

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

Current (as of March) **Metro Red Line** ridership is: 36,700 weekday boardings, 22,650 on Saturday and 10,600 on Sunday. On the **Metro Blue Line**, there were 45,400 weekday, 34,400 Saturday and 27,400 Sunday boardings. (In March 1996, weekday ridership was as high as 47,000). Finally, **Green Line** ridership is 18,200 on weekdays, 10,675 on Saturday, and 8,700 on Sunday.

Beginning June 30th **MTA line #316** will continue to downtown Los Angeles along Third Street instead of ending at the Wilshire/Vermont Red Line station. Scott Page, a planner at the agency, explains that the changes were made because most of the ridership was in the Third Street corridor. The stretch from Third to the subway station had low ridership (never more than 8 riders per bus). Many people eastbound were getting off at the last Third Street stop.

Actually this will result in more service for #316, as now half the peak hour service for Third will be expresses! It will also still go to Century City, although there is concern that segment also is weak for ridership. Marketing will be targeted in hopes some now riding line 22 may switch over to the 316 for faster service to downtown.

**Metrolink** commuters will still be able to connect with #316 at the Pershing Square Red Line station instead of Wilshire/Vermont.

Placards on the buses indicate the June shakeup will include welcome significant improvements to service weekdays and weekends. Brochures with details were not available by the time this newsletter was being readied but should be before the end of the month.

MTA annually has hearings regarding unmet transit needs outside its service area (Santa

Clarita, Antelope Valley, Catalina). The recommendation of greatest interest is for Santa Clarita Transit to have service on Sierra Highway past Soledad Canyon Road and provide service to The Marketplace/The Old Road. Antelope Valley has hired a consulting firm to prepare a restructuring study, the draft of which was presented to the AVTA Board of Directors in March. It is anticipated for final revision and adoption to occur perhaps by this month.

MTA has indicated after the Hollywood/Vine Red Line station opens (hopefully) the end of next year that the following lines will start/end there: #163, 212, 424/425/522, 427 and 429 plus LADOT 208 and 423. When the Universal Studio station in North Hollywood opens (hopefully) 1-2 years later some San Fernando Valley services will terminate there instead and Hollywood/Vine will only have 163, 212, 429 plus LADOT 208 start/end there.

Continuing the piggybacking of consent decree mandated services on ventures that would have happened anyway (Eric Mann complains MTA is complying with the decree on the cheap) a new Vermont Avenue experimental Smart Shuttle is starting June 29th along the line 204 corridor between Slauson and 120th Street.

According to the **Long Beach Transit** schedules dated June 22 (gray colored), evening schedules will be adjusted so that buses will be timed to meet each other at the same time in the Transit Mall.

Also, the high tech/low daytime visibility videos displaying schedules at the Long Beach Transit Mall have been replaced by light emitting diodes. These deep red light sources are (continued on Page 9)

# BULLETIN BOARD

At our June 14th monthly meeting we will discuss strategy to respond to the potential MTA strike at the end of the month. Certainly we can promote the hell out of the Transit Guide. What else should be our goal? Who should be spokespeople?

An initial observation about our May 31st Santa Clarita excursion is that conversations we had with patrons and one vocal operator during the trip along with our own experiences raised certain issues that may be worth drafting a letter about to Santa Clarita Transit. It was thanks to a letter after the Big Bear excursion that Omnitrans began marking in their bus book map of the San Bernardino transit mall where MARTA stops. These trips have more value than mere recreation.

Would there be interest in having a holiday party in December for the membership (perhaps a Saturday evening?) One venue to consider is the Colonial Buffet, an excellent all-you-can-eat restaurant located 1/2 block from the Blue Line station in downtown Long Beach (1st and Long Beach Blvd.) Groups as small as 10-20 can be accommodated. Cost per person - \$9.49. Reservations need to be made by August or September to lock in a December date. This requires a \$50 deposit. Or is there a better place to do it? Suggestions are welcome. Volunteers to be part of the party organizing committee are also welcome.

