale, Pasadena, San Gabriel Valley and San Fernando Valley) is setting up Passenger Advisory Committees composed of bus users to provide input. Those selected will attend monthly meetings and get a free monthly pass. Call (213) 922-2269 to get an application.

The Pacific Bus Museum will have an excursion, covering the routes of the Montebello Municipal Bus Lines. (Additional details, including an application form, have been included with this newsletter. *(cont'd on Page 5)*)

The MTA Board is finally becoming aware of how costly the consent decree will be. The sleight of hand that was initially taken to comply with it using buses that otherwise would have been retired helped lull them. Now they are shocked even at their own staff's estimates of the cost, much less what Eric Mann is stating it will be. And as it is under the supervision of a Federal Court they cannot easily avoid this. I seriously question the viability of any rail projects in the light of these events. Which just might be why the Board is starting to buck.

The Coopers & Lybrand report was duly lauded, approved and is already a dim memory. With no firm follow-up it seems to be meeting the fate of previous attempts to reform MTA. One initiative that shows promise is being undertaken by the Citizen Advisory Council of the agency. This would involve an Industry Oversight Task Force composed of top people from various industries. If the MTA Board members can be enlisted to support such a blue ribbon panel (or even better convinced they actually came up with the idea) it could be a useful venture.

Sacramento is going MTA reform mad. There are 4 bills to change the Board composition and/or the agency itself plus other bills dealing with various MTA issues. Briefly the bills include:

- SB567(Polanco) - originally an elected board bill, this has been amended as an elected board is deemed currently not politically viable. It now reduces the number of Supervisor seats to 2, splits the 4 Los Angeles seats between the Mayor and City Council and adds an at-large seat for the other cities. This is a reduction of the Board by three members to 11 plus an ex-officio (non-voting).

- SB837 (Kopp/Hayden) splits MTA into agencies for bus operations, rail operations and everything else. Given the chief proponent is from Northern California and the co-sponsor is more influential in getting media coverage than moving bills this one is dead in the water.

- AB1143 (Murray) gives the MTA Chief Executive Officer a 4 year term, authority to award all construction contracts and can be removed by the Board only with a 2/3 vote. Murray has jumped from novice to insider but may not have thought through the complications this could introduce.

- AB1481 (Kuykendall) is the 9 member appointed board proposal championed by L.A. Mayor Riordan with its members appointed (3 each) by the L.A. Mayor, the County Supervisors and the other cities in the county. No one is enthused about this one. A suggestion has been made that fixed terms would at least insulate them from pressure from their appointers for specific votes (a problem during the days of the RTD and the LACTC)

Other bills (dealing with ethics and the Inspector General) include SB794 (Hayden), AB584 (Villaraigosa) and SB790 (Hayden). I'll be glad to discuss details about these at our monthly meeting.

And how is the MTA Board reacting to this? With trepidation, realizing they now are not in control of the process. Their position is status quo as to the board membership (while living with the concept of eliminating alternates that is contained in several of the bills), fixed term for CEO or super majority vote to remove and insulate their Inspector General from pressure in a similar manner. Is it too little, too late? Time will tell.

GUEST REPORT *James Umbach*

Editor's Note: This report was written by a visitor from Sacramento who traveled on Southern California transit systems.

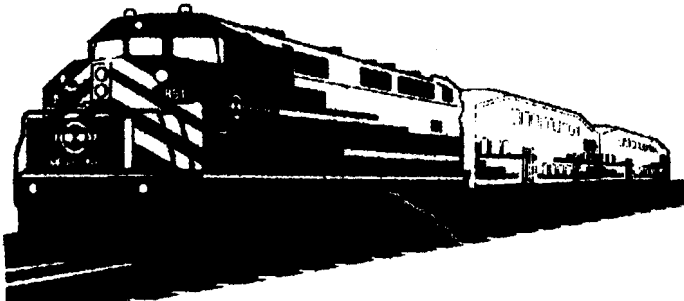
I just returned from a trip to Southern California which gave me an opportunity to ride several systems for the first time.

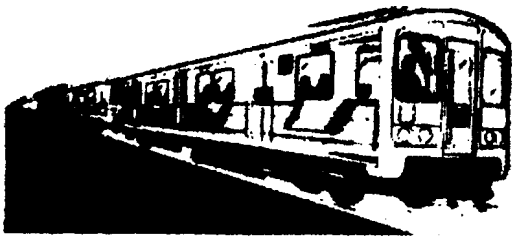
On Wednesday, March 26, I rode the MetroLink system from San Bernardino to Los Angeles. Of all the systems, this was the one by which I was most impressed. Drinking fountains and restrooms adorn cars, and the seats are comfortable, the ride smooth. The ridership was the classiest I've ever seen on any system—no drunks, bums, smelly people, etc. were to be found anywhere during my wanderings on the train. Doors open gracefully at each station, and the conductors do an excellent job of announcing the stops and answering riders' questions. The train was 100% punctual and arrived at Union Station only two minutes late—not bad for an 83 minute trip. The scenery along the way was great! The fare system is POP, but nobody ever came to check our tickets. The only minor hitch

on MetroLink was the TVM—the symbol for the round trip ticket was a little hard to understand and I pushed the button for “Transit Upgrade”, costing only \$13.00, rather than for full fare, \$14.00. The icon seemed to indicate that the “Transit Upgrade” button should be pushed if you are planning on riding transit on either end, but it actually only if you are riding transit TO the boarding station. Oh, well. I would have been happy to pay the extra dollar to the conductor if he ever came to check the tickets. Anyway, SCRRA should make this a little more clear.

After arriving at Union Station we transferred to the Red Line subway. We rode from Union Station to Pershing Square. It was 9:00 am on a work day, so the train was full—a good sign in “Car-crazy” L.A. Again, there were no problems with weirdos seen on the train. The stations are shiny and clean, as are the trains.

We then took the MTA 420 bus from 4th St to our final destination in Universal City. It took us three tries before we found the right stop, but eventually we did. The MTA drivers we encountered were surly, but the passengers were the friendliest I'd ever seen on a transit system. The other passengers were much more helpful than the driver in telling us where we should get off, and even suggested a closer stop than the one we had planned.

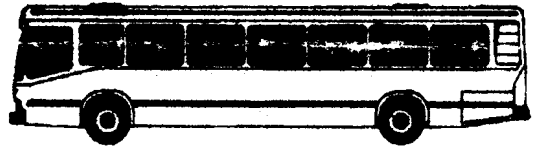




In both directions, the buses were SRO and racially mixed. Again, this speaks volumes that there IS hope in Los Angeles that some people do, in fact, ride the bus. Headways were frequent. However, as far as I know, there is no master timetable book for the MTA, or even regional ones. None of the MTA buses or trains we rode had an schedule or route information on them whatsoever. The 420 is officially a "fixed route" service, but coming back inbound at night the driver pulled off the freeway at Vermont to avoid congestion, then followed an alternate route back to 1st Street. It is nice that the drivers have authority to do this!

On Friday, March 28, I rode OmniTrans from Crafton Hills College to Inland Center. This ride involved a transfer at Loma Linda Med Center. The Omni buses were pleasant as well, and trash free. Drivers were neither extremely nice nor extremely pleasant—from my experience, they are about average. Buses kept their timetables well and transfers went smoothly.

All in all, I was impressed with my SoCal transit trip and look forward to my next one in November 1997, which will introduce me to Foothill Transit and Riverside Transit Agency.



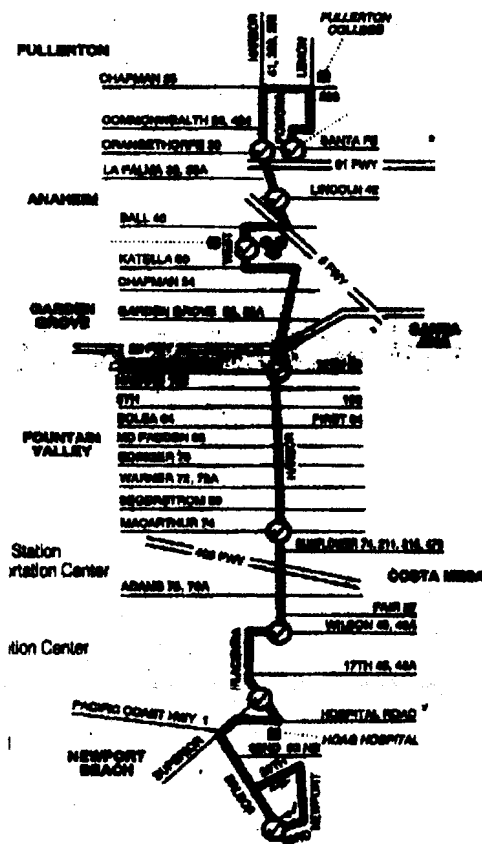
(Bulletin Board, from Page 2)

Also, SO.CA.TA is planning Saturday excursions on the Metrolink Santa Clarita line; we plan to visit Santa Clarita sometime in May, and perhaps Lancaster in June.

The executive summary of the California Intercity High Speed Rail Commission final report and action plan can be viewed at <http://www.ns.net/users/bbrown/hsr.html>. The full report is available for \$17 at (916) 445-3520.

As always, *The Transit Advocate* needs articles, letters, photographs and research (newspaper clippings, etc.) from all members and interested non-members. All materials should be sent to **3010 Wilshire #362, Los Angeles, CA 90010**. (or e-mailed to transit@lerami.lerctr.org). Material for publication should be received two weeks before the scheduled SO.CA.TA meeting date.

ROUTE OF THE MONTH



ROUTE: OCTA #43

WHERE DOES IT GO:

Newport Beach, Costa Mesa, Anaheim, Disneyland Hotel, Fullerton Transportation Center

WHEN DOES IT RUN:

5:00am-10:00pm, 7 days a week.
15 minute service weekdays,
20 minute service weekends.

WHAT IS THE FARE?:

\$1.00 regular, \$0.45 seniors 6-9am and 3-6pm Monday-Friday, \$0.15 seniors all other times.

SPECIAL NOTES:

This is the OCTA route having the highest ridership (15,000 passengers/day)

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Call OCTA at 714-636-RIDE

TRANSIT TRIVIA *Chris Ledermuller/Russ Jones*

Last month's Transit Trivia question was:

How many MTA routes run Monday through Saturday only and which are they?

The answer: #11,21,168,209,225 and 226

This month's Transit Trivia question:

What MTA routes leave L.A. County?

(The answer will be in next month's Transit Advocate, and announced at the May SO.CA.TA meeting!)