President Gabbard now has an e-mail account: dgabbard@hotmail.com. He checks it every few days.

Circulation of this newsletter has slowly expanded. We now have exchanges with several groups and newsletters. It now goes to the state legislative transportation committee chairs. We plan to start sending it to key federal legislators and reporters. Who else should we send it to?

Phillip Capo, chair of the Land Use Committee, is drafting a response to the Bus Service Improvement Plan proposals. This is not an exercise in futility. A set of suggestions Charles Hobbs submitted have resulted in MTA making changes to the draft proposals. We can make a difference!

Our in-progress research projects are:

- HOV position paper being drafted by Michael Ludwig
- Day pass proposal brochure being researched by Dana Gabbard (with input from Chris Ledermuller, Pat Moser and Woody Rosner)
- 5 point plan for new MTA CEO (drafted by Dana Gabbard with input from Joseph Drummond)
- A proposal for So.CA.TA to be partners with Edward Simburger (author of the Metrolink Guidebook) in the creation of videos to advocate for use of transit that could appear on public access channels is being investigated. We have written Mr. Simburger for clarification of certain issues. Of course anything would have to be approved by the membership after discussion at one of our monthly meetings. *(continued on page 9)*

## PLAC REPORT *Dana Gabbard*

We have been busy! I had letters published in the Daily News (May 25th and June 7th) LA Times (May 28th) and Downtown News (June 2nd) plus voice mail comments in the Wilshire Independent (May 28th). These were principally in response to Los Angeles Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky's comments that rescinding Propositions A & C (twin half-cent sales taxes dedicated to transportation) might aid the drive to reform MTA. I mustered arguments on the dire consequences this would have and pointed out all the other transportation services beside subway construction these taxes help support.

I also responded to angry noises of unfairness by the San Fernando Valley political and business establishment over delays in constructing a rail line in that area. We are fulfilling our role of contributing informed analysis to counter the usual parochial politics.

As MTA wobbles, the political elite grandstand. Keven Murray, Assembly Transportation Chair, complains the people of his area are being discriminated against by being asked to make do with just the Red Line extension to Pico/San Vicente (at \$668 million that is a lot of making do). This is evidently a fresh salvo in the campaign for the Crenshaw project. And Valley Councilmembers threaten to hold hostage a Los Angeles contribution of \$200 million to Red Line segment three (which ironically includes North Hollywood) unless the Valley gets rail PDQ.

But when it comes to grandstanding Mayor Riordan takes a back seat to no one. Hardly an MTA Board meeting goes by that he doesn't produce a new proposal out of his back pocket

and tries to rush it through. "Hey, let's order 200 additional CNG buses or explore design/build and public/private partnerships for Valley Rail. Isn't that a great idea. Let's program it!" Even his board appointees often appear in the dark as to what he is up to. And it often turns out the Mayor is nearly as clueless ("I didn't know" he explained when confronted with lack of sufficient fueling facilities for that many additional CNG buses).

Utter chaos is the best phrase for the current state of MTA. Confidence in the agency is so low Gordon Linton of the FTA has basically demanded veto power over the rail recovery plan, key points of which he mandated. One person quipped Linton is now virtually the new CEO.

Speaking of our friends in Washington one of SO.CA.TA's letters supporting the Amtrak 1/2 cent gas tax trust fund proposal went to new Transportation Department Secretary Rodney Slater. I included in it a request for clarification of remarks he made that the consent decree is a model for other urban areas. Pointed I asked if this meant he would commit federal funds to pay for it. Also how he reconciles this with the relentless demand of the Federal Transit Administration that MTA comply with the Full Funding Agreement. As you can imagine there has been no response to date.

The gentleman from Bechtel has turned down the offer to be MTA's new CEO and the candidate from Orange County has now taken the top job with OCTA. So the job search is starting over from scratch. MTA Boardmember Jenny Oropeza of Long Beach was closedmouth

when asked at the May MTA Citizen Advisory Council meeting about how the search is going. "We have a plan" is all she would say.

We won't get into the specifics of the latest "recovery plan". These things have the half life of rare radioactive elements. Here is one item to ponder - estimated cost to comply with the consent decree through Fiscal Year 2013 is \$922 million!

Two more items in the ongoing MTA follies:

I: Earlier this year a 5% budget cut was adopted to begin with the July 1997 budget. It was stated this would occur without layoffs. Now the obvious is being admitted, that to meet budget targets layoffs are likely necessary.

II: We were promised last year the practice of using one-time revenues to balance the budget was being discontinued. The promise didn't last a year ("budget adjustment", agenda item #14, May 28th MTA Board meeting).

Money is getting so tight MTA is making Division 12 (Long Beach) a support facility. They are also cutting what they pay vendors (liquor stores, supermarkets, etc.) to sell tokens and passes.

The feared Foothill strike fizzled. Rumor is hardball tactics were again the weapon of choice. Long-term consequences of such management actions are never addressed by politicians who preach contracting out.

If there is an MTA strike, MTA has already prepared for it, spending \$2 million on a contingency plan according to a report in the June 4th Wilshire Independent. 350 buses will serve

the 41 most used lines, with 150 more buses available if the strike stretches past a third week. Service will be between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m., fares reduced to 50 cents and refunds offered for passes. The agency is targeting cost of living increases. There is no indication that additional contracted lines are being advocated (MTA staff admit their hands are full supervising the 13 lines presently contracted).

MTA continues slow progress toward a regional pass. Now there will be a Board ad hoc task force on the issue. Hey, when the Board decides to micromanage it means something real could be going on.

Coopers & Lybrand isn't dead. MTA now admits it needs to have C&L (at \$285,000) train MTA staff to do the implementation. I wonder how long until Coopers is handed the entire task (and at what fee)?

I will be representing SO.CA.TA at a MTA Long Range Plan Focus Group meeting at the end of the month. Input is welcome.

Eric Mann of the Bus Riders Union says the pilot project should include 100 buses under his proposal. We are eager to see Mann finally offer a proposal of substance. Heretofore he has mostly used protest sound bites (50 cent fare, \$20 monthly pass). One SO.CA.TA member who attended a BRU meeting a few years ago asked what their specific recommendations for better service was. In essence they responded "Oh, we just want there to be more money spent on buses. It's up to MTA to figure out how to spend it". Now that we are getting down to specifics lets see if they can go beyond protest songs and scolding speeches.

## **SANTA CLARITA EXCURSION** *Chris Ledermuller*

On Saturday, May 31, a few members of So.Ca.TA got up early in the morning to explore Santa Clarita. Members Dana Gabbard, Charles Powell, Charles Hobbs, Chris Ledermuller, Woody Rosner, Hank Fung, and June Messick went on this all-day journey. Chris Flescher was also in town from San Diego and came along as well.

At around 9:00 am, the members boarded the new Saturday Metrolink service to Santa Clarita at Union Station, heading for Santa Clarita. Just by the number of people who got on the train at Union Station, Metrolink has very good ridership on weekends.

About 45 minutes later, the group arrived at the Santa Clarita Metrolink station. The station is very nice, complete with an ornamental stairway area to the park & ride lot and a public restroom. The group then waited nearly 20 minutes until the Santa Clarita #10 arrived, heading towards Castaic.

The Line 10 bus was a 35 foot Gillig Phantom, one of the biggest buses they have for local service. The bus filled up all of its seats just at the Metrolink station alone, not just because of the train, but also because the station serves as a timed transfer center to all Santa Clarita Transit buses. One of the first major stops on Line 10 was Magic Mountain. There is a lot of ridership to Magic Mountain via public transit, but the bus was not fortunate enough to escape the traffic jam caused by the motorcade of park goers. It was this part of the trip which made the bus late. Then, most of the passengers got off at another major stop: Wayside Honor Rancho jail. By then, virtually everyone on the bus was a

So.Ca.TA member. The bus did a turn through Castaic, but did not go near the famous lake. Once again the 10 went to Magic Mountain, held up by even more traffic to the park.

Charles Powell and Dana had planned out a carefully timed itinerary. It was all in vain, since the 10 was held up by traffic to meet the 25 originally planned for. The group still got off at the Valencia Town Center, right in front of a waiting Line 50 bus. After a few minutes of debating on riding the line, the driver waited patiently as the group finally boarded the 50, riding through a large perimeter of the Santa Clarita Transit service area, along San Fernando Rd. and Sierra Highway and back to the Metrolink station.

After the long ride on Line 50, at the Metrolink station the bus became Line 40, and the group got off at the Valencia Town Center for a lunch break. After getting about an hour's rest and sustenance at the mall's food court, it was a short ride on the 35 back to the Metrolink station, with a trip along Line 30 through Saugus and back to the Metrolink station. At this point, Chris Flescher stayed back at the Metrolink station so he could catch the 3:31pm train home.

The rest of the group remained together and took Line 15 south to the Santa Clarita Valley Senior Center. At the brief layover at the Senior Center, the members of the group struck a conversation with the bus driver. He said that while the passengers like the system, the drivers feel that the buses (mostly Gillig Spirits) are unreliable, many things are not getting repaired fast enough, drivers are paid very low, and that there should be a systemwide restructuring of

routes that needs to be done, because of major gaps in service. After that interesting conversation, the bus was back in service and the group got off near the Santa Clarita Civic Center. Another break was taken at the library there, sitting down and reading books in air conditioned comfort. Dana did not forget to leave some So.Ca.TA flyers for the library.

Then, at about 4:15 pm, it was time to head to the bus stop so the group could ride back in enough time to rest at the Metrolink station. Since the library was near the Valencia Town Center, any bus could be caught at one of two nearby bus stops. It was finding out which bus stop to wait at that delayed arrival at the Metrolink station. Most of the buses were turning left onto Valencia Bl. instead of continuing straight on Magic Mountain Parkway. Then, after waiting about 20 minutes, a Line 25 bus showed up on Valencia Bl., heading back to the Metrolink station and catching the train in time, heading back to L.A. with a modest dinner at Burger King.

In summary, a good time was had by all. It was amazing to see how far 75 cents could take you in Santa Clarita, especially since riding back after a turnaround was allowed. The system did a good job in carrying passengers, though it was Line 10 that really had very good ridership. Most of the other lines did not have as many riders, especially since So.Ca.TA members accounted for most of the ridership on the buses. The system was easy to use, maps were fairly clear, though bus stops should list what buses serve each particular stop and where is it heading towards. If it weren't for the traffic jam at Magic Mountain, the whole system could have been done, as opposed to only a few lines. Also, it should be noted that while the Metrolink

station is the official timed transfer point, all Santa Clarita buses serve the Valencia Town Center as well, creating a timed transfer zone between the mall and train station, which has all the buses leaving at the same time.

It was also important to hear how service could be improved in Santa Clarita, especially with what that Line 15 driver said. Santa Clarita Transit does not serve all parts of the area, mainly because of the unchecked sprawl. New developments for housing and shopping are sprouting nearly everywhere, too fast for the transit system to keep up. Also, a few mechanical problems were noted like a farebox problem and inoperable headsigns. The buses are also suffering vandalism problems like most of the MTA buses down here. So it would be time for Santa Clarita Transit to have better upkeep of their buses, and perform a restructuring study on how service can better be provided. Also, the city of Santa Clarita should limit the sprawl occurring in the area right now, so that restructuring would not be needed every time more massive developments are built.



*SCT Grumman bus. C. P. Hobbs photo*

## **METROLINK UPDATE** *Charles Hobbs/ana Gabbard*

Total weekday ridership on Metrolink is around 24,500 passenger boardings. Weekday ridership per line is as follows:

San Bernardino: 7,175

Orange County: 5,000

Riverside: 4,200

Antelope Valley (Santa Clarita): 3,800

Ventura County: 3,050

Inland Empire: 1,150

Burbank Short Turn: 183

Systemwide, the subsidy per passenger is \$6.42, while the subsidy per passenger-mile is \$.18, comparing favorably with long-distance commute express buses in the region.

New Metrolink services as of May 11 include; a new weekday round trip from Los Angeles to Lancaster (leaving L.A. at 11:50 a.m., and Lancaster at 1:38 p.m.) and two additional trains to Burbank Airport.

On or around July 1 (depending on whether the new cars on order have arrived), one additional trip will be added to the Riverside, Orange County, and Inland Empire lines. In November, Metrolink plans to extend the Ventura Line midday train to Oxnard, as well as adding six additional trips between Burbank Airport and Los Angeles.

Several track and facility improvements are budgeted for the coming fiscal year. These include:

- an additional maintenance facility in the Inland Empire;
- relocation of the Central Control Facility (Dispatch), as the current building does not meet earthquake safety codes for "critical

facilities" (if the building were destroyed, no trains could be dispatched)

- new passing tracks at Newhall, Covina, Pomona, Claremont, and Montclair, along I-10 near Fremont St, and near Burbank Airport;
- various track and tunnel upgrades throughout the system.

Metrolink is also considering reconfiguring track in El Monte so that trains could operate via Alhambra. If this could be done, reverse peak trains might be routed via Alhambra, leaving I-10 for "regular" commuter operations.

The SCRRA Preliminary 97/98 Budget includes amendments to implement the interim Joint-Powers entity for Southern California Intercity Rail. This is the eight-county group (Super Metrolink) that may take over administration of the San Diegan. This one is a political minefield. But despite jitters over whether the state will pull funding the counties are all putting up monies to continue the process.

Metrolink recently did a survey of Saturday service on the San Bernardino line. Key results:

- purpose of trips is visiting family and friends (39%), going to work (20%) and shopping (12%)
- first time users constituted 41% of those surveyed
- respondents learned about Saturday service at train stations (35%), from friends/neighbors (31%) or newspaper ads (11%)
- satisfaction with service was very high
- compared to weekday ridership, Saturdays draw a wider range of ages, ethnic backgrounds and income brackets

(Updates, from Page 2)  
clearly visible in bright sunlight.

Changes to **Foothill Transit** include: #184 has been extended to the corner of Huntington and Rosemead, presumably to connect to Line 266. #486 has just increase service to a half hour frequency during weekend afternoons from Puente Hills Mall to El Monte (presumably to relieve overcrowding). New Line #731 has been created. It will go from the El Monte Metrolink Station down Peck Road, to the 605 Freeway, serving the Home Savings of America complex, who paid for the line. In the future, there may be extensions to Crossroads Business Park. These changes will go into effect on June 29, 1997.

Reportedly, Gardena Municipal Bus Lines has joined MTA, LADOT and Torrance Transit on the Harbor Freeway Transitway. Currently,

• MTA is considering plans for a coordinated schedule/fare system for all four operators.

There will also be changes on the VISTA (Ventura County Intercity Transit) in July:

- VISTA Central will no longer operate (although peak-hour service between Camarillo and Oxnard may be replaced by the City of Camarillo)

- VISTA 101, 126 and East, along with the Santa Paula and Fillmore dial-a-rides, will continue to operate, but with a possible new contractor on any or all of these lines

- There is interest in extending VISTA East to Simi Valley and Chatsworth, for providing a new commuter route between Oxnard/Camarillo and Warner Center, and for providing Saturday service on some or all of the existing VISTA routes.

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*(Bulletin Board, from page 3)*

Upcoming joint MTA/Bus Rider Union meetings for input on the consent decree mandated pilot project for new service where the bus system presently does not serve:

- Thursday June 12, 7 p.m. - Wilshire United Methodist Church (4350 Wilshire)
- Wednesday June 25th, 7 p.m. - Boyle Heights Senior Center (2839 E 3rd Street)

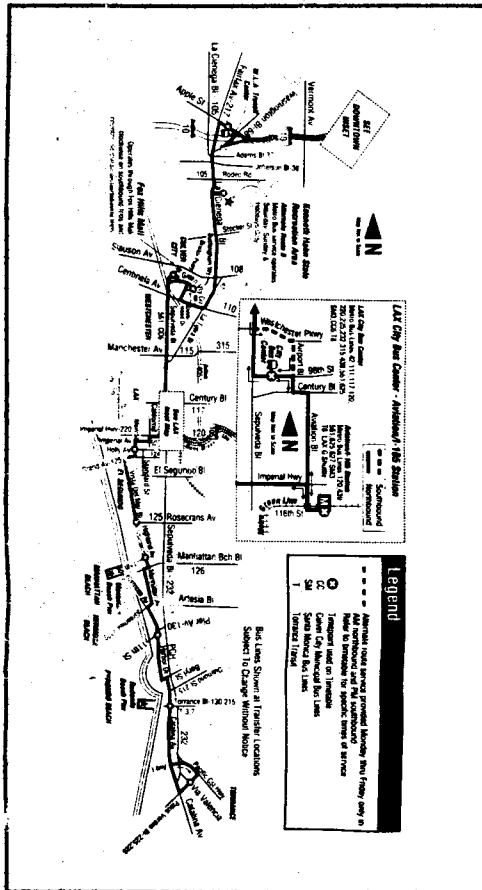
We have a quantity of free coupons for the new Train 'n Wheels shuttles that serve Bell, Bell Gardens, Commerce, Cudahy, South Gate, Huntington Park, Maywood, Vernon and Walnut Park (along with nearby Blue and Green line stations, Metrolink Commerce station and Union Station). These will be available for the taking at our monthly meeting. Or just make a request via voice mail [(213) 388-2364 ext.2] or e-mail [dgabbard@hotmail.com].

"Big Blue Bus News" is the new customer newsletter for the Santa Monica system. Members wishing to be on the mailing list can call (310) 451-5444 or e-mail info@BigBlueBus.com or write Santa Monica Municipal Bus Lines 1660 Seventh St., Santa Monica CA 90401.

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 of the Month: MTA 439

**Where does it go:** Just about everywhere. Patsaouras Transit Plaza, West L.A. Transit Center, Fedco, Kenneth Hahn Park (weekends and holidays only), Fox Hills Mall, LAX City Bus Center, Aviation Green Line Station, Manhattan Beach Pier, Redondo Beach Pier, and Torrance.

**When does it run:** 5:00am (5:50am weekends) to midnight everyday. Half hourly service during peak rush hours, hourly service all other times. Special turnout to Kenneth Hahn Park on weekends and holidays.

**How much does it cost:** \$1.35 between West L.A. Transit Center and Torrance, and \$1.85 between Downtown L.A. and Torrance.

**When is the perfect time to ride:** During the next few hot summer months, for great beach service.

**Whom to call for more info:** 1-800-COMMUTE

## TRANSIT TRIVIA *Chris Ledermuller*

**Last month's Transit Trivia question was:**

**Question:** What service besides the Runabouts provides free service in Downtown Long Beach?

**The answer:** Promenade Trams

**This month's Transit Trivia question:**

Which Metro Bus route (or routes) besides line 439 serves all three Metro Rail lines: Blue, Green and Red?

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